

**News from the Virginia Tree  
Farm Foundation**  
**By: John Matel, Virginia Tree  
Farm Foundation**



**New certification fees**

I have been a certified Tree Farmer since I bought my first forest land in 2005. Being a certified Tree Farmer is important to me. In fact, it is so important that I have served as the President of the Virginia Tree Farm Foundation (VTFF) for the past 4 years. Until now, this program has been free in Virginia, even as many other states instituted various fees. However, now Virginia will be following suit.

Starting January 1, current Virginia Tree Farmers will be billed a certification fee of \$50 per year per Tree Farm. The VTFF recognizes that some people own multiple Tree Farms so there is a maximum fee. No Tree Farmer will pay more than \$250 per year, no matter how many individual Tree Farms they own. New Tree Farms will be assessed a one-time certification fee of \$100, which will cover initial costs plus their first year of Tree Farm certification. These fees will be used to cover administrative expenses associated with the VTFF, offer better service to Tree Farmers, and allow for more outreach and educational opportunities.

**Something new: Landscape Management Plans**

Virginia has been chosen to pilot a Landscape Management Plan (LMP). The LMP will cover all counties east of, and those including, Route 29. The LMP will allow for more planning at the landscape, rather than at the individual property, scale. Tree Farmers may opt to have their own management plan; however, they will also have the option of using the LMP. All Tree Farmers will still be required to have a list of ownership objectives, management activities, and maps specific to their property.

The VTFF is making sure that the LMP will be equivalent to Forest Stewardship and Conservation Activity Plans and will help Tree Farms qualify for cost share offered by state and federal governments, as well as for appropriate tax credit and conservation programs. The VTFF believes the LMP will become increasingly valuable in the coming years, as requirements for certified timber and land become more important. More information will be coming over the next couple of months. For frequently asked questions about the LMP, visit:

[https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/content/dam/forestupdate\\_frec\\_vt\\_edu/resources/publications/LandscapeManagementPlanFAQs.pdf](https://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu/content/dam/forestupdate_frec_vt_edu/resources/publications/LandscapeManagementPlanFAQs.pdf).

### **Certification**

Speaking of certification, it is important to make a distinction between certified wood and certified land. Strictly speaking, Tree Farm does not certify wood. Tree Farm certifies that the land where that wood is being grown is managed according to principles of sustainability, using best management practices in accordance with robust land ethics. Certified land produces certified wood. The distinction is not trivial, since, as all Tree Farmers know, trees are more than wood and forests are more than trees. It means that the care for the land comes before and goes beyond harvests.

### **Putting it all together**

To sum up, the VTFF will assess a \$50 annual fee for each Tree Farm starting in January 2020 and has already begun charging a \$150 one-time fee for each new Tree Farm. The VTFF is working on a program that will allow Virginia Tree Farmers to use an LMP, simplifying the planning and administration for Tree Farmers and making them eligible for government and private cost share and tax programs. The VTFF looks forward to continue working with Virginia's Tree Farmers and welcomes suggestions about how they can make the program work better. Thank you for your continued commitment to healthy and sustainable forests in Virginia.

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