

# Process for Conducting a Tree Farm Inspection

## Enroll New Property

- Landowners, Tree Farm Inspectors, consultants or other forestry professionals contact the NCTFP to enroll a new property.
- Property must meet the following requirements:
  - Individual owner, small business owner or public entity (except State Governments)
  - Contiguous parcels 10 acres to 10,000 acres (Non-contiguous parcels  $\geq$  10 acres must be certified as separate Tree Farms under separate Tree Farm numbers.)
- Landowner must:
  - conform to the Standards.
  - have a qualifying forest management plan.
  - pay fee to certify (or recertify) the property every 5 years.
- NCTFP assigns a Tree Farm Inspector to visit the property and review the forest management plan. Inspector submits a completed 021 Form and a copy of the Forest Management Plan to NCTFP.
- NCTFP requires payment of certification fee, copy of forest management plan and completed inspection record before processing the certification.

## Collect Certification Fee

NCTFP:

- notifies landowner that property is due for re-inspection and recertification, and invoices landowner for certification fee.
- collects payment.
- charges \$350 for 5 years of certification. Grant funding is available for a limited time to pay \$150 of the fee in all 100 counties. There is no application process for the grant.
- offers discounts to landowners with multiple Tree Farms enrolled in the program. Starting in 2023, Tree Farmers who have certified one Tree Farm (the primary Tree Farm) at the \$350 rate (less available grant funding) can certify new Tree Farms and recertify existing Tree Farms under the same ownership for \$100 each as long as the primary Tree Farm remains certified. The primary Tree Farm will recertify at the \$350 rate and the secondary Tree Farm(s) will recertify at the \$100 rate every five years thereafter. Tree Farms receiving the \$100 rate are not eligible for grant funding toward the certification fee. Contact the NCTFP to find out if a property qualifies for the discounted rate.

## Assign Inspection

NCTFP:

- contacts Tree Farm Inspector to request help with Tree Farm inspection.
- sends email to inspector with resources for completing the inspection.

- requests completion of inspection and submission of paperwork within 6 weeks. (Tree Farm Inspector keeps NCTFP informed of any schedule changes.)
- sends email to landowner (and cc's inspector) with the inspector's name and information on the next steps in the recertification process.

## Contact Landowner

Tree Farm Inspector:

- requests copy of current forest management plan and supporting documentation.
- schedules field visit and Tree Farmer interview. Invites landowner to participate in field visit.
- If inspection is a re-inspection, asks landowner if he/she needs a Tree Farm sign. Provides a sign to landowner during field visit if landowner needs one.

## Prepare for Field Visit

Tree Farm Inspector:

- reads guidance for forest management plans and inspection forms at <https://www.nctreefarm.org/forest-certification/inspectors/inspector-resources/standards-of-sustainability-guidance/>.
- reviews the forest management plan and supporting documentation for compliance with the 2021 Standards of Sustainability.
- follows the NCTFP Management Plan Policy to facilitate a plan update if there are missing elements. Ensures all required elements have been addressed before recommending certification of the property.
- reviews map of property to confirm that the tax parcels are contiguous and under the same ownership. If parcels are not contiguous or if contiguity is unclear, inspector contacts NCTFP for next steps.
- makes sure that the management plan, maps and inspection form all show the correct forested and total acreage.
- prepares list of questions/topics to discuss with the landowner.
- picks up Tree Farm sign from any N.C. Forest Service District Office to take to landowner during field visit (if landowner needs a sign).

## Conduct Field Visit and Interview Tree Farmer

Tree Farm Inspector:

- takes the Standards of Sustainability Pocket Guide on the field visit and a Tree Farm sign if landowner has requested one.
- uses phone to determine the GPS coordinates to the Tree Farm's main entrance. Enters coordinates in decimal degrees format on page 1 of the inspection form.
- interviews Tree Farmer and updates information on the inspection form.

- validates landowner information on page 1 of form. If information is incomplete or incorrect, enters changes in ownership or contact information in the Notes/Updates section on page 2 of the 021 Form and does not replace ownership or contact information on page 1.
- validates Tree Farm information. If Tree Farm location or acreage information is incorrect on page 1 of the pre-populated form, correct the information by typing over the pre-populated data.
- walks the property to determine if conditions on the ground align with the management plan and maps and meet the requirements of the Standards. If there are discrepancies between the plan, maps and on-site conditions, inspector works with the landowner to update or correct the information in the forest management plan per the NCTFP Forest Management Plan Policy.
- notes the conditions and recommended corrective actions on the inspection form and shares this information with the landowner if conditions on the ground do not comply with the Standards. Inspector does not certify or recertify the property until all non-compliances are corrected.

## Complete, Review and Submit Inspection Form

Tree Farm Inspector:

- types inspection information directly into the 021 Inspection Form.
- References <https://www.nctreefarm.org/forest-certification/inspectors/inspector-resources/standards-of-sustainability-guidance/> for guidance on filling out the form.
- types signature, date and recommendation into the Approvals section of the form. (Do not use Adobe's "fill and sign" feature because it will lock the form and prevent further changes.)
- emails completed inspection report in writable PDF format to [genny.nctreefarm@gmail.com](mailto:genny.nctreefarm@gmail.com). If the inspection record is for a new Tree Farm certification, email the forest management plan to the NCTFP.

## Complete Certification Process

NCTFP:

- reviews the inspection paperwork and follows up with the inspector for additional information as needed.
- enters inspection data in the national database and certifies the property.
- emails confirmation to Tree Farm Inspector that certification is complete.
- mails membership card or new member packet to landowner.

## For New Certifications:

Tree Farm Inspector

- picks up Tree Farm sign from any N.C. Forest Service District Office and presents to landowner. (The NCTFP provides 1 sign per Tree Farm.)