SHAPING THE STANDARDS:
FOREST CERTIFICATION AS A SUSTAINABILITY SOLUTION

SFI STANDARDS REVISION UPDATE — MARCH 2021

Working together is critical to ensuring the sustainability of our planet. People and organizations are seeking solutions that go beyond limiting negative impacts to make positive contributions to the long-term health of the planet. Sustainable forests, and products sourced from those forests, are a great tool to move towards shared sustainability goals such as climate action, reduced waste, clean water, and economic development.

SFI standards, when leveraged with our three other pillars of work–conservation, community, and education–provide practical, scalable solutions for markets and communities working to pursue this growing commitment to a sustainable planet. When companies, consumers, educators, and community and sustainability leaders collaborate with SFI, they are making active, positive choices to achieve a sustainable future.

Through SFI standards, more forests are sustainably managed, which means more effort is put into conserving healthy wildlife, providing clean water, and making more sustainable wood, paper, and packaging products available for consumers and companies. Choosing SFI is a practical choice that helps combat climate change, conserve nature, and increase the number of products in the marketplace that have a positive impact on the planet.

A regular, transparent process for revision of the SFI standards is a critical part of SFI's commitment to continual improvement. By leveraging expertise across our network through focused engagement, and by including open comment periods, SFI creates standards that are grounded in science, include diverse perspectives, and benefit consumers, communities, and ultimately forests across the U.S. and Canada. This commitment to collaboration strengthens the positive impact of our standards in addressing sustainability challenges.

BETTER CHOICES FOR THE PLANET

SHAPING THE STANDARDS:
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SFI STANDARDS REVISION UPDATE—MARCH 2021

SFI 2022 Standards Revision and Task Group Process
TThe goal for the SFI standards revision process is to create standards that are grounded in science, include diverse perspectives, and benefit consumers, communities, and ultimately forests across the U.S. and Canada. To achieve this goal SFI ensured strong participation from a diverse group of individuals representing forest sector, brand owners, conservation groups, resource professionals, landowners, educators, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and universities. This diversity of engagement is reflected in the three SFI standard revision task groups.

In October 2019, SFI officially launched a two-year process for the SFI 2022 Standards Revision with a 30-day public comment period.
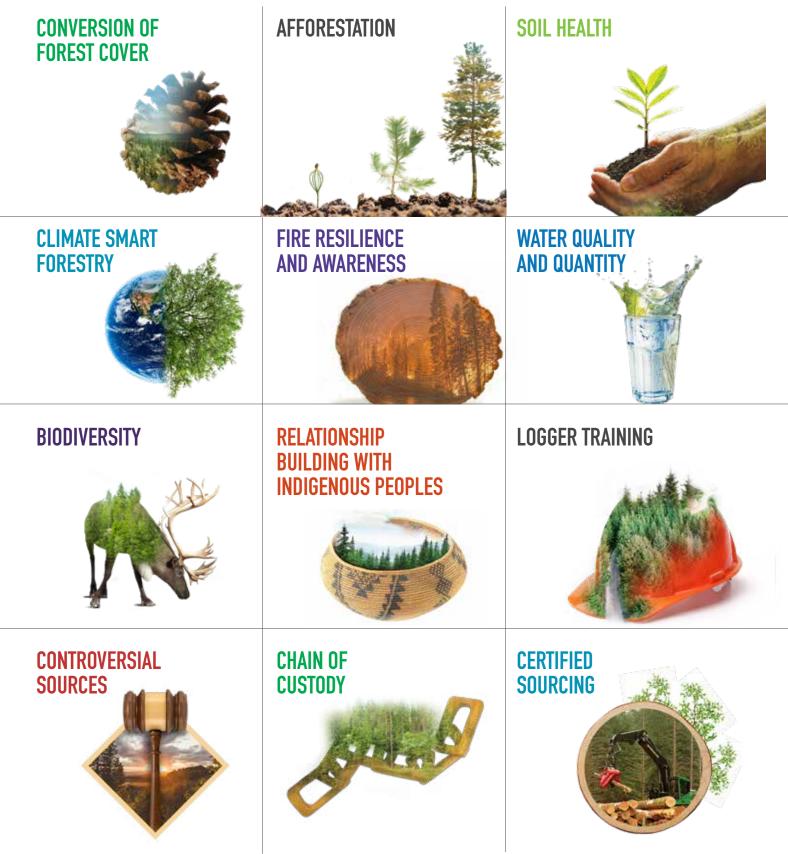
To facilitate the review of public comments and the development of working drafts of the SFI 2022 Standards, three Standards Revision Task Groups were created - Forest Management, Fiber Sourcing, and Chain of Custody and Label Use. The task group process started in January 2020 with in-person and Zoom meetings to review input from the first comment period create first drafts of the SFI 2022 Standard.

SFI conducted a second public comment on the draft 2022 SFI Standards from May 1–June 30, 2020,. To collect public input and comments, SFI hosted a series of ten themed webinars in May and June with high levels of attendance and participation. Nearly 2,300 individuals and organizations participated in webinars and/or submitted comments on the draft SFI 2022 standards.

From September to November, the task groups reviewed over 1,200 comments from the second public comment period. One of eight subgroups addressed comments on key topics such as forest conversion and afforestation, biodiversity conservation, recognizing and respecting Indigenous Peoples' rights, climate-smart forestry, logger training requirements in both the SFI Forest Management Standard and SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard, a new due diligence system to access risk of controversial sources in the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard, SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard, and SFI Certified Sourcing Standard. Subgroups reported to their respective task groups to discuss results andSFI-certified organizations were updated via webinar in December.

In January 2021, the Forest Management Task Group developed a new Forest Management Standard objective (Fire Resilience and Awareness) to address limiting susceptibility to the undesirable impacts of wildfire. The final draft SFI 2022 Standards was delivered to the SFI Resources Committee for review at their February 2021 meeting. At that meeting, the SFI Resources Committee decided to recommend to the SFI Board that they approve the SFI 2022 Standards.

SFI SOLUTIONS
NOW, MORE THAN EVER

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI 2022 STANDARDS

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
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CONVERSION OF FOREST COVER

AFFORESTATION

SOIL HEALTH

CLIMATE SMART FORESTRY

FIRE RESILIENCE AND AWARENESS

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

BIODIVERSITY

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

LOGGER TRAINING

CONTROVERSIAL SOURCES

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

CERTIFIED SOURCING

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI 2022 STANDARDS

FOREST CONSERVATION

CONVERSION OF FOREST COVER TYPES
OBJECTIVE 1, PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.2
SFI's requirements relative to forest conversion are critical to addressing climate change, preventing species loss, and depletion of water resources.

The SFI Forest Management Standard has two requirements to safeguard against the negative impacts of conversion of forest types.

1. Certified organizations must exclude any forestlands converted to non-forestland use from their SFI certificate to ensure that any fiber resulting from deforestation, does not count towards certified forest content in any SFI-labeled product.
2. The SFI standard requires certified organizations to conduct a landscape assessment to determine ecological impacts and prohibits conversion if there would be negative impact and requires appropriate justification for any conversion of one forest cover type to another forest cover type.

The enhancements made to this performance measure address situations when an SFI-certified organization considers converting one forest cover type to another forest cover type.

When considering a conversion of forest cover types, certified organizations must ensure the proposed conversion does not pose a threat to important ecological systems, species, or natural communities, including a provision to consider scale, which can constitute an inherent impact. Provided that this assessment determines there is no threat, the certified organization then must consider how the conversion could impact forest health, reforestation challenges and riparian protection. The assessment must consider ecological impacts, and impacts to site productivity, economics, or stand quality.

Finally, the assessment must consider if consultation with local communities, Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholders is required. Any conversion activity would require this level of assessment, and justification.

AFFORESTATION
OBJECTIVE 1, PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.4
Afforestation activities are generally viewed as favorable toward the environment, but it is important to ensure afforestation activities do not negatively impact ecologically important areas. A new performance measure ensures any proposed afforestation activity is assessed to determine if such activity could affect the presence of ecologically important communities, threatened and endangered species or native natural communities at risk of becoming rare. If any of these potential impacts are identified, the afforestation activity shall not occur.

SOIL HEALTH
OBJECTIVE 2, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2.3
Soil health is essential to forest productivity and ecosystem function. Healthy soils provide many functions including tree and plant growth, nutrient cycling, control of forest and plant pests, and the regulation of water and air resources. A new indicator requires the use of practices that protect and maintain soil health in addition to soil productivity. To assist certified organizations with implementing these practices new guidance was developed.

LANDSCAPE BIODIVERSITY
OBJECTIVE 4, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 4.1
SFI's requirements on landscape-level conservation help conserve biodiversity at that scale.

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Enhancements ensure that landscape-scale analyses and research inform management decisions at the landscape level. By linking management decisions to analyses of landscape conditions and biodiversity conservation goals, managers will be better able to respond to the needs of wide-ranging species, the distribution of ecologically important natural communities, and the role of the managed area toward attaining critical biodiversity outcomes. Further enhancements now call out the use of credible relevant planning and priority setting efforts to conserve biological diversity including Indigenous planning processes.

FORESTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL CONSERVATION VALUE OBJECTIVE 4, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 4.2, 4.3, AND 4.4

Species decline is a global concern, and SFI requires the protection of Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV), which are defined as forest areas harboring species and ecological communities that are imperiled or critically imperiled.

Specific requirements for attention to FECV provide assurance that forest managers will tailor strategies to protect such populations and natural communities as a specific obligation on their managed lands.

Enhancements to the standard were made to ensure the standard reinforces and clarifies conservation requirements relative to "ecologically important" sites and "ecologically important species" and "natural communities." This language provides greater clarity and consistency toward protective requirements relative to species and natural communities, replacing and expanding the former term "significant species of concern." The use, and associated guidance for "ecologically important" species and "natural communities" facilitates the ability of managers to address conservation of species considered vulnerable, locally rare, suffering decline, or otherwise at potential risk.

Further enhancements require application of knowledge gained from the results of monitoring the effectiveness of conservation-related programs when managing wildlife habitat and contributing to conservation of biological diversity. Additionally, a program is now required to incorporate data from field applications and ecosystem research results into forest management decisions.

LANDSCAPE BIODIVERSITY IN FIBER SOURCING FIBER SOURCING STANDARD–OBJECTIVE 1, PERFORMANCE MEASURE1.2

Non-certified landowners represent the majority of the fiber supply in the U.S. SFI pays special attention to these landowners through requirements in the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard.

A new requirement was added to the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard for SFI-certified organizations to conduct an assessment on FECVs across their wood and fiber supply area. This strengthens the standard's requirements for addressing conservation of biodiversity at both the local and landscape level.

Further edits ensure that the use of qualified logging professionals contributes to the recognition and protection of FECVs and ensures the promotion of conservation of FECV for purchased stumpage.

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WATER QUALITY AND WATER QUANTITY

OBJECTIVE 3, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 3.1 AND 3.2

Forests maintain and clean our water supplies. Water is a vital resource for both human communities, and for the preservation of aquatic species and ecosystems. Protection of water quality and quantity are both important for the effective protection and maintenance of water resources, and forests play a vital role in ensuring both. Forests protect groundwater by assuring healthy rates of filtering, infiltration, and evapotranspiration. Forests are at least as critical for filtering surface water, and many forested watersheds are vital to human health as a primary resource for downstream communities.

Edits were made that now distinguish the protection of water quality in one performance measure (3.1) while measures for protection of water, wetlands, and riparian buffers are included in another performance measure (3.2). Additionally, there is a new indicator for protection of water quantity during all phases of management. Guidance was developed to assist SFI-certified organizations with addressing these new requirements.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

OBJECTIVE 8–PERFORMANCE MEASURES 8.1 AND 8.2

SFI RESPECTS THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND BELIEVES OUR SHARED QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVES WHEN FORESTS ARE SUSTAINABLY MANAGED FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

These shared values allow for a strong and multi-faceted link between SFI and Indigenous communities across Canada and the U.S. and help support certified organizations in growing meaningful forest-focused relationships within their operating areas. The SFI Forest Management Standard is aligned with Indigenous values, including rights, knowledge, and environmental considerations.

Edits were made to Objective 8 that clarify the intent toward a meaningful process relative to relationship building and rights recognition. All certified organizations must:

- identify the Indigenous Peoples whose rights may be affected by the SFI-certified organization's forest management practices;
- determine the specific rights that may be affected by drawing on federal, provincial, state laws, and/or treaties and agreements between governments and Indigenous Peoples, and/or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- provide appropriate training so that all staff and contractors are competent to recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge for the purposes of Objective 8.

Certified organizations with management responsibilities on public lands are now required to implement additional requirements intended to further enhance their ability to build meaningful relationships with

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Indigenous Peoples within their operating areas. These measures include:

- promoting meaningful dialogue through respecting Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions and communications protocols;
- providing opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to review certified organizations' forest management practices and forest management plans;
- ensuring respect for Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge, including non-timber forest products and sites of spiritual, historical, and cultural importance; and
- developing additional guidance developed for certified organizations regarding approaches to identifying and implementing appropriate communications protocols.

SFI is developing tools that will assist certified organizations in training personnel and contractors, rights identification and recognition, and relationship building for the purposes of Objective 8.

CLIMATE CHANGE

OBJECTIVE 9–PERFORMANCE MEASURES 9.1, 9.2

FORESTS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND STORING CARBON
Given the increasing global impact of climate change, and increased understanding about the important role of forests, SFI developed a new objective focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The new objective requires certified organizations to individually or through cooperative efforts, such as the engagement of SFI Implementation Committees, identify and address climate change risks to forests and forest operations and develop adaptation objectives and strategies. Similarly, it requires certified organizations to identify and address opportunities to mitigate effects of climate change associated with forest operations. Guidance was developed to assist certified organizations in identifying options for addressing stored carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Additional requirements point to existing elements of the SFI Forest Management Standard that contribute favorably to the certified organization's adaptation plan as well as those that contribute to opportunities to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations.

Certified organizations will be required to report annually to SFI on progress toward achieving climate change strategies (9.1.4) and plans and measures to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations (9.2.4).

Finally, certified organizations are required to have a program to identify and address GHG emissions associated with forest operations within their operational control.

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FIRE RESILIENCE AND AWARENESS

OBJECTIVE 10 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES 10.1, 10.2

MITIGATING THE UNDESIRABLE IMPACTS OF WILDFIRE

The link between wildfires and climate is well-documented. The planet is warming with many regions in the United States and Canada experiencing increased incidence of wildfire and the undesirable impacts that result. Undesirable impacts are those which threaten public safety, human health, property, water quality and quantity, air quality, species habitat, or those which increase atmospheric carbon or have the capacity to destroy forests on a scale that significantly diminishes their inherent values.

Sustainable forest management can reduce risk of these undesirable impacts of wildfire. The new Objective 10 – Fire Resilience and Awareness – elevates SFI's role in addressing wildfire to ensure the efficacy of such efforts. The objective requires that Certified Organizations limit the susceptibility of the forests they own or manage to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of wildfire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.

The objective has two Performance Measures. Performance Measure 10.1 requires that on the forests they own or manage, Certified Organizations limit susceptibility to undesirable impacts of wildfire, promote healthy and resilient forest conditions through management techniques, actions and/or policies, and support restoration of forests following wildfire damage.

Performance Measure 10.2 requires that Certified Organizations individually or through cooperative efforts involving government agencies, SFI Implementation Committees, Project Learning Tree, or other partners, engage in efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of fire management and minimization of undesirable impacts of wildfire and take action to address these important topics.

Guidance has been developed to assist Certified Organizations with implementing the requirements of the objective.

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LOGGER TRAINING

FIBER SOURCING STANDARD–OBJECTIVES 3 & 6 (FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD– OBJECTIVE 13)

LOGGERS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE ON THE GROUND IMPLEMENTING THE SFI STANDARDS. LOGGER TRAINING HAS BEEN A KEY COMPONENT OF SFI SINCE 1995

Loggers who are aware of their responsibility as professionals are better equipped to protect the environment, underscoring the importance of logger training as a core requirement in both the SFI Forest Management Standard and SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard. By the end of 2019, 214,000 loggers and foresters had completed training programs approved by SFI Implementation Committees.

Requirements for promotion and use of qualified logging professionals, qualified resource professionals and certified logging companies are now in Objective 3 of the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard. A new performance measure (3.2) ensures certified organizations maximize the delivery of their raw materials from qualified logging professionals or certified logging companies.

All requirements for logger training are now in Objective 6. Performance Measure 6.2 is reorganized into two indicators, with Indicator 6.2.1 detailing the core training requirements needed to attain qualified logging professional status. Indicator 6.2.2 has the continuing education requirements needed to maintain qualified logging professional status. These enhancements add more structure to the qualified logging professional training requirements and raise the overall quality and impact of logger training.

The definition of "certified logging company" was updated to ensure the requirements for a certified logging company build on the already high level of training provided by qualified logging professional training programs. Specifically, key personnel are required to complete a SFI Implementation Committee approved qualified logging professional training program. Certified logging companies are required to hold independent, in-the-forest verification of conformance with a logger certification program.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS INVOLVING SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

The SFI Standards Revision Task Groups determined that using a cooperative approach where appropriate could result in efficiencies and consistency of application for the certified organizations. As such, the new Forest Management and Fiber Sourcing Standards stipulate several requirements that could be effectively addressed through cooperative efforts involving SFI Implementation Committees. Examples include working cooperatively to address conservation of biological diversity, climate-smart forestry, forest research, improvement in logger training, outreach to landowners, and implementing a risk assessment for the avoidance of controversial sources.

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DUE DILIGENCE SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

CUSTOMERS WANT TO KNOW THAT FIBER IN PRODUCTS DOES NOT COME FROM CONTROVERSIAL SOURCES

When procuring fiber, avoiding controversial sources is critical to achieving sustainability targets. Recognizing this, SFI developed a new definition of controversial sources along with expanded requirements for a due diligence system to assess the risk of controversial sources entering a certified organization's supply chain. SFI also has a unified approach to controversial sources and due diligence across all standards. This new requirement is in the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard, the SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard, and the new SFI Certified Sourcing Standard.

Guidance was developed for use by certified organizations when assessing the risk of controversial sources in their supply chain.

SFI CHAIN–OF–CUSTODY STANDARD

The SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard allows the tracking of forest fiber through harvesting to manufacturing and to the end product. It helps businesses prove to customers that their products are made using certified forest content, certified sourcing, or recycled content.

Edits were made to align more closely with the PEFC Chain-of-Custody Standard adding efficiencies for those certified organizations that are dual certified. This includes aligning terms such as "percentage" and "credit," extending the credit life for volume credit to 24 months, and adding requirements to address the handling of complaints.

The management system requirements (Part 8) were also edited to include a system to ensure compliance with applicable social laws, occupational health and safety legislation, and requirements for internal audits. Edits were made to clarify that internal audits will occur at least annually, and are conducted prior to an initial certificate audit, covering all standard requirements, and established corrective, and preventative actions.

Finally, edits were made to the requirements for outsourcing agreements (Part 9).

SFI CERTIFIED SOURCING STANDARD

Requirements for secondary producers to use the SFI Certified Sourcing Standard were previously located in an appendix to the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard. These requirements have now been moved into the new SFI Certified Sourcing Standard that allows users to better understand and communicate the value of the certified sourcing requirements. This will also improve the auditing of the certified sourcing requirements.

The standard has the same due diligence system requirements as the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard and SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard. The standard has a section with all requirements for the sale of products with the certified sourcing claims and/or label. The management system requirements were edited to include a system to ensure compliance with applicable social laws, and occupational health and safety legislation, requirements for internal audits, and requirements for outsourcing agreements.

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI 2022 STANDARDS

RULES FOR USE OF SFI ON-PRODUCT LABELS AND OFF-PRODUCT MARKS

This section was restructured to improve its utility for SFI-certified organizations and their customers. Requirements for label use approval by the SFI Office of Label Use and Licensing (Part 2) and requirements for SFI Claims and Labels (Part 3) are contained in their own parts of the document. Edits to the SFI Chain-of-Custody labels improve how the applicable labels can reflect recycled content. Finally, new statements are included for SFI-certified organizations to use in combination with SFI on-product labels and with promotional materials that may or may not include the SFI label. The statements are grouped by pillars and provide multiple options for users.

Another key enhancement is the development of a customer-focused document that summarizes the different label options by claim (or category of origin) and what SFI certification is needed to use the label(s).