

FLORIDA LAND STEWARD



A Quarterly Newsletter for Florida Landowners and Resource Professionals

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To Certify or Not: Florida Tree Farm Program Needs to Decide

By Phil Gornicki, Florida Forestry Association

Something that sets the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) apart from all other private land stewardship programs is forest certification. ATFS Tree Farms are currently third party certified as sustainable (or "green") and products can be sold as such at market.

Florida, along with other states, is now being presented with a choice: we are being given the chance to either stay in or opt out of ATFS Certification status depending on the importance we see in it. The Florida Tree Farm Committee will be required to make a formal declaration by December 31, 2015 of whether or not we want to continue as a state program of "third party certified" Tree Farms. The alternative is to revert to a "recognition" program that no longer has a "certification" status.



select a pathway relative to third-party certification.

What is Third-Party Certification?

All Tree Farms in the ATFS network manage to the ATFS Standards of Sustainability. Under certification, a third-party assessor assesses on-the-ground management to the ATFS Standards, along with the performance of the Tree Farm Program as a whole, to verify that we embody our commitments to forest sustainability.

What are the Benefits of Third-Party Certification?

Recognition: Rigorous third-party certification offers additional validation and assurance of the good stewardship practiced by Tree Farmers.

Objective Feedback: Certification is a continuous improvement process. Third-party assessors often provide insightful observations that can drive innovations, improvements and efficiencies to forest management and the ATFS Program.

Credibility: Because assessments are conducted by impartial, objective third parties, certification adds a supplementary layer of credibility to forest management and the ATFS Program. For many of ATFS's partners, including state agencies, forest product companies landowner associations and conservation organizations, this additional rigor is essential.

State's Voice, State's Choice

ATFS is diverse. United in our efforts to promote stewardship on America's family woodlands, we have learned that one size does not fit all. The *State's Voice, State's Choice* is designed to embrace diversity with creative, multifaceted solutions and asks each State Tree Farm Program to engage in a collaborative discussion to make an informed decision and

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Market Recognition: A central benefit of third-party ATFS certification is market recognition. Fiber that originates in third-party certified Tree Farms may be recognized and sold as “certified” in the global market place under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) or Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) labels. Market demand for certified fiber varies widely. In some situations, certified fiber enjoys access to markets that uncertified fiber does not and, in some cases, may even bring a premium. Several forest products companies including Weyerhaeuser, NewPage, Plum Creek, Idaho Forest Group and MeadWestvaco have issued supply chain preferences for fiber originating in third-party certified Tree Farms.

What are the Costs of Third-Party Certification?

ATFS certification is designed to minimize the barriers and costs of certification for landowners and partners. It is structured to be the most assessable option for family woodlands in the US. State programs choosing the

Certification Pathway will generate revenues to help offset the costs of third-party certification. These contributions may be generated in any number of ways, through donations, support from partners, member dues or other means. The American Forest Foundation (AFF) heavily subsidizes ATFS third-party certification and will continue to do so under State’s Choice.

Direct Cost: Third-party certification involves additional financial costs. These include the costs of contracting with third-party assessors and maintaining certificates.

Time and Coordination: Third-party certification requires additional time and coordination for State Tree Farm Programs and volunteers. This includes preparing for, implementing and responding to third-party assessments, coordinating with the AFF and third-party assessors and carefully maintaining certification documents.

What are the Choices?

Currently, all Tree Farms enrolled in State Tree Farm Programs are

third-party certified. State Tree Farm Programs may choose to maintain their third-party certified status (the Certified Pathway) or forgo third-party certified status to focus on recognition and outreach (the Recognition Pathway).

What are the Timelines?

Each State Tree Farm Program must make a choice regarding third-party certification by the end of 2015. States choosing the Certification Pathway begin contributing to financial sustainability at the end of 2019.

As Tree Farmers, The Florida Tree Farm Committee would like your opinion of whether Florida should remain in a “certified” Tree Farm program, or drop the requirement for third party certification. Please reply with any comments you may have on this to Phil Gornicki, State Tree Farm Coordinator at (850) 222-5646 or phil@forestfla.org.

2013 Tree Farm Tour Highlights

By Roy Lima, Florida Tree Farm Chair

The 2013 Florida Tree Farm Program was involved with planning and coordination of three tree farm field tours designed for reaching out to new landowners. These field tours provided the opportunity to promote the tree farm program to those who are not certified and to educate landowners about the tree farm standards of sustainability.

Jon and Carol Gould, former state tree farmers of the year graciously offered their property for the first of the Tree Farm Tours held March 26, 2013. The event opened with

Jon presenting a brief history about their tree farm and past acquisitions totaling more than 600 acres. Jon emphasized the importance of having a written forest management plan which serves as the basis for all current and future activity on the property. The tour itself consisted of a hay ride and a series of stops along the way where two guest speakers shared their expertise of managing timber and wildlife. Jim Moyers, from St. Joe Timberlands, shared his expertise in wildlife management and Ed Lewis, a forester from RockTenn

Company, shared his knowledge of forest management. The field tour consisted of a number of stops on the Gould property with ample time for interaction and questions for the guest speakers. The event concluded with a catered lunch followed by a drawing for a door prize donated by International Forest Company Nursery in Moultrie, GA.

The second Tree Farm tour took place on June 5, 2013 at the University of Florida School of Forest Resources and Conservation (SFRS)

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Left: Jon Gould sharing his tree farm experiences. Center: Scott Sager talks about research and management of the University of Florida's Austin Cary Forest. Right: Jeff Scott speaks to tree farmers.

Austin Cary Forest on a humid, overcast but comfortable June day.

Approximately thirty participants attended the event. The tour was designed to be interactive with several stops along a forest road where Scott Sager, SFRC Education Coordinator and Forester, guided the group through presentations of research projects on the school forest. One of the most intriguing stops demonstrated the effect of prescribed burning in areas where burns have been excluded for decades. Another stop involved extended research on pine genetics through grafting of young sapling stock onto genetically improved seedlings. The tour concluded with a catered lunch near the

construction site of a new education facility, now completed (see next article for those details and photos).

The final tour of the year took place on November 7, 2013 at the property of Jeff and Melody Scott in Suwannee County. Approximately 70 guests attended the event honoring the Scott family as Florida's Tree Farmers of the Year for 2013.

Jeff and Melody Scott are examples of families that find many benefits from owning and managing forests. Tour guests were shown examples of good land stewardship being displayed and their hard work towards protecting Florida's forest legacy.

Many organizations cooperated to make this a successful event, including the Florida Forest Service, the Florida Forest Stewardship Program, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, and the Florida Forestry Association. The American Forest Foundation was also represented through the Florida Tree Farm Committee.

Jeff and Melody were presented a plaque and a framed commemorative forest photograph, recognizing them as the Outstanding Florida Tree Farmer of the Year, both on the tour and at the Florida Forestry Association's Annual meeting on September 5, 2013.

New Austin Cary Forest Learning Center Unveiled

We are very excited to announce the unveiling of the new Austin Cary Forest Learning Center. The new Center improves upon and replaces the Austin Cary Conference Center that burned down in 2011.

The dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on Saturday April 5, a beautiful spring day. A crowd of about 540 gathered at the Austin Cary Forest to see the unveiling of the building, which will be used for the educational, research and outreach activities of the University of Florida's School of

Forest Resources and Conservation and its partners. The facility is also available to rent by the public for events such as weddings, retreats or team-building exercises.

The center includes a gallery, classroom, library, conference center, full-sized catering kitchen and a large deck overlooking Lake Mize, one of the deepest lakes in the state. We look forward to hosting Forest Stewardship events and other activities at the new Center this year.



COYOTES NEEDED!

The University of Florida is conducting a study of coyote dietary habits in Florida and needs **YOU** to donate your catch! We are especially interested in how coyotes are affecting **white-tailed deer, turkeys, bobwhite quail, livestock, and pets!**

YOUR help is needed to obtain legally acquired coyote carcasses, with or without pelts. We will also accept coyote stomachs and

intestines if you cannot store the whole carcass. Carcasses or stomachs and intestines should be **frozen** in a suitable bag or container, and include the name of contributor, animal **weight/sex**, date harvested/obtained, and location harvested/obtained.

Arrangements can be made to get carcasses from you at the University or combine your animals with others in your area

for a pickup. **We have obtained a permit** from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for this project, and will keep information provided by you for this project anonymous to the extent possible by law. We greatly appreciate your help with this valuable study! Contact Lauren N. Watine & Bill Giuliano, LNWATINE@UFL.EDU, (352) 846-0575.

Friends of Florida State Forests: “You Can Help Make the Forests Better For Everyone”

By Doug Ott, Friends of Florida State Forests Program Coordinator, Florida Forest Service

Spring is in the air and Florida’s State Forests are alive. As fellow forest owners and land managers, we understand the value you provide in your land management efforts. We also appreciate the long-term environmental, economic and social benefits provided by managed forests for generations to come.

From my viewing the dwarf cypress trees at Tate’s Hell, to walking along the ridge surrounded by the scrub ecosystem at Lake Wales Ridge State Forest and its rare endangered plants and species, to my visit in the heart of the Big Cypress Basin at Picayune Strand State Forest, I have a true appreciation of the efforts it takes to manage these precious forest resources.

Reaching out to communities and Florida landowners is important as we share our message and mission with partners like you, and strive to make our forests better for everyone. Through community partnerships and support, the Friends program assists the state forests to expand outdoor recreation, education and reforestation on our 35 state forests representing more than one million

acres of public land. Contributions to our program can be made to a specific forest near you in the areas such as reforestation, forest restoration, recreation projects, exotic plant removal, equipment donations, and other forest needs.

I hope to meet many of you, whether you are a neighbor or visitor to our state forests, or part of Florida’s Forest Stewardship or Tree Farm Program. After joining the Florida Forest Service in the Fall of 2013 as Program Coordinator for “Friends of Florida State Forests,” I have attended many events statewide such as the North American Endurance Equestrian Team Challenge at Goethe State Forest, Festival in the Woods at Picayune Strand State Forest, the Florida State Fair - Forestry Discover Center, the Wildlife Heritage & Outdoors Festival at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Babcock Ranch 100 year celebration in Punta Gorda, the Red Hills International Horse Trials in Tallahassee, the Rural Tourism & Economic Development Summit in Marianna, and Children’s Week at the Florida Capitol. Upcoming visits include the Austin Cary

Learning Center at UF, and the Forestry Teachers Tour in June. If you have an upcoming event in your area to share, or would like to learn more about our program, please visit www.floridastateforests.org, or contact me doug.ott@freshfromflorida.com, and please “Like” us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfFloridaStateForests>. With your help, we can make the forests better for everyone!



The Friends of Florida State Forests is a direct-support organization of the Florida Forest Service dedicated to ensuring Florida’s state forests are available for future generations to enjoy. Make a difference by joining today to help protect Florida’s forests. Membership dues go to the forests for conservation and improvement projects, and contributions can be matched to a specific state forest of your choice.

Get Email Updates!

Don't miss out on upcoming events and news! Send an email to cdemers@ufl.edu to be added to the Stewardship listserv. Updates are sent every week or two.

Animal Invasion – Tegu Lizard

By Alicia Campanella

Tupinambis merianae, also known as the black and white Tegu lizard, or the Argentinian Tegu, is a reptile native to south America, specifically Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. In fact, it is one of the most abundant reptiles in the Southern portion of Brazil. It arrived here via the exotic pet trade, with large numbers of them being sold at exotic reptile expos.



Tegu juveniles

It has found hospitable habitats here in Florida, especially in dry upland sandy areas, scrubby flatwoods and sandhills. In late fall and winter months, Tegu lizards live in underground burrows.

Biology

A rather spectacular looking reptile, the Argentinian Tegu is one of seven Tegu species. It grows 4 to 5 feet in length, and can reach a staggering 15 pounds. Females typically lay 5 eggs per clutch twice a year, and they live 15 to 20 years in total. These factors combined give them a competitive edge in establishing populations in new habitats. Adding to the long list of habits that confer these competitive advantages is their classification

as generalists or omnivores. The Tegu lizard is a highly opportunistic feeder and getting to their meal is never a problem. They have uncharacteristically strong limbs and are skilled climbers as well as capable swimmers, allowing them to exploit food sources at various levels within the environment.

Their varied menu includes a range of fruits and herbaceous plants, as well as amphibians, insects, and other reptiles and birds. Of particular concern is their taste for the eggs and young of imperiled species in Florida, such as gopher tortoises and scrub jays.

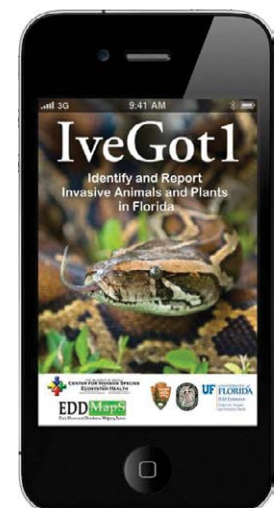
In their native countries of origin, they are hunted heavily for their skins and meat. Their fat is used in traditional folk medicine and is believed to have strong antibacterial and wound healing properties. The species remains plentiful in their native home ranges despite this heavy harvesting.

Problems

The Tegu lizard is becoming a serious problem for Florida's native wildlife, agricultural producers and homeowners. Aggressive hunters, they easily out-compete native animals for food and even eat the eggs and young of many birds and reptiles and mammals. Agricultural crops are also on the Tegu's menu and there is concern that the pathogenic bacteria on their bodies could contaminate some crops. The lizards also have the potential to be aggressive to humans

and pets as their populations expand into urban and suburban areas.

Nesting season for the Tegu lizard is April through July. While their native ranges include habitats that burn naturally and often, fire is not thought to be a limiting factor in their habitat preference. However, the use of prescribed fire during nesting season could thin out local populations. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is working with partners to develop management strategies to control the spread of Tegu lizards. Please report sightings by photographing the animal, making note of its location, and calling 1-800-Ive-got1.



For more information about this reptile, other invasive exotic species, funding, and regional efforts to prevent and control infestations see the Florida Invasive Species Partnership web site at <http://www.floridainvasives.org/>

TIMBER PRICE UPDATE

The timber pricing information below is useful for observing trends over time, but does not reflect current conditions at a particular location. Landowners considering a timber sale are advised to solicit the services of a consulting forester to obtain current local market conditions.

Average stumpage prices for the three major products in Florida, as reported in the **1st Quarter 2014** Timber Mart-South report were:

Florida Stumpage Prices

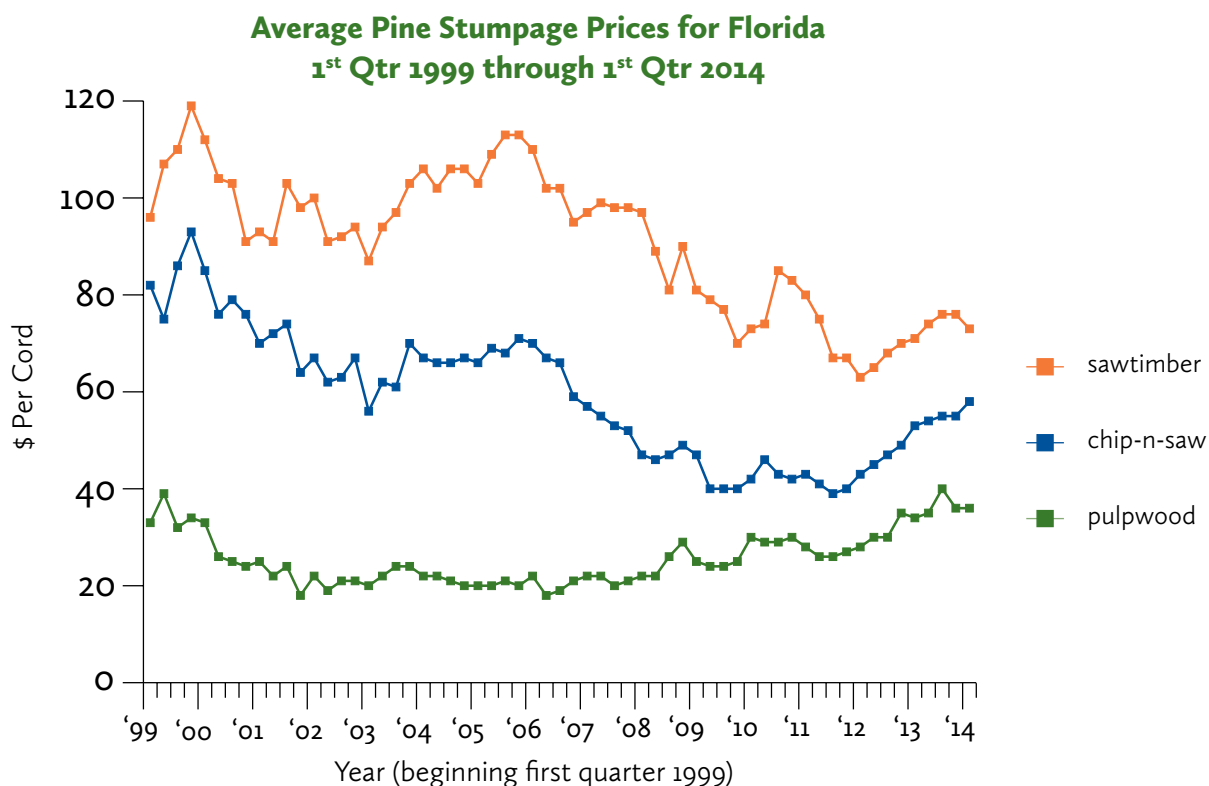
Pine pulpwood: \$36/cord (\$13/ton), ~ same as 4th Qtr 2013

Pine C-N-S: \$58/cord (\$22/ton), ↑

Pine sawtimber: \$73/cord (\$27/ton), ↓

Trend Report

Prices changes were subtle in the first quarter of 2014. Across the region wet or snowy weather played a role in increased stumpage prices in some areas. Ice damage affected transportation as well as mill operations in Georgia and South Carolina. With regard to market indicators, employment and manufacturing continued to grow during the first quarter. The hardwood market of the Eastern U.S. is on an increase, with consumption of hardwood lumber products exceeding production. International respect for U.S. hardwood species, especially in Europe and China, has resulted in consistent demand.



Timber Mart-South is compiled and produced at the Center for Forest Business, Warnell School of Forest Resources, University of Georgia, under contract with the Frank W. Norris Foundation, a non-profit corporation serving the forest products industry. See <http://www.tmart-south.com/> for information on subscriptions.

CONGRATULATIONS

CERTIFIED FOREST STEWARDS AND TREE FARMERS

For more information about becoming a Certified Forest Steward or Tree Farmer, contact your Florida Forest Service County Forester, consultant or learn about it at:

<http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/For-Landowners/Programs/Forest-Stewardship-Program>

or

http://www.floridaforest.org/tree_farm.php

These landowners have a current Forest Stewardship and/or Tree Farm management plan for their property and have demonstrated excellent stewardship of their land resources.



Dave Pridgen (R) with Barry Stafford, Jackson County



Larry Perrin (L) and Mike Allen (R), Madison County



George Burnham, Suwannee County



Phil Gainey (L) with Andy Lamborn, Bradford County



Paul Still (L) with Andy Lamborn, Bradford County



Ralph Ward (center) with neighbor Jon Gould (L) and Ariel Sewell (R), Washington County

Upcoming Stewardship, Small Farm and Other Events

Date	Event, Location, Contact
May 14	Longleaf Pine Forest Restoration & Management Workshop , 8:30 am to 3:30 pm CT, Turkey Pond Ranch, Washington County. Presented by Apalachicola Regional Stewardship Alliance and Forest Stewardship Program. \$10 includes lunch and materials. <i>Details to come. Register at https://fsp-workshop051414.eventbrite.com or call UF/IFAS Extension Washington County (850) 638-6180</i>
May 15-18	Florida Native Plant Society's 34th Annual Conference , Florida Gulf Coast University, Ft. Myers, FL. <i>Details at http://fnps.org/conference</i>
May 20	Compost in Citrus Production Workshop , 8 am – 4 pm, UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center, Florida 29, Immokalee, FL. Training will be based on composting principles to improve the soil. <i>Call the Center at (239) 658-3400 for more information.</i>
May 29	Rural Energy Workshop , 6 – 8 pm, UF/IFAS Extension Alachua County Office, 2800 NE 39 Avenue, Gainesville, FL. Topics include solar power systems for agriculture and residential use as well as the economics of solar power. FREE, supper included. <i>Pre-register at 352-337-6209 (voice mail) by May 27th. For more information call 352-955-2402.</i>
June 8-10	Trees Florida 2014 , Innsbrook Resort and Golf Club, Palm Harbor, FL. Presented by Florida Chapter International Society of Arboriculture. CFEs approved for the event. <i>See http://www.treesflorida.com/ for details and registration.</i>
June 23-26	Tall Timbers GIS Workshop: Python Scripting and GIS Programming . Tall Timbers Research Station. <i>See http://www.gis.ttrs.org/GISHome.html for details.</i>
August 1-2	2014 Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference , Osceola Heritage Park, Kissimmee, FL. <i>See http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/SmallFarms/ for details and registration.</i>

For many more events and information see: floridalandsteward.org

The Florida Land Steward Newsletter is a University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service, Florida Forest Service, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Florida Tree Farm joint project:

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