

# Standard 7

## THE SPECIAL SITES ON YOUR LAND

### What is a “Special Site”?

A “special site” is a place of special value that may be present on your land. **Standard 7** outlines what you must do to identify and protect special sites.

Examples of special sites are diverse and may include:

- Historical, archaeological, cultural, and ceremonial sites;
- Sites of importance to wildlife such as rookeries, refuges, fish-spawning grounds, vernal pools, or shelters of hibernating animals;
- Unique ecological communities such as springs, glades, savannas, fens, and bogs;
- Geological features such as terminal moraines, cliffs, and caves; and
- Sites of importance to you as the landowner, such as a family graveyard, a special tree, or an old mill dam.
- Areas of significance for you or your family.

### Performance Measure 7.1

Forest-management activities shall consider and maintain any special sites relevant on the property.

#### INDICATOR 7.1.1

Landowner shall make a reasonable effort to locate and protect special sites appropriate for the size of the forest and the scale and intensity of forest-management activities.

Special sites are diverse and **should** be recognized through consultation with your forester or other natural-resource professionals with relevant expertise and through on-the-ground reconnaissance on your property. Sites of historical, archaeological, and cultural importance are identified on the National Register of Historic Places (<http://focus.nps.gov/nrhp>), a listing administered by the National Park Service, or by state historic preservation offices (SHPOs) ([www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/shpolist.htm)), which are the state agencies that oversee preservation efforts in each state. (See **Standard 7.1.**) These national and state lists denote sites that have been recognized as significant to the history of your community, your state, or the nation. Federal law does not require you to protect sites listed on the National Historic Register if there is no federal money involved in their protection, but there may be state or local laws that indicate specific protections.

#### STANDARD 7:

##### Protect Special Sites

Special sites are managed in ways that recognize their unique historical, archaeological, cultural, geological, biological, or ecological characteristics.

Many properties may include historical, cultural, or archaeological sites that are not listed in the National Historic Register or SHPO listings. Landowners may choose to designate sites not listed by relevant authorities as special sites. To do so, landowners or their designated representatives **should** evaluate sites for congruence with all of the following criteria:

Your sites may be significant and therefore designated as special sites if they:

- are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- are associated with the lives of significant persons of the past; or
- embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- yielded or may be likely to yield information important in history or prehistory.
- Age: At least 50 years old.
- Integrity: The site must retain its historical physical integrity with its character-defining features still present. A building, structure, or landscape feature must be relatively unchanged. An archaeological site must be relatively undisturbed, with its patterns and layers of artifacts and other archaeological evidence relatively intact. A traditional cultural site must be recognizable to today’s affiliated cultural group, evidenced through tradition and still used or revered in some way.

If your property includes rare biological features or significant geological features, consult with your state's natural-resource agency and consult lists of **threatened or endangered species** to determine if you are required by law to protect them. For detailed guidance, refer to **Standard 5** for help in identifying individual species and forest communities protected under the Endangered Species Act, or as part of a **forest of recognized importance (FORI)**.

#### RESOURCES FOR SPECIAL SITES

- Find links to your state's historical databases and archives: [www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/woodland-resources)
- Document your research on special site in the ATFS Management Plan Addendum: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/atfsaddendum>
- Learn more about what are **special sites**, why they are important to protect, how you can protect them, and find additional resources available for landowners at: [www.mylandplan.org/special-sites](http://www.mylandplan.org/special-sites)
- Find your local NRCS office to get additional assistance: <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrsc>

#### Tree Farmer Profile

## Protecting special sites

### Duke & Naomi Hoiland, Polebridge, Montana

Like many Tree Farmers, Duke and Naomi Hoilands' Tree Farm includes special sites, which they not only protect, but also use as a way to educate visitors about the land's history. A historic Indian trail used by native Salish and Kootenai peoples and early settlers crosses the property, linking buffalo hunting grounds in eastern Montana with fishing and summer foraging areas in western Montana and Idaho. The Hoilands have worked hard not only to preserve the physical evidence of the historic trail, but also to save the history and stories associated with the route—topics on which Duke is considered the local expert. The Hoilands host annual tours of the trail and work with youth crews from the Montana Conservation Corps to maintain it.

#### TIPS FOR PROTECTING SPECIAL SITES

- ✓ **Get to know your woods.** Locating the special sites on your land is the first step in protecting them. Take time to walk your woods and identify the unusual plant communities, old structures or possible artifacts, and unusual features (for example, mounds or depressions in the ground) that you discover.
- ✓ **Note where special sites are located.** Once you have found your special sites, make sure to flag them, both on the ground and in your property map. A GPS unit can be especially helpful when you are doing this. Use it to record the exact locations of your special sites and then transfer the data to your computer for mapping. Pair that information with photographs, notes, or any other information that helps you track your special sites. Or use the mapping tool at [www.MyLandPlan.org](http://www.MyLandPlan.org) to map the locations.
- ✓ **Get expert help.** Once you have identified and recorded your special sites, ask for help in properly preserving them. Your state department of natural resources or NRCS office, local historical and archaeological societies, and local tribal governments can help you understand the special sites you have on your property and how to best protect them.
- ✓ **Include special sites in your management plan.** Your findings and the federal, state, or local guidelines for protecting special sites should become part of your woodland management plan. Aim to minimize damage and disturbance to the site by creating a vegetation buffer, fencing the area, or otherwise distinguishing it from surrounding areas. Try to control for erosion and disturb the soil there as little as possible. This also means doing things a little differently at harvest time. Make sure to review your special-sites map and protection plan with your timber buyers, loggers, foresters, and any other professionals assisting you with forest-management activities, and monitor their work. After harvests and other activities, follow up to make sure your special sites were properly protected.

# Preserving a chapter of family and county history

## Dr. John William Bemby, III Hawkinsville, Georgia

On the banks of the Okefenokee River in Georgia is Bemby's Mill, an ATFS-certified Tree Farm that its owner, veterinarian Dr. John Bemby, rightly describes as "a family heirloom." It is the place where seven generations of Bemby ancestors have lived since it was purchased in 1807 by Revolutionary War veteran William S. Lancaster, Dr. Bemby's great-great-great-great grandfather.

That purchase is the first recorded in the deed books of Pulaski County. The site, originally known as Land Lot 388, was the perfect place to build a dam and establish a gristmill, which operated continuously through the generations that included John Bemby's grandfather, Roscoe Tilden Bemby. Not only did the mill provide high-quality cornmeal, but it also served as a cotton gin and sawmill, and a community social center for church and school socials and picnics.

The responsibility of caring for land with such a history is not lost on Dr. Bemby, the 2013 ATFS Southern Regional Tree Farmer of the Year. The area

immediately surrounding the historic gristmill has been in timber production since its original purchase in 1807. The mill still stands, as does the mill dam constructed by Bemby's grandfather in the 1950s. They are among the special sites on the property that Bemby protects—and that will be protected in perpetuity under a conservation easement. The 150-acre easement, transferred to the Georgia Forestry Commission in 2009, guarantees not only that the historic structures will be protected, but also that the land originally purchased by Bemby's ancestor will remain in sustainable forestry management.



Photos: Bemby Family



