



American Forest Foundation



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**Contact:** Brigitte Johnson, APR  
202.463.5163  
bjohnson@forestfoundation.org

**The 2007 Natural Resources Conservation Service  
State Conservationist Awardees**

Washington, D.C. – The American Forest Foundation and the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) announce the 2007 Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Awardees. This award recognizes NRCS state conservationists and their staff for outstanding technical and financial assistance to private forestland owners on forest conservation activities. The NRCS State Conservationists work everyday to provide resources and support for private family forest owners to continue to be great stewards of the land.

**Terry Crosby, Ohio State Conservationists, East Region**

Cosby grew up on a 500 acre property of woods and plantations in Mississippi. Today he is the owner and manager of that family property and continues to be a good steward of those woodlands. As the Ohio State Conservationist, Cosby puts his forestry background to use by supporting state efforts to increase Ohio's eight million acres of woodlands. Even with the significant loss of state and federal cost-share programs for forest landowners, Cosby's leadership and partnership efforts with the Ohio NRCS leadership made Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) resulted in funding to Ohio's woodland owners. In recent years, more than 750 Ohio landowners have utilized \$2.5 million in EQIP funding for forestry practices. Through his leadership skills, Ohio is cited as a model state to show how EQIP, NRCS, and a State Forestry Program can cooperate to create a successful woodland improvement program.

**Bill Gradle, Illinois State Conservationists, Central Region**

As the Illinois State Conservationist, Gradle demonstrates a commitment and passion for forestry through his State Conservationist duties and volunteer activities that promote forestry interests. Gradle provides representation on the Illinois State Tree Farm Committee and maintains a strong working relationship with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts. He serves on the Governor's Forestry Development Council (IFDC) which in 2005 envisioned a grass-roots forestry organization that would build and strengthen forestry professionals, organizations, and citizens across Illinois. Gradle committed resources to develop, promote and establish this burgeoning new organization – the Illinois Forestry Association, which now is a 400 plus member grassroots, nonprofit organization that has become the voice for Illinois forestry.

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Despite Illinois' agriculture heritage, Gradle maintains forestry as a top priority for Illinois NRCS programs. In 2007, he provided a new and unprecedented *Forest Management Plan* incentive program under EQIP through the USDA Farm Bill. This initiative committed in excess of \$400,000 to over 1,000 forest landowners that will be used to develop forest stewardship management plans and encourage sustainable forest management across Illinois' landscape.

**Mr. Richard Sims, Idaho State Conservationist, Western Region**

Under his tenure, Idaho is among the top states obligating forest restoration and improvement cost share. Idaho has obligated \$2.7 million EQIP funds to implement 150 forest conservation contracts. In 2003, Sims filled the NRCS State Forester position that had been vacant for nearly 10 years. When he began as the Idaho State Conservationist there was only one forestry representative on the State Technical Committee, now there are three forestry representatives on the committee. Under his leadership the NRCS provides opportunities for the USDA Resource Conservation and Development program to assist local landowners and communities in projects such as Fuels for Schools and fuel reduction projects benefiting communities throughout Idaho.

For more information please contact Brigitte Johnson, APR, Director of Communications, 202.463.5163, Email [bjohnson@forestfoundation.org](mailto:bjohnson@forestfoundation.org) or visit ATFS at [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org)

*The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) is a national program that promotes the sustainable management of forests through education and outreach to private forest landowners. Founded in 1941, ATFS has 27 million acres of privately owned forestland and 87,000 family forest owners who are committed to excellence in forest stewardship. Tree Farmers manage their forestlands for wood, water, wildlife, and recreation with assistance from 4,400 volunteer foresters. ATFS is a program of the American Forest Foundation's Center for Family Forests. The American Forest Foundation (AFF) is a nonprofit organization that strives to ensure the sustainability of America's family forests for present and future generations. AFF's vision is to create a future where North American forests are sustained by the public which understands and values the social, economic, and environmental benefits they provide to our communities, our nation, and our world.*

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