

# Standard 1

## WHAT IT MEANS TO PRACTICE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

Standard 1 is all about developing and implementing a **management plan** for your woodlands, which represents the road map that will guide you as you work to achieve the goals you have for your land.

The process of developing a **management plan** helps you define your goals. Then the **management plan** outlines the activities to sustainably achieve your goals and measure progress as you work to keep your woods healthy and productive. Demonstrating a thoughtful approach through your **management plan** is what often distinguishes a Tree Farmer.

Standard 1 describes, in the broadest terms, what it means to practice sustainable forestry. Rather than being a prescription, it encourages creative solutions that are appropriate to your woods. As you work to achieve or maintain recognition through ATFS, Standard 1 will guide you in developing a strategy appropriate for your property. It outlines the elements that **must** be considered in managing your woodlands. Your plan must document how you identified if these elements are present on your land and if present, how you will address them in how you manage your land. In addition, this Standard also suggests additional elements that may be relevant to your property or of special interest to you.

**STANDARD 1:**  
**Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry**  
Landowner demonstrates commitment to **forest health** and **sustainability** by developing a forest **management plan** and implementing sustainable practices.

## Performance Measure 1.1

Landowner shall have and implement a written forest-management plan consistent with the size of the forest and the scale and intensity of the forest activities.

### INDICATOR 1.1.1

Management plan shall be active, adaptive, and embody the landowner's current objectives, remain appropriate for the land certified, and reflect the current state of knowledge about natural resources and sustainable forest management.

While a plan must be written that includes all of the required elements, remember that there is no one way to create a plan.

Your **management plan** may be comprised of a collection of paper and electronic documents that, together, demonstrate consideration of all the elements. This documentation might include a series of emails between you and your forester or handwritten notes documenting your strategies, management activities, and observations. The most important things are for your plan to have evidence of your planning process, show that you have consulted knowledgeable resources, and demonstrate that the strategy outline is appropriate for your woodlands. Your plan must also include a map, depicting significant features such as roads, water features, timber stands, special sites, and other features.

## RESOURCES

- Managing Your Woodlands: A National ATFS, FS, NRCS Joint Management Template and the associated Guide for Landowners: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates>
- Good Forestry in the Granite State: Read the section on developing goals/objectives for your land: <http://extension.unh.edu/goodforestry/html/1-2.htm>

# The value of the Standards

## Raul Chiesa & Janet Sredy Elizabeth, Pennsylvania

There are no greater champions of the ATFS Standards of Sustainability than Raul Chiesa and Janet Sredy, the owners of Becketts Run Woodlands, LLC, in Elizabeth, Pennsylvania. For several years now, the couple has been tireless in promoting Tree Farm and the importance of certification to woodland owners in their home state of Pennsylvania and throughout the Northeast. Since being named National Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year for 2015, Chiesa and Sredy have embraced the challenge to spread the message of ATFS certification and its benefits to a national audience of woodland owners.

Faced with the daunting task of restoring a horribly degraded woodland to its former biodiversity, Chiesa and Sredy developed an ambitious management plan with the goals of keeping the land, originally purchased by Janet's father in 1920, in the family, and restoring their woodland to its former biodiversity. Throughout the process of formulating their management strategy, they have looked to the Standards of Sustainability to lend credibility to their efforts.

"What concerns us most is how the land is conserved—the quality of the air, the quality of the water, and the ecosystem services that the forest provides,"

Chiesa notes. "We may or may not harvest timber, but these ecosystem services need to last long into the future."

For woodland management to be sustainable, "we have to envision an economy based on the things that we need to protect for the long term," says Chiesa. "In the near future, forest commercialization will be much more than just wood, paper, and pulp. Recreation, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and conservation banking are all things of value that will be commercialized and that can provide income to family forest owners like Janet and me. So restoring the ecosystem and the biodiversity are very important goals for us."

Sredy and Chiesa see their recognition by AFF as "an empowering thing"—an opportunity to talk about the value of certification and to build awareness of a business model where forest certification provides added credibility and income to private landowners. "I like to think of it as maintaining a business of nature, where ecological and financial sustainability are closely intertwined," Chiesa says.



Photos: Chiesa and Sredy



### INDICATOR 1.1.2

*Management plans **shall** describe current forest conditions, landowner's objectives, management activities aimed at achieving landowner's objectives, document a feasible strategy for activity implementation, and include a map accurately depicting significant forest-related resources.*

*The forest management plan **shall** demonstrate consideration of the following resource elements: forest health, soil, water, wood and fiber production, threatened or endangered species, special sites, invasive species, and forests of recognized importance. Where present and relevant to the property, the plan **shall** describe management activities related to these resource elements.*

*Where present, relevant to the property, and consistent with landowner's objectives, the plan preparer should consider, describe, and evaluate the following resource elements: fire, wetlands, desired species, recreation, forest aesthetics, biomass, and carbon.*

When developing your management plan, Standard 1 requires that you consider these elements:

- Forest health
- Soil
- Water
- Wood and fiber production
- Threatened and endangered species
- Special sites
- Forests of recognized importance (FORI)

For each of these elements, the plan should discuss whether it is present or not on the property, and which activities will be undertaken to address these elements. For elements such as **threatened and endangered** species, **special sites**, and **FORI**, it is necessary to consult relevant resources or authorities to determine if these resources are present on your property.

### RESOURCES

- Managing Your Woodlands National ATFS, FS, NRCS Joint Management Template and the associated Guide for Landowners for the Joint Management Plan Template <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates>
- ATFS Management Plan Addendum: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/atfsaddendum>
- ATFS Woodland Resources in your state: Use to search for your state's **BMPs**, **special site** databases, and more: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources>

If your goals and objectives include using prescribed burns as a management tool, Standard 1 recommends that you address this in your plan. Similarly, if your land includes wetlands, or if there are particular animals you want to attract to your land, Standard 1 encourages you to include this in your planning documents. If you plan to manage your property for its aesthetic values, or for recreation, or for its ability to store carbon, be sure to include that information, too.

### INDICATOR 1.1.3

*The landowner should monitor for changes that could interfere with the management objectives as stated in the management plan. When problems are found, reasonable actions are taken.*

Remember, your **management plan** is a living document. When circumstances change—fire, flood, pests, or a wind event, for example—update your plan to reflect the changes. As time goes by, you and your forester or other qualified natural-resource professional will monitor your property for changes in the landscape. As changes occur, take notes and include them with your plan. This is your best proof that your **management plan** is active and adaptive. It is also appropriate to update your plan when your own circumstances change. The most important thing is to document your objectives and your actions taken to meet them.

## RESOURCES

- Wildfire: [www.mylandplan.org/wildfire](http://www.mylandplan.org/wildfire)
- Natural disasters: [www.mylandplan.org/natural-disasters](http://www.mylandplan.org/natural-disasters)
- Pests and weeds: [www.mylandplan.org/pests-weeds](http://www.mylandplan.org/pests-weeds)

### MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

#### Regularly/Ongoing:

- ✓ Walk your land looking for: signs of pests or disease, hazards on your trails, damage from natural disasters or trespassers
- ✓ Keep good records of the activities that you conduct on your property
- ✓ Maintain your property boundaries
- ✓ Maintain wildlife food plots and wildlife structures
- ✓ Maintain fire breaks and lines
- ✓ Monitor and control pests and weeds

#### Annually:

- ✓ Review your management plan for needed changes and update accordingly

#### Every 10 years:

- ✓ Formally review your management plan with your forester and other natural-resource professionals. Update it as necessary to reflect new conditions, forest-management goals, and personal circumstances.



***“The 2015-2020 Standards allow greater flexibility and encourage other ways of documenting your planning and sustainable management activities. For example, if you want to show that you are monitoring your property to ensure that your forest is healthy, it does not have to be a written journal in the back of the management plan. You can also use [www.MyLandPlan.org](http://www.MyLandPlan.org) to track your observations, or just document them in a series of emails between you and your forester.”***

— Chris Erwin, Registered Forester #1978  
Director of Woodland Conservation, American Forest Foundation

# Managing to reduce fire hazards in Montana's mountains

## Duke & Naomi Hoiland Polebridge, Montana

Duke and Naomi Hoiland's 80-acre Tree Farm is perched alongside Trail Creek in the Montana mountains near the Canadian border. The Flathead National Forest borders their land, and Glacier National Park is nearby.

The land has been in Naomi Hoiland's family since 1945, when her grandmother purchased a tract of wild forest along Trail Creek. Duke and Naomi share their mountain homestead with an array of wildlife that includes grizzly and black bears, moose, wolves, elk, deer, coyotes, red fox, and lynx. They grow and harvest lodge pole pine, Western larch, spruce, and Douglas fir.

Guided by the management principles outlined in the ATFS Standards, Duke and Naomi, "are stalwart proponents of the Tree Farm program," says Allen Chrisman of the Montana Tree Farm Committee. "No one leaves [their property] without knowing about the Tree Farm program and how it has helped the Hoilands in meeting their land-management goals."

The biggest threat to the Hoilands' high-mountain Tree Farm is a "crowning" fire that spreads rapidly through the tops of the tall trees, and the Hoilands' **management plan** reflects this. In 2003, the Wedge Canyon fire destroyed

68,000 acres of nearby forestland, but did not damage the Tree Farm, thanks in part to Duke and Naomi's active timber management.

According to Chrisman, their well-prepared and defended property quickly became a safety zone from which fire-suppression activities could be based. Although it was one of the most terrifying experiences in their tenure on the property, seeing their planning pay off further steeled their resolve to share information and skills with neighbors, touting the benefits of active management.

With help from ATFS and their forester, Paul McKenzie, the couple has met the special challenges of managing a wildfire-prone, high-elevation forest. Duke offers these tips:

- If fire is a threat, be sure to have a way for a fire engine to come in easily, turn around, and leave quickly.
- Make sure to clear fuels that would bring a fire to your house or other buildings. Have 300 feet of safe space around your buildings.
- Manage your trees so that you have 10 feet between crowns.
- Cut smaller trees around the old growth so they don't serve as "ladder fuel" if a big tree gets struck by lightning.



Photos: Hoiland Family

## Resources to help you develop your management plan:

There are many sources of information to guide you as you develop a plan for your woods. Take advantage of them!

- *Your State Tree Farm Committee*: State Tree Farm Committees offer publications, field days, training sessions, and events where you can learn new skills and share information with other woodland owners. Find your state contact and connect with Tree Farm in your state: [www.treefarmssystem.org/state-tree-farm-programs](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/state-tree-farm-programs)
- *State-Specific Resources*: The American Tree Farm System® website has a wealth of information on resources available in your state to help you manage your Tree Farm: [www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources)
- *Management Plan Templates*. A downloadable template for **landowners** can provide a sample framework for you and your forester to use to develop a plan for your woodlands. This Joint Management Plan Template for ATFS, FS, and NRCS was based on the Montana Forest Stewardship and Tree Farm **management plan** developed by forestry professor Dr. Peter Kolb of Montana State University: [www.treefarmssystem.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/tree-farm-management-plan-templates).
- *Natural-heritage Databases*: Natural-heritage databases are rich resources, with comprehensive information on **threatened or endangered** species, **forests of recognized importance**, and sites with special biological significance. These are most often managed by each state's natural-resources agency. The NatureServe Network is a clearinghouse, searchable by state, of agencies providing natural-heritage data: <http://www.natureserve.org/natureserve-network>.
- *The National Register of Historic Places*: The Register can help you determine if there are sites of historic, archaeological, or cultural importance on your land. The U.S. National Park Service maintains the Register and keeps a list of state historic preservation officers at: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm>.
- *Your State Forestry Agency's Website*: State agency websites contain many resources that can help you, including state guidelines on best management practices, information about **threatened or endangered** species, and resources to help you manage invasive species, insect pests, and other threats to your woodlands: [www.mylandplan.org/your-state-forestry-agency](http://www.mylandplan.org/your-state-forestry-agency)

## Documents Every Woodland Owner Needs to Keep

- **Deeds**—Your deed records your ownership and the location of your property boundaries.
- **Your management plan**—Your plan serves as an inventory of what is on your property, a work plan for its future, and proof that your Tree Farm is a business if you are claiming a profit or loss at tax time.
- **A detailed map of your property**—This should include every important feature of your woods, including boundary lines, walls and fences, vegetation types, streams, and historic structures. The larger the property or more intensive your operations, the more detailed your map should be. You can hire a surveyor to create a map for you, or use the mapping tool in MyLandPlan.org to identify and map your land's important features yourself.
- **Permits**—Keep permits for any activities that require them. Whether it is harvesting or planting trees, building roads or stream crossings, using **pesticides**, or conducting controlled burns, permits are your proof that you followed the law.
- **Contracts**—Always have a written agreement with any contractor you hire to do work and keep it, along with the contractor's proof of insurance: [www.mylandplan.org/contracts](http://www.mylandplan.org/contracts)
- **Landowner liability insurance policies**—Obtain insurance for yourself, your property, and any structures on it, and keep copies of each policy: [www.mylandplan.org/insurance](http://www.mylandplan.org/insurance)
- **A copy of your state's best management practices (BMPs)**—Find your state's **BMPs** on the ATFS Woodland Resources: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources>

## How Long Should I Hold on to Contracts, Permits, and Other Management Documents?

It is a good practice to keep documents like contracts, permits, stocking guides, and other materials used in your stewardship for about **three years**, although some **landowners** will hold on to documents much longer. This helps demonstrate your conformance to the ATFS Standards of **Sustainability**.