The Florida Tree Farm Program is reviewed every five years. As such, it will participate in a third-party certification assessment in the spring of 2014. This assessment is important for the program in two critical ways. First, the assessment affirms the great work Tree Farmers do in managing their forests. In fact, the good forest management practiced by Tree Farmers has been consistently recognized through this assessment process. Second, the assessment also provides The American Forest Foundation with the opportunity to review how well the program operates to better understand how to serve landowners and help them manage their forests. As the assessment moves forward, a random sample of Tree Farms will be selected for on-site visits by the professional foresters from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the firm providing the third-party recognition. If a Tree Farm is chosen for the random sample, an on-site visit will be conducted during the spring of 2014. Adherence to the 2010-2015 Tree Farm Program Standards of Sustainability receives top priority during the assessment visits.

For more information, please contact Phil Gornicki at 850.222.5646.

Wildlife BMPs

The Best Management Practices Technical Advisory Committee (BMP TAC) of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services agreed in December to move ahead with the formal rule-making process for a new set of wildlife BMPs for forestry. This process could include a public hearing, if requested by an interested party. The sole purpose of the wildlife BMPs will be to serve as an alternative to the need to obtain an incidental take permit for a specified set of state imperiled species. These BMPs will only be used as voluntary measures at a landowner’s discretion. They are practical and easily understood and applied. The wildlife BMPs will exist as a completely separate document from the current silviculture BMP manual for maintaining water quality. Upon adoption, any future revisions to these new wildlife BMPs for forestry will be developed through the Forestry BMP TAC. A sub-group of the TAC met twice during the summer and fall of this year to develop the draft set of BMPs that were approved by the TAC. We will keep you posted as the BMPs progress through the state rule-making/adoption process.

For more information, please contact Phil Gornicki at 850.222.5646.

FFA President Named 2013 Woman of the Year in Agriculture

Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Adam Putnam recently announced that FFA President Lynetta Usher Griner has been named Florida’s 2013 Woman of the Year in Agriculture. Griner joined the FFA Board of Directors in 1991 and subsequently moved through the ranks of leadership, ultimately being elected as president in 2012.

Griner owns and operates Usher Land and Timber, Inc., (ULT) with her husband, Ken. Under their leadership, ULT has been honored as the Logger of the Year on the state and national level and has also received Audubon’s Sustainable Forestry Award. In 2013 they were recognized for their exceptional natural resource stewardship with a County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) award.

In addition to her work in forestry, Griner served on the Governing Board of the Suwannee River Water Management District for fourteen years and served as Chairman of the Board for ten years. She is a member of the Board of Directors of Drummond Community Bank in Chiefland and is active with several local organizations.

Commissioner Putnam will present the award at a luncheon at the Florida State Fair in Tampa on Feb. 10, 2014.
As we turn our calendars to a new year, it is only natural that our thoughts turn to the year that we have left behind.

2013 was a very positive time for the Florida Forestry Association. It was a period of growth and change that reflects well on the strength, determination and support of our membership.

In 2013, our membership numbers were up. Our dues collections increased. Sponsorship money at our annual meeting broke records, as did the number of sponsors.

Our successes were not only financial. The 2013 state legislative session was a homerun for FFA. All of our priority issues made it successfully through the process and were signed into law. Greenbelt was strengthened. Regulatory burdens were lifted. Playing fields in the construction market were leveled. Also, no harmful bills were passed, which is equally important.

In Washington, battles were won on the issue of forest roads and the Boiler MACT Rule. Both the Senate and House versions of the Farm Bill contain favorable provisions for the forest industry; hopefully a resolution will be reached quickly after the winter recess and a bill will be passed that forestry can be proud of.

Closer to the homefront, FFA worked with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services on proposed Best Management Practices for Wildlife. Obviously this is an area of interest for all in the forest industry. The BMPs are now in the final stages of the rule adoption process.

To make sure we always have a finger on the pulse of our members’ interest, in 2013 FFA instituted a series of regional membership meetings which were so successful that they will be continued this year. These gatherings not only provide a forum for our members to give feedback to us, they also are a great opportunity for networking and fellowshipping with fellow forestry professionals.

FFA also launched our new website in 2013. Garnering thousands of new visitors, this has become an invaluable tool for promoting working forests. To maximize our outreach, we also expanded our use of social media with an active presence on both Facebook and Twitter. To share our story even further, FFA President Lynetta Usher Griner and several members authored forest-friendly op-ed pieces published in papers across the state.

Speaking of President Griner, FFA can also boast that our hard-working president has recently been named Florida’s 2013 Woman of the Year in Agriculture! We are very proud of her and all that she has accomplished. She will receive her award at a luncheon during the Florida State Fair in February.

The highlights of 2013 are not just about successes, accomplishments and awards, however. 2013 was also a great year for giving at FFA. We were honored to be part of the fundraising effort for the reconstruction of the Austin Cary Memorial Forest Learning Center at the University of Florida’s School of Conservation and Forest Resources, which broke ground this year.

Never forget that the impact FFA members make is not limited to the forest industry. 2013 was also a significant year in contributions to Log a Load for Kids, raising more than $79,000. Since 1995, FFA members have raised nearly $1.8 million for the Children’s Miracle Network. The lives of untold children and families have been touched by our membership's continuing dedication to this worthy cause.

While we feel that we accomplished much in 2013, we are not content to rest on our laurels. As the landscape of the forest industry continues to change, this new year will undoubtedly bring its own set of changes and challenges. We look forward to facing them as a united front, bolstered as always by our strength of purpose and the continuing support of our members. 2013 was a great year for FFA, but we are committed to making 2014 an even better one.

Your membership matters. FFA works hard to make a difference for our members because our members make a difference in FFA. For that, we thank you.

My staff and I look forward to continuing to serve you in 2014 and beyond.

FFA hosted two regional membership meetings in 2013. Both were great opportunities for members to visit with friends, network with other forestry professionals and provide feedback to the Association on issues of importance to the industry. Featured in photos: FFA President Lynetta Usher Griner and Jim Patillo (Coastal Plywood Company); Dave Lewis (Southern Forestry Consultants, Inc.) and Jesse Dumas (Farm Credit); Carlton Jones and Dick Cochran (Cochran Forest Products); and Avery Roberts (Roberts Land & Timber Investment Corp.).

FFA members met with legislators during the session to discuss bills of interest to the forest industry. Later that evening they attended Farm Bureau’s legislative reception, which FFA sponsors each year. Featured in photos: FFA members pose beside the state seal at the capitol before visiting their legislators. Daniel Kennedy (Forestry Forward Leadership Group), Mike Bell (Rayonier, Inc.), Sen. John Thrasher, R-Jacksonville, Leigh Ann Wynn (Forestry Forward), and Bob Cook (Great South Timber & Lumber, Inc.); and Jesse and Jimmy Bielling (Bielling Site Prep & Reforestation).

FFA partnered with the Florida Forest Service, the University of Florida’s School of Forest Resources and Conservation (SFRC) and others for the Forest Discovery Center at the Florida State Fair. After the fair, the Discovery Center was also part of the Frontier Florida Industry School Tour for students in fourth grade and older.

FFA helped raise funds to rebuild the Austin Carey Forest Learning Center. Featured in photo: ACF Development Committee — Mike Branch (FFA Past President), Jack Vogel (FFA Past President), Leonard Wood, Tim White, Wayne Smith, John Clyatt, Alan Shelby (FFA Executive Vice President) and Michael Dooner (FFA Vice President).
FFA was a sponsor of the Florida Forest Teachers Tour again this year. This program brings educators from across the state to northeast Florida for a hands-on learning experience. The goal is to give teachers a better understanding and appreciation of the many benefits of the forest industry so that they can share the information with their students. Teachers watched a live controlled burn conducted and also learned about forest management as part of the tour.

FFA’s annual meeting is always one of the highlights of the year. The 2013 meeting broke several records, including number of sponsors, amount of money raised and number of participating golfers. Featured in photos: Stacey and Tim Southerland (Logger of the Year), Congressman Steve Southerland and FFA President Lynetta Usher Griner; Michael Dooner (Southern Forestry Consultants) and Scott Sager (UF SFRC); and Donnie Fleming, Jim Crittenden, and Robert and Jeanette Cross (Arborgen).

FFA members raised more than $79,000 for Log a Load for Kids in 2013, for an overall total of nearly $1.8 million since 1995. Featured in photos: FFA member Harold Mikel and Rep. Beshears; Sen. Simpson and Alan Shelby (FFA Executive Vice President).

**Membership Meetings**

FFA will host two regional membership meetings in February. These events are designed to give our members the opportunity on a local level to network with other forestry professionals and fellowship with good friends.

At both meetings, the floor is open for discussion. Participants will have the opportunity to address issues of interest and concern, as well as provide invaluable input, to FFA officers and staff. Together, we will showcase the many benefits of belonging to FFA. Current members are encouraged to bring prospective members so they can also experience why FFA is the recognized leader in Florida in representing all facets of the forest industry.

Both meetings, which include lunch, will be held as follows:

**February 19** (Wednesday), 11:30 am–1:30 pm
Lake Alice @ Shadowlawn Farms, Penny Farms (Clay County), FL

**February 27** (Thursday), 11:30 am–1:30 pm
Neal’s Camp @ Neal Land & Timber Company, Inc., Scott Ferry (Calhoun County), FL

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Debbie Bryant at 850.222.5646. Invitations will be mailed to nearby members for each location, but an invitation is not required and all are welcome. Please note that there is no cost to attend, but RSVPs are required.

**Master Logger Update Schedule**

The 2014 schedule for Master Logger classes is as follows:

- **Feb. 22, 2014**
  8 AM - 12PM
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Branford, FL

- **May 14, 2014**
  8 AM - 12Pm
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Bryceville, FL

- **June 11-12, 2014**
  Time TBA
  2-Day Master Logger Workshop
  Quincy, FL

- **July 16, 2014**
  8 AM - 12PM
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Quincy, FL

- **October 15, 2014**
  8 AM - 12PM
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Perry, FL

- **November 12, 2014**
  8 AM - 12PM
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Gainesville, FL

- **December 10, 2014**
  8 AM - 12PM
  Master Logger Annual Update
  Lake City, FL

For more information, please contact Vickie Allen at 850.222.5646.