



For Immediate Release
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ATFS Recognizes Family Forest Stewardship Plans
Approved by Washington DNR as Meeting Certification Requirements

Washington, D.C. - The Washington State Department of Natural Resources and the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) announced today that ATFS certification universally recognizes DNR-approved multi-resource Forest Stewardship Plans as meeting management planning requirements for family forest landowners.

"ATFS recognition of the Forest Stewardship Plans will expedite the process for landowners interested in applying for certification. This should strengthen the public's confidence that wood from Washington's family forests is grown and harvested in an environmentally responsible way," said Doug Sutherland, Commissioner of Public Lands.

Bob Simpson, Senior Vice President, American Forest Foundation, the Tree Farm programs parent organization, echoed these sentiments. "This recognition will open the door for thousands of Washington's family forest owners seeking affordable certification of their forest management, allowing them to stay competitive in today's shrinking global economy," said Simpson.

Previously, these plans met or exceeded the Tree Farm certification standard for management plans. However, prior to today's announcement, each individual plan still needed to be reviewed and evaluated for approval. Today's recognition provides a programmatic level approval for all landowners with these plans.

Forest stewardship plans help landowners to integrate multiple resource issues in the management of the property as a valuable legacy for future generations. These issues include: timber, fish, wildlife, soils, water, wetlands, forest health, aesthetics, recreation, special forest products, cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, and wildfire hazard reduction. The plan defines a landowner's objectives, describes the current condition of natural resources present on the property, and outlines a ten-year action plan to achieve the landowner's goals while maintaining and enhancing those resources.

Washington State is the birthplace of the American Tree Farm System® beginning with the certification of the first Tree Farm near Montesano in Grays Harbor County in 1941. Today, the national program includes 87,000 certified Tree Farms on 27.5 million acres in 46 states.

Family forest owners are proven dedicated stewards of forestlands. In Washington State, nearly half of the privately owned forests, approximately 3.2 million acres, are in family forest ownership. These landowners operate according to the State's forest practices rules, among the most environmentally responsible and protective in the nation. By following these rules, landowners with an approved Forest Stewardship Plan, or other forest management plan acceptable to the Tree Farm Program, qualify for ATFS certification of forested properties of 10 or more acres.

The DNR Forest Stewardship Program, in cooperation with Washington State University Extension, offers landowners an 8-week Forest Stewardship Coached Planning Course which teaches landowners how to prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan. The course is offered at several locations statewide. The WSU Natural Resource Extension website includes a course schedule: ext.nrs.wsu.edu.

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DNR will collaborate with ATFS to promote awareness of today's announcement. Landowners interested in learning more about Forest Stewardship Plans or Tree Farm certification can contact the DNR Stewardship Forester through the agency's region office, which serves the county where their land is located. Information about DNR regions is available at www.dnr.wa.gov .

The Forest Stewardship Program provides free on-site forest management advice to owners of five or more forested acres. The program, administered by DNR's Small Forest Landowner Office, is part of a nationwide landowner assistance program financially supported by the USDA Forest Service.

Administered by Commissioner Sutherland, DNR has offered assistance programs for family forest owners throughout the agency's fifty year history. Sutherland is the 12th Public Lands Commissioner since statehood in 1889.

The American Tree Farm System® is a national program that promotes the sustainable management of forests through education and outreach to private family forest landowners. 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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