

The American Tree Farm System®



Founded in 1941, the American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) is the oldest and largest family forest conservation, certification, education, and advocacy program in the United States.

ATFS promotes the sustainable management

of forests by providing family forest landowners with the validation that they are doing right by their land and the confidence they are meeting third-party certification standards. ATFS has already enrolled nearly 95,000 family forest owners, representing 25 million acres of privately owned forestland, who are committed to excellence in forest stewardship.

Visit here for more information:

TreeFarmSystem.org/florida

Start With a Plan

You plan for your vacation, your investments, and your retirement, but have you taken time to develop a plan for your forest?

- 1 Consider your objectives.** Are you interested in immediate and sustained income, wildlife habitat, recreation, retirement, or even college savings for a child or grandchild?
- 2 Get help.** Get planning help from a qualified resource professional or professional forester and ask for a Florida Master Logger when ready to harvest. They can help you plan for reforestation and harvesting and ensure your plan complies with voluntary guidelines and state and federal regulations. Participation in a forest management certification program, such as the Sustainable Forestry Initiative or the American Tree Farm System®, is also a good way to obtain forest management guidance and information.
- 3 Stick to your plan.** Protect the value of your land with a plan that provides for reforestation, responsible harvesting, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect water, soil, and habitat quality.

You're Important to Florida

Private landowners like you own more than 60 percent of Florida forests. Decisions you make affect the value of your property but also have many positive benefits for the economy and the quality of life in Florida. The SFI Implementation Committee of Florida understands and values the contributions of family forest owners and wants to provide you with resources that will help you sustain your forests today and for the future.

Working for Florida Forests

Since 1995, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) program has existed to promote the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees in a way that's compatible with the protection of wildlife, plants, soil, and water quality.

In Florida and across North America, SFI participants adhere to a set of principles that address how they operate on their own lands and how they conduct fiber sourcing practices across all ownerships. Collectively and individually, SFI members promote the practice of sustainable forestry on all lands by funding logger and forester education and encouraging landowners to manage their forests sustainably. SFI Program participants have been third-party certified to the SFI Standard by independent auditors.

Inconsistent Practices

If you see a forest activity that is not consistent with SFI standards, we want to know about it! We will take every step possible to help rectify the problem if applicable to a certified landowner, wood producer, or wood consuming facility. Any direct violation of these standards is taken very seriously. An actual infraction must be a direct violation of SFI standards and must be reported, providing specific correlations to these standards. Visit FLForestry.org/sustainable-forestry-initiative/sfi-inconsistencies/ to make a report.

Want More Information?

There are many in-depth resources available - often for free - on all these topics. This information is provided by the SFI Implementation Committee of Florida as a quick guide and reminder for landowners.

For more information about the SFI or the Florida SFI program visit: Forests.org or FLForestry.org/sustainable-forestry-initiative/.



SM

**Sustainable Forestry Initiative
Florida-State Implementation Committee**

*The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and SFI® and the SFI logo are registered service marks of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®
2024 Florida SFI Implementation Committee.*

PLAN NOW. SUSTAIN YOUR FOREST.

A quick management guide
for Florida landowners.



**SUSTAINABLE
FORESTRY
INITIATIVE
FLORIDA**

Forest Management Basics

If you grew up around the woods, you're probably familiar with the basics of forest management. Regardless of the amount of experience you have as a forest landowner, your forest management plan should consider Florida Best Management Practices (BMPs) for forestry, wildlife, regeneration, and harvesting.

BMPs for Forestry

Land management activities such as construction, agriculture, timber harvesting, and similar operations have some potential to impact soil and water quality. Florida BMPs for forestry are designed to minimize the impacts of forestry activities on your land. Some of the most critical BMP guidelines address road construction and streams; they include:

- **Special management zones (SMZs or buffer strips along streams, lakes, and sinkholes):** These vary depending on stream size, slope, and soil type but are designed to maintain water quality, shade, and certain wildlife values.
- **Erosion control measures for roads and skid trails:** Includes culverts, broad-based dips, and water bars.
- **Stream crossing guidelines to minimize environmental impact:** If necessary, crossings can be made using bridges, culverts, or fords.
- **Waste disposal:** Includes recommendations for oil disposal when servicing heavy equipment in the woods.

All of these and more are addressed in detail in the Florida BMP Manual for Forestry. To download a copy, visit fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/Silviculture-Best-Management-Practices.

Plan for Regeneration First

When planning the harvest of your timber, a regeneration plan should come first. If you wait until after harvest to plan regeneration, you could incur unnecessary expense or have less than desirable results. Consider all the below:

- **Seed Tree/Shelterwood:** Good for naturally regenerating certain softwoods and hardwoods; seed tree or shelterwood cuts leave 10 to 50 trees per acre.
- **Clearcutting:** Generates the highest one-time income and is also a good regeneration method if you want to plant improved southern pine seedlings or naturally regenerate hardwood species like oak, maple, and gum.
- **Single-Tree Selection:** Used to create or maintain uneven-aged stands in which individual trees of all size classes are removed to achieve desired results. This requires frequent manual harvesting, which is generally more costly.

- **Thinning:** This practice removes some of the lower-value trees in a stand, allowing the remaining trees to continue to grow to chip-n-saw or sawtimber size.
- **Visual Quality:** Forestry operations are highly visible and subject to the perceptions and opinions of the public. Planning and conducting aesthetically acceptable forestry operations is important to the future of forestry. Practices that can improve visual quality include – removing trash; spreading and/or utilizing logging slash; minimizing mud on paved roads; minimizing soil disturbance; considering a vegetative buffer in view; configuring the shape, size, and place of the harvest; and leaving scattered trees around the margins of harvest areas.
- **Utilization of Harvest Residues:** Spreading logging slash across a harvested area can enhance soil quality and improve nutrient levels for future forests. Landowners should also consider the advantages of grinding or chipping post-harvest residues.
- **Invasive Plants and Animals:** Be sure your plan includes early detection and control of any invasive plants and animals. Resources providing information on these species include FloridaInvasives.org and InvasiveSpeciesInfo.gov.

In addition to harvested acres, consider including any currently non-forested acres in your regeneration plan.

Get advice from a qualified resource professional before making decisions about harvesting or regeneration, and choose a Florida Master Logger when you're ready to harvest.

Planning for Biodiversity

Your choice of harvest and regeneration options will influence your forest's game and non-game wildlife and its landscape biodiversity. Forests of all types and ages provide important habitat for wildlife and support a variety of vegetative species.

If wildlife habitat for hunting or other personal enjoyment is one of your objectives, there are many things you can do to enhance wildlife habitat:

- Provide wildlife corridors or buffers to give wildlife safe passage across your property.
- Sow native grasses and consider planting or protecting nut-producing hardwoods that provide food for wildlife.
- Maintain prescribed SMZs, per BMPs for forestry, to protect fish and other aquatic species.
- Create edge habitat and food supply for wildlife by keeping individual forest stands of the same age relatively small.
- Leave den trees for mammals and cavity-dwelling birds, plus snags for birds of prey.

Special Sites

Consider providing enhanced protection to any unique or "special" sites on your land. These may include:

- **Cultural:** Burial grounds, Native American mounds, relic areas or settlement sites, cemeteries, or other historically significant areas.
- **Ecological:** Presence of unique plants, animals or communities that have been classified as few in number or unusual for their location.
- **Geological:** Possess geological characteristics that are unique to the location.

Prescribed Burning

Prescribed fire is one of the most versatile and cost-effective tools available to forest landowners. Not only does prescribed fire mitigate the potential for dangerous wildfires, but it also maintains ecosystem health.

- **Hazard Reduction:** Prescribed fire is the most practical way to reduce fuel buildup in southern pine stands, thus protecting the forest, people, and their homes from wildfires.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Prescribed fire creates open understory habitat while promoting vegetation favorable for wildlife.
- **Competition Control:** Unwanted low-value species can compete with desired forest species for valuable nutrients, but routine burning can limit this competition.

If you need help conducting a prescribed fire, you can access the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Forest Service Vendor Database at ffs.fdacs.gov/fsvd or the Prescribed Fire site at fdacs.gov/Forest-Wildfire/Wildland-Fire/Prescribed-Fire.

Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value

Forests have value beyond their potential to give us paper and wood. Certain places might be home to a globally rare plant, animal, or community. If a plant, animal, or community is found to be rare and vulnerable to extinction, it may be classified as imperiled or critically imperiled. Imperiled or critically imperiled species and communities are typically rarer than threatened and endangered species protected under the Endangered Species Act. For more information, visit the Florida Natural Areas Inventory (FNAI.org) or NatureServe (NatureServe.org). Additional information about rare Florida wildlife is available through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (MyFWC.com).

