



# CERTIFICATION CORNER

# Certification for Kentucky's Woodland Owners

by Jeff Stringer

Forest (woodlands) certification is one of the hottest topics in forestry, and there are numerous reasons why woodland owners should stay abreast of this issue. Mills that produce certified lumber or wood products must get their logs from certified woodlands. To participate in the carbon market, your woods have to be certified. Ongoing policy decisions regarding biomass and ecosystem services (other than carbon) involve discussions on certification. All of these reasons point to the importance of certification. The following information outlines two of the woodland owner certification systems that are getting the most attention and potentially have the most value for woodland owners in Kentucky.

## American Tree Farm

Membership in the American Tree Farm (ATF) System is the easiest way for woodland owners to become certified. There are approximately 800 American Tree Farms in Kentucky. Membership in the ATF system requires that you have and adhere to a written management plan consistent with ATF standards. This requirement is easy, especially if you have a Stewardship Plan from the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF). The ATF System is very familiar to foresters in Kentucky, and you can contact your local forester for advice. Currently there is no cost for woodland owners in Kentucky to become ATF certified. KDF, the Kentucky Forest Industries Association (KFIA) members, and the Kentucky Tree Farm Committee are providing inspection services and managing the program free of charge.

Becoming a Kentucky member of the ATF System means

your woods are automatically certified. Having ATF certification indicates that you are managing sustainably. Once you have that certification, you are eligible to sell carbon credits through the Managed Forest Offsets Carbon Program of the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED). Also, if sawmills or other forest industries eventually develop a market for certified wood endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) to sell in Europe, they will prefer ATF wood. Also, forest industries that are part of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative use logs, pulpwood, and chips from American Tree Farms to meet their certification requirements. Maintaining ATF certification puts you in a position to take advantage of these opportunities and others that arise.

## Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is the largest globally-recognized green certification system. FSC certification is more involved than ATF certification. Also, unlike ATF, FSC certification costs money. Currently no family-owned woodlands in Kentucky are FSC certified. However, there are efforts under way in Kentucky to streamline, simplify, and reduce costs for FSC certification for small woodland owners. The primary reason for these efforts is because several sawmills and wood industries in Kentucky have recently obtained FSC chain-of-custody certification and are in need of FSC-certified logs and pulpwood. As is the case with ATF, FSC certification makes you eligible to sell carbon.

Certification will continue to gain momentum in Kentucky. Being aware of certification and positioning yourself to take advantage of the opportunities that certification can and will provide may be in your best interest. For ATF information, go to [www.treefarmssystem.org](http://www.treefarmssystem.org) and click on Certification, then AFF 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability for Forest Certification, and for FSC information, go to [www.fscus.org](http://www.fscus.org). Stay tuned for more information on woodland certification in upcoming issues of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

### About the Author:

**Jeff Stringer, Ph.D.**, is a hardwood extension specialist at the University of Kentucky and is responsible for continuing education and research in hardwood silviculture and forest operations. He is also an editor of the Kentucky Woodlands Magazine.

Cooperative Extension Service, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, 201 Thomas Poe Cooper Building, Lexington, KY 40546-0073; Phone: 859.257.5994; Fax: 859.323.1031; E-mail: [stringer@uky.edu](mailto:stringer@uky.edu)



Photos courtesy: Billy Thomas

Some Tree Farms contain plantations such as the one above in Henry County, Ky.; while other Tree Farms like the one to the right in Breathitt County, Ky. are well-managed native stands. However, all Tree Farms must be managed according to the American Forest Foundations' 2010-2015 Standards of Sustainability.