



# **Guidance to SFI 2022 Standards and Rules (Section 7)**

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## Introduction

This guidance document is intended to assist *Certified Organizations* and *certification bodies* in interpreting and implementing new and existing provisions in the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*.

This document provides additional information that may help *Certified Organizations* make management decisions to meet *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* requirements. *SFI Inc.* routinely researches ways to improve the functionality of its work, thus this document may be updated over time. This guidance document is informative in nature and the information contained below should not be taken as normative.

## 1. Guidance for the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard

### Application of the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard, SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard and SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard

#### Scope of the SFI 2022 Forest Management and SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standards

The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standards* apply to management of and sourcing from forests throughout the United States and Canada where management intensities are characterized by managed natural forests and plantation *forestry*, regardless of the forest products derived from management of such forests. The figure (Figure 1) below illustrates the spectrum of forest management systems. The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* are intended to apply to forest management systems that are classified as natural forest systems, managed natural forests and plantation forests. Management operations that are classified as short rotation woody crops or agro-forestry are not within the scope of the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*.

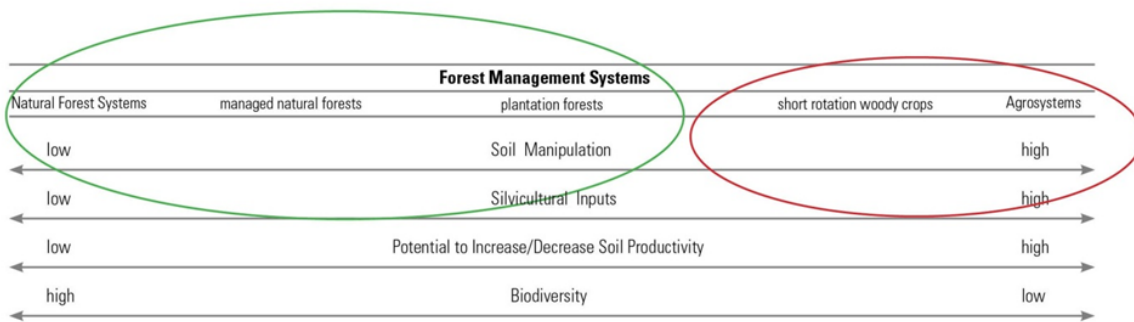


Figure 1. Spectrum of forest management systems (green circle) that qualify for certification to the *SFI 2022 Standards* (Adapted from Burger, 2002<sup>1</sup>).

### Objective 1. Forest Management Planning

<sup>1</sup> Burger, J. A. 2002. Soil and Long-Term Site Productivity Values. In: Richardson, J.; Bjorheden, R.; Hakkila, P.; Lowe, A. T.; and Smith, C. T. *Bioenergy from Sustainable Forestry: Guiding Principles and Practice*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 165-189.

## **Long-term Sustainable Harvest Levels**

### **Determining the Most Appropriate Geographic Scale**

Objective 1 Performance Measure 1.1 requires long-term harvest levels that are sustainable and consistent with appropriate *growth and yield models*. Indicator 1.1.1 lists items required in forest management planning “at a level appropriate to the size and scale of the operation”, with 1.1.1(d) requiring that “*biodiversity* at the *stand* and *landscape* scale” be factored into forest management planning decision-making. From these requirements it can be inferred that a *Certified Organization* must base their *long-term* sustainable harvest level planning at a geographic scale that accurately reflects forest growth and yield and conservation of biodiversity. Likewise, the requirement that forest management planning shall ensure *long-term* (one rotation or greater) sustainable harvest levels requires planning to occur on forest types in similar biological, geological, and climatic areas.

### **Acquisitions and Sustainable Harvest Planning**

A *Certified Organization* with a prolonged, accelerated harvest level in one operational region cannot offset a *long-term* unsustainable level of harvests through land acquisition. This practice does not meet the spirit and intent of SFI certification and to allow this practice could result in an imbalance in forest age classes and species composition in certain portions of the *Certified organization’s* lands, which in turn could have significant negative impacts on the conservation of *biological diversity* contrary to Indicator 1.1.1 (d), which requires that forest management planning consider *biodiversity* at the *stand* and *landscape* scale. Any acquired lands should be integrated into the organization’s forest management planning, and the organization should recalculate appropriate long-term harvest levels that are sustainable and consistent with accepted growth and yield models by operational region.

### **Temporal Scale**

It is SFI’s expectation that certification bodies shall audit sustainable harvest levels based on the criteria specified in Performance Measure 1.1, taking into account the maintenance of *landscape* level *biodiversity*, and confirming that any increases in planned harvest level(s) are consistent with the *Certified Organization’s* forest management plan. Additionally, sustainable harvest levels or government regulated allowable annual harvest should not be exceeded for extended periods of time unless a substantive ecological rationale is developed to justify the elevation, examples of which could include a response to forest health emergencies such as beetle epidemics or sanitation logging of forests impacted by catastrophic wildfire, ice storm or wind damage. In instances where harvest levels are exceeded for extended periods, a documented plan must be in place to demonstrate how harvest planning will achieve a return to the long-term sustainable harvest levels over one rotation.

### **Record Retention**

The requirements of Objective 1, Performance Measure 1.1 address the need to have a *long-term* resources analysis, *forest inventory*, *growth-and-yield modeling* capabilities, and recommended sustainable harvest levels for areas available for harvest. Likewise, Indicator 1.1.2 requires that “documented current harvest trends fall within *long-term* sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan” and Indicator 1.1.4 requires “periodic updates of

*forest inventory* and recalculation of planned harvests to account for changes in growth due to *productivity* increases or decreases.”

Forest management plans by their very nature are adjusted as needed to reflect changes in factors such as inventory, growth and yield modeling capabilities, growing stock, harvest levels and the cyclical nature of the forest products market. To ensure effective decision making regarding *long-term* sustainable harvest levels, a *Certified Organization* must be able to assess the accuracy of past planning inputs and decisions made through appropriate document retention. It is expected that a *Certified Organization* has the ability to look backwards over a sufficiently long timeframe in order to inform its future forest management planning.

## **Social, Environmental, and Economic Effects of Forest Management Operations**

Indicator 1.1.6 requires that a *Certified Organization* consider the local or regional social, environmental, and economic effects of forest management operations contained in their forest management plans. The “consideration” required in Indicator 1.1.6 does not necessarily require a formal assessment, but *Certified Organizations* should show evidence of having developed an understanding of the potential social, environmental, and economic effects of implementation of forest management planning appropriate to the size and scale of the operation.

## **Conversion**

### **Conversion of One *Forest Cover Type* to Another *Forest Cover Type***

The intent of Performance Measure 1.2 is to outline the limitations on conversion and the due diligence process to be followed when converting to a different *forest cover type*. Limitations exist where the conversion is unlawful, threatens rare and ecologically important *native* forest types, or where *long-term* adverse impacts are expected on species, *habitats* or *special sites* already protected by the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*.

In situations where a *Certified Organization* intends to convert from one *forest cover type* to another *forest cover type*, the *Certified Organization* is expected to demonstrate proficiency of assessment of the conditions outlined in *Indicator 1.2.2*.

The formality of the assessment has not been prescribed and therefore, *Certified Organizations* are able to structure the assessment in accordance with the scope and scale of their organization and scale of the intended conversion.

*Certified Organizations* are encouraged to consider ways in which to conduct the required assessments in the most efficient ways possible. For example, if a particular scenario of conversion and assessment repeats regularly in the area of management responsibility, a single assessment of that repeating scenario may suffice, and be applied to appropriate situations when they arise. Another potential means to achieve efficiency could be to collaborate with other *Certified Organizations*, or within *SFI Implementation Committees* that encounter similar circumstances throughout their areas of operation — in such cases, assessments could be conducted collaboratively and applied by participating *Certified Organizations* under appropriate circumstances. Such means may be employed as appropriate to obviate the need for a new

assessment each time a *Certified Organization* encounters relatively common and similar circumstances.

It is not the intent of Performance Measure 1.2 to limit activities that are of ecological benefit, such as returning a site to a historical *forest cover type*, responding to *forest health* concerns, or mitigating present or future environmental harm (e.g., *climate change*). To be consistent with the intent of Performance Measure 1.2, any proactive conversion of *forest cover types* intended to mitigate the future impacts of climate change, or to limit susceptibility to pathogens, insect infestations, etc. must first meet the two-filter test, and further be supported by best available scientific information. Similarly, this Performance Measure 1.2 should not be construed to limit conversion of *forest cover types* in ways that fundamentally reflect (or effectively accelerate) the natural order of succession of *native forest cover types*, or which result in restoration of ecologically significant forest cover types or conditions.

In situations where a *Certified Organization* proposes a site for conversion from one forest cover type to another forest cover type, the *Certified Organization* is expected to demonstrate proficiency of assessments outlined in Indicator 1.2.2., and to further demonstrate that these conditions are fully met before further consideration is given to the potential for conversion at the site level.

If the conditions noted under Indicator 1.2.1 are met, then the *Certified Organization* must further meet the conditions and justifications noted under Indicator 1.2.2., in order to move forward with conversion of forest types — so that these requirements are essentially hierarchical in application.

Relative to application of Indicator 1.2.2, conversion objectives should include stand- and landscape-level outcomes generally consistent with the natural distribution of forest cover types and structural composition at the landscape scale. Supporting assessments and spatial analyses are consistent with the requirements under Objective 4.

There may be circumstances under which an ecologically important native forest cover type could be considered for conversion. A possible example could be limited conversion of a bottomland hardwood stand to loblolly pine — a species that is more economically justified for the site. In this instance, bottomland hardwood may be considered an ecologically important native forest cover type, although it still occurs extensively across the landscape. Such conversion could be allowable under limited circumstances, if justified for economic reasons, provided that such conversion would not put native forest cover types, or Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV), at risk. An important determinant in this instance is the scale of the conversion — this should be fully explored in the required assessments to provide assurance that the scale of the proposed conversion does not generate undue risk to FECV, or to the perpetuation of the native forest cover type itself. The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* is intended to safeguard such ecologically important natural communities, so that forest managers must carefully consider impacts prior to approval of any such conversion.

Indicator 1.2.2d notes the need for “appropriate consultation” with local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other *stakeholders* who could be affected by such activities, including adjacent ownerships. Landowners must recognize the societal context of managed forests within landscapes, and consider *stakeholder* concerns, if any, when determining scale and

impact of the proposed conversion. “Appropriate consultation” includes the possibility that circumstances of any particular conversion proposal may not merit any consultation (i.e., that consultation is not necessary, and therefore no consultation is appropriate). For example, if the project is sufficiently remote, it may occur beyond the range of impact to any local community or group. Therefore, with sufficient explanation and justification, the *Certified Organization* may determine to forego consultation.

In the event that “appropriate consultation” suggests the need for consultation, such consultation should help to gauge possible impacts of conversion on local values — recreation, aesthetics, cultural, etc. Such consultation becomes increasingly critical with the scale of the proposed conversion, but there is no specific prescription for a threshold of size of conversion that should trigger the consultation.

### **Conversion of Forest Land to Another Land Use**

The intent of Performance Measure 1.3 is to ensure that forest land that is being converted to non-forest land uses is appropriately scoped out of *SFI* certificates. Two basic tenets establish the rationale for this *Performance Measure*. First, forest land that is being converted to non-forest land uses would not likely meet any of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* requirements (prompt *reforestation*, *biodiversity*, etc.) and therefore could not be certified under the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*.

Second, fiber (roundwood and/or chips) from forest land being converted to non-forest land uses cannot be counted as *certified forest content* in any product bearing an *SFI* label (see definition of *conversion sources*).

### **Scope of Certification**

Notwithstanding the tenets listed in the Control of Decision Making section of this guidance, the issue with conversion to non-forest land use is really a question of which lands are eligible to be within the scope of a *Certified organization’s SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* certificate. There is no limit on the percentage of land that can be scoped out of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* certificate. However, it is important to ensure that forest land within the scope of the *Certified organization’s SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* certificate continues to be managed as forest land consistent with the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*. In some circumstances forest land designated for sale may not sell in the short term nor is there certainty that these forest lands will be converted to another land use by the purchaser. As such, the *Certified Organization* should continue to manage these forest lands in conformance with the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* until a sales contract has been executed. Once a sales contract is executed, the *Certified Organization* should scope out the lands that will be sold.

*Certified Organizations* are not restricted in their decision making regarding the purchase of or sale of forest land or the movement of forest land (or the quantity) in or out of the scope of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* certificate. *Certification bodies* must ensure that lands within the scope of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* audit are being managed in conformance with the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* to *protect* the integrity of the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*. Furthermore, *certification bodies* and *Certified Organizations* must ensure that there is absolute clarity on which forest lands – whether owned, managed or

controlled (see Control of Decision Making below) – are included in the scope of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate*.

### **Control of Decision Making**

The issue of control of decision making by the *Certified Organization* is the central factor when determining which forest land should be scoped out of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate*. When a *Certified Organization* knowingly intends to convert forest land to a non-forest land use and has control over the process, then the forest lands should be scoped out of the certificate when the decision is made to convert.

The example above where forest land is being sold or purposefully converted to non-forest land use is relatively straight-forward when it comes to identifying who has control of decision making. However, there are other examples where control of management practices is less clearly defined or where control over decisions regarding forest land use shifts to a different party after a fixed period of time. Examples of these more ambiguous circumstances include *long-term* leases and timber deeds.

Like the forest land sale example, the decision whether to scope forest land in or out of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate* still rests with the organization who has control over decisions related to management of the forest land in conformance with the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*. More specifically, if a *Certified Organization* has forest management authority over Objective 1 of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* then such lands can remain within the scope of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate* until such time as control of forest management decisions is relinquished. Likewise, in the case of *long-term* leases or timber deeds; if a *Certified Organization* has a reasonable expectation the lands will remain in a forested condition after their lease or deed expires, then such lands can remain within the scope of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate* until such time as control of forest management decisions is relinquished.

Mining and drilling activities are other examples of where *Certified Organizations* may have control over forest management but may not have control over the ultimate fate of the land use. In this example, so long as the *Certified Organization* is not the party deciding to mine or drill or has not engaged into a contractual relationship with a third-party to do so, then lands being managed in accordance with the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* may remain within the scope of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate* until such time as forest management control is relinquished.

### **Accounting for Non-Certified Forest Content**

Despite efforts to scope out forest lands intended to be converted to non-forest land uses, small parcels of land intended for conversion may remain in the scope of an *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard certificate* (e.g., utility right-of-way, well drilling pad). Accounting for the *conversion sources* from such small inclusions within a larger SFI-certified forest may be impracticable. In order to meet the spirit and intent of Performance Measure 1.3, *Certified Organizations* should make reasonable efforts to separate *conversion sources* from *certified forest content* where the volume of *conversion sources* is more than a minimal amount (e.g., 1% of the harvested volume).



## **Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity**

### **Prohibited Chemicals**

The intent of Performance Measure 2.2 is to *minimize* the chemical use required to achieve management *objectives* while ensuring the protection of employees, the public and the environment, including *wildlife* and *aquatic habitats*. To ensure these results are achieved, the use of forest management pesticides must follow federal, state, and local laws; the label instructions, and be implemented with proper equipment and training. Furthermore, pesticides, such as chlorinated hydrocarbons whose derivatives remain biologically active beyond their intended use, as well as pesticides banned by international agreement, are prohibited for use by *Certified Organizations*. This last requirement is addressed by Indicators 2.2.5 and 2.2.6.

Indicator 2.2.5: The World Health Organization (WHO) type 1A and 1B pesticides shall be prohibited, except where no other viable alternative is available.

It is the responsibility of the *Certified Organization* to ensure that any chemical use in forest management avoids the use of chemicals on the WHO type 1A and 1B list of prohibited chemicals. In the rare exception where a *Certified Organization* believes a variance on the prohibition on the use of a WHO type 1A and 1B chemical is warranted, the *Certified Organization* will submit their rationale to their *certification body* for approval. The *certification body* will then monitor the chemical usage approved under this variance, should this variance be approved. ([WHO list of prohibited type 1A and 1B chemicals](#))

Indicator 2.2.6: Use of pesticides banned under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) shall be prohibited.

It is the responsibility of the *Certified Organization* to ensure that any chemical use in forest management complies with the ban on the use of chemicals under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001). There is no option of a variance for the use of chemicals banned under the Stockholm Convention (2001). ([List of chemicals banned under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants](#))

### **Soil Health**

Performance Measure 2.3 now includes requirements to implement *practices* which *protect* and maintain forest *soil health*, in addition to soil *productivity*. This guidance is intended to suggest some potential *practices* that could be considered by *Certified Organizations*, which can serve to maintain those values.

The way in which forests are managed can improve or degrade the quality or health of forest soils, which represent a complex ecosystem which includes living microorganisms, minerals, and organic matter. Together, this dynamic medium serves to regulate water, air, and nutrients, and thus interplays directly with health of the forest ecosystem. Healthy soils provide many functions that support plant growth, including nutrient cycling, biological control of plant pests, and regulation of water and air supply. These functions are influenced by the interrelated physical, chemical, and biological properties of soil, many of which are sensitive to soil

management practices (primary source: [PennState Extension—Managing Soil Health: Concepts and Practices](#)).

*Soil health* is essential to forest *productivity*, and ecosystem function. Managing for *soil health* (improved soil function) is mostly a matter of maintaining suitable *habitat* for the diversity of organisms that depend on it. This can be accomplished by minimizing soil disturbance, ensuring plant diversity, maintaining vegetative cover, and avoiding serious alterations to soil chemistry.

*Practices* which limit soil disturbance, exposure and/or chemical alteration will be key to maintaining *soil health*. In many cases, such *practices* are likely to be consistent with *best management practices* for water quality (Performance Measure 3.1), *practices* which maintain water quantity (Performance Measure 3.2), or *practices* relative to appropriate use of chemicals and pesticides (Performance measure 2.2). However, additional practices to maintain *soil health* may also be considered by forest managers during potentially impactful activities such as road or skid trail construction, harvesting or yarding activities, herbicide, or pesticide application, etc. To meet the intent of this indicator, managers should be able to offer some evidence of having considered whether additional measures may have been appropriate to meet the particular circumstances of site conditions and activities, in order to minimize adverse impacts to *soil health*. As a practical matter, *Certified Organizations* will have to weigh *soil health* measures in the context of overall forest management objectives, recognizing that such measures need to be balanced with related objectives ranging from water quality to productive capacity of the site and maintaining a diversity of species on the managed area.

### **Objective 3. Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources**

#### **Water Quantity**

The intent of Performance Measure 3.2.2 is to have a *program* to address management and protection of water quantity during all phases of management. Protecting and maintaining water quantity benefits a range of water-related ecosystem services provided by forests, including flood regulation, *aquatic habitat*, water filtration and storage, and ensuring a good supply of healthy drinking water. Water quantity and quality are closely linked and *practices* already in place to *protect* and maintain water quality are important for protecting and maintaining water quantity. Developing, documenting, and implementing a water quantity *program* will help reinforce the important role *Certified Organizations* can play in positively or adversely affecting water quantity.

Water quantity is the timing and total yield of water from a watershed. It is affected by the hydrologic regime (e.g., precipitation amount, intensity, and type (rain or snow), watershed characteristics (e.g., geology and soils, aspect and slope, and vegetation), climate (e.g., evaporation), *forest health* (impacts of wildfire, disease, pests) and forest management activities (e.g., road building, harvest and stand management, *reforestation*) and varies naturally within and between years.

Managing for water quantity requires an understanding of the natural and man-made features and activities that may contribute to success. For example, considering other land use activities as laid out in state or provincial watershed management plans or recognizing the important role

of *riparian areas* and *wetlands* toward protecting water quantity and quality can guide forest management activities to manage effects to water quantity. This includes activities such as the timing of road/trail construction or harvesting activities, design of *wetland* crossings.

The intent of including water quantity in the Forest Management Standard Objective 3 is to increase the awareness of watershed features and forest management activities that may influence water quantity and to promote implementation of *practices*, appropriate to the size and scale of the *Certified Organization*, that help to maintain a natural range of variation while avoiding or minimizing negative effects.

### **Forest Management Impacts on Water Quantity**

Forest management including road/trail development, forest harvest, and *reforestation* activities can influence water quantity. The potential effects of these activities on water quantity are influenced by regional characteristics such as the amount of annual precipitation, slope, soils, and vegetation, and can vary locally depending on factors such as the proportion of a watershed harvested. For example, forest harvest in a watershed that has steep slopes with high annual precipitation has a greater potential for water yield impacts, as compared to a watershed with flat terrain and low annual precipitation.

Road/skid trail location and density also can alter stream flow characteristics, resulting in higher peak flows from reduced water infiltration, blocked subsurface flow, and faster water delivery to streams via roadside ditches. Additionally, roads with water, *wetland*, and *riparian area* crossings can block surface flow if they are not designed and built to accommodate the natural flow characteristics.

Forest harvests can contribute to increased run-off. In general, runoff and stream flow, increase in proportion to the amount of land harvested in a watershed.

Water quantity is also influenced by position of harvest within the watershed, silvicultural system, and harvesting *practices* used. Harvesting operations that maximize the retention of forest floor vegetation and non-merchantable timber within the harvest area and that minimize soil rutting and compaction help reduce surface runoff and potential for increased stream flow following harvest. Prompt *reforestation* can minimize or mitigate the effects of forest harvest on water quantity.

*Certified Organizations* can reference state, provincial, or other relevant watershed plans and indicate how their forest management plans and activities may support relevant plan objectives at a level appropriate to the size and scale of the *Certified Organization's* operations.

On public lands, *Certified Organizations* can indicate how their forest management plans and activities are consistent established government agency requirements and guidelines, rate of harvest criteria, and other relevant watershed plans.

Components to be considered in a *program* could include mapping and identifying watershed features that contribute to water quantity (e.g., lakes, streams, *riparian areas*, *wetlands*, *vernal pools*, beaver ponds), *practices* that maintain natural drainage patterns and minimize adverse effects of roads and skid trails on water yield, harvesting *practices* that minimize ground disturbance and retain non-merchantable timber or other vegetative cover, *practices* that

*protect* and maintain soil *productivity* and *soil health*, and prompt *reforestation* where consistent with other *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard Objectives*. The *program* can also include meeting or exceeding applicable *best management practices* for protecting and maintaining water quality in ways that contribute to protecting and maintaining water quantity.

## **Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity**

### ***Conservation of Biological Diversity***

The intent of Performance Measure 4.1 is to ensure that *Certified Organizations* utilize the *best scientific information* to inform action at multiple scales, for purposes of *biodiversity conservation*. The individual Indicators specify the means by which this should be executed.

Several indicators suggest the use of *best scientific information*. This is intended to drive the utilization of credible sources to determine *landscape* level priorities, to facilitate assessments and ultimately to maximize the potential of the managed area to contribute to *landscape* level *biodiversity*, within the context of management objectives. Credible sources of science information could include (but are not limited to) The Nature Conservancy ecoregional plans, NatureServe biodiversity metrics, or other credible sources.

Assessments conducted under Performance Measure 4.1, or any assessments consulted to meet the requirements of Performance Measure 4.1, should inform efforts to maintain or advance *biodiversity conservation* at multiple scales, including *landscape* scale. Indicator 4.1.3 references documentation of *biodiversity* at *landscape* and ownership levels, and incorporation of such documentation “to ensure the contribution of the managed area to the diversity of conditions that promote *biodiversity*.” Such documentation is increasingly available through remote sensing sources, NatureServe biodiversity metrics (a project of SFI), The Nature Conservancy, Forest Inventory and Analysis (U.S.) and/or Canadian Forest Service. It also may be possible for a *Certified Organization* to develop its own documentation of diversity at this scale, though credibility is likely to be enhanced by participating in a broader collaborative process.

To achieve the intended goal of contributing to *biodiversity conservation* at *landscape* scale, managers will need to evaluate the required “documentation of *biodiversity* at *landscape* and ownership/tenure levels” in the context of their own management strategies and objectives, to determine if there may be opportunities to fill gaps in *biodiversity* outcomes, or to provide certain forest composition, age-classes or conditions that may be lacking on the *landscape*. The “planning and priority-setting efforts” cited in Indicator 4.1.4 are intended to be informative to this effort, by helping managers understand *conservation* priorities that have been independently and scientifically established, and “incorporating results” into their own planning. The list of credible sources for such analyses provided in Indicator 4.1.4 is intended to aid in that process — these sources often intersect or dovetail with the *landscape biodiversity* assessments noted above.

Another credible prioritization effort at large scale is the “Forests for the Birds” project, collaboratively developed by SFI, the American Bird Conservancy, and multiple *Certified Organizations*. Incorporation of the results of this project should be considered appropriate to

meet the intent of Indicator 4.1.4 by informing management strategies for conservation of wide-ranging bird species.

Certain commonly understood forest metrics, such as stand age, and size-class distribution, can be valuable elements of credible analyses to better understand the contributions of a given managed area to *biodiversity conservation*. Certain imperiled species, such as Red Cockaded Woodpecker (in the U.S. South), may have life cycle requirements related to tree size and distribution — in this case, larger diameter trees. Analysis and incorporation therefore could include assessment of range maps or habitat prediction models of species that may be dependent on such conditions. In this way, managers can develop strategies to enhance habitat for species with known requirements, and potentially elevate the contribution of their managed area toward landscape goals, within the context of overall management objectives, using well-established metrics beyond just the *forest cover type*.

An advantage of using credible planning and priority-setting frameworks, such as those noted above, is that multiple elements and scales of *biodiversity* analysis are already inherent to these constructs. For example, the NatureServe *biodiversity* metrics approach (a project in collaboration with SFI and multiple *Certified Organizations*) includes metrics relative to “*landscape condition*” and “*species assemblages*,” effectively addressing “*connectivity*” and “*natural communities*” respectively. The metric of “*Landscape Spatial Pattern*” effectively speaks to both “*fragmentation*” and “*connectivity*” as inherent attributes of *biodiversity* at multiple scales.

Analyses of *landscape* conditions and opportunities may be conducted collaboratively by multiple *Certified Organizations*, or in partnership with *SFI Implementation Committees* that operate across multiple certified ownerships. Such assessments may facilitate the ability of forest managers to address *landscape scale conservation* or *biodiversity* assessments more efficiently, facilitating the ability of managers to implement strategies that improve such outcomes, while remaining true to the diverse management objectives of individual *Certified Organizations*.

### ***Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value***

Objective 4 of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* extends the *biodiversity* requirements to *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* (FECV).

Indicator 4.2.2: *Program* to locate and *protect* known sites flora and fauna associated with viable occurrences of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and communities also known as *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*. Plans for *protection* may be developed independently and/or collaboratively and may include *Certified Organization* management, cooperation with other *stakeholders*, or use of easements, *conservation* land sales, exchanges, or other *conservation* strategies.

Definition of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*: *critically imperiled* (G1) and *imperiled* (G2) species and ecological communities.

***Critically imperiled***: A plant or animal or community, often referred to as G1, that is globally extremely rare or, because of some factor(s), especially vulnerable to extinction. Typically, five

or fewer occurrences or populations remain, or very few individuals (<1,000), acres (<2,000 acres or 809 hectares), or linear miles (<10 miles or 16 kilometers) exist.

***Imperiled:*** A plant or animal or community, often referred to as G2, that is globally rare or, because of some factor(s), is very vulnerable to extinction or elimination. Typically, six to 20 occurrences, or few remaining individuals (1,000 to 3,000), or acres (2,000 to 10,000 acres or 809 to 4047 hectares), or linear miles (10 to 50 miles or 16 to 80.5 kilometers) exist.

In the United States and Canada, *Certified Organizations* can use the NatureServe database to identify species and communities for *protection*. Learn more about [NatureServe Conservation Status Assessments](#).

## **NatureServe Resources for Global and Occurrence Ranks**

Identification and *protection* of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled species* and communities is a stepwise process. First, NatureServe determines the global rank, which reflects the rarity/imperilment of the species or community. Then it assesses the estimated viability, or probability of persistence, of particular occurrences of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled species* and communities. A viable species or community is one that is of sufficient quality to likely survive *long-term*. Clearly, little *conservation* benefit is gained unless protected occurrences have a good likelihood of *long-term* survival.

NatureServe inventory and *conservation* activities focus on locating, maintaining records on, and working with partners to conserve viable occurrences of *conservation* elements. NatureServe/Natural Heritage Programs rank viability of element occurrences (community or species) using standard methodologies to yield an element occurrence ranking. A standard set of Element Occurrence Rank Specifications is developed and maintained for each element, and then applied against individual occurrences of the element.

The basic element occurrence ranks are:

- A: Excellent estimated viability
- B: Good estimated viability
- C: Fair estimated viability
- D: Poor estimated viability
- E: Verified extant (viability not assessed)
- H: Historical
- F: Failed to find
- X: Extirpated

The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* requires that *Certified Organizations* have a "Program to address *conservation* of *ecologically important species* and *natural communities*, including those that are locally rare."

Under the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*, occurrences of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled species* and communities ranked as A and B are to be protected. C-ranked occurrences should be reviewed and addressed on a case-by-case basis. If they have greater potential to be viable (C+), they should be protected. If there is less potential for viability (C-), they are to be managed at the *Certified Organization's* discretion.

Element occurrences with poor estimated viability (D) would not be protected under the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*. A D rank might result because the acreage of a community or the population of a species is too small, the quality is very low, and/or the ecological processes required to maintain the occurrence are fundamentally altered and un-restorable. E-ranked occurrences (viability not assessed) should be presumed viable and protected until assessed and determined to be of C- or D quality. Occurrences ranked F are not covered under the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* since only known occurrences are included. Historical (H) and extirpated (X) occurrences are clearly nonviable, and no *protection* activity is warranted.

In determining the viability and potential to *protect* occurrences, *Certified Organizations* are encouraged to seek [additional information on occurrence ranking](#) from NatureServe and/or collaborate with qualified *conservation* experts.

## Occurrence Quality

The following material provides additional information on the standards and methodologies employed by NatureServe in determining the quality or viability of occurrences.

For an ecological assessment, scientists and managers want to know if each occurrence is of sufficient quality, or feasibly restorable, before including it in management planning. With adequate information, ecologists evaluate and rate the quality of element occurrences using criteria grouped into three categories: size, condition, and *landscape* context.

Characterizing the quality of an occurrence provides the basis for assessing stresses – the degradation or impairment – of element occurrences at a given site. To assess the quality of element occurrences, ecologists must identify the key ecological factors (ecological processes, population abundance, disturbance regimes, composition, and structure, etc.) that support them. Once these are identified, it is possible to describe their expected ranges of variation and assess whether the on-site factors are within those ranges or requires significant effort to be maintained or restored to its desired status.

Key ecological factors vary by element type, but all are grouped into three categories of size, condition and *landscape* context. Each of these three categories is reviewed and ranked for each occurrence as A (excellent), B (good), C (fair) and D (poor). The break between C and D establishes a minimum quality threshold for occurrences. Occurrences ranked D are typically presumed to be beyond practical consideration for ecological restoration. In subsequent management planning, these ranks and underlying criteria aid in focusing *conservation* activities and measure progress toward local *conservation* objectives.

Definitions of these categories are:

**Size** is a measure of the area or abundance of the *conservation* element's occurrence. It may simply be a measure of the occurrence's patch size or geographic coverage, and it may also include an estimate of sub-population size or density. Minimum dynamic area, one aspect of size, is the area needed to ensure survival or re-establishment of a population or community after natural disturbance.

**Condition** is an integrated measure of the composition, structure and biotic interactions that characterize the occurrence. This includes factors such as reproduction, age structure, biological composition (e.g., presence of *native* versus *invasive species*; presence of characteristic patch types), physical and spatial structure (e.g., canopy, understory, and groundcover; spatial distribution and juxtaposition of patch types or seral stages in an ecological system), and biotic interactions that directly involve the element (e.g., competition and disease).

**Landscape context** measures two factors: the dominant environmental regimes and processes that establish and maintain the element occurrence, and connectivity. Dominant environmental regimes include hydrologic and water chemistry regimes (surface and groundwater), geomorphic processes, climatic regimes (temperature and precipitation), fire regimes, and natural disturbances. Connectivity includes such factors as species elements having access to *habitats* and resources needed for lifecycle completion, fragmentation of ecological communities and systems, and the ability of any element to respond to environmental change through dispersal, migration, or re-colonization. Criteria for ranking ecological communities vary by type. In many instances, criteria are developed for ecological systems, then modified (mostly with size attributes) for application to occurrences of individual rare plant associations that may occur among the more broadly defined ecological system.

### **Guidance on Incorporation of Ecosystems in the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard***

In the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* the term “ecosystem” or “ecosystems” is referenced in several different *objectives* and *indicators*, yet guidance on how the concept of ecosystems should be integrated into *sustainable forestry* is lacking. Ecosystems represent the integration of biotic (e.g., plants, animals) and abiotic (e.g., soils, water) elements of the environment. In the context of *sustainable forestry* key components of ecosystems include: 1) forest composition; 2) forest structure; 3) connectivity across *landscapes*; and 4) how ecological processes like competition, nutrient cycling, or herbivory influence the sustainability of forest ecosystems.

*Sustainable forestry* is based on applying management at multiple scales with most *Certified Organizations* operating at *stand* to *landscape* scales. The guidance provided is not a template for ecosystem management. Rather, currently accepted *SFI* definitions and approved elements of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* are relied on to demonstrate how ecosystems are an integral component of sustainable forest management. The guidance is consistent with the four aforementioned components of ecosystems: 1) forest composition, 2) forest structure, 3) connectivity, and 4) ecological processes.

### **Integrating the Biotic and Abiotic Elements of the Environment**

The combination of *forest cover type* and soils maps, supplemented by non-timber information like *non-forested wetlands* and *Forests with Exception Conservation Value*, provide the foundation for *landscape* scale mapping and planning that incorporates ecosystems into sustainable forest management for *Certified Organizations*. These organizations are required to have a *land classification* system (Indicator 1.1.1c), soils inventory and maps, where available (Indicator 1.1.1e, Performance Measure 2.3), up-to-date maps or a *geographic information system* (Indicator 1.1.1g), and information on non-timber resources (Indicator 1.1.1i,



Performance Measure 3.2, Indicators 4.1.6, 4.2.2, 4.2.3) as part of their forest planning processes. *Certified Organizations* also are required to integrate biotic and abiotic elements in forest conversion decisions (Indicator 1.2.2), forest regeneration (Performance Measure 2.1), and during implementation of forest *protection* activities (Performance Measure 2.4). Additionally, the *conservation* of *biological diversity* inherently integrates the biotic and abiotic elements of the environment through the accounting of *wildlife habitats* (Indicators 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.5), ecological community types (Indicators 4.1.1, 4.2.2, Performance Measure 4.3), *biological diversity* (Indicator 4.1.1), and *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* (Performance Measures 4.2 and 4.4).

## **Forest Composition**

Forest composition is closely linked to abiotic factors like soil, microclimate, and moisture availability. Forest managers tend to think of composition at three levels: 1) *forest health* and *productivity* (e.g., high growth rates, drought resistant, disease resistance) of planting or regeneration stock (the “genetic” level”); 2) *stand* level considerations including tree species composition, management of competing vegetation, and structural retention practices (Indicator 4.1.2); and 3) *landscape* scale considerations (across ownerships or across multiple ownerships - Indicators 4.1.3, 4.1.4) in terms of *forest cover types* or other land cover classes.

## **Forest Structure**

Within forest *stands*, structure refers to a number of characteristics, including the physical arrangement of trees, snags, and down woody debris. Within a *stand* and depending on the situation, *Certified Organizations* have criteria for the desired forest composition (Performance Measure 2.1), tree stocking (Indicator 2.1.2), size distributions (Indicator 1.1.1a, Indicator 1.1.1h), retention of *habitat* elements (Indicator 4.1.2), and *protection* of *ecologically important* sites (Indicators 4.1.5, 4.1.6, Performance Measure 4.3), *special sites* (Objective 6). At larger scales, like multiple forest *stands*, forest structure is often based on differences in size/density or stand age (in even-aged management systems), as portrayed by a *land classification* system (Indicator 4.1.3). This *land classification* system often includes information on *riparian zones* and *wetlands* (Performance Measure 3.2). At even larger scales (e.g., *landscapes*), forest managers tend to portray the diversity of size, density, or age classes in management blocks, across entire ownerships, or in some instances across multiple ownerships (Indicator 4.1.3).

## **Connectivity**

Integration of connectivity into sustainable forest management occurs through *protection* of *wetlands* and *riparian zones* (Performance Measure 3.2), provision of diverse *forest cover types* and structures (Indicators 4.1.2, 4.1.3), and *protection* of other *ecologically important* sites (Indicators 4.1.5, 4.1.6, Performance Measure 4.3). Connectivity can be assessed at multiple scales and can be thought of as structural or functional. As the labels imply, structural connectivity refers to *forest cover types* or *habitats* physically touching, providing the ability of genes and species to move through the managed forest *landscape*. Functional connectivity refers to *forest cover types* or *habitats* that are not physically touching but are arranged in a *landscape* such that genes and species can move. The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* contains *indicators* that both directly and indirectly influence connectivity via requirements for prompt forest *reforestation* (Performance Measure 2.1), limitations on clearcut harvest area sizes (Indicator 5.2.1), limitations on forest *conversion* (Performance Measures 1.2, 1.3), the

*protection of wetlands and riparian zones* (Performance Measure 3.2), non-forested areas, and other ecological sites (Indicators 4.1.5, 4.1.6, Performance Measure 4.3), and through aesthetic considerations (Objective 5). In certain situations, some *Certified Organizations* may explicitly identify species of *conservation* concern that warrant direct assessments of connectivity (Performance Measure 4.2).

## **Ecological Processes**

Ecological processes help sustain forest composition, structure, and connectivity. The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* explicitly recognizes numerous important ecological processes that are important to *sustainable forestry*, including forest *reforestation* (Performance Measure 2.1), *forest health* (Performance Measure 2.4), hydrological function (Objective 3), and consideration of the role of natural disturbances (Indicator 4.1.8). In many certified forest *landscapes* the ecological processes that sustain composition and structure are influenced by active or passive management activities including harvesting, *reforestation*, and maintenance or enhancement of *biological diversity* and *wildlife habitat*.

### ***Wildlife Habitat Diversity, Ecologically Important Species and Invasive Species***

Objective 4 in the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* includes *performance measures* and *indicators* for *conservation* of *biological diversity*. Additional information is provided here for *wildlife habitat* diversity and *invasive species*.

#### ***Wildlife Habitat Diversity***

Performance Measure 4.1 in the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* includes programs to incorporate *conservation* of *biological diversity* and recognize the value of a diversity of *habitats* to support fish and *wildlife habitats*. Early successional forest stages, for example, are particularly lacking in certain regions of the U.S. and Canada and managing for them can aid in preventing the decline of species dependent on them (e.g., ruffed grouse). Historically, fires and other natural disturbances created forest openings and the types of *habitat* needed by these early succession forest dependent species. As forests across the *landscape* mature, this type of *habitat* declines in abundance. However, it can easily be created by proper selection of harvesting methods including clearcutting and the use of prescribed fire.

#### ***Ecologically Important Species***

Indicator 4.1.5 requires a *program* to address *conservation* of *ecologically important* species and *natural communities*. Such *ecologically important* species or communities could include those that are locally rare in the area of operation, at the discretion of the *Certified Organization*. "Locally rare" is a term intended to give managers flexibility in interpretation, though managers are encouraged to consult objective sources (such as NatureServe G and S-Rank systems) to achieve consistent application of the concept. Specifically, "locally rare" could include species with a high "S-Rank," indicating relative rarity within that jurisdictional area (e.g., state or province), or it could mean species that are at the fringes of their range, and thus relatively uncommon to that locality.

The intent of indicator 4.1.5 is for *Certified Organizations* to; (1) evaluate *conservation* opportunities relative to species or communities that are not officially designated for *protection* by state, provincial or federal law, or ranked G1 or G2 (and thus addressed through *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*); (2) identify *ecologically important* species for management attention; and (3) incorporate *conservation* actions for the selected species into management.

The term "*ecologically important species*," replaces the former term "viable occurrences of significant species of concern." *Ecologically important* is a defined term, which can be applied to either species or *natural communities* (which is also now a defined term).

The intent is for *conservation* to occur on *Certified Organization* lands. *Although Certified Organizations* are not required to survey to determine known occurrences, they should refer to available sources to identify the presence of ecologically important species or natural communities. *Certified Organizations* should look to the definition of *ecologically important* to help determine which species or *natural communities* should be considered under this indicator, in addition to considering rarity, regional importance, and sensitivity to, or reliance upon, forest management activities. Resources for determining rarity may include Nature Serve G or S ranks, International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List and federal, provincial or state lists. Resources for determining regional importance may include The Nature Conservancy Eco-regional Plans, State Wildlife Action Plans or other credible *conservation* plans. Information regarding known occurrences (i.e., presence) can be drawn from Nature Serve, State/Provincial Natural Resource Agencies, Conservation Data Centers, or other regional mapping efforts or assessments.

It should be noted that *non-forested wetlands*, bogs, fens, marshes, and *vernal pools* (cited for identification and *protection* in Indicator 4.1.6) are characterized by distinct *natural communities* and can thus be identified using the methods and sources noted above.

*Ecologically important* species or *natural communities* could include species that that are ranked G3 or S1-S3 by NatureServe, at the discretion of the forest manager, and based on potential opportunities for the managed area to aid in recovery or perpetuation of that species (note that G1-G2 species are already afforded *protection* by definition and related requirements under *Forest with Exceptional Conservation Value*). For example, the Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*), ranked G3, is considered an *ecologically important* species across much of its range. Many forest managers in the range of Gopher tortoise in the US South include specific attention to the needs of that species in management planning.

It is recognized that lists of "special concern species," "rare species," "species of greatest conservation need," or similarly described lists have been published by state/provincial or federal agencies or others. It is not the intent of this indicator to imply that any particular species on such lists should require management or *protection* under this indicator – rather such lists should serve as a resource for identification of *ecologically important* species or *natural communities*.

The concept of ensuring *programs* to address *ecologically important* species and *natural communities* provides forest managers with opportunities to address vulnerable, and locally rare, species in multiple ways. *Certified Organizations* are encouraged to work closely with non-governmental organizations, state, provincial and federal agencies, to advance *conservation*

efforts collaboratively, and to mitigate the need for formal listing and regulatory protections under the Endangered Species Act (US), or the Species at Risk Act (Canada).

### ***Invasive Species***

Indicator 4.1.7 addresses *invasive species*.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, *invasive species* are “any species, including its seeds, eggs, spores, or other biological material capable of propagating that species, that is not native to that ecosystem, whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health.” Examples would include gypsy moth and kudzu, but not the barred owl.

*Certified Organizations* should become knowledgeable about *invasive species* within their area of operation. The expectation is that they will participate in cooperative efforts by others (e.g., government agencies or non-government environmental organizations) and work proactively within their own programs (e.g., erosion control or seed selection for *wildlife* plots) to limit the introduction, impact and spread of *invasive species*. Indicator 4.1.7 does not require a *Certified Organization* to eliminate *invasive species* on their land. In some places, *invasive species* are well established and eradication by the *Certified Organizations* is unrealistic.

Experts in this area believe the most effective means of addressing *invasive species* include:

- awareness building,
- monitoring,
- preventing new introductions, and
- eliminating new occurrences.

*Certified Organizations* should emphasize these as priorities in their programs. Forest practices that reduce the abundance of *invasive species* are preferred if they can be addressed within the context of the *Certified organization's* overall management objectives.

### **Application of Research to Forest Management Decisions**

The intent of Performance Measure 4.4 is to ensure that the substantial investment of *Certified Organizations* toward research is resulting in advancements in application of practices toward *biodiversity conservation*. *Certified Organizations* can participate in advancing this knowledge in multiple ways. Performance Measure 4.4 suggests the need for acquiring biodiversity-related data through inventory processes, mapping, interaction with natural heritage programs, data centers, or NatureServe. The implication is that *Certified Organizations* can both utilize such data, and also participate in the advancement of general understanding by contributing data to be widely shared, where feasible and appropriate – this could include, for example, sharing element occurrence data with NatureServe data centers to augment understanding of species' distribution. Participation could further include direct engagement in collaborative projects with non-governmental organization, academic partners, and other *Certified Organizations*, in a variety of projects that serve to increase understanding and advance common practice. Modes of implementation could include (but are not limited to):

- collaborative research participation, and sharing results, through *SFI Implementation Committee* engagement

- participation in research projects with external partners, through direct engagement, *SFI* Conservation Grant projects, multilateral partnerships, etc.
- sharing of proprietary research results, as appropriate, to support elevation of forest practices across the sector

## **Objective 8. Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights**

### **Indigenous Title**

*SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Performance Measure 8.1 requires that *Certified Organizations* recognize and respect *Indigenous Peoples'* rights. Additionally, Objective 10 requires *Certified Organizations* to comply with all applicable federal, provincial/state laws and regulations. This includes applicable laws and regulations pertaining to engagement, communication and/or consultation with Indigenous Peoples, as they exist within the *Certified Organization's* province(s) or state(s) of operation and apply to the *Certified Organization's* private forest lands or public tenures.

Further to legal compliance under Objective 10, *Certified Organizations* should take additional measures to demonstrate recognition and respect for Indigenous Peoples rights and *traditional forest-related knowledge*. Such measures are intended to help build a strong foundation for meaningful relationship building and collaboration between *Certified Organizations* and Indigenous Peoples whose rights may be affected by the *Certified Organization's* forest management activities.

Demonstrating an understanding and recognition of established frameworks of legal, customary, and traditional rights is one such measure that can further support relationship building processes. Within their Objective 8 *program* (Indicator 8.1.1), *Certified Organizations* should include actions that demonstrate efforts to understand and recognize established frameworks of legal, customary and traditional rights as they pertain to their private forest lands or public tenures which may be of importance to Indigenous Peoples whose rights may be affected by the *Certified Organization's* forest management activities.

Reference to resources such as (i) the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, (ii) federal, provincial, and state laws and regulations, and (iii) relevant treaties, agreements, or other constructive arrangement among governments and Indigenous Peoples can be used to demonstrate efforts to recognize such frameworks. In all cases *Certified Organizations* shall respect the processes, laws, and direction received from relevant government agencies derived through nation-to-nation relationships where the certification takes place.

*Certified Organizations* are encouraged to investigate opportunities to implement aspects of such frameworks that fall outside of those required under Objective 10 and are identified as being of importance to affected Indigenous Peoples, as a means of further supporting meaningful relationship building processes.

### **Communications with Indigenous Communities**

The *2022 Forest Management Standard* Indicator 8.2.1 d. requires a *Certified Organization* with public forest tenures to communicate with *Indigenous Peoples* whose rights may be affected by

forest management *practices* through processes that respect their representative institutions and cultural preferences. At a minimum, *Certified Organizations* with forest management responsibilities on public lands must fulfill their legal requirements arising from relevant federal, state, or provincial regulations. Many jurisdictions have existing legislation or regulations that guide communications with *Indigenous Peoples* in the context of sustainable forest management. Areas of consideration and levels of prescriptiveness vary by jurisdiction but may include:

- i. timing of communications;
- ii. subject matter of communications;
- iii. delivery method(s) of communications;
- iv. timelines for responses to communications;
- v. necessary recipients of communications; and,
- vi. ability to modify prescribed communication procedures to accommodate local preferences.

Early, often, and ongoing communication with *Indigenous Peoples* can enhance relationship building efforts, promote trust and collaboration, and enable all parties to proactively address potentially contentious issues before they become sources of disruptive conflict. As such, *Certified Organizations* are encouraged to implement communications programs that build on regulated requirements and are aimed at supporting open, respectful, and locally relevant communication with affected *Indigenous Peoples*.

*Certified Organizations* are encouraged to identify communications protocols that have been previously developed and endorsed by affected Indigenous communities and integrate them into their broader communications programs. These protocols can often be obtained by checking a nation, tribe or community's website; calling the nation, tribe or community's administrative office; or, contacting relevant federal, provincial, or state authorities who have responsibilities to communicate with Indigenous Peoples. Many Indigenous communities will appoints an individual or department to lead external communication, consultation and engagement activities who can advise *Certified Organizations* on appropriate protocols.

Where community-endorsed communications protocol does not already exist and/or where regulated requirements or existing communications protocols do not contain specific provisions related to performance measures or indicators contained in Objective 8, *Certified Organizations* are encouraged to co-develop customized communications protocols with affected Indigenous communities. Such protocols should seek to build upon relevant legal or regulatory requirements, while considering the unique interests, needs, preferences and capacity of each party. In addition to considering items i through vi above, customized communications protocols could contain agreed-upon provisions pertaining to:

- adequate communications timelines that permit thorough review of documents and meaningful participation in decision-making processes by all parties;
- opportunities to participate in information sharing events such as company hosted field tours or third-party audits (interviews and/or field audit);

- presentation of relevant documents in an accessible, non-technical format that can be easily understood by individuals from a non-forestry background;
- documentation, storage, application, and dissemination of (a) *Indigenous Peoples' traditional forest-related knowledge*, (b) information pertaining to sites of spiritual, historical, or cultural importance, (c) use of *non-timber forest products* of value, and (d) other forms of *Indigenous Peoples'* intellectual property as deemed important to the affected Indigenous community; and,
- resolution of disagreements with respect to forest management decision-making.

Prior to the establishment of a customized communications protocol that identifies necessary recipients of and delivery methods for communications, *Certified Organizations* should attempt to establish genuine, good faith communications with affected Indigenous communities by employing a variety of delivery methods (e.g., mail, electronic, telephone, in-person), as required, directed to appropriate contact persons or departments identified through the use of available resources and information. *Certified Organizations* are encouraged to document all communications with affected Indigenous communities pertaining to the fulfillment of Objective 8 requirements.

Communications protocols should be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant and meaningful to all parties, considering evolving local circumstances and forest management priorities. Appropriate training should be provided to personnel and contractors so that they are competent to fulfill both their legal responsibilities with respect to communications with *Indigenous Peoples* as well as responsibilities arising from co-developed communications protocols.

### **Objective 9: *Climate Smart Forestry***

Atmospheric carbon continues to influence the effects of climate change on forest ecosystems and global climate cycles. Carbon sequestered in and released from forests has been identified as having a significant effect on atmospheric carbon levels. As such, understanding the benefits of carbon sequestration and storage in managed forests is an important element of sustainable forest management.

Natural disturbances such as fire and insect outbreaks have occurred throughout history in North American forests. However, recent evidence suggests that these events are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change. These unprecedented increases in extent and severity of disturbance have shifted large areas of forests to become significant sources of emissions to atmospheric carbon pools, compounding the climate change effects of anthropogenic carbon emissions.

Forest management decisions need to take into consideration a suite of objectives which are appropriately responsive to the unprecedented changes to our forests, resulting from climate change. These include managing for wildfire risk, maintaining landscape diversity for wildlife and recreation, maintaining growing forests that remove carbon from the atmosphere, and providing a sustainable resource for rural communities that rely on forest-based economies. We know that when we actively manage our forested landscapes for wood products, we can

maintain forests as a carbon sink<sup>2,3</sup>. Understanding carbon dynamics in managed forests allows *Certified Organizations* to make informed decisions relative to objectives, strategies, and practices applied, which are both responsive and responsible with respect to climate change impacts.

In 2019, the Michigan State University Forest Carbon and Climate Program (FCCP) undertook a preliminary study which included a qualitative analysis of SFI documents, interviews with key experts, and observations of SFI training activities. This analysis found that while the *SFI Forest Management Standard* did not explicitly require performance relative to carbon or climate mitigation, nonetheless “climate smart forestry”<sup>4</sup> concepts, management practices, and other best practices with benefits were prevalent throughout the standards, training materials, and *Certified Organization* interviews. Beyond those valued practices, which remain as important elements of the *SFI Forest Management Standard*, the Climate Smart Forestry Objective is the next logical step in providing the assurance that such practices are undertaken, audited, and tracked as a proof point of forest sustainability.

The Climate Smart Forestry objective ensures that *Certified Organizations* are aware of the effects of their management on forest carbon dynamics as they relate to climate, and that such considerations are taken into account in business and forest management planning. However, the Climate Smart Forestry Objective is not a carbon quantification protocol, nor does it require *Certified Organizations* to additionally sequester carbon in managed forests. Further, the requirement of the Climate Smart Forestry objective do not extend to the quantification and verification of carbon pools as might be required by voluntary carbon markets or offset programs such as the [Carbonzero](#) program, the [Verified Carbon Standard](#) (VCS), or [Carbonfund.org](#), but may be a useful framework to do so.

The requirements of the Climate Smart Forestry Objective and the programs and management activities designed to meet its *performance measures* and *indicators* should to the extent possible be based the *best scientific information*. SFI recognizes that there is uncertainty in all science, and climate change is a uniquely challenging phenomenon. Even with the *best scientific information* the outcomes of climate change on forests may not be 100% predictable; nonetheless we strive to have the best preparation possible, and to help reduce uncertainty, rather than avoid it.

It is important to note that the scope and scale at which *Certified Organizations* address these objectives will depend on their capacity to conduct analysis and their purposes vis-vis the needs of their customers. Organizations certified to the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* may choose to conduct a more complex and area specific inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and harvest removals or consult regional averages for greenhouse gas emissions and harvest removal estimates for purposes of developing an *adaptation* strategy and *mitigation* plans.

Due to the overarching regionalized effects of climate change, it may be useful and feasible for *Certified Organizations* to coordinate efforts at addressing climate change risks to forests

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<sup>2</sup> Kurz W.A., Smyth, C. and Lemprière, T. (2016) Climate change mitigation through forest sector activities: principles, potential and priorities. *Unasylva* 246 (67), 61-67.

<sup>3</sup> Smyth, C.E., Stinson, G., Neilson, E., Lempriere, T.C., Rampley, G.J. and Kurz, W.A. (2014). Quantifying the biophysical climate change mitigation potential of Canada’s forest sector. *Biogeosciences* 11, 3515-3529.

<sup>4</sup> See FAO 2019 for more information on Climate-smart Forestry  
Guidance to SFI 2022 Standards and Rules (Section 7) March 1, 2021



(Performance Measure 9.1) or to identify and address opportunities to mitigate climate change with their state or regional *SFI Implementation Committees*. While not a requirement, such coordinated efforts may be an effective means of assuring consistency for practice and information availability.

The intent of the Climate Smart Forestry Objective is to require *Certified Organizations* to consider as many managed forests greenhouse gas and carbon sources and sinks as is reasonably practicable, recognizing that some of them may be outside of their influence. SFI also acknowledges *Certified Organizations* will continuously improve their forest management activities to address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures over time as more data and information become available. The following guidance is intended to provide options that *Certified Organizations* may use to meet Objective 9 in the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* and is not normative.

### **Performance Measure 9.1 — Identifying Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities**

Risks and vulnerabilities that result from climate change impacts on managed forests and the values within them will vary from region to region and across forest stand types and ages. This variation may include differences in effects on tree mortality, forest infestation, wildfire, and species distributions<sup>5</sup>. Identifying risks and vulnerabilities based on best scientific and economic information is important to test the relevance or efficacy of a *Certified Organization's* existing risk management strategies under climate change or to help identify whether new or additional strategies may be warranted. Standard risk identification and assessment approaches exist that can be directly used in a forest management context ([Edwards et al 2015](#)<sup>6</sup>) or can be adapted from similar approaches ([CoastAdapt 2020](#)<sup>7</sup>).

#### **Indicator 9.1.1 — Prioritization of Risks and Vulnerabilities**

Risk or vulnerability assessment is the process of assessing the probabilities and consequences of potential risk events. Indicator 9.1.1 requires *Certified Organizations* to conduct an assessment to prioritize identified climate change risks. Management efforts can then be better allocated to reduce risks to forests and the values within them, as per Objectives 2 (Forest Health and Productivity), 3 (Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources), 4 (Conservation of Biological Diversity), 5 (Management of Visual Quality and Recreation Benefits) and 6 (Protection of Special Sites).

Determining the climate-related material risks to a *Certified Organization* may involve identifying, refining, and assessing numerous potential environmental, social, and economic climate-related risks and vulnerabilities that could affect the organization or its stakeholders. These could then be distilled into a short-list of topics that inform forest management strategies, targets, operations, and reporting<sup>8</sup>. Determining which risks and vulnerabilities are

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<sup>5</sup> Romero-Lankao et al 2014, Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

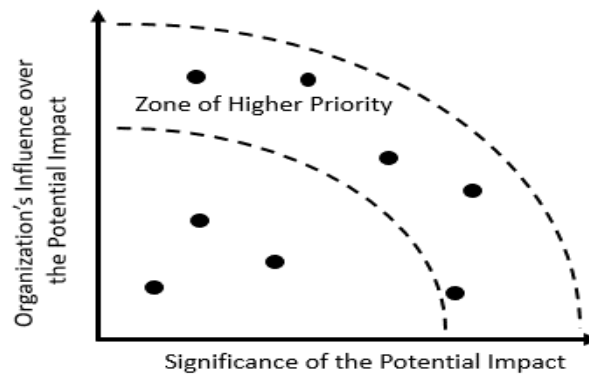
<sup>6</sup> Climate change and sustainable forest management in Canada: a guidebook for assessing vulnerability and mainstreaming adaptation into decision making / J.E. Edwards, C. Pearce, A.E. Ogden, and T.B. Williamson.

<sup>7</sup> Plunket, J., Stanzel, K., Weber, R. and S. Lerberg. 2015. Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool for Coastal Habitats: Guidance Documentation. Available: <http://www.ccvatch.com>

<sup>8</sup> KPMG 2014, Sustainable Insight: The essentials of materiality assessment. Guidance to SFI 2022 Standards and Rules (Section 7) March 1, 2021

the highest priority may involve considering the nature of the impacts, including whether they are positive or negative, actual or potential, direct or indirect, short-term or long-term, or intended or unintended. A further consideration may be given to the significance of the potential impact on the organization, its operations, or stakeholders, and the level to which the impact can be influenced (Figure 1), and the risks over the *long-term* planning horizon for the forest being assessed.

Figure 1: Prioritization of climate-related risks to a *Certified Organization* based on the significance of the potential impact and the organization’s ability to influence the risks.



### Indicators 9.1.2 and 9.1.3 — Identifying *Adaptation* Strategies

Indicator 9.1.2 requires a *Certified Organization* to develop an *adaptation* plan to address priority climate change risks, and in so doing help identify and address opportunities to enhance ecosystem resilience for the forests they own or manage (Indicator 9.2.2). Indicator 9.1.3 then addresses how these *adaptation* plans should be reviewed in the context of Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategies (RCCAS), where they exist. RCCAS are useful tools that help governments and organizations conduct operations that are aligned with overall *adaptation* efforts that are sensitive to regionally specific climate change risks. RCCAS have been developed for several jurisdictions and municipalities and are readily available for downloading, such as those found in Table 1. *Adaptation* strategies may involve consideration of potential adjustments to account for altered timing of spring thaw, shorter winters, assisted tree migration through selective planting, and consideration of planting the right tree species in the right place, at the right time, to name a few. *Certified Organizations* may further wish to assess the impact of climate risk across the range of potentially impacted *programs* they develop under the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*, including those related to *wildlife* and *biodiversity*, and *special sites*, through monitoring and data collection. For example, climate change may result in shifts in *habitat* for *threatened and endangered* species or increase the potential for catastrophic wildfire or insect infestation on *special sites*. It may be useful to identify how these *programs* might need to evolve to address identified climate risks.

Table 1: A non-exhaustive list of Adaptation Tools and Strategies by relevant jurisdiction, with title and source URLs for locating the documents (accessed April 26, 2020).

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Title</b>
California	<a href="#">California Adaptation Planning Guide: planning for adaptive communities</a>
New Hampshire	<a href="#">Climate Change Resilience Plan: resilience and preparedness in state government project</a>
U.S. Southeast	<a href="#">UE EPA Region 4 Adaptation Implementation Plan</a>
British Columbia	<a href="#">Strategic Climate Risk Assessment Framework for British Columbia</a>
Ontario	<a href="#">Climate Ready: Ontario’s adaptation strategy and action plan</a>
Canada	<a href="#">Adapting Sustainable Forest Management to Climate Change: preparing for the future</a>
U.S.	<a href="#">Climate Hubs – U.S. Department of Agriculture</a>
U.S.	<a href="#">USFS Climate Change Resource Center</a>
Canada	<a href="#">Forestry Adaptation Community of Practice (FACoP)</a>
U.S.	<a href="#">Climate Change and Forestry Handbook (Manomet)</a>
U.S.	<a href="#">Forest Adaptation Resources: Climate Change Tools and Approaches for Land Managers, 2nd edition (USDA)</a>

Adapting forest practices to address potential risks (identified in 9.1) involves understanding the potential range of variability in future climate scenarios and adapting management and silvicultural practices to those conditions in order to sustain a thriving forest with all of its inherent values. Larger forest land owners and managers may choose to conduct a more holistic adaptation plan and incorporate a broader range of options or examine a narrower range of feasible options for purposes of developing an adaptation strategy, depending on their capacity or market purposes.

**Indicator 9.2.1 — Identifying options for addressing stored carbon and greenhouse gas emissions**

Resulting activities may range from assessing the impact of the forest management plan on overall carbon balance, to assessing the impact of different silvicultural and operational practices on live tree carbon to support the maintenance of forest benefits, potentially including target-setting for reduced net emissions or increased sequestration. Some examples may include:

- Consideration of equipment age, operability and maintenance (Scope 1 emissions);
- Selecting the correct equipment size (most efficient machine for the job);

- Finding alternative uses for logging waste to manage for fuel abatement and minimizing open burning; and/or
- Modifications to site preparation techniques.

### Indicator 9.2.3 — Quantifying GHG emissions in forest management operations

Understanding the overall impact of forest operations on forest carbon balance can encompass analysis of carbon pools and fluxes or the identification and management of the most significant fluxes over which *Certified Organizations* have an influence. Forest landowners and managers may choose to conduct a more comprehensive inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, or rely on regional averages for estimating emissions and informing forest management operations, depending on their capacity or market purposes.

Sources of models and tools to quantify local, regional, and national level forest carbon storage that may assist in addressing carbon storage or emission calculations are available from a variety of sources. The USDA Forest Service website maintains a list of tools for carbon inventory, management and reporting here. Some freely available data sources include the USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) National Program, as well as resources available from Natural Resource Canada’s (NRCan) Carbon Accounting Program, such as the CBM-CFS3 model (available here). Other more regionally-specific resources are available from industry-specific vendors (e.g., NCASI, Silviaterra), or through available tools such as FORECAST or FORCARB. Selection of tools and approaches may consider resolution, accuracy, and scalability. Irrespective of the source, accounting tools should be characterized by sensitivity to forest types and employ the appropriate scale and climate modelling analysis suitable to the forest management area in question.

Resources to develop programs (Indicator 9.2.2) are related to the tools and methods developed to address carbon and greenhouse gas emissions (Indicator 9.2.1), combined with approaches to prioritize the most significant emission sources for management. Tools and models developed to quantify emissions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 — Forest carbon emission and storage estimation models and tools, with references to geographic applicability. Note this is not an exhaustive list of possible tools.

Tool	Country, State/Province	Description	Source
CBM-CFS3	Canada (all)	The operational-scale Carbon Budget Model of the Canadian Forest Sector (CBM-CFS3) is an aspatial, stand- and landscape-level modeling framework that simulates the dynamics of all forest carbon stocks required under the Kyoto Protocol (aboveground biomass, belowground biomass, litter, dead wood and soil organic carbon). It complies with the carbon estimation methods outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)	<a href="#">Link</a>
Generic Carbon Budget	Canada (all)	The GCBM is the next generation, fully spatial version of the CBM-CFS3 that the federal	<a href="#">Contact</a>

Model (GCBM)		government is currently using for various internal research and collaborative projects.	
FORECAST model	Canada (BC, AB, SK, S. ON, NS)	FORECAST is an ecosystem-based, stand-level, forest growth simulator. The model was designed to accommodate a wide variety of harvesting and silvicultural systems in order to compare and contrast their effect upon forest productivity, stand dynamics, and various biophysical indicators of non-timber values. Forest carbon is one of the outputs that can be modeled.	<a href="#">Link</a>
FORCARB model	Canada (ON)	FORCARB is a U.S. developed model that the government of Ontario has modified for provincial use. The Ontario model is referred to as FORCARB-ON. The model can be used to project carbon storage in harvested wood products.	<a href="#">Link</a>
i-Tree Harvest Carbon Calculator	U.S.	The i-Tree Harvest Carbon Calculator (originally known as the PRESTO Wood Calculator) allows land managers and landowners to estimate the amount of carbon stored in harvested wood products. Carbon estimates are based on harvest volume, geographic region, and wood type.	<a href="#">Link</a>
Methods for calculating ecosystem and harvested carbon	U.S.	A publication with guidelines and default tables for estimating forest ecosystem carbon pools in the US and storage of harvested wood products in use and in landfills	<a href="#">Link</a>
FORCARB2	U.S. and Ontario	FORCARB2 produces estimates of carbon stocks and stock changes for forest ecosystems and forest products at 5-year intervals; it includes a new methodology for carbon in harvested wood products, updated initial inventory data, a revised algorithm for dead wood, and now includes public forest land, reserved forest land, and forest land of low productivity.	<a href="#">Link</a>
US Forest Carbon Calculation Tool	U.S.	The Carbon Calculation Tool 4.0, <i>CCTv40.exe</i> , is a computer application that reads publicly available forest inventory data collected by the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA) and generates state-level annualized estimates of carbon stocks on forest land based on FORCARB2 estimators.	<a href="#">Link</a>
EVALIDator	U.S.	Generates user-specified reports on forest inventory estimates, including forest carbon stocks and	<a href="#">Link</a>

		changes in dry biomass over time, using US Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data.	
Practitioner’s Menu of Adaptation Strategies and Approaches for Forest Carbon Management	U.S.	Decision-support tool for incorporating adaptation considerations into current management objectives	Link
USFS Climate Change Resource Center	U.S.	CCRC hosts several informational pages on forest carbon management.	Link
USFS Climate Change Resource Center – Library	U.S.	Library of tools related to forest carbon.	Link
Forest-Climate Working Group	U.S,	FCWG hosts webinars that address a wide range of topics related to adaptation and mitigation	Link

IPCC AR4 WG3 (2007), Metz, B.; Davidson, O.R.; Bosch, P.R.; Dave, R.; Meyer, L.A. (eds.), *Climate Change 2007: Mitigation of Climate Change, Contribution of Working Group III (WG3) to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA., 851 pp.

## Objective 10. Fire Resilience and Awareness

The intent of Objective 10 — Fire Resilience and Awareness is for *Certified Organizations* to limit the susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of wildfire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.

Undesirable impacts of wildfire are those that threaten public safety, human health, property, carbon emissions, water quality and quantity, air quality, and species *habitat*, or have the capacity to destroy forests on a scale that significantly impacts the inherent values of these forests.

The link between wildfires and climate is well-documented. The planet is warming, and higher temperatures lead to drier conditions, with many regions experiencing severe drought resulting in more dead trees and debris that significantly increase the risk of undesirable impacts of wildfire. Indicator 1.1.4 already requires *Certified Organizations*, where applicable, to model the negative impacts of climate change (i.e., prolonged drought, increased incidence of disease or pests) in their *long-term* sustainable harvest levels.

However, sustainable forest management can also reduce risk of these undesirable impacts of wildfire. Appropriate management must be done within the context of fire ecology, especially fire regime. Doing so increases overall forest resiliency, including reducing fuel loads and limiting invasive species, all of which can decrease the likelihood of damage from catastrophic fire.

The Objective has two Performance Measures. Performance Measure 10.1 has requirements for practices on lands *Certified Organizations* own or manage. Performance Measure 10.2 has requirements for raising public awareness of the benefits, risk, and minimization regarding fire.

Performance Measure 10.1 requires that on the forests they own or manage, *Certified Organizations* shall 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. The development of a *program* to evaluate risk of undesirable impacts of wildfire can occur individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving government agencies, *SFI Implementation Committees*, or other partners. The *program* can also take into consideration the scope and scale of the *Certified Organization's* forests.

Examples of risk assessment resources include:

- Canada — [Canadian Wildland Fire Information System](#)
- US — [USFS Operational Risk Management Guide](#)
- US South — Southern Wildfire Risk: [Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal](#)

When considering management techniques, actions, or policies it is understood that these must be assessed in the context of economic viability. It is also acknowledged that management techniques will vary according to regions and forest type. Examples are illustrative and may not be suited to all regions.

Examples of management techniques for limiting the undesirable impacts of wildfire can include prescribed burning for wildlife or cultural purposes (e.g., traditional foods), *stand* thinning, or other treatments to reduce levels of hazardous fuels.

Examples of *landscape* level management practices for limiting the susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire include prescribed burning, and commercial and non-commercial restorative thinning treatments.

Examples of cooperative efforts at the *landscape* level include:

- The multi-partner [Manastash Taneum Resilient Landscapes – Restoration Project](#) in Washington state involving *Certified Organizations*, Tribes, state, and federal agencies.

- The [Gulf Coastal Plain Ecosystem Partnership](#), formed to conserve and restore the dwindling longleaf pine ecosystem and the unique aquatic resources of northwest Florida and southern Alabama.

Forest landowners and managers who use prescribed fire as a management tool can access additional resources at the following sites:

- US — The Longleaf Alliance [prescribed fire webpage](#)
- US — [Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils](#)

Additional wildfire information for *Certified Organizations* can be found at:

- Southeast US — [Wildland Fire in the Southeast](#)
- US West — [Wildfire in the West](#)
- US Appalachian Region (Alabama to Pennsylvania) — [Consortium of Appalachian Fire Managers and Scientists](#)
- US Northeast — [Northeast Region Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#)
- US — link to all [US fire science consortiums](#)

In some jurisdictions, post-fire forest restoration on public forest lands is the responsibility of government agencies. These state/provincial or federal agencies have mandated wildfire management and restoration programs and/or regulations, whose purpose it is to mitigate the negative impacts of wildfire to water quality and quantity, *soil health* and to promote restoration and forest resilience. This ensures forests are promptly restored, preserving the critical values inherent in forests. *Certified Organizations* are expected to work individually or cooperatively in support of these government agencies. Additionally, *Certified Organizations* where applicable should operate in accordance with fire management regulations including reduction of hazardous fuels from logging slash and preventative measures to control the spread of fire resulting from forestry operations.

*Certified Organizations* can refer to the following when implementing plans for forest restoration.

- US — [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#)
- US — [Burned Area Emergency Response](#)
- US — [After the Flames](#) (Coalitions and Collaboratives, Inc.)
- Canada — [Wildfire Recovery](#) (British Columbia)

Examples of practices for addressing restoration following damaging fire include salvage logging, installation of water or erosion control devices, planting or seeding for erosion control or slope stability, installation of appropriate-sized drainage features on roads or trails, *protection* of threatened and endangered *habitat*, or monitoring for detection and rapid response to *minimize* the spread of *invasive species*.

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 and take action towards benefits of fire management and minimization of undesirable impacts of wildfire.



Indicator 10.2.1 requires participation in, or support of, local, state, Indigenous, provincial, or federal fire management and prevention programs. When developing these programs, *Certified Organizations* can consult the following tools:

- U.S. — [Bureau of Indian Affairs Wildfire Prevention Handbook](#)
- Canada — [Wildland Fire Management Strategy](#) (Ontario)

Indicator 10.2.2 requires *Certified Organizations* participate in, or support, programs to promote benefits of fire management, and raise awareness about the environmental, economic, and social risks of undesirable impacts of wildfire to values such as carbon emissions, water quality and quantity, air quality, and species *habitat*, public safety, and human health.

Examples of national wildfire awareness programs or community awareness programs include: [FIREWISE USA](#), [FireSmart™ Canada](#) (FireSmart™ and associated Marks are trademarks of Partners in Protection), [Smokey Bear](#) and Project Learning Tree's [Living with Fire](#) or [The Nature of Fire](#). Example state or provincial community wildfire awareness resources include: Alberta's FireSmart [Guidebook for Community Protection](#) or the Washington Department of Natural Resources [How to Prepare for a Wildfire](#).

## **Objective 11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance (and Objective 4 of SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard)**

### ***Illegal Logging***

SFI has strong existing measures in the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* to avoid sourcing fiber from *illegal logging*. These measures are reinforced by the *SFI Policy on Illegal Logging* (September 2008). These measures address the issue of *illegal logging* from sources within the United States and Canada and offshore.

The United States Lacey Act, as amended May 22, 2008, makes it unlawful to import, export, transport, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce any plant, with some limited exceptions, taken, possessed, transported, or sold in violation of the laws of the United States, a State, an Indian tribe, or any foreign law that protects plants from removal or that regulates the removal of plants and products made from illegally removed plants. The European Union Timber Regulation (EUTR), applied since March 3, 2013, prohibits illegally harvested timber, or products derived from such timber, to be brought into the EU and creates due diligence obligations for operators who place timber and timber products on the EU market.

*SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Objective 11 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Objective 4 requires legal and regulatory compliance with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local laws and regulations.

*SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Performance Measure 11.1 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Performance Measure 4.1.

*Certified Organizations* shall comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local *forestry* and related and environmental laws and regulations and take appropriate steps to avoid *illegal logging*.

The definition of *illegal logging* is intended to cover intentional violations, such as timber theft from areas that are precluded from logging, falsification of official documents, avoidance of harvest payments and duties, and deliberate removal of trees from the land without the legal right to do so. The definition is not intended to cover isolated occurrences of legal infractions such as unintentional trespass over a property line (for private ownership) or unit boundaries (for public ownership), violation of roadway laws, or minor contract disputes. As stated in *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Objective 11 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Objective 4, *Certified Organizations* are required to comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

### **International Labour Organization (ILO) Core Conventions**

*SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Performance Measure 11.2 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Performance Measure 4.2 addresses differences in U.S. labor law and the ILO core conventions. Additional guidance is provided here for application of 11.2 and 4.2 for independent contractors and for *Certified Organizations*.

Application of *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Performance Measure 11.2 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Performance Measure 4.2 for independent contractors operating on lands owned or controlled by *Certified Organizations*:

- *Certification bodies* at the time of the audit will collect and review information the *Certified Organization* has received from outside *stakeholders* with regards to concerns or conformance pertaining to independent contractor actions related to ILO Core conventions 87, 98 and 111.
- Any information collected by the *certification bodies* during normal auditing times will be promptly submitted without contractor identifying information to the *Certified Organization*, *SFI Inc.* and the *SFI ILO* Task Force. Information received will be reviewed every six months by the *SFI ILO* Task Force which will develop recommendations to the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors for resolution of any significant problems identified.
- Forest Management Standard Indicator 11.2 and Fiber Sourcing Standard Indicator 4.2 shall only apply to the core conventions not fully covered by existing U.S. or Canadian law.
  - Right to Organise (No. 87)
  - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (No. 98)
  - Discrimination (111)
- In addition, any ILO related issue that is being addressed through a formal grievance process or before any of the agencies established by the U.S. National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the appropriate Provincial Labour Code or Act, or the courts until those processes are completed, and will not be subject to review, consideration or recommendations by the *SFI ILO* Task Force nor by the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors.

Application of *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Performance Measure 11.2 for *Certified Organizations* with respect to their employees operating on lands owned or controlled by *Certified Organizations*:

- *Certification bodies* at the time of the audit will collect and review information the *Certified Organization* has received from outside *stakeholders* with regards to concerns or conformance pertaining to their employee relations with regards to ILO Core conventions 87, 98 and 111.
- *Stakeholders* may raise issues regarding conformance to indicator 11.2.2 through the inconsistent *practices* and procedures outlined in the SFI Public Inquiries and Official Complaints (Section 12) requirements, item 3.
- All information collected through the inconsistent practices process will be reviewed every six months by the *SFI ILO* Task Force which will develop recommendations to the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors for resolution of any significant problems identified.
- Indicator 11.2.2 shall only apply to the core conventions not fully covered by existing U.S. or Canadian law.
  - Right to Organise (No. 87)
  - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining (No. 98)
  - Discrimination (111)

- In addition, any ILO related issue that is being addressed through a formal grievance process or before any of the agencies established by the U.S. National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), the appropriate Provincial Labour Code or Act, or the courts until those processes are completed will not be subject to review, consideration or recommendations by the *SFI ILO* Task Force nor by the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors.

Public forest landowners in states (Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia) that currently have laws prohibiting bargaining with their public employees shall be “legacied in” as meeting the requirements in indicator 11.2.2 but must still participate in the information gathering process with their *certification bodies* (for independent contractors) and the inconsistent practices process in item 3 of the SFI Public Inquiries and Official Complaints (Section 12) requirements to aid in resolution of any issues that may be identified.

### **Objective 13. *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* and Objective 6. *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard*)**

#### ***Use of Qualified Logging Professionals, Qualified Resources Professionals and Certified Logging Companies***

Logger training is a very effective tool in promoting sustainable forest management and has been a key component of SFI’s work since its inception. The *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* strengthens requirements for logger training with revisions to *Indicators*, 13.1.5, 13.2.1 and 13.2.2 and the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* does the same with *Indicators* 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.

*SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* Indicator 13.1.5 requires *Certified Organizations* to develop a *program* for the purchase of their raw material from logging professionals who have completed training *programs*. The *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* Performance Measure 3.2 says that *Certified Organizations through their relationships with wood producers and landowners*, shall maximize the deliveries of raw materials from *qualified logging professionals*, and shall encourage the use of *qualified resource professionals*.

In working to maximize deliveries, *Certified Organizations* should strive for 100% of their raw material deliveries from *qualified logging professionals* or contract with loggers in the process of completing a logger training *program* approved by an SFI Implementation Committee. It is recognized that allowances may have to be made for small-scale or *other wood suppliers*, for when catastrophic events (e.g., severe storms, wildfire, beetle epidemics) can result in increased deliveries by untrained loggers, or for turnover in the logging workforce. The goal is to demonstrate continual and incremental improvement towards this goal. Where the *Certified Organization* identifies a region where the availability of *qualified logging professionals* is not sufficient to meet the expectations of *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* indicator 13.1.5 and *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* indicator 3.2.2, the *Certified Organization* will develop a *program*, individually or collaboratively, to address this shortage.

*Program* is defined in the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* as an organized system, process or set of activities to achieve an *objective* or *performance measure*.

### **Expectations for On-site Supervision by *Qualified Logging Professional***

*The definition of a Qualified Logging Professional* requires that a logging *crew* is supervised by an individual who “has direct responsibility and is on-site regularly to consistently carry out the roles and responsibilities of the *wood producer*.” It is a best practice to have a *qualified logging professional* on site, however it is understood a logging *crew* will not be under the supervision of a *qualified logging professional* at all times given the additional responsibilities that can be placed on the supervisor such as dealing with equipment failures, etc. Also, it is understood that the safety, environmental and/or legal risks inherent with a logging site can vary. When determining whether a logging site needs a trained supervisor “onsite regularly” it is the knowledge of such risks that need to be evaluated and taken into account. For a site with high biodiversity or water quality values, or a complicated harvest unit boundary, it is reasonable to expect regular onsite supervision of the *crew*. The principal of the logging company or his representative should be sufficiently knowledgeable about the harvest unit and its harvest plan to do this risk determination. Using this determination, the forester, contractor principal or his representative can determine the level of onsite supervision required to consistently carry out the roles and responsibilities of the *wood producer* or if additional trained supervisors are required on the harvest site.

### **Certified Logging Companies**

SFI Inc. recognizes the potential and value in promoting the use of *certified logging companies*. *Certified logging companies* are entities that hold a independent, in-the-forest verification of conformance with a logger certification *program*.

Recognizing the value of certified logging companies, *Certified Organizations* may be able to demonstrate conformance to some indicators in the SFI Standards by using *certified logging companies* to deliver raw materials. It is up to the Certified Organization to provide evidence to their *certification body* on which *indicators* may be met, and how, via the use of a *certified logging company*.

## **2. SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard**

### **Objective 1. Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing**

Performance Measure 1.2 is intended to promote *conservation* of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* or forest areas that harbor or consist of *imperiled* or *critically imperiled species* or *natural communities* through the course of Fiber Sourcing activities. This promotion takes place through three means: 1) an assessment of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* within the *wood and fiber supply area*, that is then made available to *wood producers*, 2) *programs* to address outreach and training, and; 3) incorporation of the results of the assessment toward promoting *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value conservation* on areas of *purchased stumpage*. Considered together, these elements should effectively promote the intended *conservation of Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*.

The required *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* assessment can be conducted at the scale of the *wood and fiber supply area* and may even be conducted collaboratively through one or more *SFI Implementation Committees*, or through multi-lateral engagement of *Certified Organizations* operating within the same affected geography, to achieve efficiencies of cost and scale. Such an assessment could be qualitative (i.e., describing the forest conditions and composition that would define *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* in that location) or geographic (i.e., mapping of known *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* through some credible method, such as remote sensing, use of USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data to achieve a meaningful scale for this purpose, sampling and ground-truthing, or other means). *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* assessments may be conducted most efficiently using the widest array of available information, including NatureServe or heritage database information, remote sensing, *habitat* prediction models and other means.

Although it is intended to inform activities at a meaningful level, that is to help promote *conservation* of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* which could be affected through harvest activities, it does not necessarily require *stand*-level analysis. The elements of Performance Measure 1.2 should be considered together, meaning that the results of the assessment generate information that could be transferred to landowners and loggers through outreach and training programs, etc., facilitating the use of that information at the level of individual harvest. Utilization of assessment results at the scale of *purchased stumpage* is the most specific level of application since *Certified Organizations* are in fact responsible for understanding details of sourcing at this scale and ensuring conservation of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* at that scale.

## **Objective 2. Adherence to *Best Management Practices***

### ***Best Management Practices***

Objective 2 of the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* calls for adherence to *Best Management Practices*: “To monitor the use of *best management practices* to *protect* water quality.”

The use of *best management practices* to *protect* water quality is a critical component of sustainable forest management and is emphasized in the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* with requirements for on-the-ground management, monitoring, training, and research. The *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* strengthened requirements for *best management practices* application with a new indicator:

“2.1.1 Use of written agreements for the purchase of raw material sourced directly from the forest is required and must include provisions requiring the use of *best management practices*.”

While it is not practical to have auditing requirements that go beyond reviewing *Certified Organizations*’ contracts for purchasing raw material from their suppliers to ensure they do require the use of *best management practices*, this indicator will further highlight the importance of *best management practices* and their use by all suppliers throughout the supply stream.

### **3. SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard – Transition to Credit Methodology and Claim Terminology**

The *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard* has adopted the terminology Percentage and Credit methods, replacing Average Percentage and Volume Credit. The updated terminology is reflected in content claims used in supplier and delivery level identification in the *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard*.

*Certified Organizations* can update relevant documentation to align with new standard language on release of the revised 2022 Standards. However, SFI recognizes that changes to processes may require additional work at many levels of operations. *Certified Organizations* may update relevant documentation with revised claim language according to internal procedures and timelines with the expectation that the transition will be completed within a reasonable time period.

### **4. SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard, SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard and SFI 2022 Certified Sourcing Standard – SFI Due Diligence System for Assessment Risk of Sourcing from *Controversial Sources***

The SFI due diligence system provides the framework for assessing the risk of sourcing from *controversial sources* whether in the United States, Canada or offshore. Below are resources a *Certified Organization* can use to assist in addressing the elements of the *controversial sources* definition.

- Forest activities that are not in compliance with applicable state, provincial, federal, or international laws — The United States and Canada have a strong legal framework which *Certified Organizations* must abide by. *Certified Organizations* can refer to the latest Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). A score higher than 50 is considered low risk.
- Forest activities which are contributing to regional declines in *habitat conservation* and *species protection* (including *biodiversity* and *special sites, threatened and endangered species*) —SFI has strong existing measures in the *SFI 2020 Forest Management Standard* and the *SFI 2020 Fiber Sourcing Standard* regarding *conservation of biodiversity*. The United States and Canada also have strong legal frameworks which *Certified Organizations* must abide by. *Certified Organizations* can refer to the latest [Environmental Performance Index \(EPI\) Score of Biodiversity and Habitat](#) of the country. A score higher than 50 is considered low risk.
- *Conversion sources* originating from regions experiencing forest area decline — Regions with a net loss of forest area <1% over the most recent ten years of available data are considered low risk. *Certified organizations* can refer to public data such as FAO, FIA ecoregional data, and Statistics Canada, Canadian Forest Service, state, provincial or federal "State of the Forest" reports.
- Forest activities where the spirit of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at work (1998) are not met — The U.S. and Canada are

both members of ILO, by virtue of that membership, they commit to promote and realize the principles set forth in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at work (1998) through laws and regulations which include support of the basic principles of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining; elimination of child labor and forced labor; and elimination of discrimination.

- Forest activities where the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) are not met - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) seeks to enhance harmonious and cooperative relations between the States and *Indigenous Peoples* in the spirit of partnership and mutual respect. The U.S. can refer to this study by Cornell Law School, and Canada can refer to the Canadian Constitution Act. Fiber from countries without the following regulatory frameworks will require a risk assessment. Domestic legal regime that considers regional particularities pertaining to Indigenous Peoples' rights, including (a) historical and cultural backgrounds of *Indigenous Peoples* and, (b) treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between *Indigenous Peoples* and the state;
- Political or legal mechanisms for *Indigenous People* to pursue their unique interests and seek just and fair redress based on the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, non-discrimination and good faith; and
- Right or ability of *Indigenous Peoples* to organize and advocate through self-determined representative institutions.
- Fiber sourced from areas without effective social laws — The United States and Canada have a strong legal framework. Fiber from countries without effective laws addressing the following will need a risk assessment. *Certified organizations* can refer to the latest Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). A score higher than 50 is considered low risk.
  - workers' health and safety;
  - fair labor practices;
  - *Indigenous Peoples'* rights;
  - anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures;
  - prevailing wages and
  - workers' right to organize.
- Illegal Logging including trade in CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) listed species — Harvesting and trading of wood fiber in violation of applicable laws and regulations in the country of harvest. The United States and Canada have a strong legal framework. *Certified organizations* can refer to the latest Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). A score higher than 50 is considered low risk. Refer to SFI's policy on Illegal Logging in SFI Section 8 - Policies for more information.
- Conflict Timber — The country/region has a been identified as having high intensity violent conflicts according to the Heidelberg conflict barometer.



- Genetically modified trees via *forest tree biotechnology* — SFI has strong existing measures in the SFI Policy on *Forest Tree Biotechnology* located in SFI Section 8 Policies.

Because genetically modified forest trees are not approved for commercial plantings in the United States and Canada, and the SFI Forest Management Standard is endorsed by the [Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification](#), which has restrictions on the use of genetically modified trees, the use of fiber from genetically modified trees via *forest tree biotechnology* is not approved for use in SFI-labeled products.

SFI realizes that much research is still being conducted to study the ecological cost benefits of genetically modified trees and regulations concerning *forest tree biotechnology* continue to evolve. As such research and regulations develop, SFI Inc. will review to understand the impacts of genetically modified trees from an ecological perspective and SFI will proactively review and update the SFI this policy as necessary.

## **5. SFI Audit Procedures**

### **Certifying Multiple Forest Management Units or Fiber Procurement Operations**

SFI recognizes that an organization might manage multiple forest management units/tenures and operate multiple manufacturing facilities. As such, an organization can choose which forest management units/tenures obtain SFI Forest Management certification. Isolated small forest management units for which the primary purpose is to buffer a manufacturing facility are not required to be certified to the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*. These forest management buffer areas may include wood production as an additional goal but not the primary goal and activities in these buffer areas should reflect the commitment to SFI and be in compliance with the requirements of the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard*. Furthermore, only those manufacturing facilities that are sourcing from the *wood and fiber supply area* of the land units/tenures that are certified to the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* are required to obtain *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* certification. Organizations with multiple forest management units/tenures and multiple manufacturing facilities have two years to ensure certification to the respective SFI standards.

### **Primary Producers with SFI Chain-of-Custody and SFI Fiber Sourcing Certification**

1.2 Additional Requirements in the *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard*, requires *primary producers* to conform to the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* if they choose to get certified to the *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard*.

However, we understand the work requirements needed to obtain a certification to the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard*, and given this work requirement, *primary producers* have two years to ensure certification to the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard*. This two-year time frame will allow the primary producer to meet immediate market demands, while working towards fiber sourcing certification.

## Exemption from Chain-of-Custody Surveillance Audits

An SFI chain-of-custody *certified organization* can upon receiving approval from their certificate body waive a surveillance audit if they have not sold any certified material since their last audit. The chain-of-custody *certified organization* must sign a declaration for their *certification body* stating that no material has been sold as SFI certified since the last audit. The declaration must also include a commitment by the chain-of-custody *certified organization* to contact the *certification body* as soon as they wish to sell SFI certified material. *Certification bodies* shall not waive more than two consecutive audits.

## Scoping Suppliers into a Chain of Custody

A *Certified Organization* that sources from *primary producers* can include these organizations in the scope of their *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody Standard* certificate. The *Certified Organization* will be responsible for all chain of custody requirements of the organizations they scope into their own chain-of-custody procedures. The scoped-in organizations are subject to sample audits. *Certification bodies* shall follow guidelines in Section 10 SFI 2022 Audit Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation — Appendix 1, for multi-site organizations. If the *Certified Organization* scopes in *primary producers*, the *Certified Organization* is also responsible for all *SFI Implementation Committee* related activity for that company.

## Guidance for the Use of Remote Auditing Techniques for SFI Audits

Advances in technology coupled with improved *certification body* and *Certified Organization* processes provide the means to improve on the effectiveness of traditional audit methodologies. This guidance discusses how *Certified Organization* and *certification bodies* can conduct audits of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard*, *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard*, *SFI 2022 Chain-of-Custody*, *SFI 2022 Certified Sourcing Standard* or SFI Modules using remote audit techniques to complement traditional audit techniques.

Remote audits using information and communications technology<sup>9</sup> (ICT) provide *certification bodies* the means to conduct rigorous and credible audits of *Certified Organization's* processes and their conformance with SFI standards requirements. Remote audits also allow *certification bodies* to optimize audit effectiveness and efficiency, while supporting and maintaining integrity of the audit process.

## Objective for Remote Auditing

The objective of a remote audit is to determine the required level of confidence in some, or all, of a *certified organization's* processes by direct observations using ICT. Audits using ICT provide the opportunity for increased efficiency, increased safety, inclusion of *certified organization* personnel that may not be easily interviewed, and avoidance of travel restrictions.

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<sup>9</sup> Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is the use of technology for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing, and transmitting information. It includes software and hardware such as smartphones, handheld devices, laptop computers, desktop computers, drones, video cameras, wearable technology, artificial intelligence, and others. The use of ICT may be appropriate for auditing both locally and remotely. (IAF MD 4:2018 – IAF MD for the Use of ICT for Auditing/Assessment Purposes)

## Preconditions for Remote Audits

The use of ICT for remote audits by *certification bodies* should be by mutual agreement with the *Certified Organization*. Examples of the use of ICT during audits may include:

- i. meetings via teleconference, including audio, video, and data sharing,
- ii. verification of evidence by means of remote access, either synchronously (in real time) or asynchronously (when applicable),
- iii. recording of information and evidence by electronic means; and
- iv. providing audio/visual access to remote locations or personnel or potentially hazardous locations (e.g., drones, cameras, etc.).

The *certification body* should identify and document all risks associated with ICT that may impact audit effectiveness, including the selection of the technologies, and how they are used. This review should ensure that the *certified organization* has the necessary infrastructure to support the use of ICT and is a viable candidate for remote audit.

Where a *Certified Organization* demonstrates a history of conformance at the system implementation level (or for the locations being assessed), audits using ICT may be considered for use when one of more of the following applies:

- i. travel to a *certified organization's* location(s) is not possible (i.e., for safety reasons, travel restrictions, etc.).
- ii. the *certification body* determines a low level of risk when conducting the audit remotely.
- iii. the number of sites to be assessed is difficult for the *certification body* to completely fulfill within the required timeline.
- iv. the *certified organization* has a centrally controlled management system where evidence (records, data, etc.) can be accessed remotely.
- v. the situation requires the audit team to conduct a follow up audit otherwise not achievable within a short timeline.
- vi. for *certified organizations* with a *SFI Forest Management Standard* or a *SFI Fiber Sourcing* certificate the surveillance audit can be conducted remotely using ICT where:
  - a. the *certification body* can justify that the audit techniques used deliver sufficient confidence in the *certified organization's* compliance with the standard(s) requirements; and
  - b. no nonconformity was raised during the previous initial, surveillance or recertification audit or the corrective action for the nonconformity can be clearly verified by other audit techniques.

Similarly, for *SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard* or *SFI Certified Sourcing Standard* audits, ICT may be considered for use if the *Certified Organization's* supply chain does not include high risk sources of fiber.

## Planning and Scheduling Remote Audits

The *certification body* should define criteria for determining when it is appropriate to perform part, or all, of an audit remotely. Criteria to consider include identification of the standard

requirements appropriate for remote audit using ICT, and the eligibility of the *certified organization* for remote assessment e.g., availability of records in electronic format, suitable internet connectivity, teleconferencing platforms, etc.

When planning an audit using ICT the certified organization and the certification body should:

- i. define the scope of the audit.
- ii. identify the records and documentation to be available during the audit.
- iii. identify the activities, sites/facilities, information, and personnel to be audited;  
and
- iv. identify dates / times for conducting the audit.
- v. test the ICT to be used for the remote audit including the adequacy of internet or WiFi connections.

Where the planning process identifies audit risks or opportunities, the audit plan should define how and to what extent ICT can be used for remote audit purposes to optimize audit effectiveness and efficiency while maintaining the integrity of the audit process. When ICT is used, it contributes to the total audit time as additional planning may be necessary which may impact audit duration.

For *Certified Organizations* with a *SFI Forest Management Standard* or a *SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard* certificate, the surveillance audit remote audits using ICT techniques may be considered, where:

- i. the *certification body* can justify that the audit techniques used deliver sufficient confidence in the *certified organization's* conformance with the standard(s) requirements; and
- ii. no nonconformity was raised during the previous initial, surveillance or recertification audit or the corrective action for the nonconformity can be clearly verified by other audit techniques.

*Certified Organizations* with a *SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard* and/or a *SFI Certified Sourcing Standard* certificate who can demonstrate they have not sold any materials with an *SFI* claim since their last audit can ask to have the surveillance audit waived.

## **Conducting Remote Audits**

Conduct of the remote audit should follow normal audit plans and processes. Audits should include a summary of the day(s)'s events, issues of concern, clarification of issues, nonconformances and expectations.

## **Post Audit Activities — Remote Audits**

Findings (nonconformances, corrective actions, opportunities for improvement, etc.) need to be drafted by the audit team members and shared with the *certified organization* in a timely manner for acknowledgement, prior to closure of nonconformances.

The processing of nonconformances, and the continuing approval of certification, should follow the same processes that are utilized for on-site audits. Audit reports and related records should indicate the extent to which ICT has been used in carrying out audit and the

effectiveness of ICT in achieving the audit objectives.

## **6. SFI Implementation Committees**

*Certified Organizations* established state *SFI Implementation Committees* in 1995 and the first provincial *SFI Implementation Committee* in 2001. *SFI Implementation Committees* provide a strong foundation for SFI and make important contributions in assuring *SFI standard* conformance and SFI recognition. The state, provincial and regional *SFI Implementation Committees* are semi-autonomous committees reflecting significant geographic and organizational diversity. This flexible, grassroots infrastructure is a fundamental strength of SFI and its goal to promote responsible *forestry* across all forest ownerships.

The definition of *SFI Implementation Committee* in Section 14 of the *SFI 2022: Standard and Rules* is: "A state, provincial, or regional committee organized by *Certified Organizations* to facilitate or manage the *programs* and alliances that support the growth of SFI, including sustainable forest management."

The *SFI Implementation Committee* governance document for reviewed for current relevance to SFI, and to ensure consistency with the *SFI 2022 Standard and Rules*. The *SFI Implementation Committee* governance document will be updated in conjunction with future *SFI Standard* revisions and may also be reviewed between scheduled revisions if there are significant changes to SFI's work.

Some key elements from the governance document and how they relate to the *SFI 2022 Standards* are included here.

### **Vision Statement**

*SFI Implementation Committees* are an integral part of SFI and play a vital role in promoting training and landowner outreach, maintaining integrity of SFI and supporting and promoting responsible *forestry* and SFI at local levels.

### **Mission Statement**

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) defines the SFI committee's mission, ensuring SFI committee goals and priorities are based on recommendations from the SFI Implementation Committee Governance Review Ad-hoc Committee. The MOU clarifies both the committee's mission and supports obligations for *Certified Organizations* as follows:

- I. Overall SFI Implementation Committee Mission — Effectively facilitate or manage at a state, provincial or regional level the *programs* and alliances which support the growth of sustainable forest management through SFI.
- II. Core SFI Implementation Committee Mission — Priorities for all committees:
  - a. Training and Education — Establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for *qualified logging professional, qualified resource*

*professional and wood producer* training, and defining what it means to be "SFI trained."<sup>10</sup>

- b. Inconsistent Practices — Establish protocols for addressing, investigating, and responding to *SFI standard* nonconformity allegations and inconsistent practices, and allegations regarding non-*Certified Organization* forest management practices.<sup>11</sup>
- c. Landowner Outreach — Focus landowner outreach efforts on education and technical assistance.<sup>12</sup>
- d. Informational Resources — Focus informational resource efforts on increasing SFI recognition, awareness, and support with groups, such as local opinion leaders and *forestry* resource professionals.<sup>13</sup>
- e. Annual Reporting — Submit the SFI Implementation Committee Annual Progress Report to *SFI Inc.*
- f. SFI Integrity<sup>14</sup> — Protect the integrity of SFI by:
  - a) ensuring proper SFI Implementation Committee service mark usage;
  - b) alerting *SFI Inc.* when improper communications or misleading claims are observed;
  - c) avoiding the appearance of participation or compliance by non-*Certified Organizations*; and
  - d) avoiding appearance of *third-party certification* by non-certified *Certified Organizations*.

- III. Secondary SFI Implementation Committee Mission — Below are priorities that may be determined by each committee; however, individual participants may choose not to participate or support these *objectives*.
- a. Training and Education — Provide delivery mechanisms for *qualified logging professional*, and *qualified resource professional*, and *wood producer* training to address SFI needs not adequately provided by other *programs*.
  - b. Market Outreach — Sponsor active market outreach efforts in local communities that may include paid advertising.
  - c. Recruitment — Encourage large landowners and all forest products facilities to enroll as *Certified Organizations*; encourage family forest owners to participate in *American Tree Farm System* or similar *programs* recognized by SFI, as appropriate.
  - d. Forest Management Statistics — Encourage government agencies to provide accessible timely, accurate harvest and regeneration statistics, in support of a *Certified organization's sustainable forestry programs*.<sup>15</sup>
  - e. Research — Promote *forestry* research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.<sup>16</sup>

## **SFI Implementation Committee Organization**

<sup>10</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard* Indicator 13.2.1 & 13.2.2 (FM) and 6.2.1 & 6.2.2 (FS).

<sup>11</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard* Performance Measure 14.3 (FM) and 7.3 (FS).

<sup>12</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard Indicators* 14.1.2 and 14.2.1 (FM) and 7.1.1 and 7.1.2 (FS).

<sup>13</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard* Performance Measure 14.2 (FM) and 7.2 (FS).

<sup>14</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard Indicators* 14.3.1 and 14.3.2 (FM) and 7.3.1 and 7.3.2(FS).

<sup>15</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard* Performance Measure. 11.2 (FM) and 8.1 (FS).

<sup>16</sup> *SFI 2022 Standard* Objective 12 (FM) and Objective 5 (FS).

SFI Implementation Committees are semi-autonomous committees reflecting significant geographic and organizational diversity. This flexible, grassroots infrastructure is a fundamental strength of SFI and our goal to promote *sustainable forestry* across all ownerships.

## **SFI Implementation Committee Participation**

All *Certified Organizations* owning and/or operating forest product facilities, owning and/or managing forestland, or procuring fiber within the state or province are expected to participate in the SFI Implementation Committees. *Certified Organizations* are required to participate in the committee where significant operations exist (i.e., majority of forestland owned and/or fiber procured). The expectation is that *Certified Organizations* with facilities within the scope of an *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* certificate will support all the SFI Implementation Committees in the regions, states or provinces where they procure fiber. However, there may be regions, states, or provinces where a *Certified Organization* sources a de minimis amount of fiber for a given facility. In these situations, it is possible for a *Certified Organization* to meet the requirements of Performance Measure 6.2 of the *SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard* in the regions where the majority of the '*Certified organization's* procurement occurs.

## **7. Transition to the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules**

Changes adopted by the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors to the *SFI standards* must be incorporated into a *Certified Organization's* policies, plans, and management activities within one year of adoption and publication. Similarly, changes to certification procedures and qualifications for *certification bodies* must be accomplished within one year of adoption and publication.

It is the *Certified organization's* responsibility to work with the *certification body* to establish a surveillance audit schedule that meets the requirements outlined in the Section 10 *SFI* Audit Procedures and *Auditor* Qualifications and Accreditation. Additional guidance regarding the transition is included below:

- The *SFI 2022: Standard and Rules* replace the *SFI 2015-2019 Standard*, which is the current standard implemented by organizations within their forest operations in United States and Canada.
- *SFI Inc.* developed the *SFI 2022: Standard and Rules* but does not conduct auditing and certification. All certification, recertification, and surveillance audits to the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* shall be conducted by *certification bodies* accredited by the ANSI National Accreditation Board (ANAB) or the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) to conduct *certification to SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*.
- Accredited *certification bodies* are required to maintain audit processes consistent with the requirements of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 17021:2015 conformity assessment — requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems; and conduct audits in accordance with the principles of auditing contained in the ISO 19011:2018 Guidelines for Quality and/or Environmental Management Systems Auditing.

- ANAB and SCC-accredited certification to *the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* shall not be granted until they are published as standards.
- *Certified Organizations* have one year from the time the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* take effect on January 1, 2022, to implement all new and revised requirements, and *Certified Organizations* must demonstrate conformance to the new requirements at their first surveillance audit following the implementation period. Earlier adoption is encouraged.
- Initial certification audits in 2022 must be conducted against the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*.
- After March 31, 2022, all re-certifications must be conducted against the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*. For re-certifications against the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules nonconformities* against changes made in the revised *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* shall be reported but will not adversely affect re-certification until after December 31, 2022.
- Surveillance audits through December 31, 2022, may be conducted against either the *SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard*, the *SFI 2015-2019 Fiber Sourcing Standard* and/or the *SFI 2015-2019 Chain-of-Custody Standard* at the *Certified Organization's* choice. For surveillance audits after March 31, 2022, *nonconformities* against changes made in the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* shall be reported but will not adversely affect certification status until December 31, 2022; these audits shall also include an assessment of action plans to fully transition to the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules* by December 31, 2022.
- After December 31, 2022, all surveillance audits must be conducted against the *SFI 2022 Standards and Rules*.