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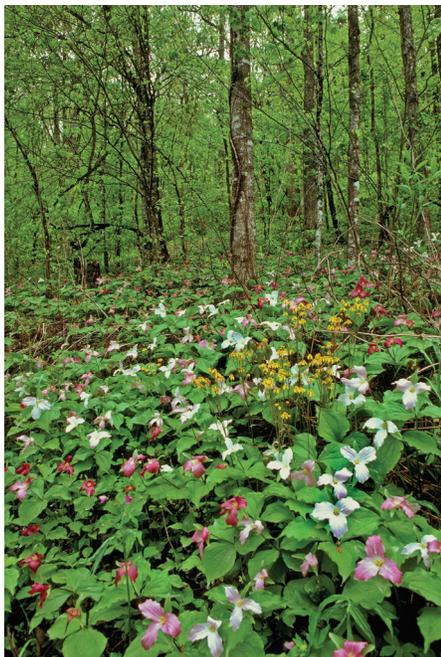
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The Role of Logging Business Owners in Forest Certification

Scott Barrett, *Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor*, Forest Operations and Coordinator for the VA SHARP Logger Program, Virginia Tech

John Munsell, *Forest Management Extension Specialist and Associate Professor*, Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, Virginia Tech

Jennifer Gagnon, *Coordinator*, Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, Virginia Tech



Forest certification

Many forest products companies and landowners participate in forest certification programs. Forest certification programs set standards for sustainable forest management and verify that they are being met. Certification programs can demonstrate to consumers that certified forest products come from trees that were grown and harvested sustainably. Participants in certification programs commit to meeting sustainable forest management standards and are periodically audited by a third party to verify compliance.

There are 3 main forest certification programs:

- 1) The American Tree Farm System (ATFS)
- 2) The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- 3) The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

Each program has standards and requirements for participation. Many standards are similar but each program has unique criteria.

Loggers' role in forest certification

It is important for loggers to understand that specific harvesting practices are often required to meet certification standards when working with participants in certification programs, and participants may be audited to verify compliance. Loggers may be required to attend trainings and adhere to detailed management or harvesting plans and auditors may follow up to



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verify criteria are being met. In situations where a mill has chain of custody certification, there could also be additional requirements to comply with requirements for the receiving mill. Certification programs audit loggers, landowners, and foresters as part of a larger overall system to verify components of a sustainable forest management program.

Certification programs are intended to ensure sustainable forest management and communicate sustainability to consumers. Adherence to certification standards and to management planning is not only important to forest landowners but to everyone in the wood supply chain. Sustainable forest management and markets for forest products help ensure that the forest industry continues to grow and harvest trees in the future.

Harvesting operations are critical to certified sustainable forest management

Certification programs and management plans often focus on timber harvesting because it is an especially important period in the management of forests. Timber harvests are a tool for stand improvement, and also a point in time where investments in forest management convert to revenue. Because of their potential to impact site quality, certification programs require steps to protect environmental quality such as clean water, wildlife habitat and site productivity during harvests.



Working with forest owners to achieve certification system objectives

Many of the certification system harvesting requirements are typically used on most harvest sites. It is important to keep in mind that certification programs may require steps that go above and beyond common harvesting practices. Working closely with owners and foresters on certified forests will help ensure that all aspects of the harvest plan are correctly implemented. Decisions and actions taken by logging operations during timber harvesting can have a direct impact on compliance verification and landowner standing in the program. Adhering to forest management plans and protecting sites will ensure compliance with certification standards and ensure resource sustainability.

Additional information on certification systems

Additional details about specific requirements of certification programs in Virginia can be found in the VCE publication: To Certify or Not? An Important Question for Virginia's Family Forest Owners.

Information about each program can be found on the following websites.

The American Tree Farm System
<http://www.treefarmssystem.org/>

Forest Stewardship Council
<http://us.fsc.org/>

Sustainable Forestry Initiative
<http://www.sfiprogram.org/>