

CONSERVATION PLANS for CAMP PROPERTIES

April, 2025

The Scouting America's National Camp Accreditation Program requires Councils that have camp properties to have a conservation plan. More specifically the standard for FA-704 states: ***There is an approved and current conservation plan for the camp property. The plan addresses the protection and stewardship of biological, ecological, and cultural resources of the camp property.***

Why get a conservation plan?

Conservation of natural resources is a critical step to ensure the sustainability of the land and all it provides. Besides recreation, properly managed scout properties protect soil and water, enhance wildlife habitat, maintain forests, protect cultural and historic sites and serve as an outdoor learning center for future decision makers. Our scout camp properties need to be managed to provide us with a setting to deliver the Scouting America's outdoor program. The complexity of managing these properties can best be accomplished by obtaining a conservation plan that recognizes objectives for the property, inventories and analyzes resources, identifies opportunities to improve and protect resources, and provides a schedule to implement conservation options.

How to get a conservation plan

Developing a conservation plan can be daunting and may require professional assistance. One option to consider is the [Forest Stewardship Program | US Forest Service](#). The program was authorized in by congress in 1978 with standards and direction from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to encourage long term stewardship by assisting private landowners in actively managing their properties.

Much like Scouting America's National Camp Accreditation program, the **Forest Stewardship Program** has national standards that applies to all properties in the program. These standards would fulfill the requirements established in NCAP Standard FA-704. A Forest Stewardship Plan is typically written for a ten year period and it identifies opportunities to enhance the natural condition property and may reveal areas that require attention.



Photo: US Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program Manager Mike Huneke and Maryland State Forest Ranger Chris Smith present Forest Stewardship Sign to Camp Ranger Dave Weissert at Broad Creek Memorial Scout Reservation.

Getting started

The USFS partners with state foresters by providing matching funds so individual states can administer a program with their foresters who know and work with local landowners. For more information, please contact your local [State Forestry Agency](#) and ask to speak with someone about enrolling your camp property in the **Forest Stewardship Program**. Most state agencies offer financial assistance for developing a Forest Stewardship Plan. (See Conservation Resource sheet: [Financial and Technical Assistance Programs for Conservation on Scout Camp Properties](#)).

Developing a plan

Through the Forest Stewardship Program, you will be directed in the process to enlist a plan preparer to assist you. This plan preparer will be a local forester trained in creating a plan to meet the objectives of the scout council. This forester may be with a state agency or a consultant. In some cases councils may have scouts who are professional foresters and qualified to write plans.

After meeting with council representatives, the forester will spend time on the property to assess various resource elements such as trees, water, wildlife, roads and trails, plus cultural and historic sites.

The forester will review available information applicable to wildlife in regards to biological diversity and historical information. Where forest management is an objective, the forester will conduct a timber inventory and prepare silvicultural recommendations to maintain a healthy forest condition.

Implementing your plan

A Forest Stewardship Plan provides a ten year activity implementation strategy to accomplish the council's objectives. Examples of activities might include; boundary line maintenance, road and trail improvements, treating invasive species, improving wildlife habitat, or timber stand improvement. A well-developed activity strategy makes sure individual practices consider all forest attributes and objectives to enhance the property as a whole. Some activities fall under the heading of conservation projects and might involve local staff, scouts, and scouts. Recruiting natural resource professionals (i.e. foresters, wildlife biologists, etc.) to serve on council conservation committees would aid in the implementation strategy.

Some scout properties look to timber harvesting as a source of revenue. Cutting trees can be controversial. Having a Forest Stewardship Plan with an implementation strategy will assist the council in making decisions that meet legal and environmental requirements and sustain a healthy forest.

Certification

Nowadays many proactive landowners seek to have their lands placed under a forestry certification program. By enlisting in a certification program, a landowner ensures environmental performance in a sustainable fashion. Certification programs independently assess forest management planning and practices against sustainable forestry management standards. Certification is valuable because it provides confirmation through a third party (someone other than the Scout Council or the forester) that the council is managing the camp sustainably.

American Tree Farm System

In 1941, the [American Tree Farm System](#) (ATFS) was created as a recognition program for landowners



American Tree Farm System

We grow stewardship from the roots.

practicing good forest stewardship. ATFS is the largest and oldest woodland certification system in America. It is internationally recognized by the [Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification](#) and meets strict third-party certification standards. ATFS specializes in certifying private forests, primarily those held by individuals and families, and currently certifies over 24 million acres (110,000 km²) of forestland. State Tree Farm programs exist in 42 states except Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, and Utah. Scout properties in these states should contact their state forestry agencies or their Cooperative Extension Forestry Agent for other certification options.

There are other certification programs, but ATFS is more appropriate for small forest ownerships. In fact, many scout properties are already certified by this program. Certification under the major systems (SFI and FSC) is more difficult for small landowners, because of the significant annual audit costs, and the large amount of record keeping and preparation costs.

Finally a National Management Plan Template was developed by the US Forest Service, NRCS, and the American Forest Foundation's American Tree Farm System which allows any property holding an approved Forest Stewardship Plan to qualify to be in the American Tree Farm program. To enroll in the Tree Farm Program, contact your [State Tree Farm Committee](#).

Additional information about Camp Conservation Planning can be found in the [Council Conservation Committee Guidebook](#), or through Scouting America's Outdoor Ethics and Conservation Subcommittee [Conservation and Environment | Scouting America](#). Email: conservation@scouting.org



Photo: Tree Farm Inspector and Scouting America's National Outdoor Ethics and Conservation Subcommittee Member Bob Radspinner performing Tree Farm inspection at Camp Ho Non Wah.