QDMA’s Land Certification Program – Frequently Asked Questions

Why did QDMA create the Land Certification Program (LCP)?
The QDMA created the LCP as a response to numerous member and landowner requests. Collectively, these individuals sought a means to:
- Determine if the property they owned, leased or managed met a baseline Quality Deer Management (QDM) standard; and
- Receive specific management recommendations on their hunting property from qualified QDM professionals; and
- Promote QDM and the QDMA in their area by displaying a sign that recognized their efforts.

What are the overall goals of QDMA’s Land Certification Program?
The LCP was developed to achieve the following objectives:
- Recognize the accomplishments of landowners and sportsmen implementing the four cornerstones of QDM throughout North America, as well as those committed to ethics, conservation and biodiversity through land stewardship; and
- Encourage management practices on participating lands that will enhance deer and other wildlife species, habitat conditions, and hunting experiences by providing incentives, recommendations and/or assistance; and
- Inspire others to engage in sound wildlife management and conservation of our natural resources.

What is QDMA’s Land Certification Program?
The LCP is a multi-level, voluntary process which evaluates one or more properties against an established list of standards, which include:

1. Commitment to QDMA, Ethics and Conservation
2. Compliance with Laws
3. Commitment to Safety
4. Commitment to Four Cornerstones of QDM
5. Herd Management Activities
6. Habitat Management Activities
7. Hunter Management Activities
8. Herd Monitoring Activities
9. Commitment to Excellence and Continued Improvement
10. Conservation of Biodiversity
11. Aesthetics
12. Special Sites Identification and Conservation
13. Air, Water and Soil Protection
14. Commitment to Long-term Habitat Protection and Conservation

Is there a beginning level to the QDMA Land Certification Program?
The QDMA Pledged Lands designation serves as the apprentice level for the LCP. It recognizes properties committed to QDM, the QDMA, wildlife laws and safety (Standards 1-4, see above). This designation does not require a written management plan or a site visit by qualified property inspector, thus properties that achieve Pledged Lands status are not certified. A self-application will be available; however, any applicant can bypass this level and apply directly for one of the certification levels if so desired.

What is the difference between the two certification levels of QDMA’s Land Certification Program?
The QDMA Certified Lands designation recognizes properties meeting the Pledged Lands requirements (Standards 1-4) as well as minimum qualifications for the four cornerstones of QDM (Standards 5-8). This designation requires a written, approved management plan and a site visit by a qualified property inspector.
The **QDMA Legacy Lands** designation recognizes properties that not only satisfy the requirements for Pledged and Certified Lands designation (Standards 1-8), but also meet minimum requirements for Standards 9-14. These properties exemplify the highest level of land protection, conservation, stewardship, and commitment to the preservation of our hunting heritage. This designation also requires a written, approved management plan and site visit by qualified property inspector.

**What written management plans will be accepted?**
Approved management plans include those obtained through the Forest Stewardship Program, American Tree Farm System, Natural Resource Conservation Service, private forest/wildlife consultants, and other plans deemed equivalent and approved by QDMA.

**Who are the qualified property inspectors?**
The QDMA will approve qualified property inspectors through professional standards and mandated training sessions. The list of approved inspectors will be updated from QDMA after each training sessions take place.

**Who is allowed to take the inspector training session?**
If you are interested in becoming an approved LCP property inspector, you can do so if you satisfy at least one of the following:
- Have an accredited college degree **AND** two years experience in forestry, wildlife, or another natural resource management field; **OR**
- Have completed QDMA Deer Steward II (or higher) course **AND** three years of wildlife and habitat management field experience¹.

Those not meeting the above guidelines but who wish to become eligible to participate must submit a written request outlining their qualifications and experience. QDMA shall review each submission on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility.

¹Wildlife management experience refers to actively managing wildlife population(s) at either the property or landscape level. Habitat management experience refers to personally manipulating vegetation species and composition at the property or landscape level in accordance with wildlife management prescriptions.

**Who is the Land Certification Program intended for?**
The target audience is single landowners, groups or QDM cooperatives, leased land holders, LLCs, companies, or similar legal entities.

**Who is the Land Certification Program NOT intended for?**
Although sportsman’s clubs are welcome to seek certification under the LCP, the QDMA will later unveil a program tailored specifically for Hunt Clubs as well as one designed for Outfitter and/or Guide services.

**Who helped develop the Land Certification Program?**
QDMA established a 17-member steering committee consisting of QDMA board members and staff, Branch/State Chapter members, small and large landowners, and representatives from the industrial forest industry, state and federal agencies, several natural resource consulting firms and a recreational real estate company. The committee contained a valuable mix of backgrounds and expertise, and included members from the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Midwest and Southwest regions of the U.S.

**Are there any other groups that support the QDMA Land Certification Program?**
The QDMA worked closely with the American Forest Foundation (AFF), which has certified nearly 90,000 properties under the American Tree Farm System, when developing the LCP.

**Do I need to own or manage a minimum acreage to apply in the QDMA Land Certification Program?**
No.
Will I be required to renew my certification in the Land Certification Program?
Yes, all designation levels are required to renew every 5 years.

What program elements will the QDMA national office produce?
The QDMA national office will facilitate the LCP application process, inspector training and distribution of approved lists, sign allocation, property audits and renewal notices.

What program elements will be delivered primarily by the local, qualified inspectors?
The local, qualified inspectors will visit your property, perform the inspection, and offer specific management recommendations. They may also be available to contract out some of the recommended services, such as writing management plans, food plot installation, forest management prescriptions, property mapping, etc.

Will the inspectors charge anything for their services?
They may or they may not, it will depend on the inspector you choose to call. Some may be free, some may charge travel costs, and others may charge a daily fee.

How do I get my property inspected through the Land Certification Program?
Getting your property inspected for both the Certified Lands and Legacy Lands designations will be easy. Just check out the list of qualified LCP inspectors on QDMA.com; or, if no one is available near you call the QDMA and ask to be placed on a waiting list. As we hold more training sessions in the future, there will be a growing supply of inspectors and will therefore offer more inspectors to choose from.

When will the Land Certification Program be launched?
The program was unveiled in August at the 2011 National Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, but was officially launched April 2012.

Are any components of the Land Certification Program available now?
Yes. On the QDMA website (Advanced Ed > Land Certification Program)

Who will run the Land Certification Program?
Matt Ross, a certified wildlife biologist and licensed forester, and QDMA’s Certification Programs Manager.

How do I get more information on the Land Certification Program?
For more information contact QDMA Certification Program Manager, Matt Ross (518-280-3714, mross@qdma.com).