



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Washington Tree Farmers Bob Playfair and Thelma Fry**  
**Named 2007 Western Regional Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year**

Washington, D.C. – The American Tree Farm System® (ATFS), a program of the American Forest Foundation, has named Bob Playfair and Thelma Fry of Stevens County, Wash. as the 2007 Western Regional Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year. Playfair and Fry received their award during the National Tree Farmer Convention held in Madison, Wis. This annual ATFS award recognizes outstanding sustainable forest management on privately owned forestland.

The story of the Rafter-Seven Ranch began generations ago when Robert Lunan and Gertrude Hull Playfair, Bob and Thelma's grandparents, acquired 160 acres of cutover timberland just east of Cheweleh, Wash. in 1910. Additional acreage was added by subsequent generations and grew into the 2,817 acres of the Rafter-Seven Ranch, Inc. of today. The Playfair siblings, Bob and Thelma, were both born and raised on the family farm which they have maintained as a certified Tree Farm since 1962. Over the years, Rafter-Seven Ranch has grown from a farming homestead into a comprehensive wood utilization operation which encompasses over 3,000 acres of timber and 260 acres of farmland that includes 80 acres of the original 1910 homestead. For the past 20 years, Rafter-Seven has operated under a written forest management plan that includes the annual harvest of 5 to 30 acres in a "seed-tree" prescription. Their seral species seedlings include western Larch, Pondorosa pine and western White pine plantings. Additionally, nearly 100 acres are commercially thinned each year as part of the "thinning from below" prescription. The income from the timber harvesting projects help maintain a sustainable timber production program. Certified Tree Farmers own at least 10 acres of forestland and actively follow a forest management plan developed in partnership with an ATFS volunteer forester. The plan addresses forest sustainability, wildlife habitat, recreation, and water and soil conservation.

Bob and Thelma have remained true to their heritage by protecting and nurturing the family homestead. Thelma and her family reside on the "home place" bought by their grandparents in 1910. Bob is the driving force behind the development, maintenance and improvements of the Rafter-Seven Ranch as a viable and successful tree farm corporation. Thelma has continued a family tradition through her modest cowherd. She and her children maintain the year-round commitment to feed, vaccinate and breed their herd. While their successes today are unparalleled and unprecedented, Bob Playfair and Thelma Fry have faced and overcome a number of challenges throughout the years. During their initial Tree Farm certification, an infection of Armillaria root rot nearly decimated the demonstration forest area. Douglas fir and Grand fir trees were dying from the root rot infections as well as an infestation of fir engraver beetles in the stands. An active program of salvage logging was started to save the remaining trees from thousands of diseased stands. Bob continued to seek a solution to the disease problems and worked with Soil Conservation Service (SCS) experts, including Mick Lewis, to devise and implement a management

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plan. In 1987, the Rafter-Seven Ranch signed a 10-year, cost-share agreement with the USDA to fund new culverts to replace old stream crossings; institute brush control; tree planting and pre-commercial thinning projects. The agreement also covered the rehabilitation of an area that had not been naturally reforested since a catastrophic burn in 1910. The ultimate success of these and many other projects helped save the forest area in and around Rafter-Seven Ranch. Additionally, Bob, Thelma and their families developed a life-long friendship with SCS forester Mick Lewis, who nominated them for the 2007 Outstanding Tree Farmers Award.

The sixth generation of Playfair descendants are also dedicated to the ongoing education of their children, grandchildren and family members, as well as the public, about the natural environment and the important role of family-owned Tree Farms. Bob Playfair has traveled throughout the country to teach and lecture about the life of a tree farmer and the essential need to maintain the health of the nation's forests. He lectures forestry professionals, legislators, landowners and students from elementary through college on timber management; plant and animal identification and the natural history of northeast Washington State. Both Bob and Thelma are committed to the continual education of lawmakers regarding the importance of tree farming, timber management and timber harvesting as well as wildlife preservation in Washington State

“We are committed to the recognition of family forest owners each year. The prestigious ATFS award honors the hard work and dedication of these true champions of sustainable forestry whose tireless efforts provide tangible and significant support to help ATFS accomplish its mission of getting more good forestry on more acres,” said Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President-Forestry of the American Forest Foundation. “Tree Farmers, like Bob and Thelma set an example for all forestland owners and most of all, create an environment in their community of flourishing and sustainable forests.”

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, a nonprofit organization that works for healthy forests, quality environmental education, and informed decision-making about our communities and our world.*

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