

# STANDARD 5

## Fish, Wildlife, Biodiversity and Forest Health

Forest management activities contribute to the conservation of **biodiversity**.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURE 5.1

Forest management activities shall protect habitats and communities occupied by **threatened or endangered** species as required by law.

#### **GUIDANCE**

Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), **landowners** are required to protect occupied habitat for **threatened or endangered** animal species. If **landowners** or **designated representatives** become aware of the presence of a **threatened or endangered** animal species on their property, it is their duty to review the requirements for protecting the habitat for that species and to take appropriate actions in the management of their property. Under ATFS certification, **landowners** may choose to go above and beyond ESA requirements and protect unoccupied animal habitat.

Although private **landowners** are not required to protect **threatened or endangered** plant species under the ESA, **landowners** are encouraged to do so.

Activities implemented under a federally approved habitat conservation plan (HCP) are deemed in conformance with the ATFS Standard. Additional information on the Endangered Species Act is available at [http://www.fws.gov/ENDANGERED/esa-library/pdf/ESA\\_basics.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/ENDANGERED/esa-library/pdf/ESA_basics.pdf)

In addition to ESA requirements, states maintain their own lists of protected species and legal requirements for protection by **landowners**.

### **Indicator 5.1.1**

**Landowner** shall periodically confer with natural resource agencies, state natural resource heritage programs, **qualified natural resource professionals** or other current sources of information to determine occurrences of **threatened or endangered** species on the property and their habitat requirements.

#### **GUIDANCE**

**Threatened or endangered** species lists are maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in accordance with the ESA [[http://ecos.fws.gov/tess\\_public/](http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/)]. Nationally listed **threatened or endangered** freshwater fish that migrate to sea are listed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) [<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/esa/>]. Contacting the state natural resources agency or service representative is usually an effective way to find out if a property or region is known to contain a **threatened or endangered** species. *Some **threatened or endangered** species are also listed separately by the state agencies. Please consult the [ATFS website](#) and [www.natureserve.org/](http://www.natureserve.org/) for additional resources on **threatened or endangered** species.*

Although **landowners** are not required to do an exhaustive search for **threatened or endangered** species on their property, under the AFF Standards, **landowners** or **designated representatives** are expected to make a good-faith effort prior to the start of significant forest management activities, such as a timber harvest or road construction, to identify any known occurrences of these species on their property through on-site review and the use of a **qualified natural resource professional** or natural heritage databases. Consultation with appropriate resources is demonstrated in **management plan** documentation.



### **Indicator 5.1.2**

Forest management activities shall incorporate measures to protect identified **threatened or endangered** species on the property.

#### **GUIDANCE**

If there are known occurrences of **threatened or endangered** species on the property, the **landowner may** be required to make provisions for protection of the species and habitat as specified by regulation. **Landowners** or **designated representatives** are encouraged to consult with a **qualified natural resource professional** for assistance in planning to protect **threatened or endangered** species.

The presence of **threatened or endangered** species on the property is not considered a prohibition of management but may influence the timing or technique of management activities.

Measures for habitat protections may include:

- limited mechanical entry in the habitat area
- restricted **pesticide** use in the habitat area
- residual tree maintenance in the habitat area
- buffer zone establishment and maintenance around the habitat area
- hunting or fishing limitations
- signage or marking of the habitat area

## **PERFORMANCE MEASURE 5.2**

**Landowner** should address the **desired species** and/or desired forest communities when conducting forest management activities, if consistent with **landowner's objectives**.

#### **GUIDANCE**

**Landowners** may wish to increase the presence of one or more **desired species** (fish, wildlife or plants) on their property such as bobwhite quail, longleaf pine or wild berry species. While these goals may be described in the **landowner's objectives**, the body of the **management plan** should provide a description of management activities planned to achieve the stated objective(s). **Desired species** management is only relevant if identified as an objective by the **landowner**.

### **Indicator 5.2.1**

**Landowner** should consult available and accessible information on management of the forest for **desired species** and/or forest communities and integrate it into forest management.

#### **GUIDANCE**

Several good sources for **desired species** management are readily available to the **landowner**:

- Nonprofit organizations that focus on the **desired species**
- State and federal agencies that focus on fish and game species
- Extension Service publications

Please consult the resource pages on the [ATFS website](#) for additional information on **desired species** management.

State specific resources for desired species management may include available state Wildlife and Forest Action Plans.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURE 5.3

**Landowner** should make practical efforts to promote **forest health**.

### Indicator 5.3.1

**Landowner** should make practical efforts to promote **forest health**, including prevention, control or response to disturbances such as wildland fire, **invasive species** and other pests, pathogens or unwanted vegetation, to achieve specific management objectives.

#### GUIDANCE

New, previously unknown or under-recognized pests, pathogens and **invasive species** are, unfortunately, emerging as serious and immediate threats to **forest health**. Outbreaks and impacts may be sudden, widespread and profound. Given this and a **landowner's** deployable resources, he or she may have limited ability to prevent, respond or control the impacts of a disturbance.

**Landowners** or **designated representatives** are advised to take a practical, proactive approach to promoting the resilience, productivity and vitality of their forests. **Landowners** or **designated representatives** are encouraged to work with their **qualified natural resource professional** to understand and identify the range of stressors in which their woodlands may be vulnerable and consider measures to promote the resilience and reduce the susceptibility of their properties.

**Qualified natural resource professionals** can supply the **landowner** or **designated representative** with information on emerging **forest health** issues and techniques for preventing, mitigating the impacts of and responding to stressors and events. **Landowners** are encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to learn about **forest health** issues and approaches for preventing and responding to stressors and promoting resilience.

On monitoring visits to the property, **landowners** or **designated representatives** should be alert to potential impacts to **forest health**.

**Qualified ATFS inspectors** and **third-party assessors** may verify compliance through interviews with **landowner** or **designated representative**, review of **management plan** documents or observing the property.





## PERFORMANCE MEASURE 5.4

Where present, forest management activities should maintain or enhance forests of recognized importance.

### GUIDANCE

**Forests of recognized importance** (FORI) represent globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas of exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values. These forests are evaluated at the landscape level, rather than the stand level and are recognized for a combination of unique values, rather than a single attribute. **FORIs** may include but are not limited to landscapes with exceptionally high concentrations of one or more of the following:

- protected, rare, sensitive or representative forest ecosystems such as riparian areas and wetland biotopes
- areas containing endemic species and critical habitats of multiple **threatened or endangered** plant and animal species, as identified under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or other recognized listings

- recognized large-**scale** cultural or archeological sites including sites of human habitation, cities, burial grounds and in situ artifacts
- areas containing identified and protected water resources upon which large metropolitan populations are dependent
- areas containing identified unique or geologic features including geysers, waterfalls, lava beds, caves or craters

In the United States, because of their significance, **FORIs** have, generally, been identified and protected by federal or state governments or are under conservation easement by an environmental nonprofit organization. There is, at this time, no state or federal agency that regulates **FORIs** on private forest lands in the United States. Several conservation organizations have identified areas that they believe are of exceptional status yet there remains no single central clearinghouse of information regarding such forested landscapes.

In an effort to support and facilitate identification of these resources, AFF developed the **Forests of Recognized Importance** Resource as a reference for **landowners** and **qualified natural resource professionals**. This resource is available at the ATFS website and MyLandPlan.org:

<https://www.treefarmssystem.org/fori>

<https://mylandplan.org/content/what-forest-recognized-importance>

In addition, the AFF National Standards Interpretation Committee (NSIC) also advises consulting state forest action plans, state wildlife action plans and state natural heritage databases as resources for identifying **FORIs**.

Due to the small **scale** and low-intensity of family forest operations, informal assessment for the occurrence of **FORIs** through consultation with experts or review of available and accessible information is appropriate.

Consideration of **FORIs** is relatively new to forestry practice and planning in the United States. As such, adoption of the model has been uneven and a range of terms has been deployed in the identification, protection and management for enhancement of **FORIs**. **Landowners** or **qualified natural resource professionals** may use terms such as “high conservation value forests” or “forests of exceptional value” or other terms to describe this concept, which are considered acceptable in fulfilling this **Standard**. **Qualified ATFS inspectors** and **third-party assessors** are advised to recognize this diversity of terms and the intent in verifying conformance.







### **Indicator 5.4.1**

Appropriate to the **scale** and intensity of the situation, forest management activities should incorporate measures to contribute to the conservation of identified **forests of recognized importance**.

#### **GUIDANCE**

**Landowners** or **designated representatives** who have identified some or all of their forest property as part of a FORI should delineate the area on the maps associated with the **management plan**. Management activities on or adjacent to an identified **FORI** should seek to contribute to or support the values that led to the designation of the area.

For family **landowners**, a more likely scenario is that their property is adjacent to a state or federally protected area and identified as a **FORI** at a landscape **scale**. **Landowners** should consider the impact to a neighboring **FORI** and opportunities to support consideration of specific values or attributes when planning and implementing activities on their forest property. Given the size and **scale** of family ownerships eligible for ATFS certification, **landowners** may be limited in their abilities to significantly impact **FORI** presence and quality through management at the small **scale**.