

American Tree Farm System®
Internal Monitoring Process and Procedures for ATFS State Affiliates and Individual
Third-Party Certificate Holders

June 1, 2023

Internal monitoring at planned intervals is required for ATFS affiliates (a.k.a. state programs) and third-party certificate holders to verify that they conform to requirements under the ATFS system, and that the ATFS Standards are effectively implemented and maintained.

Sampling Process (for ATFS Affiliates only)

Required Inspection Sample (Certification State Program)

The sample population will be stratified, excluding all Tree Farms that have been inspected within the prior 3 years. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

Guidance for Required Inspections for States participating third-party assessments

- *In the year that a state participates in the third-party assessment, the required inspection sample for that state will be considered a Monitoring Sample, and therefore optional to complete.*
- *Internal monitoring should accompany a third-party assessment, and an inspection should be completed for each Tree Farm selected.*

Required Inspection Sample (Recognition State Program)

The sample population will include all states operating a Recognition Program. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

Monitoring Inspection Sample (formerly Optional)

The sample population will include all Tree Farms in the ATFS database for state programs. VPI will continue to provide sample calculations and random track selection across five acreage strata.

Guidance for Required Inspections for States participating third-party assessments

Inspection Procedures (for ATFS Affiliates only)

Initial Inspection

Requires field visit, and full review of the management plan documents, including maps, schedule of activity, and other supporting documents.

Required Inspection

Requires field visit if management activity has occurred on the ground since the last inspection OR if the previous inspection occurred >3 years.

If a field visit is not required, the remote 'desk' audit would include:

- Full review of the management plan documents, including maps, management activity schedule, and other supporting documents.
- Current aerial/satellite imagery, remote sensing, or other emerging technologies support of records.

Monitoring Inspection (formerly Optional)

Requires a field visit if management activity has occurred on the ground since the last inspection.

If a field visit is not required, the remote 'desk' audit would include:

- Full review of the management plan documents, including maps, management activity schedule, and other supporting documents.
- Current aerial/satellite imagery, remote sensing, or other emerging technologies support of records.

Guidance for Multiple Tree Farms/Single Owner/Single Management Plan

Tree Farms selected for a Monitoring Inspection may complete inspections for additional Tree Farms if:

- *the Tree Farmer owns ten or more Tree Farms*
- *all Tree Farms are held under the same management plan*

These Monitoring Inspections may be recorded in tabular form using an ATFS designed template for single owner/multiple Tree Farms.

Non-conformities

Where annual internal monitoring identifies non-conformities with the ATFS Standards and their requirements, affiliates and individual third-party certificate holders shall:

a) react to the nonconformity and, as applicable:

- i. take action to control and correct it;
- ii. deal with the consequences;

b) evaluate the need for action to eliminate the causes of the nonconformity, in order that it does not recur or occur elsewhere, by:

- i. reviewing the nonconformity;
- ii. determining the causes of the nonconformity;

- iii. determining if similar nonconformities exist, or could potentially occur;
- c) implement any action needed;
- d) review the effectiveness of any corrective action taken;
- e) make changes to the management system, if necessary

Where internal monitoring identifies persistent non-conformities at the individual program level, affiliates and third-party certificate holders shall contact ATFS staff so that they may assist in programmatically addressing non-conformities.