



Oregon Tree Farm System, Inc.

Good Morning

I am **Dick Courter**, Oregon Tree Farmer | Professional Consulting Forester. I have volunteered with the American Tree Farm System for about 45 years. I am past Board of Directors Chair, The Oregon Tree Farm System, Inc. among other tasks both locally and nationally.

Today I am before you in support of HRC 208 - A resolution marking the 75th anniversary of the American Tree Farm system.

The Tree Farm program has a long and distinguished Oregon history.

"Kill the thing before it spreads"

U.S. Forest Service Chief Lyle Watts and his assistant C. Edward Behre tried to kill the "thing" in 1941. They failed, and it spread from the West, into the South and eventually all the way across America. The "thing" was the American Tree Farm System.

Why were Watts and Behre against Tree Farms in **1941**? They disliked substituting private cooperation for public regulation. They saw Tree Farming as a move to decrease pressure for federal regulation.

Tree Farming was not new to this 1941 debate. "Wood is a crop," Gifford Pinchot, first chief of the USDA Forest Service, said in a speech in 1935. "Forestry is Tree Farming."

On **June 12, 1941**, the nation's first Tree Farm was dedicated on Weyerhaeuser Companyland near Montesano, Washington and named the Clemons Tree Farm. Chapin Collins, a Montesano newspaper editor, is commonly credited with the idea of using the words "Tree Farm".

The effort to create a national program had already begun. The National Lumber Manufacturers Association (NLMA), resolved in **November 1941** that a nationwide tree farm system be established. In the following year, the American Forest Products Industries (AFPI), then a subsidiary of the NLMA, accepted responsibility for the American Tree Farm program.

During **1942** the first five States joined the Tree Farm movement - Alabama, Arkansas, California, Oregon and Washington. The first family to be certified in the program was located in Alabama.

Most of those early organizational meetings were held at the Old Portland Hotel in Downtown Portland. It was at one of those meetings that Weyerhaeuser was designated Tree Farm #1. The program by **1946** spread to about half of the states. The early tree farm movement was primarily limited to large company holdings.

In **1954**, the trustees of AFPI approved the "Principles of the American Tree Farm System." The principles established standards for tree farm certification. They remained the same for many years. Those principles stated that the property must be 1) privately owned, 2) managed for the growth and harvest of forest crops, and 3) protected adequately from fire, insects, disease, and destructive grazing. Significantly, harvesting practices were to assure prompt restocking with desirable trees.

To implement these principles, AFPI assumed the program administration and sponsor-ship in states east of the Rocky Mountains. Local sponsor-ship was placed in the hands of state forest industry committees composed of representatives of AFPI member companies.

In the West the program was sponsored and managed by various organizations to include - the Industrial Forestry Association, the California Redwood Association, and the Western Pine Association.

Under AFPI leadership the system soon expanded to every state in the nation. AFPI reorganized in **1969** as the American Forest Institute (AFI).

The AFPI reorganization had a traumatic effect on the American Tree Farm System. During the process of computerizing, many tree farm records could not be located. It became apparent that reinspection was dramatically behind schedule. AFI began a massive reinspection campaign on every Tree Farm. Only about ten states still had functioning organizations. Thousands of foresters from government, industry, and consulting firms volunteered their time. Landowners had to demonstrate quality forest management.

The emphasis on quality forest management was instrumental in initiating "Outstanding Tree Farmer" competitions, which became a national recognition program by **1976**.

By **1981**, fifty-two percent of the more than 20,000 certified tree farms were woodlots of 100 acres or less. The tree farm program became a useful tool to encourage productive management on small tracts. The American Tree Farm System supported forty-five active tree farm committees. Tree Farms had been certified in all fifty states. About 10,000 foresters volunteered time to operate the program.

The green and white diamond-shaped sign, boldly marked "**TREE FARM**," became a nationally recognized symbol of private forestry.

The 60 year celebration (**2001**) documented best of forest care on 65,000 private forests. The program covered more than 81 million acres - of which 26 million acres were non-industrial private forestland.

After many years of struggle and retrenchment, in the **1990's** the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) emerged as truly a national program with universally accepted national codes and standards. Today, the ATFS certification program serves as an international standard. The ATFS in the early **2000's** began focusing exclusively on family forest owners and became recognized by and was accepted under the umbrella of the International Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Today, ATFS is the largest and oldest program for family-owned woodlands sustaining more than 80,000 Tree Farmer relationships covering 21 million acres of forest.

Prominent well-known names that are Tree Farmers include actress Andie MacDowell, Rolling Stones musician Chuck Leavell, President Jimmy Carter, actor Andy Griffith and Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy among others.

“Oregon Tree Farm Committee Involvement”

Oregon has been very active in the Tree Farm movement since it's inception initially through the various organizations listed above. Records are not clear regarding when the Oregon Tree Farm Committee began operating as a Committee outside the various industry organizations. However, the Oregon Tree Farm Committee after having operated as a committee largely run by industry personnel reorganized in **1995**.

It was incorporated into a 501(c)3 non-profit organization under the style and business name Oregon Tree Farm System, Inc. (OTFS). I became the first family owned Tree Farmer Board Chair. Family Tree Farmers make up the majority of Board members and have served as Board Chairs to this day.

The new OTFS Board of Directors very early on recognized that monetary support would be a challenge. From a proposal offered by myself, Betty Denison and past Board Chair Dee Anderson, the Board unanimously adopted a resolution establishing the Oregon Tree Farm Memorial Fund (Memorial Fund) - an endowment like fund. The purpose was to support Board activities. **Today** fund assets are about \$70K and \$16.1K has been distributed to the OTFS operating budget.

Since **1966**, OTFS has annually recognized “Outstanding Tree Farmers”. In those early days the Forestry Committee within the Portland Chamber of Commerce organized the recognition program. OTFS has organized and handled this recognition program internally in recent years.

Rex Brown, Yamhill County, was the first Oregon Tree Farmer of the Year in **1966**. OTFS has relied upon Chapters of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association (OSWA) to assist in selecting nominees from many or all Counties. That has been an excellent and rewarding partnership.

Since the National Outstanding Tree Farmer recognition initiated in **1976**, Oregon has been well recognized. Four Oregon Tree Farm families have been recognized as national Tree Farmers of the Year - (1) **1981** - Bert & Betty Udell, Linn County - (2) **1992** - Representative Wayne & Colleen Kreiger, Curry County (3) **2001** - Ron & Barbara Bentz, Linn County, and (4) **2005** - Senator Bob & Margaret Kintigh, Lane County.

State Tree Farmers of the Year become nominees for Regional Recognition. Oregon has been recognized with more Regional Tree Farmers of the Year than any other State.

While all Oregon Counties are encouraged to nominate a candidate yearly, all do not. However, over the history of recognizing County Tree Farmers of the Year all with the exception of Sherman County (having no forests) has submitted nominations at one time or another.

Not only has Oregon been blessed with loyal volunteers to assist with inspections, serving on the OTFS Board and helping with numerous other activities, many Oregon Tree Farmers have actively served ATFS at the national level.

In about **1996**, ATFS began emphasizing Tree Farmer involvement in assisting to manage the organization. The National Operating Committee (NOC) was organized - currently called The Woodlands Operating Committee (WOC). The NOC/WOC functions much like a Board of Directors for ATFS. Oregon Tree Farmers Representative Wayne & Colleen Krieger, Betty Denison, Dick Courter (Executive Committee), Clint Bentz (Chaired), Joe Holmberg, David Ford and Scott Hayes have served on this committee. Clint was the first NOC family forest land owner Chair.

ATFS functions as an arm of the American Forest Foundation (AFF). As such The AFF activities are directed through a Board of Trustees. The NOC/WOC Chair sits on the AFF Board of Trustees. Clint Bentz sat on that Board for several years serving as its first family Tree Farmer Chair.

The NOC in about **2002** adopted the National Public Affairs Committee (NPAC) charter. The NPAC assesses public policy issues of importance to Tree Farmers and family forests, and recommends positions on those issues, and strategies for dealing with them, to the WOC. I assisted in developing that NPAC Charter and was honored to serve as third NPAC Committee Chair. NPAC members routinely visit and communicate with congressional members for the purpose of keeping them informed about issues important to family forest land owners. Scott Hayes currently chairs that committee.

ATFS also has an Education committee on which Oregon Tree Farmers Anne & Richard Hanschu and myself have served.

ATFS has a certification committee whose main purpose is to review and update the ATFS standards for certification. Oregon Tree Farmers Rick Fletcher, Clint Bentz and David Ford have served on this committee. Both Rick and David have chaired this committee.

Of the twenty-one National Tree Farm conventions held across the United States, Oregon helped plan and hosted two. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to chair both planning committees and was assisted by Tom Fox of Washington State for the **2008** second event. The 2008 National Convention field day was held on Oregon Tree Farmers Anne and Richard Hanschu's Tree Farm near Forest Grove. Tree Farmers across the United States to this day are marveling about that experience.

Oregon has recognized many Inspectors of the Year.

Numerous Oregon Tree Farms have been recognized for having been certified either 25 or 50 years.

Last week in Seattle, Joe Holmberg was nationally recognized for his service.

I urge you to favorably consider HRC 208.

Thank You