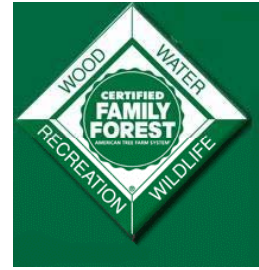


Time to Talk Tree Farm

Condensed from National Association of Conservation Districts "Forestry Notes"

The diamond-shaped sign of American Tree Farm System (ATFS) is both familiar and symbolic to those that come across it, each one of its four sides (water, wildlife, recreation, wood) offering proof that its care-taker is committed to properly managing his forestland.



Organized in 1941, the American Tree Farm System is the oldest and largest forest conservation, certification and advocacy program in the United States. Part of the American Forest Foundation, the program requires participating landowners to meet a set of standards and guidelines to obtain certification.

The program's mission is to promote the growing of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry. "ATFS adheres to the American Forest Foundation's Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification which provides landowners with a framework for their land management," says Liz Sandler, American Tree Farm System's director. "Landowners that achieve ATFS certification are recognized for their sustainable management practices, and gain the right to proudly display the diamond-shaped ATFS sign of good forestry. ATFS certification may help landowners gain access to markets, as many companies want to assure their customers that the products they buy come from a well-managed and sustainable forest."

In Alabama, Charles Holmes has managed his family's land since 1972. For Holmes, the value of having his land certified has more to do with his beliefs as a landowner than anything else. "I believe in the value of good conservation practices that the Tree Farm System certification encourages – water quality and soil erosion in the forest," says Holmes. And if people question the way he manages his land, Holmes has an answer they can't argue against. "When people say, 'You just go in and cut a bunch of trees down' I tell them, 'No, I'm certified, and that means I use best management practices, I plant more timber than I sell, and I keep the forest in good shape because of these practices.'"

ATFS has worked with more than 90,000 landowners over the years, certifying 24 million acres of privately-owned forestland. But there is still room for growth. "Landowners can join and support the American Forest Foundation's advocacy efforts to ensure we have the policies that enable families to stay on the land and keep their land forested," says Ritz Neznec, the American Forest Foundation's vice president for public policy.

Conservation districts and the American Tree Farm System are bonded by common interests. Says the American Forest Foundation's Director of Communications, Brigitte Johnson, "ATFS and conservation districts share the same values – education and stewardship – and they also share a commitment to help landowners manage their land to provide benefits to all Americans."

To learn more about the American Tree Farm System, visit <http://www.treefarmssystem.org>.