

NH Tree Farm Rating Sheet



Instructions for Inspecting Foresters

The NH Rating Sheet is a guide to help an Inspecting Forester assess a landowner's accomplishments when applying for Tree Farm certification. It also serves as an educational tool to help landowners understand the many facets of forest management and Tree Farming. The recommendation for or against Tree Farm certification is up to the Inspecting Forester. The Rating Sheet is required of new Tree Farms, but is optional for reinspections under 2000 acres.

NH Tree Farm Requirements

- *Minimum 10 acres of forestland.* Does not include buildings, agricultural fields, ponds, or non-forest acreage (see #4 for larger properties).
- *Written management plan,* with appropriate maps and forest management prescriptions. A comprehensive, well-written plan with separate maps for timber types, soils, locus, trails, etc. Should address the 10 stewardship topics of fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, recreation, forest protection, soils, timber, wetlands, aesthetics, cultural features and endangered species. This plan can be written by a non-forester landowner. Plan must be approved by an inspecting forester.
- *Commitment to harvesting forest products in a silviculturally sound manner.* Owner conducts activities that benefit the whole woodlot environment from a long-term perspective. Sustainable forestry is defined by the American Forest and Paper Association as "Managing our forests to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic which integrates the growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products, with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, and wildlife and fish habitat.

Rating Sheet Line Items

1. Applicant is the owner, not the resident manager.
2. Mailing address and telephone number.
3. Total Tree Farm acreage proposed is the area devoted to growing and harvesting repeated crops of forest products. Buildings and campgrounds are not included. Wetlands and old fields managed as wildlife habitat may be included at the discretion of the Inspector.
4. Town(s) Tree Farm is located in. If Tree Farm is in more than one town, include the acreage within each town.
 - I. Maps and photos. Self-explanatory.
 - II. Boundary maintenance. Assign more points for blazed and painted corners and lines; fewer points for flagged.
 - III. Forest inventory.
 - A. Written management plan - see above in requirements section.
 - B. Timber volumes - assign points according to intensity of cruise, i.e. ocular estimates vs. multi-plot sampling.
 - C. Wildlife habitat features - include wildlife trees (live and dead, hard and soft mast trees and shrubs, raptor nest sites), high exposed perches, ground cover, shrubs and mid-story layers, dead and downed woody material, etc.
 - IV. Access. Quality of access within as well to the property
 - V. Long term land protection. Points listed after each item are suggested allocations and can be raised or lowered at the discretion of the Inspector.
 - VI. Wildlife.
 - A. Timber Harvesting Related:
 1. Retain mast producing trees and stands for maximum rotation. On at least half of the sites, oaks, hickories, butternut, beech, ash and sugar maples should be grown to at least 20-24" DBH. On poorer sites, any large, full-crown mast producing trees should be favored.
 2. Encourage diversity of hardwoods/ softwoods by harvesting to release patches of hardwoods

in extensive softwood stands and softwoods in extensive hardwood stands. A diversity of age and size classes of trees and openings of various sizes should be encouraged. Encourage vertical diversity of vegetation layers, including downed woody material, and herbaceous, shrub, mid-story and main layer canopy layers.

3. Designate wildlife trees for food, shelter, and nesting. Leave standing dead trees and live trees with cavities, in a mixture of sizes and species. Snags within 300" (approximately) of perennial streams and ponds should be left.
 4. Maintain and enhance winter deer yards and browse. Deer will seek dense conifer stands in harsh winters, preferring sites that have full canopy closures and a landscape slope facing southeast to west. Consult with NH Fish and Game before harvesting in known deer wintering areas.
- B. Non-Timber Harvesting Related:
1. Conduct and record wildlife surveys. At a minimum, keep a journal of the date, species, location, activity and weather.
 2. Improve logging roads and landings for wildlife by seeding them with a conservation-type grass mix. Do not plant non-native (exotic) shrubs or trees. Instead use blueberries, viburnum, dogwoods, sumac and apples. Semi-permanent openings of approximately one half acre are highly valuable in densely forested regions.
 3. Release apple trees and other fruit producers by removing competing trees from a distance of one tree length. Tall, spindly apple trees may need to be cut back to half their height. Prune off suckers and dead branches. Release other fruit producers, such as blueberries, shadbrush, dogwoods, hawthorns, chokecherry, black cherry and grapes.
 4. Other. Nest boxes may be erected, but should be cleaned each winter and maintained. Bluebird and duck boxes have had good success. Create brush piles over logs or large rocks for small animal cover and structural diversity. Specify management techniques for riparian zones and fish habitat.
- VII. Unique Natural Communities.
- A. Identify vernal pools, springs and seeps. Vernal pools are critical breeding habitat for forest amphibians. Springs and seeps offer unique microhabitats and are valuable for wildlife (particularly turkeys) in winter.
 - B. Designate areas for the encouragement or maintenance of old growth forests. Steep slopes or remote corners of the property are limited use areas that are good locations. Other examples of special ecological significance include ledge or cliff communities, blueberry barrens, Atlantic white cedar swamps, pitch pine barrens, old fields, etc.
- VIII. Water Quality.
- A. and B. Follow NH Best Management Practices (BMP's) to control erosion and protection water quality during forest harvests and road or trail construction.
- IX. Recreation. Self explanatory.
- X. Harvest aesthetics. Self explanatory.
- XI. Educational activities to promote better understanding to the public of the importance of Tree Farming, the forest environment and the forest industry in NH.

Two separate total point scores are required to pass the rating sheet; one for items I-XI and another for line items XII-XIII.

A timber harvest can produce silvicultural improvements as well as income to the landowner, therefore points can be awarded in line items XII and XIII for different aspects of the same harvest.

The NH Tree Farm program is cosponsored by UNH Cooperative Extension, the NH Timberland Owners Association, The Society for the Protection of NH Forests, and the Granite State Division of the Society of American Foresters.