

## Commitment to Practicing Sustainable Forestry

**Landowner** demonstrates commitment to **forest health** and **sustainability** by developing a forest **management plan**, implementing sustainable practices, and seeking opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding of sustainable forest management.

### 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.

#### GUIDANCE

The **management plan** may include several separate documents that, taken together, constitute the **management plan**. **Management plans** vary widely and may encompass a wide range of formats, language styles and document types, including emerging digital technologies and other tools that illustrate evidence of planning.

Umbrella **management plans** may be utilized in the management of multiple parcels and ownerships. **Landowners** or **their designated representatives** and **qualified natural resource professionals** are advised to select language that best reflects **landowner's** objectives and property circumstances. Consideration of specific conditions (size, **scale** and intensity of property and operations), **landowner** capacities, access to resource professional support and nonliteral interpretations are advised.

#### 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**.

#### GUIDANCE

The **management plan's** detail should reflect the forest and habitat complexity of the property as well as the management intensity planned for the property. The Standards do not require a prescribed **management plan** information structure or hierarchy. The plan preparer has considerable latitude in developing the **management plan**, or its composition of parts, at a level of complexity that reflects the **landowner's objectives** and provides for an accurate method of prescribing any planned treatments or activities on the property. A more formal or structured system is appropriate for larger collections of properties, whether under one ownership or part of an **independently managed group (IMG)** structure. A group manager should have a system in place to allow timely retrieval and editing of management plans under his/her authority and responsibility. Handwritten notes to the plan are acceptable as indications of updates to the plan for individual properties.

The nature of **adaptive management** requires that the **landowner** or his/her **designated representative** not be bound to follow the **management plan** prescriptions when circumstances influencing the property and its management have changed or when the **landowner's objectives** change. Examples of such changes include changes in family circumstances, the sale or acquisition of lands included in the certificate and disturbance from storms, fires, pests or disease outbreaks. Forestry involves dealing with dynamic natural systems and some accommodations may be necessary for natural events such as fires, flooding or wind damage, as well as the **landowners'** personal circumstances. To respond to such events, **management plans** must be active and adaptive in nature, as indicated in Indicator 1.1.1. While the **management plan** is not expected to address all possible facets of state-of-the-art forestry or habitat



management, the plan is expected to avoid forestry or wildlife management practices that do not support **sustainable forest management**. For example, a plan that prescribes practices to maximize short-term income should not compromise long-term **forest health** or resilience.

### **Indicator 1.1.2**

**Management plans shall describe current forest conditions, landowner's current 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, **conversion**, forest aesthetics, biomass and carbon.

### **GUIDANCE**

Current conditions may be described in general terms, including age, species and composition, or identified in accompanying maps and inventories. The depth of narrative and level of detail in current condition descriptions may vary widely with access to technical support, property attributes and the **scale** and intensity of management. Third-party assessors are encouraged to recognize a range of approaches in assessing current condition descriptions.

The plan must clearly describe landowner's current objectives. **Landowner objectives** are concise, high-level statements of what the **landowner** hopes to accomplish through his or her management. Landowners are *encouraged*, but not required, to seek education opportunities, such as written materials, landowner workshops and field days, as well as consult **qualified natural resource professionals** as they identify their objectives. Landowners are encouraged to locate sources for these references in their state. Local State Tree Farm Committees can provide a great resource to landowners and may be found on the ATFS website: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/state-tree-farm-programs>

**Landowner objectives** may range widely in language styles and approaches, from specific and technical to general and nontechnical. For example, some plans may describe specific forest conditions (fast-growing conifer stands, mixed hardwood bottomland forests, older forests of longleaf pine, etc.) or general goals for the property (good habitat for animals, a healthy forest, etc.) the **landowner** is attempting to achieve.

Strategies for achieving the **landowner's objectives** should be reflected in the body of the plan. For example, if the **landowner's** objective is to increase the occurrence of wildlife on the property, the **management plan** is expected to prescribe management activities that will enhance, or at least maintain, suitable habitat.

The plan must specifically mention the required topics (**forest health**, soil, water, wood and fiber production, **threatened or endangered species**,



**special sites, invasive species and forests of recognized importance**). If there is no occurrence of an attribute on the required topic list (**threatened or endangered** species, for example), the plan should state that the attribute is not present on the subject property and describe the consultation or means by which the determination was made. For example, a plan may state that, “Based on field review of the property and review of the state natural heritage database on XX date, no **threatened or endangered** species are known to be present on the property.” For requirements and guidance on required elements and consultation options regarding **forest health, threatened or endangered species, forests of recognized importance** and **special sites**, please refer to Standards 5 and 7, respectively.

If attributes such as fire, wetlands, **desired species**, recreation, aesthetic quality, biomass or carbon are present on the property and aligned with the **landowner’s objectives**, the **landowner** or **designated representative** may consider inclusion of these elements in his or her **management plan**.

There is no requirement for level of detail around optional elements. Addressing the attribute may be as simple as saying that, “The attribute will be protected during all forest operations in compliance with applicable regulations.” Alternately, the plan preparer may provide a detailed description of the management actions or protections specific to the attribute.

A property recently covered by a written **management plan** will not necessarily have evidence of plan performance.

**Management plans** can present a suite of options to **landowners** for their consideration. ATFS does not view **management plans** as a strict blueprint for **landowner** action, rather **that management plans** are adaptive and responsive to a number of factors. **Qualified ATFS inspectors** and **third-party assessors** should contemplate the following question when assessing the conformance of a **management plan** to the AFF Standards: *does the failure to perform the plan-action constitute a breach of **sustainability** for this property?* If the answer is no, then, the **landowner** is not out of conformance. If the answer is yes, this is an issue that needs to be addressed.







### Indicator 1.1.3

**The Landowner** should monitor for changes that could interfere with the management objectives as stated in **management plan**.

#### GUIDANCE

Monitoring for individual **landowners** or **designated representatives** can be achieved by visiting the property on a regular basis, riding through it or walking the trails. This can be done annually or more or less frequently depending on the individual circumstances (region, soils, risk of **invasive species**, risk of pest outbreaks, etc.).

**Landowners** and **designated representatives** are encouraged to keep a written record of monitoring observations to reflect and document changing conditions—including the presence of **invasive species**, pest or disease or storm damage—along with management activities. In addition, these records may also be used to defend against adverse possession claims, substantiate any casualty losses and enable timely response to trespass, illegal dumping, timber theft and insect or disease outbreaks. Records of monitoring may be informal, such as handwritten notes, and could include photos, digital technologies, online tools such as [www.mylandplan.org](http://www.mylandplan.org) and other emerging media.

**Landowners** are encouraged to update **management plans** based on monitoring.

A **management plan** is considered current if it remains consistent with the **landowner's objectives** and the conditions on the ground, regardless of when the plan was written.

