



American Forest Foundation

### **How the American Forest Foundation helps family forest owners:**

The **American Forest Foundation** is a non-profit organization that helps protect and measurably increase the clean water, wildlife habitat and sustainable wood supplies that come from family-owned forests, by working with landowners, partners, stakeholders and policymakers to address today's important economic and environmental issues.

Our **vision for the future, in the West**, is to ensure to protect clean drinking water for 22 million fellow Americans by making family-owned forests more resilient to wildfire.

We employ a variety of strategies to help forest owners overcome the barriers to forest stewardship, by ensuring they have the tools and resources they need to care for their forests and make a positive impact, including:

**The American Tree Farm System:** AFF runs an internationally-known recognition and certification program that provides family and private forest owners with support and tools to keep their forests healthy and sustainable. This is done through 3 elements of the program: a wide community of Tree Farmers that can help each other learn, grow and share information to more sustainably manage; an established set of standards of sustainability, to guide landowners as the best practices of forest management; and a third-party assessment process to certify the practices are sustainable. *Currently, the program is administered by 42 state committees, with more than 70,400 Tree Farmers in the program, managing more than 18.9 million acres.*

**Placed-Based Conservation Projects:** AFF partners with local organizations on the ground in specific landscapes to help forest landowners overcome the biggest hurdles to management – knowledge, technical expertise, and cost – so that they are able to address environmental issues, such as wildfire, invasive species, insect epidemics, and help conserve and improve clean water, wildlife habitat or sustainable wood supplies in that landscape. Currently, AFF is working in 15+ places. [Visit Mysierrawoods.org](http://Mysierrawoods.org) to learn more about our work in California.

**Policy Reform:** AFF works with federal policy makers to create or enhance national policies and programs that encourage and support family forest owners (through technical and financial assistance) in order to protect and enhance clean water, wildlife habitat and sustainable wood supplies, and ensure we keep working forests as forests in the future.

**Aligning and encouraging markets for wood:** AFF works with partners, stakeholders and more to sustain and encourage markets for wood from family forests, particularly certified wood, to help family forest owners generate the income needed to continue to manage sustainably.

# American Tree Farm System® By the Numbers, 2019

## Overall Program Snapshot:

- The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) is an internationally-endorsed recognition and certification program that provides family and private forest owners with support and tools to ensure their forests deliver the clean water, wildlife habitat and sustainable wood supplies all Americans count on.
- In total, there are more than 18.9 million of forested acres within the ATFS program, across 91,000 Tree Farms. These are managed by over 70,400 Tree Farmers.
- ATFS is administered by the American Forest Foundation (AFF), and implemented on the ground by State Tree Farm Committees, independently-managed groups (IMG) and third-party certificates.
- State Committees are comprised of Tree Farmers, state agency partners, industry partners, consulting foresters and others, and vary from one state to another. Based on local conditions and market drivers, State programs fall into two paths – Certification or Recognition. All Tree Farms within ATFS must adhere to the Standards of Sustainability to be identified as Tree Farms through the program. The Certification path includes rigorous third-party assessments of the Standards of Sustainability, whereas Recognition program focuses solely on outreach and education. There are 30 Certified State programs and 12 Recognition State programs.
- In 2018, ATFS added 1,544,176 new acres across 6,477 new Tree Farms.

## Certified Pathway Snapshot:

- There are over 17.9 million acres of certified forestland within ATFS, across 85,400 Tree Farms, managed by 64,300 Tree Farmers. This includes certified acres within the State Tree Farm Committees, IMGs, and third-party certificates.
  - Specifically, State Tree Farm programs include 11.5 million acres of certified forestland, across 32,400 Tree Farms, managed by 25,700 Certified Tree Farmers.
  - IMGs account for 5.6 million acres of certified forestland, across 52,000 Tree Farms, managed by 39,000 Certified Tree Farmers.
  - Third-party individual certificates account for 833,000 acres of certified forestland, across 1,200 Tree Farms, managed by 4 Certified Tree Farmers
- In 2018, ATFS added 1,539,169 new *certified* acres and 6,442 new *certified* Tree Farms.

## Recognized Path Snapshot:

- There are 1 million acres in the recognized ATFS program, across 5,600 recognized Tree Farms. These are managed by 6,200 Tree Farmers.

**FAQs:****What is the difference between the Certification and Recognition paths within ATFS?**

All Tree Farms (and Tree Farmers) within ATFS must adhere to the Standards of Sustainability to be identified as Tree Farms through the program. Certified State programs must go through a rigorous third-party assessment process to provide assurance of conformance with the standards. Many states chose the Certification path in response to market demand within their state.

**Why were the two paths created?**

Over the past few years, AFF, with the ATFS community, implemented an initiative called State Voice, State Choice. Based on extensive dialogue among volunteers, landowners and partners, as well as assessment results and surveys, AFF found that certification is a driving force in some regions and not at all in others. In addition, State Committees sought flexibility to respond to the cultures, partnerships and opportunities in their states. State's Voice, State's Choice allowed states to choose a path – Recognition or Certification, which best fits local conditions in their states. To help support their decision-making, State Committees developed strategic plans, identifying focal areas such as data integrity, inspector recruitment or landowner outreach.

**What has AFF been doing over the past few years to grow or improve ATFS?**

AFF continues to work to increase credibility and value in the program for its partners and the forest products industry. In order to do this AFF conducted an extensive review of its program and engaged the ATFS community to hone in on the key areas where improvements can help with this. Currently, AFF is focusing on five areas to strengthen the ATFS state programs: developing strategic plans based on state needs; providing training to increase leadership skills and efficiency of our volunteers; improving communications with volunteers; increasing partners volunteering in ATFS; and sharing success stories of volunteer engagement amongst committees.

**The numbers of acres in ATFS seems to be lower, why?**

As AFF continues to work to increase credibility and value in the program for its partners and the forest products industry, accuracy in data is extremely important. In the past few years, during a strategic planning process, AFF and the ATFS State Leaders identified data and landowner engagement as focal areas for the committees. Since, AFF has and plans to continue to spend time and resources working with the State committees to scrub their database for accuracy.