



American Tree Farm System

Washington Tree Farm Program

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Washington State Tree Farmer Advances to National Competition

(Chewelah, WA)-- Bob Playfair & Thelma Fry, from Stevens County, were named the 2007 Western Regional Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year winners. This contest was eligible to tree farms in 11 western states. The Rafter Seven Ranch, Inc., located in northeastern Washington, was certified by the Tree Farm System in 1962. Next, they will be competing for the National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year title. Other Washington State tree farmers were awarded this title in 2005 and 2003.

Winning this regional competition makes Rafter Seven Ranch the first from eastern Washington since 1977 to be selected. "It is always difficult for eastern Washington tree farms to compete with western Washington tree farms for the Tree Farmer of the Year title because of the slow growing conditions on the eastside of the Cascades," said Duane Weston, Chair of the Washington Tree Farm Committee. "We are proud to have Bob, Thelma and Rafter Seven Ranch representing our State in the national contest."

Bob Playfair and his sister Thelma Fry are dedicated to using their tree farm as a classroom to educate the public that active management is an essential part of maintaining a healthy forest. In support of this goal, they have dedicated a portion of the tree farm to the Sherwood Creek Demonstration Forest near Chewelah. They plan to keep Rafter Seven intact as a working family farm by involving their children and grandchildren in the farm management along with educational and recreational activities. The total acreage of the tree farm exceeds 2,800 acres.

The Washington Tree Farm Program is sponsored by the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). The program is committed to sustaining forests and healthy habitats through private stewardship. The ATFS establishes standards and guidelines for property owners to become a certified Tree Farm. Private forest landowners must create a management plan based on strict environmental standards and pass an inspection every five years. The ATFS was established in 1941 and now there are 29 million acres of privately owned forest land in the program. This is the oldest and largest voluntary, third party verification process in the U.S. The tree farmers share the commitment to protect soil, wildlife habitat and provide recreation for their communities while producing wood products.