

American Tree Farm System

Individual Certificate Dispute Resolution Process

Notification of Dispute

Disputing the issuance of a certificate or the recertification or decertification of a property in American Tree Farm System (ATFS) may be presented only by recognized members or participants within the ATFS. Recognized members may act as representatives for complainants outside the scope of ATFS members or participants who wish to challenge a certificate or decertification.

Notice of dispute in initial certifications, recertifications and decertifications from the complainant must be received in writing no later than thirty (30) days following the approval or denial of issuing the certificate.

The original notice of dispute must be mailed to the State Tree Farm Committee Chair. Copies must be submitted to the Tree Farmer and the Tree Farmer's certifying forester. The notice must state the reason(s) of dispute. The reasons must specifically pertain the American Forest Foundation's Standards of Sustainability and/or the ATFS performance measures and indicators to which the property is certified. The State Chair will forward a copy of the notice of dispute to the inspecting forester, landowner and National Director.

In the event a certified property owner disputes his/her decertification, a notice of dispute must be mailed to the State Tree Farm Committee Chair and the inspecting forester within thirty (30) days of receiving notification of decertification. The State Chair will forward a copy of the letter to the National Director.

Upon receiving an initial dispute from an eligible party, the National Office will reroute the certification dispute to the appropriate state committee for their handling.

Procedures for Investigation

Upon receiving the notice of dispute, the State Committee Chair will select a review committee to investigate the dispute. The State Review Committee (SRC) will consist of no less than three (3) State Tree Farm Committee members. The SRC should consist of at least one Tree Farmer serving on the State Committee and two foresters with current approved inspector training.

The SRC will visit the property whose certificate is in dispute within thirty (30) days of receiving the written notice of dispute. The chair will set a time convenient for the SRC, the complainant, the owner of the disputed property and the inspecting forester to meet at the site of the disputed property. At that time, the committee will investigate the complaints. If the chair cannot assemble an SRC within the thirty day period, he or she may set an extension not to extend more than thirty (30) days past the original deadline. If the complainant refuses to be present, the dispute will be automatically dismissed.

Procedures for Remedy

Following inspection of the disputed property, the SRC will determine whether or not to abide by the inspecting forester's initial decision. This will be accomplished through a vote needing only a simple majority of the SRC. The SRC will appoint one member to record, in writing, the reasons for its decision and present them to the State Committee. In addition, copies of the SRC's decision will be mailed to the complainant, the property owner, the inspecting forester and the National Director.

The decision of the SRC is final.

The ATFS National Director will return the signed agreement to the State Tree Farm Committee Chair. In the occasion the Executive Committee does not approve the proposed amendments, the ATFS National Director will notify the state Chair.