

FSC Family Forests Group Operation Manual Template

Prepared by the Forest Stewardship Council U.S. in cooperation with the
Northwest Natural Resource Group and the Family Forests Alliance

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Foreword

This template manual is designed to help organizations set up Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified land management programs for groups of family forest owners.

As described by the National Woodland Owners Survey, over a third of the forestland in the United States is owned and managed by some 10 million families, private individuals and small businesses collectively known as “family forest owners”. Family forestlands provide immense environmental and social benefits like clean water, wildlife habitat, and reliable incomes for landowners and steady jobs for forest workers. Getting family forest owners to carry out forest stewardship programs has, however, been a decades-long challenge. Unfortunately, only 1 in 5 acres of family forestland is managed according to a written forest management plan. Only 2 in 5 acres are owned by people who have received any sort of professional resource management advice.

One of the disincentives to maintaining the vitality of working family forests is that responsible management often goes under-rewarded in economic systems. The FSC-US Family Forests Program helps create and promote financial incentives for the ecosystem services family forests supply. Our goal is to expand the economic benefits of family forest stewardship through effective, affordable group certification and supply chains that reward excellent forest managers.

Family Forests Group organizations seeking FSC certification are welcome to use this template manual by substituting their specific information where appropriate. The format offered here is not, however, required. Group organizations are encouraged to set up procedures based on their unique circumstances, including layering FSC certification onto existing landowner assistance and incentive programs or other forest certification systems. Please view this template as an “open source” document that can be freely adapted.

Parts of this template are based on FSC procedures developed by the Northwest Natural Resource Group, Wisconsin Managed Forest Law Group, Indiana Classified Forest Group and others. Their willingness to share their efforts is appreciated.

While this example incorporates the FSC-US, FSC-International and USDA Forest Stewardship Program standards and polices in effect at the time it was written, there is no assurance that it is complete in all respects. Each group entity will need to work with their Certification Body to verify conformance to the standard.

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Note: Throughout this template, advisory information is in **{bold text and enclosed in brackets}**. Keep in mind that many of the ideas presented here are offered as examples. An individual group may have other appropriate methods based on the scale and intensity of its operations.

1. Group Organization and Applicable Standards¹

{FSC has very few requirements regarding necessary structures associated with forest management group entities other than that they must be able to effectively manage the group and there must be a single person designated as responsible for interaction with the certification bodies. FSC encourages all group entities to seek the most appropriate structures for their goals and the needs of the Group Members.

This section should provide the mission and basic governing structures of the group entity. The flexibility of the group entity is such that it may be a single person such as a forester or wood purchaser, a family-owned business, a larger organization with a Board of Directors, or a government agency.}

1.1 Introduction

The Group Entity is an organization with a mission to help member landowners achieve their objectives for healthy forests and clean water with economically beneficial, environmentally appropriate and socially considerate forest management practices {or insert your organization's mission statement}. Group Entity personnel are guided by a Board of Directors, multi-year strategic plans, and individual annual work plans, etc.

1.2 Group Contact Information

The Family Forests Group is a program developed by the Group Entity to provide forest management and certification related services to family forest landowners in [state or geographic region of the United States].

Organization/Group Entity:
Family Forests Group Manager (individual's name):
Organization Street Address:
City, State:
Zip or Postal Code:
Phone:
Fax:
Email:
Website:

¹ Throughout this manual, the terms "Group Entity" and "Family Forests Group" can be replaced with the participant's actual organization name and group certification program name.

1.3 Applicable Standards

The Family Forests Group Operations Manual provides the operating structure, policies, and procedures of the program. This Operations Manual is designed to help the group organization and service providers accomplish the mission within the context of the following standards:

- Forest Stewardship Council-US (FSC-US) Forest Management Standard with Family Forest indicators
- FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups FSC-STD-30-005
- FSC Chain of Custody Standard FSC-STD-40-004
- Other associated FSC policies and procedures
- USDA Forest Stewardship Program National Standards and Guidelines (February 2009 edition) or more recent editions

Copies of the relevant standards, group procedures and forms are available online, from the Group Manager, the Group web site and/or upon request.

1.4 Commitment and Goals

The Group Entity is committed to follow FSC Principles, Criteria and Indicators in the administration of the Family Forests Group. Family Forests Group members also agree to manage their land consistent with FSC standards. (Note: By agreement² between FSC-US and the USDA Forest Service, FSC compliant forest management plans are recognized as being fully compatible with the USDA Forest Stewardship Program. Group Entities may wish to develop a group program as described here that uses the FSC standards in concert with USDA Forest Stewardship Program requirements.)

The group's goals for using FSC standards in concert with USDA Forest Stewardship Program requirements are to:

- Build landowners' confidence that their goals and long-term economic and ecological sustainability will be furthered through forest management;
- Reward Group Members for responsible forestry and ecosystem services they deliver with access to profitable global markets demanding FSC-certified raw materials;
- Improve wildlife habitat, water quality, timber harvest quality, and other resource-related benefits on member lands through planning, practice implementation and monitoring services;
- Enable Group Members to participate in USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service and U.S. Forest Service cost-sharing incentives and programs;
- Strengthen forestry awareness and landowner education programs;

² FSC-US and USDA Memorandum of Understanding, pending approval as of August 1, 2011

- Retain working forests and vital forest industries, including the thousands of jobs they represent, by building a credible supply of FSC-certified raw materials; and
- Assure the public and governmental authorities that private lands are being well-managed with voluntary stewardship practices, without unwarranted governmental regulations.

2. Structure & Relationships

{Although there are endless possibilities for tailoring group structures to local conditions, the following provides an example of a common and simple group structure.}

2.1 Group Structure

The structure of the group certification program involves the Group Entity, Group Members, Professional Service Providers, a third-party Certification Body and the Forest Stewardship Council.

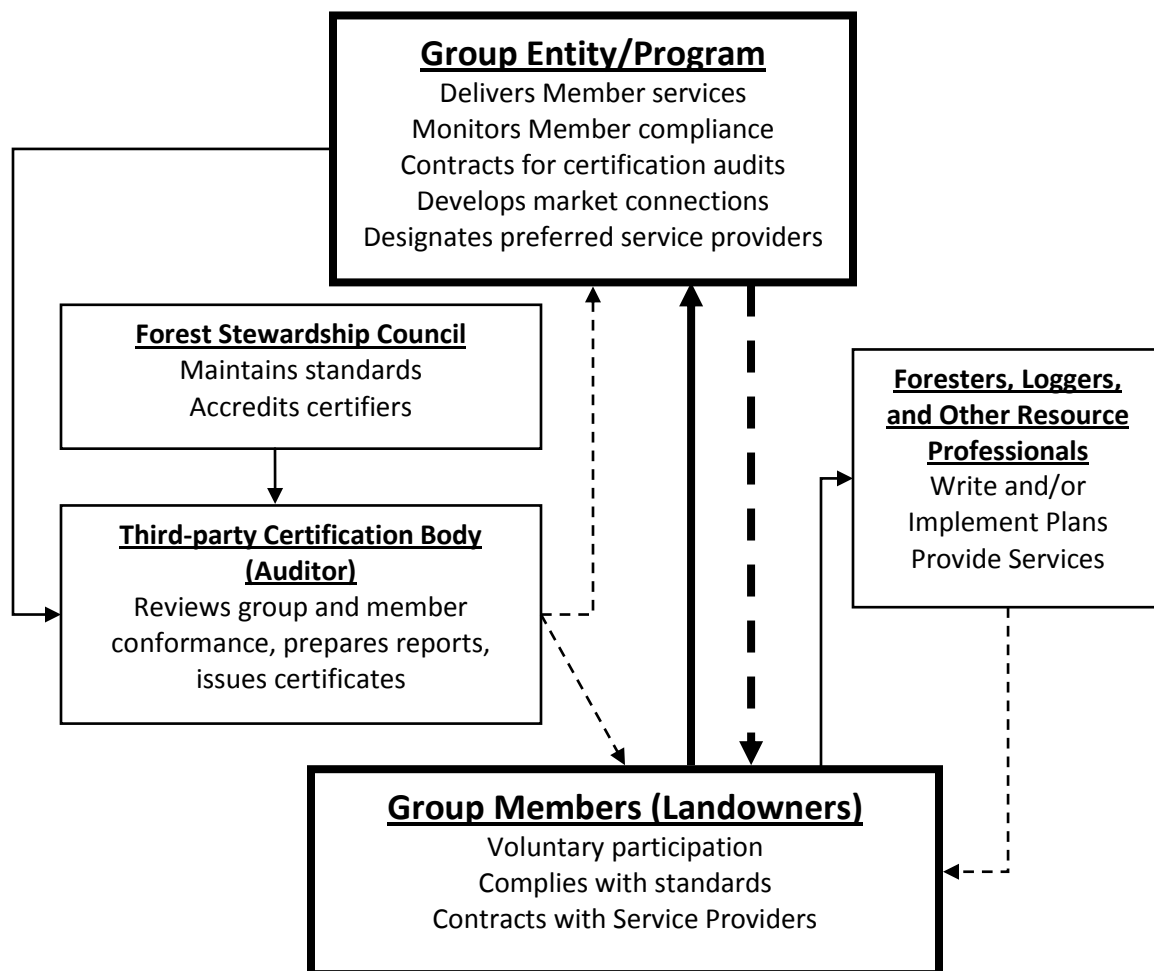


Figure 1. Organization chart relative to forest certification. Solid lines indicate contractual relationships, dotted lines indicate services provided. Heavy borders denote primary parties.

2.2 Group Type

The FSC Forest Management Group Entities Standard describes two types of groups, recognizing that some groups might have blended operations between the two types:

Type I Group: Group with shared responsibilities between the group entity and the Group Members. The shared responsibilities may vary from administrative tasks to marketing, planning, silviculture, harvesting, and monitoring.

Type II Group: ‘Resource manager’ type of group in which the group entity has basically taken all or almost all operational responsibilities including administration, forest management and harvesting activities on behalf of the Group Members.

Sample Language for a Type 1 Group: This Group Entity program is declared to be a Type 1 Group. The Group Entity aggregates independent landowners to take advantage of efficiencies of scale through shared planning, marketing and monitoring services, but members have complete control over what happens on their property. As Group Manager, the Group Entity is responsible for establishing the eligibility rules for the Family Forests Group program, components that make up the group’s forest management planning system, and methods for monitoring internal compliance with group policies and relevant FSC standards. The Group Entity accomplishes this through database administration, a geographically distributed network of staff or cooperating service providers, internal management planning and implementation reviews, follow-up on internal corrective action requests, contracting for third-party FSC audits, and following-up on Corrective Action Requests made by the external auditors.

Although the Group Entity provides guidance, Group Members independently decide whether to implement recommended and optional practices identified in forest management plans, select and hire contractors to implement practices, and choose to whom they sell forest products.

The Group Entity has conducted a risk assessment³ and given the details [include details here, including group size, scale and intensity of operations, spatial configuration of Group Members, local social and environmental conditions, etc.] has determined that there is a low likelihood of large-scale ecological or social impacts. Group Members that fit the FSC-US definition of a “Small and Low Intensity Managed Forest” (a Family Forest⁴) should therefore be considered under the full suite of modified FSC Family Forest Indicators and Guidance. This particularly

³ See Excel template available from FSC-US.

⁴ See [Section 3.1.1](#) for Family Forest eligibility requirements

includes consideration of FSC Criteria 4.1, 4.4, 5.4, 5.6, 6.4 and Indicators 6.1.b, and 9.4.a, where likelihood of HCVF presence would also a factor.⁵

Sample language for a Type 2 Group: This Group Entity program is declared to be a Type 2 Group. The Group Entity aggregates private landowners, for whom the Group Entity manages the enrolled property within the sideboards established by agency agreements with the landowners. As Group Manager, the Group Entity is responsible for establishing the eligibility rules for the Family Forests Group program, components that make up the group's forest management planning system, and methods for monitoring internal compliance with group policies and relevant FSC standards. The Group Entity accomplishes this through database administration, a geographically distributed network of staff or cooperating service providers, management planning and implementation reviews, follow-up on internal corrective action requests, contracting for third-party FSC audits, and following-up on Corrective Action Requests made by the external auditors.

The Group Entity decides (along with the landowner) when and how to implement prescribed practices identified in forest management plans, selects and hires contractors to implement practices, and chooses to whom forest products are sold. Although any of these activities may be accomplished in consultation with the landowners, the Group Entity is primarily responsible for planning and implementation of scheduled resource management activities.

Since management decisions are controlled by the Group Entity, Group Member lands are effectively managed as one Forest Management Unit. Therefore, it is likely that management decisions could cumulatively influence ecological or social objectives, such as affecting landscape level ecological factors or influencing local economies. The Group Entity has conducted a risk assessment⁶ and determined that some FSC Family Forest Indicators should be set aside and the evaluation for those elements be based on full indicators [provide a table showing which full indicators will be used].

{As noted above, group entities could set up a Type 1 or Type 2 organization, or they can use a blended approach. Groups could also have distinct and separate categories of participants based on the management authority granted to the group entity. In such structures, Certification Bodies could examine discrete member categories through separate audit sampling selections.}

⁵ Note: Groups that reach a different conclusion regarding likelihood of cumulative impacts related to the size or configuration of group members' land should list the related FSC-US Family Forest Indicators to be set aside in favor of the regular requirements for larger ownerships. See "*Group certification and family forest indicators/guidance*" on pages 5-6 of the FSC-US Standard for more information.

⁶ See Excel template available from FSC-US.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities.

{These are examples of common roles that may not be applicable in all situations.}

Table 1 provides a summary of general responsibilities for the Group Entity, Group Members, Group Staff/Contractors, Preferred Cooperators, Other Service Providers and Third-party Auditors.

The Group Entity is responsible for administering the group certification program and minimizing the risk that member landowners will not be in conformance with the certification standard. Preferred Providers and all other contracted natural resource professionals are responsible for giving landowners assistance and services that are consistent with the group certification program guidelines. Family Forests Group Members are responsible for meeting their obligations defined in the Operations Manual. The third-party Auditor is the accredited certifier who reviews the Group Entity's and members' conformance with certification standards. FSC develops and updates standards for FSC certified forestry operations through a membership organization that is open to participation of group organizations, individuals, natural resource managers, companies and other entities.

More specifically, roles and responsibilities may be broken out as follows:

Group Entity⁷

{The complexity and size of the group entity may vary greatly and range from a single person to an entire organization based on the complexity and needs of the group.}

The Group Entity oversees all aspects of maintaining group certification. The Group Entity determines eligibility and membership requirements of the group as outlined in this handbook. The Group Entity can hire staff and enter into cooperative agreements with service providers to carry out its duties. The Group Entity:

1. Appoints a representative to serve as the Group Manager.
2. Maintains the records of the group organization.
3. Processes applications for membership into the group organization.
4. Applies for certification on behalf of landowners in the Family Forests Group and selects an accredited certification body to conduct the certification audit.
5. Represents the group organization throughout the audit process.
6. Maintains the FSC group certificate on behalf of the group organization and controls the claims that the group organization can make.
7. Ensures that any public claims about the group's certification are accurate and truthful and that FSC claims and trademarks are used in accordance with FSC guidelines.

⁷ In Type 2 Groups, the Group Entity might also conduct forest inventories, establish annual sale quantities, conduct and/or administer timber harvests, etc.

8. Provides timely reporting and payment of fees to FSC or the Certification Body and reporting Forest Stewardship Program accomplishments to state or federal Forest Stewardship Programs as appropriate.
9. Defines training needs and implements training activities and communication strategies relevant to the implementation of responsible forestry practices as outlined in the applicable FSC standards.
10. Conducts ongoing internal monitoring of group and members.
11. Conducts group-level assessments associated with calculating sustained harvest, monitoring, HCVF, Representative Sample Areas, etc.
12. Issues plan implementation reminders and effects compliance measures
13. Reviews and approves plans prepared by Staff Foresters and Preferred Service Providers⁸
14. Reviews and compiles timber harvest cutting notice and annual management activity reports
15. Publishes summary reports as required by the FSC Standard and provides detailed member information only when necessary (such as verification of membership for FSC claims)
16. Consults with tribal representatives⁹, where appropriate.

Group Entity Staff/Foresters

Family Forests Group services offered by Group Entity Foresters (some possibly on a fee basis) may include but are not limited to¹⁰:

1. Initial forest management guidance (woodland walk-throughs, clarification of objectives, program information, publications)
2. Forest Management Plans and plan revisions within the sideboards of group policies, FSC standards and Forest Stewardship Program guidelines
3. Natural Heritage Inventory, cultural and historic database checks
4. Detailed practice plans for timber harvests, reforestation, wildlife habitat improvement or other management activities
5. Oversight of active forest product harvests
6. Technical and administrative assistance for cost sharing programs¹¹
7. Forest health or ecological monitoring assistance

⁸ Plan approval by the Group Entity could reduce risk and lower audit costs but is not required under the FSC-US Standard. It might be sufficient for a plan to be prepared by a qualified professional resource manager, waiving a review by the Group Entity. Third-party audits can be used to determine the adequacy of plans under the simplest group structure.

⁹ Family Forest Groups may rely on consultation between appropriate state and federal agencies and tribes and then abide by the outcome of such government to government negotiations or settlements.

¹⁰ The simplest Type 1 Group might not offer any of these services.

¹¹ If the Group Entity is registered as a NRCS Technical Service Provider

8. Guidance on forest protection measures against fire, insects, invasive species and disease
9. Referrals for more detailed services not offered by the Group Entity

Group entity staff shall demonstrate knowledge of the Group's procedures and the applicable FSC Standards.

Preferred Service Providers

In addition to services that might be offered by Group Entity Staff, services offered by cooperating natural resources managers on a fee basis as contracted by the landowner may include but are not limited to:

1. Forest management plans if qualified as a Registered Plan Writer/Forester
2. Detailed practice plans for timber harvests, reforestation, wildlife habitat improvement or other management activities
3. Ecological assessments (for the group as a whole or for individual Group Members)
4. Recreation planning and development
5. Forest inventory and cruising, including basis establishment
6. Tree planting, seeding and site preparation
7. Pest control
8. Prescribed burning
9. Road and trail location, design and construction
10. Surveying (if licensed) and boundary establishment
11. Thinning and pruning services
12. Timber Tax counseling
13. Timber sales: preparation & administration
14. Logging (if a professional logger)
15. Specialty product marketing

Note that Family Forests Group members are not required to contract with Preferred Service Providers for any of these services other than forest management planning writing. For purposes of consistency and efficiency, forest management plans must be prepared by a Registered Plan Writer with access to the Group Entity's digital database system¹². Preferred Service Providers should demonstrate knowledge of the Group's procedures and the applicable FSC Standards.

¹² Neither the use of Registered Plan Writers nor the use of digital database management systems are FSC requirements, but are recommended. The federal Forest Stewardship Program WebDET 2 database system is suggested, or the group might have a custom database management system. Manual data systems are also allowed.

Group Members

The Group Members are the eligible participants that collectively make up the Family Forests Group. Specific group member duties include:

1. Applying for Group Membership
2. Obtaining and following a forest management plan that is consistent with group policies, including FSC indicators, Forest Stewardship Program guidelines, and FSC chain of custody requirements
3. Contacting the Group Manager when planning a timber harvest, and notifying the Group Manager when the timber harvest begins
4. Allowing access for group internal audits and FSC forest certification field audits
5. Keeping forest products harvested from Family Forests Group land separate from products harvested from non-Group land during commercial harvest operations
6. Considering appropriate liability insurance and safety requirements in timber sales and other contracts
7. Using FSC logos and claims in conformance with both on-product and off-product FSC trademark policies
8. Ensuring that no FSC banned pesticides are used on certified parcels
9. Maintaining property boundaries and ensuring that harvest boundaries are adequately designated on the ground or controlled with GPS-enabled harvest systems
10. Taking precautions (such as providing gates or appropriate signage if needed) to protect their property from illegal use
11. Complying with laws and governmental regulations
12. Honoring legally substantiated use rights held by others, including treaty rights (if any) held by native tribes¹³
13. Keeping records of management activities, harvest of timber and commercial non-timber forest products, pesticide applications
14. Annually reporting management information to the Group Manager

Group members are also encouraged to be actively involved in forestry education and advocacy opportunities, participate in Group Entity leadership opportunities, and network with other landowners.

¹³ Family Forest Groups may rely on consultation between appropriate state and federal agencies and tribes and then abide by the outcome of such government to government negotiations or settlements.

Table 1- Summary of Roles & Responsibilities

	Group Entity (Group Manager)	Member (Landowner)	Group Staff/Contractors	Preferred Cooperator	Other Service Provider	Third-party Auditor
Service Agreements & Contracts	Creates and signs formal agreements with all parties except Other Service Providers.	Signs Membership Agreement with Group Entity. May contract with Preferred Providers or other service providers	Signs Agreement with Group Entity	Signs Memorandum of Agreement with Group Entity and contracts with Landowner	Contracts with Landowner	Contracts with Group Entity
Policies	Develops Operations Manual and assures it is understood, followed, and updated as necessary.	Follows Operations Manual. May participate in Group activities or committees.	Follows Operations Manual	Follows Operations Manual	Follows Operations Manual	Reviews adequacy of Group policies in relation to the FSC Standard.
Fees	Sets fees, pays for costs of certificate and market development.	Pays Member fee (if any) and fees for contracted services	N/A	Pays annual fee (if any) to Group Entity. Contracts with Landowner for services	Contracts with Landowner for services	Charges Group Entity for certification auditing fees
Auditing	Provides templates, coordinates/conducts internal monitoring, and compiles aggregate data. Represents Family Forests Group Membership in third-party audits.	Obtains and follows forest management plan. Subject to annual monitoring and possible inclusion in third-party auditor sample. Makes property available for monitoring.	Provides services as contracted. Assists with internal reviews of Members' compliance to program rules. May be asked to participate in third-party audits.	May be offered an opportunity to participate in internal monitoring or third-party audits.	May be offered an opportunity to participate in internal monitoring or third-party audits.	Audits Group Entity and sample of Landowners for compliance with FSC standards. Prepares reports including Corrective Action Requests. Provides certification.
Monitoring of Ecology, Forestry, and Community Issues	Establishes procedures, and provides guidance. May do some monitoring for members.	Implements monitoring activities identified in the Operations Manual and landowner's management plan	May assist with monitoring or conducts internal reviews of members' implementation of monitoring activities	Provides fee-based technical services. Follows Operations Manual.	Provides fee-based technical services. Follows Operations Manual	Reviews adequacy of monitoring efforts relative to the FSC Standard.
Communication	Provides central point of communication between all participants. Maintains an Operations Manual to explain policies and FSC requirements	Communicates with Group Entity regarding activities, operations, and needs. Files Cutting Notices and Annual Forms with Group Entity	Communicates with Group Entity, Members, and relevant Service Providers	Communicates with Member and Group Entity regarding activities, operations, and needs.	Communicates with Member and Group Entity regarding activities, operations, and needs	Communicates with Group Entity
Training	Offers workshops, tours, and other skill building activities.	Participates in workshops and other activities (voluntary)	Completes initial training and any continuing training as necessary.	Builds and maintain skills to provide FSC compliant services.	Builds and maintain skills to provide FSC compliant services	Maintains credentials to conduct audits

3. Membership Policies¹⁴

3.1 Membership Eligibility

{The group entity is required to define the categories of land and landowners that are eligible for membership. Following is an example for a group entity that only includes private landownership categories.}

Membership in the Family Forests Group is available to private land¹⁵ in [a state or region] that includes:

- A. “Family Forests” – Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests (SLIMF) – defined as any non-public forest management unit (FMU) that is:
 - a. Small:
 - i. An FMU with a total forest area in the unit of 1,000 hectares (2,470 acres) or less, with a minimum of 10 contiguous acres for this program; **OR**
 - b. Low Intensity:
 - i. The rate of harvesting is less than 20% of the mean annual increment (MAI) within the total production forest area of the unit, AND
 - ii. EITHER the annual harvest from the total production forest area is less than 5,000 cubic meters, OR the average annual harvest from the total production forest is less than 5,000 m³ / year during the period of validity of the certificate as verified by harvest reports and surveillance audits.
- B. “Large Private Ownerships” that exceed the family forest constraints but are less than 20,000¹⁶ acres total in size within [a state or region]. Large ownerships will be in a separate audit sample pool and will be reviewed under the full FSC-US forest management standard.

Membership in the Family Forests Group is available to public land in [a state or region], but only under very limited situations: City parks and county forests are eligible, as well as other public lands that fit the family forest constraints and are determined by the Certifying Body to be of low risk with respect to negative social and environmental impact in those Indicators that are different in the FSC Family Forest Indicators. For public lands that are deemed eligible to

¹⁴ The examples here are based on a private landowner association. A public agency that organizes an existing forestry incentive program into a family forest group, an industrial landowner assistance program, a resource manager group and other models might have different policies unique to their charter or statutory authority.

¹⁵ Defined here as land owned or leased by individuals, families, partnerships, trusts, and any businesses that are not publically traded on U.S. or international stock exchanges

¹⁶ FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups FSC-STD-30-005 does not establish a maximum size limit for a group member, but a 20,000 acres limit is used as an example for this template.

use the FSC Family Forest Indicators, all indicators in the FSC-US Forest Management Standard that are identified as applicable only to public lands are also applicable to public lands in this group.

Eligible landowners must demonstrate a long-term commitment to meeting and maintaining the FSC standards in their forest management, both through the signing of the Family Forests Group service agreement, the content of their management plan, and their on-the-ground performance. Eligible landowners must also demonstrate a willingness and ability to comply with Family Forests Group policies and procedures.

All landowners meeting the eligibility requirements noted above are welcome to join the Family Forests Group. For purposes of recruiting new members and developing additional Forest Stewardship Plans, the Group Entity may, however, focus outreach efforts toward “Important Forest Resources Areas” as defined in the State Spatial Analysis Project or Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources completed under the 2008 Federal Farm Bill and related High Conservation Value Forest assessments.

Based on the Group Entity’s staff and ability to scale staff and the management system as Group Members are added, the Family Forests Group is limited to [X] members or approximately [X] acres.¹⁷ After the initial group organization, the Group Entity does not anticipate typically adding more than [X] members or [X] acres per year¹⁸.

3.2 Membership Duration

{Since the integrity of the FSC certification program is dependent on a long-term perspective and commitment to forest management, the Group Entity is encouraged to have a policy relating to turnover in the group. Groups which experience a high level of turnover may be subject to additional scrutiny by certification bodies to ensure consistency with FSC goals (see process for membership 3.4).}

Members may enroll at any time, and they can continue from year-to-year¹⁹ as long as they are in good standing in respect to group policies and fees.

The Group Entity’s FSC certificate has term of five years (e.g., Jan 2012 – Dec 2016). After five years, a new assessment is conducted to qualify for another five-year certificate. Once enrolled, landowners are strongly encouraged to remain committed for the remainder of the certificate term. If a landowner chooses to end their membership before the end of the certificate term,

¹⁷ Declaration as required in Section 6.2 of FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0) EN

¹⁸ Growth levels or limits may also be stated as percentages.

¹⁹ Groups based on statutory programs such as forest tax incentive programs may have longer membership commitments, which are tied to program regulations.

the landowner may reapply for admission provided they have not significantly strayed from the goals of the Group Entity or the requirements of the FSC standard during their absence.

If the group's FSC certificate lapses or is suspended for any reason, the Family Forests Group may continue to function for other worthwhile purposes, but members would not be able to make FSC claims.

Group Membership does not automatically transfer to a new owner. See Section 3.5 for details regarding land transfers.

3.3 Fee Structure

{The FSC Standards and Policies do not provide guidance or limitations on how Group Entities establish fee structures. Group Entities are free to construct the fee structure that fits their operations and are encouraged to include that information within the Operations Manual that is developed.}

Sample Language for a Fee Structure that includes an annual membership fee: Family Forests Group Members are responsible for an annual membership fee (*see Table 2 below for fees*). Fees cover the administrative costs of certification, market development, and other Family Forests Group services identified in this manual. The membership fee is payable to the Group Entity. The Group Entity reserves the right to raise fees if necessary. Starting in their second year, Members may be eligible for a reduced annual fee if they complete the Annual Reporting Form, have no significant management activity, and are up to date with compliance.

Table 2 - Fee structure.

Membership Level	Acreage	Initial Cost	Reduced Annual Cost
Family	1- 2,470 a. ²⁰	\$	\$
Large	2,470 to 20,000 a.	Negotiated	Negotiated

The Membership fee does not include the costs associated with forest management planning, harvest operations, or other contract services. Members are responsible for paying any and all service fees to loggers, foresters or other natural resource professionals who provide management planning, harvest, or other services.

{Group Entities may also establish an Application Fee, Annual Audit Fee, 5-year Re-assessment Fee, Management Service Fees and rates, or other fee structures that aid in meeting the financial objectives of the program.}

²⁰ The group might elect to have a graduated fee structure based on additional intermediate acreage classes.

3.4 Membership Process

{The FSC standard does not prescribe a membership process. However, Group Entities are required to establish a process that outlines 1) how members are enrolled into the group, 2) how members are voluntarily or non-voluntarily expelled from the group, and 3) how members can re-join the group after voluntary or non-voluntary membership lapses.}

Sample Language for a Membership Process: The first step in joining the Family Forests Group is the completion of the Membership Application & Service Agreement and submittal of the initial payment. The form outlines both the basic requirements and specific responsibilities of membership. The Group Entity will provide applicants a new member packet with any supplemental information.

The following schematic outlines an example process a landowner would go through to become a Member of the Family Forests Group.

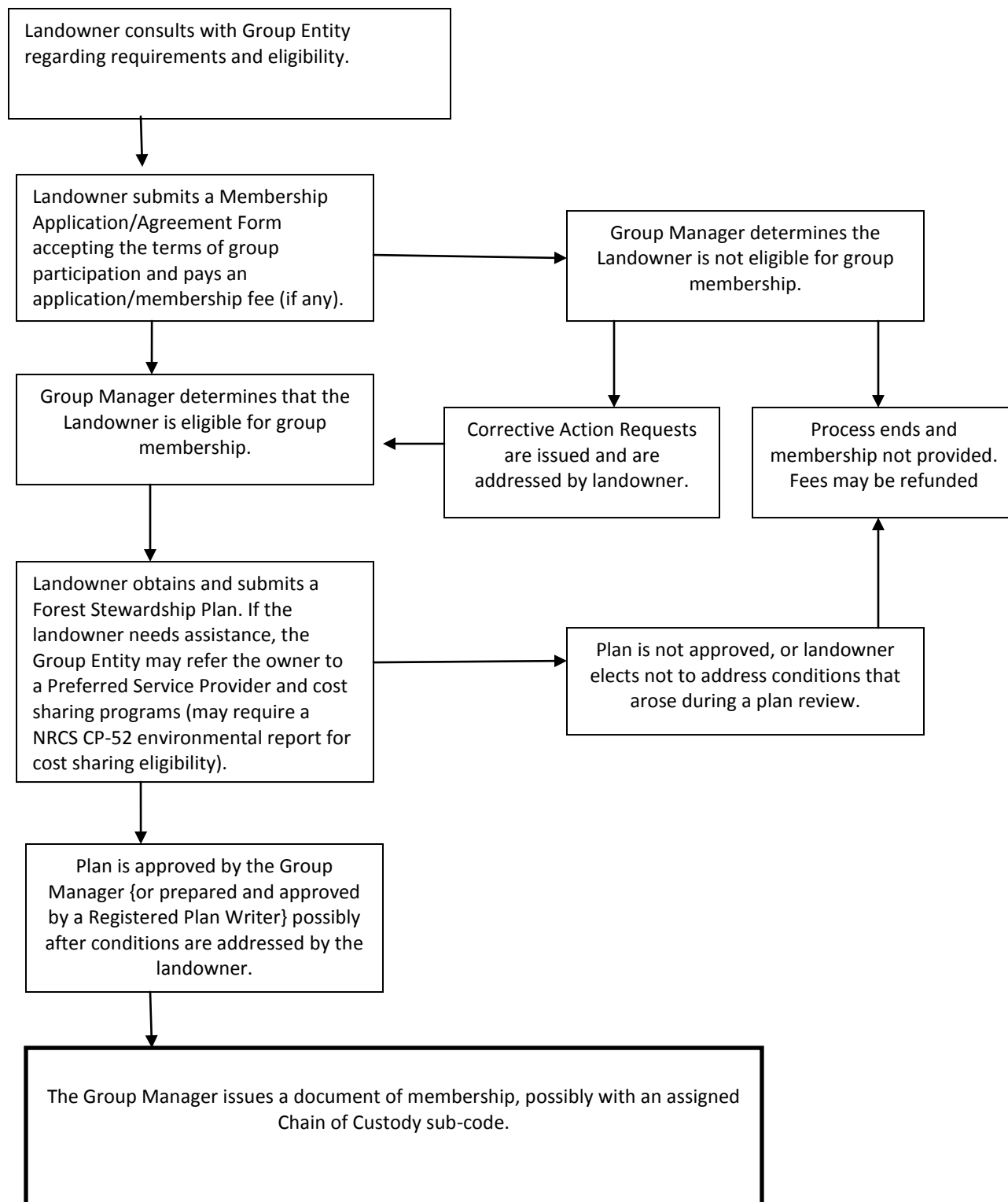


Figure 2. Family Forests Group Membership Process

3.4.1 Entry into Family Forests Group²¹

To enter the certified group, landowners are required to:

- Acknowledge acceptance of the terms and conditions of being a member of the certified group by signing the Membership Application & Service Agreement. By signing the Membership Application, the landowners agree²² that they:
 - Commitment to comply with all applicable certification requirements;
 - Acknowledge and agree to the obligations and responsibilities of the Group Entity;
 - Acknowledge and agree to the obligations and responsibilities of Group membership;
 - Agree to membership of the scheme, and
 - Authorize the Group entity to be the primary contact for certification and to apply for certification on the member's behalf.
- Manage their forests in accordance with all applicable FSC standards and policies as described in the Operations Manual provided to all applicants by the Group Entity;
- Adhere to their management plan;
- Allow Group Entity assessors and/or FSC auditors to review forestry practices on their land and review documents pertaining to the management of their land during the certification period with due notice;
- Notify Group Entity if there are any changes in the ownership or management of their land during the certification period;
- Pay the appropriate annual Membership fee based on acreage;
- Comply with all conditions within any designated time frame.

Regarding signatures on the Membership Application/Agreement²³:

1. Signatures can be original, faxes, scans or photocopies.
2. The signature of a spouse due to marital property is not required. If the spouse is listed as a grantee/vendee on the title documents, however, they are an owner and must sign the Agreement.
3. A life estate holder is an owner and as such must sign the Agreement.
4. Encumbrance holders and land contract vendors must sign the Agreement if they control or have some approval authority over the management. If a deed is in probate, the executor must sign the Agreement.
5. If the ownership document states that another party holds the timber interest or that the other party has control of the management, both the landowner and that party

²¹ If an "Opt-Out" procedure is used to originate a certified group from an existing program (such as a State Forest Stewardship Program or property tax incentive program), the Operations Manual must describe the process by which participants were given the opportunity to give informed consent relative to FSC certification (see Section 5 of FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0) EN).

²² As required in Section 4.2 of FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0) EN

²³ Suggested provisions not specified in the FSC standard

must sign the Agreement. The same applies for conservation easements and restrictive covenants that may or will affect the management of the property.

3.4.2 Departure or Withdrawal from the Family Forests Group

Landowners will be withdrawn or suspended from the certified group if they:

- Request to be removed from the group, giving at least 30 days notice;
- Do not adhere to their management plan or the FSC standards;
- Refuse to allow the Group Entity and/or FSC Auditor access to their land for monitoring or auditing purposes;
- Fail to conform with conditions or corrective action requests issued by the Certification Body and the Group Entity;
- Sell their property (see last paragraph of this sub-section);
- Do not pay their annual membership fee by the end of a 120 day grace period.

Landowners that depart from the group:

- Can no longer place any FSC or Family Forests Group claim, logo, or their chain of custody number on any product, invoice, or marketing material, or make any FSC certified sales;
- Must remove all FSC logos and claims from material associated with the property including, but not limited to, websites, advertising, letterhead, brochures, and maps;
- Will no longer receive the benefits of Family Forests Group Membership; and
- Must return their Family Forests Group certificate and gate sign (if any).

The continuation of use of logos by the landowner (former Member) on any paperwork, advertising or website constitutes a violation of the FSC trademark and may subject the landowner to legal action by FSC or the Group Entity.

3.4.3 Property Sale or Transfer

If a Member sells the property, membership will terminate 10 days after entering into a contract of sale or upon transfer of title by deed, whichever occurs earliest. The buyer or grantee of the property may become a Group Member and maintain the same property in the program if the buyer/grantee notifies the Group Entity in writing within 60 days and agrees to comply with all applicable policies. The new owner may agree to comply with the previous owner's management plan or have a Qualified Plan Writer make appropriate updates to the plan. If more than 60 days has lapsed since the transfer, the new owner will need to pay the initial membership fee.

3.4.4 Membership Reactivation

If a landowner chooses to end their membership before the end of the five-year FSC certificate term, the landowner may reapply for admission provided they have not significantly erred from the certification indicators during their absence. A landowner may

depart the group and return only once per five-year period. Returning members would pay the annual fee.

3.5 Conditions & Corrective Action Requests

Landowners seeking membership in the Family Forests Group FSC certification program may require management improvements or other changes to meet program requirements. Necessary changes may also be discovered in the course of internal reviews and third-party audits. The following mechanisms can be used to bring performance to acceptable levels either prior to or during certification. The Group Entity will issue written pre-conditions, conditions, observations, or other non-binding recommendations to an applicant following an onsite visit or desk review of the management plan. Conditions and recommendations are provided to the landowner along with guidance on how to make the correction. The Group Entity will follow up prior to the deadline to verify that corrective action has been taken. Gaps may also be identified during third-party audits, which could result in auditor-issued Corrective Action Requests (CARs) that will need to be addressed. Verification involves either document review or a site visit, depending on the nature of the pre-condition and condition. Conformance with optional recommendations is not required.

3.5.1 Pre-conditions

If an aspect of management is clearly out of line with FSC standards such that Members are not conformant to the intent of a FSC Criterion, correction of the issue will be required as a pre-condition of Group Membership. Pre-conditions must be resolved prior to a Member being admitted to the group program. Pre-conditions will be communicated to the prospective member in writing. Making certification-related claims is not possible without first satisfying pre-conditions.

3.5.2 Conditions

If an aspect of management is largely conformant to a FSC Criterion but not all of the indicators associated with that Criterion, the Group Entity may grant conditional membership. Conditions will be communicated to the new Member in writing. Compliance with specific conditions and CARs will be required within a specified timeframe, most often prior to harvesting or one year, as deemed appropriate by the Group Entity in consultation with the landowner. Non-compliance with a condition will result in second repeat condition with a firm time frame for conformance, typically 30 - 90 days. Non-conformance with a repeat condition is grounds for immediate expulsion from the certified group.

3.5.3 Recommendations

In the interest of providing Members with constructive feedback, Family Forests Group staff or service providers may also offer optional observations and recommendations for changes

in management. These may be used to identify minor, individual, and isolated occurrences of non-conformities as well as areas where the Group staff has identified areas of improvement. These are completely non-binding. The landowner may pursue other methods to address the cause of a condition.

3.5.4 Corrective Action Requests Issued by the Certification Body

During the course of a field review, the Group Entity's FSC auditor may deliver Corrective Action Requests to specific Family Forests Group Members or the Group Entity when nonconformities to the standard are discovered. The Group Manager will communicate CARs that affect collective or individual members. It is the responsibility of the Family Forests Group Manager to explain the reason for a CAR and what steps the members need to take to correct any CARs issued by third-party auditors.

3.6 Complaints/Dispute Resolution

{It is important for Groups to have internal dispute resolution processes and to have mechanisms to resolve issues between Group Members and the Group Entity prior to their escalation. Following is an example of a mechanism to resolve internal disputes. FSC also has a formalized dispute resolution protocol for complaints or disputes between the group (including members) and third-party auditors or between the group and FSC.}

To avoid conflicts and corrective procedures arising out of Group Entity policies, Members will communicate clearly and consistently with service providers, auditors, Family Forests Group staff, and other relevant parties to avoid misunderstandings. Conflicts arising within the context of Family Forests Group and FSC policies will largely be avoided if management treatments are done in accordance with the approved management plan. It is a goal of Family Forests Group not to allow situations to develop to the point where Members become involuntarily ineligible.

If disputes cannot be resolved by Family Forests Group staff, a three Member Dispute Resolution Committee comprised of one staff member, one Group Member, and one other party, will be asked to review the case and propose a resolution.

If the Dispute Resolution Committee cannot facilitate a resolution, the two parties will contract with a third-party dispute resolution service. The two parties will share the cost of this service equally. If more than one Group Member is involved in a dispute, the cost will be shared proportionately.

If a dispute resolution service cannot facilitate a resolution, the parties involved will enter into binding arbitration.

3.7 Notification of Group Membership Changes

The Group Entity will notify the Certifying Body of significant changes in Family Forest ownership, the certified land base and significant changes in management planning prior to the next scheduled annual audit, or within one year of such change, whichever comes first. Significant changes affecting the large owner category will be reported to the Certification Body within 90 days.

4. Operational Policies

4.1 Group Records

4.1.1 Types of Records and Retention Policy²⁴

The Group Entity shall maintain complete and up-to-date records covering all applicable requirements of this operations manual. These include:

1. List of names and contact details of Group members, together with dates of entering and leaving the Group scheme, reason for leaving, and the type of forest ownership (e.g., family forest or large ownership) per member;
2. Any records of training provided to staff or Group members relevant to the implementation of group policies or the applicable Forest Stewardship Standards;
3. A map or supporting documentation describing or showing the location of the members' forest properties;
4. Evidence of consent of all Group members, including any "opt-out" procedure if applicable;
5. Documentation and records regarding recommended practices for forest management (i.e. silvicultural systems);
6. Records demonstrating the implementation of any internal control or monitoring systems. Such records shall include records of internal inspections, non-compliances identified in such inspections, actions taken to correct any such non-compliance;
7. Records of the estimated annual overall FSC production and annual FSC sales of the Group.

Group records shall be retained for at least five (5) years.

²⁴ As required in Section 5 of FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0) EN. The amount of data that is maintained centrally by the Group Entity may vary from case to case. In order to reduce costs of evaluation by the certification body, data should be stored centrally wherever possible. Use of a digital database system such as the USDA WebDET 2 system is encouraged.

The Group Entity will not issue any kind of certificates or declarations to their Group Members that could be confused with FSC certificates²⁵.

4.1.2 Document Control & Confidentiality Policy

Documents and information related to individual members are to be kept confidential²⁶. Except as noted here, only the Group Entity, staff, authorized agents, Certification Body auditors, and individual landowners (for their land) will have access to records for specific properties. When necessary, the Group Entity may share member specific information for FSC Chain of Custody purposes; use by service providers contracted by the Group Entity or landowner; and authorized monitoring, training and research activities related to administration of the Family Forests Group. Public summary information as required by FSC standards and Forest Stewardship Program guidelines will be available upon request.

4.1.3 Forms List

The following table lists examples of the forms that may be typically used by the Family Forests Group and operational guidance for reviewing the information.

Table 3 – Family Forests Group List of Forms²⁷

Stage in Forest Management Process	Forms	Guidance
Membership Application Process	Membership Application & Service Agreement	Group Entity will conduct at least one site visit before the management plan receives final approval unless the plan was developed by a Registered Plan Writer.
Membership Application Process or Internal Review	Client Report	The Client Report will include the Group Membership decision or pending conditions. In some situations, the Client Report may be auto-generated from database driven assessment.
Resource Planning	Landowner’s parcel-specific forestry plan (Forest Stewardship Plan)	A template that helps forest management plan writers address all the required plan components. The template may be built in to a digital system like WebDET or a paper form such as the ATFS FS NRCS Joint Management Plan Template .

²⁵ Individual certificates for Group Members may, however, be requested from the Certification Body if desired

²⁶ Record confidentiality may not be feasible for public organizations subject to open records laws.

²⁷ A group might have additional forms such as an Internal Audit Report, HCVF Monitoring, Growth and Yield Information, etc. Specific forms are not provided as part of this Operations Manual template.

Resource Planning and Monitoring	Management Recommendations/Completion Record	A paper record used where a digital system is not in place or to supplement a digital system.
Resource Planning and Monitoring	WebDET 2 (or other digital forestry database) ²⁸	WebDET is a national web based data entry and report writing geodatabase tool designed to support the Forest Stewardship Program. WebDET is accessible through a web browser without the need for desktop GIS software or software expertise and is an extension of the Spatial Analysis Project. Administered by the U.S. Forest Service, WebDET is implemented and delivered by state forestry agencies and allows field foresters, working with private landowners, to prepare Forest Stewardship Management Plans, record contact and other attribute information of the plan property, track plan implementation accomplishments, and spatially display and analyze plan locations and associated activities.
Resource Planning and Monitoring	NRCS Environmental Evaluation (NRCS-CPA-52)	Needed for landowners seeking federal cost sharing assistance through Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Farm Service Agency (FSA) incentive programs.
Annual Reviews	Group Member Annual Reporting Form (paper form or online form)	The annual report form is useful for confirming the landowner's continued interest in Group Membership, whether they are keeping up on monitoring activities, and if their contact information is current. It can be used to trigger an update to the forest reconnaissance records or monitoring visit. ²⁹

²⁸ Use of any specific proprietary tool or data system is not required in the FSC Standard

²⁹ Large groups may find that annual reports from each group member are impractical and too costly to administer. Alternative database systems such as WebDET 2 and cutting notice/report procedures may provide sufficient information for some groups.

Annual Reviews	Group Entity Annual Report Forms	Includes annual reports to FSC Certification Bodies and the USDA Forest Stewardship Program and Rural Forestry Assistance PMAS report (where appropriate).
Harvests	Cutting Notice Form	Completed by the landowner or their forester prior to commencing a commercial harvest of timber or other tracked product that involves a FSC claim. The form (and a call when cutting starts) may be used by the Group Manager to schedule a visit while the harvest is active. If signed by the Group Manager, it can also be used to confirm approval for a member to use the Group's FSC claim/certificate code.
Harvests	Cutting Report Form	Completed by the landowner or their forester when a commercial harvest of timber or other tracked product that involves a FSC claim is done. The cutting report helps the Group Manager track accomplishments.
Harvests	Sample Timber Sale Contract	Depending upon whether the organization is a Type 1 or Type 2 FSC Group, the Group Entity may have more or less say in specific timber sale contract language. Regardless, the availability of an example can help Group Members have a successful harvest and address forest certification issues.
Property Sale	Sale or Transfer Form	Completed by the member within 60 days of a transfer.
Voluntary Group Departure	Group Departure Notification Form	Completed by the member if they want to disassociate from the certified group.
Preferred Service Providers	Service Provider Cooperative Agreement Form	Agreement between the Group Entity and Preferred Service Providers, required for referrals from the Group Entity.

4.2 Forest Management Plans

Group Members must have a parcel-specific forest management plan (also called a Forest Stewardship Plan). Parcel-specific plans are augmented by overview documentation providing overarching support such as management guidelines, resource assessments, inventory systems and Comprehensive Landscape Management Plans.

4.2.1 Overview Documentation

Written documentation that constitutes a Family Forests Group forest management plan extends beyond parcel-specific plans provided to landowners. Additional plan components may include the following information from the State Forestry Agency, U.S. Forest Service, State University, Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations, State Historical Societies, Tribal Cultural Affairs Offices and other credible sources³⁰:

- State Silviculture Handbook
- Generally Accepted Forest Management Guidelines
- Best Management Practices for Water Quality
- Logging Equipment and Logging Engineering Guidelines
- Invasive Species Risk Assessments and Control Guidelines
- Biomass Harvests Guidelines
- Ecological Landscapes Handbook
- Wildlife Action Plan
- Statewide Forestry Assessment and Strategies³¹
- State Spatial Analysis Project (SAP), including identification of land in Important Forest Resource Areas as defined by the USDA Forest Stewardship Program
- High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) Assessments³² done by the State Conservation Agency, Group Entity or cooperating organizations
- Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) and Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) data
- Geographic Information System (GIS) software and geographic libraries
- Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) or State Biotic Inventory, including Old Growth Assessments
- Cultural and historic databases

³⁰ This example approach is offered as an efficient method to simplify forestry plans and minimize group costs by utilizing available resources. Optionally, the Group Entity could also develop comprehensive landscape management plans for specific geographic regions. The purpose of such overview plans would be to provide background and ecosystem management guidance for reference in individual plans (thereby helping to keep parcel-specific plans no more complicated than necessary).

³¹ Regional assessments such as the Southern Forests Futures Report might also be valuable resources.

³² Use of HCVF terminology is not required. State and regional assessments and planning reports that get at HCVF concepts may be utilized regardless of whether they incorporate FSC language.

- State Forest Health surveys and reports
- State BMP monitoring reports
- State wildlife population surveys
- State timber harvest and reforestation compliance surveys
- U.S. Dept. of Labor – [Occupational and Safety & Health Administration Logging eTool](#)

While individual landowners in the group might not have occasion to study these related documents, professional resource managers providing assistance to Group Members are expected to consider the broader documentation when parcel plans are written and implemented.

4.2.2 Rate of Harvests

The rate of harvest of forest products shall not exceed levels which can be permanently sustained without adverse effects to the forest ecosystem³³. This applies to both timber and non-timber forest products harvested in commercial operations or where traditional or customary use rights may be impacted by such harvests.

On Family Forests' lands where calculation of a discrete annual harvest rate is not practical due to the small scale and intensity of operations, sustainable harvest levels will be based on consideration of:

- Generally accepted silvicultural practices for the forest cover types, as described in the State Silviculture Handbook and USFS silviculture guides listed in Section 4.2.1
- Regional FIA growth data
- Age-class and species distributions as shown in stocking charts
- Stocking rates required to meet management objectives
- Ecological and legal constraints, including RMZ setbacks

On Family Forests, harvest levels and rates will not exceed growth rates over successive harvests, will contribute directly to achieving desired future conditions as defined in the forest management plans, and will not diminish the long term ecological integrity and productivity of the site.

Large Private Ownerships in the group will calculate sustained yield harvest levels using conventional area and/or volume control methods where the acreage and forest cover types lend themselves to those techniques. In those situations, the sustained yield harvest level calculation for each planning unit will be based on:

³³ For purposes of ecological restoration, there are cases where species may be harvested above growth rates to restore natural species distribution.

- Documented growth rates for particular sites, and/or acreage of forest types, age-classes and species distributions
- Mortality and decay and other factors that affect net growth
- Areas reserved from harvest or subject to harvest restrictions to meet other management goals
- Silvicultural practices that will be employed on the FMU
- Management objectives and desired future conditions.

The calculation will be made by considering the effects of repeated prescribed harvests on the product/species and its ecosystem, as well as planned management treatments and projections of subsequent regrowth beyond single rotation and multiple re-entries.

Furthermore, average annual harvest levels, over rolling periods of no more than 10 years, shall not exceed the calculated sustained yield harvest level.

Overstocked stands and stands that have been depleted or rendered below productive potential due to natural events, past management, or lack of management, will be returned to desired stocking levels and composition at the earliest practicable time as justified in management objectives.

4.2.3 Parcel-Specific Plan Components

A parcel-specific written management plan (a Forest Stewardship Plan) is a condition of Group Membership. All plans must be developed by a Registered Plan Writer in good standing with Group Entity policies. All recommended practices and optional practices to be completed during the time period of the plan should be identified and accompanied by a stand number and completion year.

Forest Stewardship Plans may not contradict any indicators in the FSC-US Forest Management Standard and must be based on quantitative data commensurate with the intensity of management.³⁴ FSC-US regional limits and other guidelines on opening sizes as well as FSC-US streamside management zone (SMZ) regional requirements must be taken into consideration. Plans should also address any additional Forest Stewardship Plan requirements that might be defined by the state conservation agency, NRCS, or other organization whose program the plan is prepared for.

³⁴ As examples, Forest Stewardship Plans should not prescribe application of FSC-designated highly hazardous pesticides in the absence of an approved derogation or planting Genetically Modified Organisms in the forest. An example of appropriate qualitative/quantitative data for a small family forest might involve a walk-through and use of a prism cruise that captures average basal area to plan a harvest based on basal area targets. A more traditional inventory might be fitting for larger, more intensively managed properties. State Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) data might also be useful for quantitative summary information at the group scale.

To aid preparation of complete plans and capture of information in the group database, the Family Forests Group uses the WebDET 2³⁵ online planning template developed by the U.S. Forest Service. Access to the service is arranged by the Group Manager for Registered Plan Writers/Foresters.

All group Forest Stewardship Plans shall include the following³⁶:

1. A property identification number to be used in the group database.
2. Name(s) of all landowners and address of primary landowner. (Telephone and email contact information in the membership database would also be helpful if available.)
3. County name, municipality name, township number, range number, and section numbers. The management plan can include more than one section, municipality, or county.
4. The parcel's acreage covered by the management plan.
5. The landowner's management objectives covering their ecological, economic and social concerns. Landowner objectives may be expressed in a narrative provided by the landowner, a checklist or statements based on discussions with the landowner. When landowner expectations don't line up with site capability or best available information, the forester should counsel and redirect the landowner.
6. The beginning and ending year of the plan.
7. For each stand³⁷:
 - a. Stand number including prefix, if applicable.
 - b. The primary and secondary timber type symbols as indicated on a property map.
 - c. Acreage. Should match the information provided in the digital database (where applicable).

³⁵ The USDA WebDET 2 system is being designed as a utility to ease creation of Forest Stewardship Plans. Use of that system is not required by the FSC-US Standard. Groups are, however, encouraged to consider using WebDET 2 or an alternative custom plan writing system for efficiency and consistency. Groups that utilize existing Forest Stewardship Plans that were prepared before the availability of WebDET 2 or other database might want to transition to a digital system as plans are updated.

³⁶ Plan requirements adopted by a Group could be moved to an appendix.

³⁷ Stand-level information can be presented in a tabular or narrative format, as suitable and efficient.

- d. Stand description. Include sufficient quantitative and qualitative descriptions of the forest resources to be managed, including at minimum species and size/age class with reference to inventory data³⁸. In addition, information in site-level plans may include: landscape within which the forest is located; landscape-level considerations; past land uses of the forest; legal history and current status; socio-economic conditions; cultural, tribal and customary use issues and other relevant details that explain or justify management prescriptions. Include any information needed to support a deviation from generally accepted practices.
- e. Silvicultural Objective. Include the target species or timber type, management system (even-aged or uneven-aged), forest products goals, typical harvest systems, and rotation age (if applicable). Objectives for non-forest types should describe desired long-term vegetative cover and address the landowner's property objectives as applicable.
- f. Recommended practices that should be completed during the plan period. Include:
 - i) The silvicultural prescription (e.g., intermediate thinning, selection harvest, tree planting, etc.).
 - ii) The year a practice should be completed. The practice description may include a range of years if appropriate but a single year is preferred. If a range is used the initial year is entered in the database.
 - iii) Specific requirements as appropriate, e.g. basal area residuals, numbered order of removal, number of trees per acre, species to be favored or planted, percent crown closure, specific stocking levels, follow up activities.
 - iv) When appropriate or otherwise potentially unclear, include an explanation of how this practice will help achieve the landowner's property objectives.
- g. Additional considerations that will improve the effectiveness of the treatment for timber quality, forest health, wildlife, fisheries, watershed protection, aesthetics, biodiversity, etc. Such practices may include, but are not limited to within-stand tree retention; dividing clear-cuts into smaller blocks; shortening or lengthening rotations; creating irregular cutting boundaries; modifying residual basal area on partial cuts; modifying species composition; reserving den or cavity trees; pest and invasive species management; fire management; pruning and other timber stand improvements; tree and shrub planting; protection of representative samples of ecosystems; High Conservation Value Forest factors, etc.

³⁸ The FSC-US Standard does not prescribe detailed inventory requirements, but quantitative inventory data should be appropriate for the scale and intensity of the management operation.

- h. Where appropriate and/or consistent with landowner objectives, opportunities and precautions related to non-timber forest products. Such opportunities might (in addition to conventional non-timber products such as boughs, herbals, mushrooms, etc.) include biomass production, payments for ecosystem services, carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation, and other emerging markets.
8. A Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) and cultural/historical screening for the parcel shall be completed by referencing publically available resources³⁹. The resulting information will be included in each parcel-specific management plan. For NHI surveys, special attention will be given to S1 and G1 critically imperiled and S2 and G2 imperiled species. Consideration of S3 and G3 species rated as vulnerable will also be made in viable recovery situations.
 - If no occurrences of special concern, threatened or endangered species or natural communities are listed for the property or likely occur at the property, indicate in the plan that the NHI was consulted and no known occurrences of special concern, threatened or endangered species or natural communities occur on the property.
 - If occurrences of special concern, threatened or endangered species or natural communities are listed for the property or likely occur at the property, management recommendations for the species or natural communities should be addressed in the plan. Address how management should be modified and how impacts on the species or community should be avoided or minimized as appropriate.
 - Note whether any cultural/historic features were found and describe the appropriate protective measures.

Specific locations of NHI and historical occurrences on individual group member's property may be shared with the landowner but should be omitted for reasons of confidentiality from plans and summaries available to the public.

9. Describe suggested monitoring activities to be done by the forester or landowner.
10. Signatures of landowners and the date signed⁴⁰.
11. Name and address of plan preparer.
12. An ownership map drawn to scale, or photo that accurately depicts vegetation cover types, hydrology and other significant forest related resources with a legend. Property level maps for family forests may be simple and efficient to produce, and may cover only

³⁹ If the Group Entity or resource manager has access to restricted NHI and historical databases through data sharing agreements or assisted queries, the refined data must also be considered.

⁴⁰ The FSC Standard and USDA Forest Stewardship Program do not require the landowner's signature on the plan. It is, however, an option for affirming the commitment of the owner.

the necessary information for interpreting the parcel plan. More complex information may be referenced through a GIS program at the group level or through the State Conservation Agency. Available data should represent property boundaries, use rights (such open or closed public access, as appropriate to any enrolled programs or agreements), land cover types, significant hydrologic features, roads, adjoining land use, and protected areas in a manner that clearly relates to the forest description and management prescriptions.

13. Supplemental Publications (optional). Attach copies of published or locally written publications to the landowner's copy of the plan. Reference to a publication makes it part of the plan and can save the forester considerable writing time. List enclosures on the plan.

4.2.4 Plan Updates

While parcel-specific plans are intended to address management issues for at least ten years, the plans are adaptive and should be revised as appropriate. Events that could prompt plan updates include:

1. Property transfers, if the landowners' objectives change
2. A change in the current landowner's management objectives
3. Catastrophic events such as fires, wind storms, hail damage, drought and flooding
4. Unforeseen disturbances caused by introduced or invasive plants, animals or diseases that threaten forest regeneration, reduce stand stocking below acceptable levels, or otherwise adversely affect agreed upon stand objectives
5. Changes in forest product markets
6. New or recently discovered NHI or cultural/historic element occurrences, especially those protected by law
7. Advances in silviculture or ecosystem management sciences
8. Revised public policies as reflected in laws or other governmental regulations
9. Older plans for Family Forests Group members that contain practices which are not up-to-date with USDA Forest Stewardship Plan guidelines or FSC indicators. Outdated plans will be updated prior to implementing active practices.

One method to update a plan could be through Cutting Notice specifications that are developed before a harvest is started. Plans can be modified with detailed practice plans that are written to guide the implementation of other management practices in addition to harvests. General revisions can also be accomplished by other written methods including letters or email, provided the change is agreeable to the landowner and a qualified forester or the Group Manager. All plan changes by whatever method should be kept in the group member's file with appropriate changes made in digital databases.

4.2.5 Additional Plan Requirements for Federal Cost Sharing

Parcel plans for Group Members⁴¹ that intend to utilize Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or Farm Service Agency (FSA) cost sharing or other incentive programs must include additional information as noted below. This applies to the following programs:

NRCS programs:

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP)
- Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)
- Healthy Forests Reserve Program (HFRP)
- Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP)
- Wetland Reserve Program (WRP)

More information about these programs is available from NRCS at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

FSA programs:

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)
- Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP)
- Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)

More information about these programs is available from FSA at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov>

As required by the 2008 Farm Bill, the Group Member's forest management plan must be approved by the NRCS State Conservationist and include the following documentation:

- A detailed description for each cost-share program practice or activity applied for⁴², consistent with agency activity and/or practice standards and the description of one or more practice alternatives. (This could simply be the proposed alternative and a no action alternative.)
- An updated map of property that clearly indicates locations of proposed cost-share practices
- A completed Environmental Evaluation (NRCS-CPA-52) is required for compliance with NRCS regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other applicable federal environmental laws and Executive Orders. Compliance and documentation are ultimately the responsibility of the USDA agency providing

⁴¹ Federal incentive programs are limited to landowners whose adjusted gross income (AGI) does not exceed \$1 million unless other conditions are met.

⁴² Detailed cost-sharing specifications may be addressed in a Practice Plan addendum to the main plan.

cost-share assistance. Forest Stewardship Plans should, however, in addressing all resource elements present, provide most or all of the environmental information necessary for Environmental Evaluations and regulatory compliance.

4.3 Monitoring Group Member Lands

4.3.1 General Monitoring

Monitoring under a FSC system typically falls into four categories:

1. Traditional forest management concerns such as stocking and growth, regeneration and condition of the forest; yield of all forest products harvested; composition and observed changes in the flora and fauna; forest health; costs, productivity, and efficiency of forest management
2. Ecosystem concerns such as rare, threatened and endangered species and/or their habitats; common and rare plant communities and/or habitat; location, presence and abundance of invasive species; condition of protected areas, set-asides and buffer zones; High Conservation Value Forests
3. Condition and impacts of road and trail systems
4. Socio-economic issues such as recreational opportunities, social impacts of harvesting, the creation and/or maintenance of quality job opportunities, etc.

On Family Forests, some attributes such those described in Section 4.2 involving forest stocking and harvest scheduling utilize quantitative monitoring or focused reviews for cultural/historical screenings and endangered resources. Monitoring protocols for higher risk activities related to pesticide use, active or completed harvests and regeneration are noted below.⁴³ For other elements of monitoring, a brief, non-technical and qualitative monitoring approach might be adequate to ensure conformance. Large Private Ownerships that do not qualify as Family Forests will need to have more robust and site-specific monitoring protocols.

The Family Forests Group may cooperate with and rely upon regional environmental, social and economic monitoring and assessment efforts conducted by the State Conservation Agency and other regional partners for monitoring data.⁴⁴ The products of many of those monitoring

⁴³ Groups could add protocols for other specific monitoring concerns, as appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operation. It would help to identify monitoring elements that will be tracked by the Group Entity, the Group Member or by a cooperative program. See Appendix 3.

⁴⁴ Groups could note additional cooperative monitoring activities such as participation in State Conservation Agency BMP monitoring, FIA or CFI plots, forest health surveys, breeding bird surveys, ruffed grouse and deer surveys, etc. In locales where no such cooperative monitoring occurs, the Group Entity or Members may have a greater responsibility.

activities are included in the forest management plan overview documentation listed in Section 4.2.1.

A Group Monitoring Plan **{example only}** showing how responsibilities are shared is included in Appendix 3. In all cases Group managers can assist with the gathering and assimilation of monitoring data into management decisions. Any approach pursued must assure that regular monitoring of the condition of the forest is occurring and that findings are incorporated into management decisions.

Group Entity staff and Preferred Service Providers shall verify Group Members' conformance with group policies and FSC standards as part of inspections related to scheduled forest management practices. Foresters shall keep contact records (this may include Management Recommendations Record (paper form) and/or a notation in an appropriate database for their visits to group member lands. If inconsistencies with group policies or certification standards are found, the Group Manager shall pursue notice procedures as outlined in Sections 3.5 and 3.6.

The Group Manager and Preferred Service Providers review upcoming scheduled practices. The database records will also be updated as practices are completed.

Group Members are encouraged to keep an informal journal of their management and monitoring activities including observations such as forest health, wildlife trends, invasive species control efforts, trespass issues, road or trail issues, etc. Group Members should also keep any financial records related to commercial harvests as may be needed for state and federal tax purposes. Management journals and other records can also be instrumental for documenting that forest land is operated as a business for tax purposes. Group members are not required to share their financial information with the Group Entity or FSC auditors, but volume and species harvested data must be reported as noted below.

4.3.2 Pesticide Use Monitoring

Pesticide prescriptions provided to Family Forests Group members shall conform to the "FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation - FSC-GUI-30-001 Version 2-0 EN", dated May 5, 2007 or newer. A list of FSC "highly hazardous", prohibited chemicals (some of which may be otherwise legal for use in the state) shall be made available on the Group Entity Internet site.

As a general rule, group forest management plans shall strive to offer alternatives to chemical pesticides and minimize pesticide use whenever practical. Typically, parcel-specific plans will not prescribe specific products or application rates, saving details consistent with product labels for practice plans. Practice plans shall prescribe⁴⁵ appropriate pesticides and/or non-chemical

⁴⁵ A prescription might include a product name and other information consistent with the product label.

alternatives. Landowners will be directed to product labels or other published pesticide use instructions, or encouraged to hire a commercial pesticide applicator. Summary information regarding the acreage treated and the products used will be included on the Annual Report Form or an online reporting tool made available to Group Members.

In the event that the Group Manager or a Preferred Service Provider becomes aware of the use of a prohibited FSC chemical (provided that a FSC-approved derogation for the group allowing an exception is not on record), the landowner will be notified according to the procedures in Section 3.5 that they are out of conformance.

4.3.3 Timber Harvest Monitoring

Group Members will notify the Group Manager before initiating a sale of forest products. The Group Manager will provide an approved Cutting Notice to ensure that the products removed can be marketed as FSC certified. Each group member must report the volume sold and buyer of forest products on the annual report.

Landowners are encouraged to utilize the sample timber sale contract template provided by the Group Entity. The sample timber sale contract covers concerns related to successful harvests and certification compliance. Landowners are encouraged⁴⁶ to require logging contractors to provide evidence of workers compensation insurance, liability insurance and logger safety training as a prerequisite to bidding on timber harvests or prior to commencement of operations.

To verify that private timber sales conform to Group Entity and forest certification standards, the Group Manager, staff or Preferred Service Providers will consider the following:

1. Visits to high-risk sites for field checks when sales are active. Lower-risk sites can be reviewed after the Cutting Report is filed.
2. Goals and objectives of the harvest are consistent with the parcel plan and approved Cutting Notice.
3. Boundaries of the harvest area are clearly marked.
4. Layout of skid trails and landings is reasonable.
5. Soil disturbance is not excessive.
6. Archeological or cultural resources are protected.
7. Forest health considerations are adequately addressed.
8. Precautions to control or prevent the spread of invasive species appear adequate.
9. Rare, threatened, endangered or special species are protected, including NHI element occurrences listed or observed on-site since the plan was initially approved.
10. Reasonable safety precautions are followed.
11. Significant conflicts with recreation or hunting activities on the tract are avoided.

⁴⁶ The Group Entity could elect to change this to a requirement rather than encouragement.

12. Measures necessary to protect or promote natural regeneration are adequate.
13. Unique natural areas or High Conservation Values are protected.
14. Water Quality Best Management Practices are followed.
15. Wildlife management goals described in the management plan are addressed.
16. Stand-level retention of snags or other residual trees is adequate.⁴⁷
17. Woody biomass retention on the ground is sufficient.

If any problems are observed, they should be reported to the landowner or the landowner's agent (or Preferred Service Provider), not the logger. The owner or owner's agent should take any necessary action.

4.3.4 Regeneration Monitoring

Survival of afforestation projects and regeneration of harvested sites is paramount for sustainable forestry. Landowners or their resource managers are encouraged to conduct survival checks four to five months after planting and again three years after planting to ensure planting and seeding success. Findings should be updated in the forestry database or on a Management Recommendations Record form.

Regeneration on these sites relying on natural regeneration should also be checked. If adequate natural regeneration is not established by the end of the fourth growing season, an alternative regeneration method should be implemented. Treatments and regeneration success on these stands should be documented on a Management Recommendations Record form or WebDET 2 database.

4.4 Program Review

4.4.1 Annual Reporting

The Family Forests Group will annually update certain information regarding the group organization⁴⁸ such as number of landowners and acreage in the program, new entries and departures from the membership, new or revised Forest Stewardship Plans, new or revised Forest Stewardship Plans in "Important Forest Resource Areas"⁴⁹, certified forest products sold and other information. Group Members will complete Cutting Notices and Reports and Annual Reports as required in Group Operations Manual. The Group Manager will submit an

⁴⁷ Note that the FSC-US Standard includes some Regional variation in respect to clearcut opening size limitations, tree retention requirements and riparian management zone widths.

⁴⁸ These are examples. Specific annual reports for individual groups will vary depending upon the group's Certification Body and state or federal programs the group participates in.

⁴⁹ As defined in the State Spatial Analysis Project or Statewide Assessment of Forest Resources completed under the 2008 Federal Farm Bill and related High Conservation Value Forest assessments

aggregated annual summary report to the Certification Body and State Forest Stewardship Program as needed and maintain copies of past annual reports.

4.4.2 Group Entity Internal Reviews

The Group Manager shall prepare annual reports covering other aspects of the program needed to evaluate overall program performance, consistency and management efficiency.

The Group Manager will also conduct an annual review of a sample of group member lands.⁵⁰ Topics will include group policies, FSC-specific requirements, administrative consistency, record keeping, stewardship planning, and timber sale monitoring, working relationships with landowners and service providers, cooperation with other agencies, field visits and other activities. The Group Manager will summarize the findings, areas needing improvement, progress on Corrective Action Requests from previous reviews and commendations in a report for the Group Entity. The internal monitoring report shall be made available in confidence to the third-party FSC reviewer.

4.5 Group Chain of Custody

{Following is an example for a Group Entity that has chosen to provide Chain of Custody (CoC) certification only for traditional timber-related forest products. FSC also offers CoC for non-timber products (syrup, bark, herbs, etc.) and value-added products (manufactured goods that use forest products), but an individual certificate holder or group certification entity would need to have appropriate tracking mechanisms not covered here.}

FSC certification provides an opportunity to differentiate responsibly harvested wood in the marketplace. Certification may allow access to certain markets and, in some cases, provide price premiums. Ultimately, when finished goods are produced from raw materials that originate from certified lands, certification systems allow the use of on-product logos.

Chain-of-Custody (CoC) assessments and documentation allow the tracking of a product through every step from the forest to finished goods. The Group Entity is the custodian of the FSC CoC registration number, which Group Members can use to initiate FSC CoC for stumpage (standing timber) or timber cut for products.

The Family Forests Group CoC applies only to logs, chips, posts, poles, fuelwood and other traditional timber products tracked by the Group Entity. At present, the Family Forests Group chain-of-custody certification does not apply to non-timber forest products (such as maple syrup, bark, herbs, etc.) or any value-added products that might be sold by individual Group

⁵⁰ See FSC-STD-30-005Part 3 for directions on sampling design and intensity for internal monitoring, which varies for Type 1 and Type II groups.

Members.⁵¹ Loggers, paper mills, sawmills and other businesses that take legal ownership of FSC-certified materials and intend to pass a FSC claim to a subsequent owner of the materials must also be FSC certified or be included as part of a larger FSC Group CoC certificate.

Chain of Custody Control System⁵²

1. The Group Entity is the custodian of the following FSC Group certificate number: FSC Certificate **XX-FM-COC-00XXX**. The Group Entity does not provide Group Members with sub-certificate numbers.
2. The Group Entity certificate number shall be included on all timber sale prospectuses, contracts, invoices, and haul tickets if the landowner intends to market harvested products as certified. In addition to the certificate number, sale documentation shall include a claim of “FSC Pure” for sold products that are certified.
3. Only Family Forests Group members in good standing are eligible to use the FSC certificate numbers for sales of stumpage or other timber products.
4. Only forest products that are reported on the Family Forests Group Cutting Notice (Form XXX) can be marketed under the group certification numbers. Family Forests Group members must clearly separate non-FSC stumpage or cut products from wood that is advertised or sold as FSC certified.
5. The Group Manager shall verify on the Cutting Notice if the land is included in the Family Forests Group. The landowner or the landowner’s agent shall provide a copy of the Group Manager approved cutting notice to the purchaser of the stumpage or cut products. Timber producers buying stumpage shall be provided the entire cutting notice, including any harvest specifications and maps. Buyers of cut products may be given just the page of the cutting notice displaying the CoC certificate number if the buyer wishes to establish a documentation chain. The Cutting Notice shall specify that Family Forests Group CoC ends at the stump, landing or roadside.
6. The Group Entity will validate of Group Membership (including the county, municipality, township, range, section, legal description and certification date) upon request.
7. Promotional or educational information about Family Forests Group products may use the FSC logos or trademarks authorized by Certifying Bodies only if such use is consistent with the FSC Standard. Any use of FSC or Certification Body trademarks in public information shall be submitted through the Group Manager to the Certification Body for review and approval.

⁵¹ Non-timber forest products and value-added products sold by group members may be FSC COC certified if methods to track sales or volumes of those commodities are added to the Group Operations Manual.

⁵² The COC System offered here is an example and may be modified. The FSC Standard for Forest Management Groups FSC-STD-30-005 does, however, require the identification of COC procedures.

8. The Group Manager shall provide FSC certifying bodies with certified product sales summaries as needed. Individual landowners shall maintain their own sales record and contract details sufficient to comply with State and Federal tax requirements.
9. Family Forests Group members shall make their land available to the Group Entity and FSC Certification Bodies for compliance inspections.
10. Group members selling certified forest products shall maintain the following records for a minimum of 5 years:
 - a. Sales invoices for products sold with FSC claims must include name and contact information for buyer and seller, date, product description, quantity and unit of measure, the member’s FSC certificate number and the claim of “FSC Pure”. The log scaling units (board foot sawtimber rule, pulpwood unit, cubic feet, tons, etc.) must be identified.
 - b. Records of any approval for use of the FSC logo.
 - c. A complete list of products sold, limited to the following:

Check if Produced by this Member	FSC Material Output Category	FSC Product Classification(s) <small>(See FSC-STD-40-004a (V1-0) EN)</small>	FSC Species Terminology <small>(If commonly used to designate product characteristics)</small>	Control System
<input type="checkbox"/>	FSC Pure	UN 0311 Coniferous logs	See species list below	Transfer
<input type="checkbox"/>	FSC Pure	UN 0312 Hardwood logs	See species list below	Transfer
<input type="checkbox"/>	FSC Pure	UN 0313 Fuel wood	Mixed Hardwoods, Pine (See species list below)	Transfer

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conifer	Common Name	Scientific Name	Conifer
Eastern Redcedar	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>	y	Red Mulberry	<i>Morus rubra</i>	
Norway Spruce	<i>Picea abies</i>	y	Blackgum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>	
Jack Pine	<i>Pinus banksiana</i>	y	Ironwood	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	
Shortleaf Pine	<i>Pinus echinata</i>	y	Paulownia	<i>Paulownia tometosa</i>	
Red Pine	<i>Pinus resinosa</i>	y	American Sycamore	<i>Platanus occidentalis</i>	
Eastern White Pine	<i>Pinus strobus</i>	y	Eastern Cottonwood	<i>Populus deltoides</i>	
Scots Pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	y	Largetooth Aspen	<i>Populus grandidentata</i>	
Loblolly Pine	<i>Pinus taeda</i>	y	Quaking Aspen	<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	
Virginia Pine	<i>Pinus virginiana</i>	y	Black Cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	
Baldcypress	<i>Taxodium distichum</i>	y	White Oak	<i>Quercus alba</i>	
Tamarack	<i>Larix laricina</i>	y	Swamp White Oak	<i>Quercus bicolor</i>	
Boxelder	<i>Acer negundo</i>		Scarlet Oak	<i>Quercus coccinea</i>	
Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>		Northern Pin Oak	<i>Quercus ellipsoidalis</i>	
Silver Maple	<i>Acer saccharinum</i>		Southern Red Oak	<i>Quercus falcata</i>	
Sugar Maple	<i>Acer saccharum</i>		Cherrybark Oak	<i>Quercus pagoda</i>	
Yellow Buckeye	<i>Aesculus flava</i>		Shingle Oak	<i>Quercus imbricaria</i>	
Ohio Buckeye	<i>Aesculus glabra</i>		Overcup Oak	<i>Quercus lyrata</i>	
Ailanthus	<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>		Bur Oak	<i>Quercus macrocarpa</i>	
European Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>		Blackjack Oak	<i>Quercus marilandica</i>	
Yellow Birch	<i>Betula allagheniense</i>		Swamp Chestnut	<i>Quercus michauxii</i>	
River Birch	<i>Betula nigra</i>		Chinkapin Oak	<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>	
Bitternut Hickory	<i>Carya cordiformis</i>		Pin Oak	<i>Quercus palustris</i>	
Pignut Hickory	<i>Carya glabra</i>		Chestnut Oak	<i>Quercus prinus</i>	
Pecan	<i>Carya illinoensis</i>		Northern Red Oak	<i>Quercus rubra</i>	
Shellbark Hickory	<i>Carya laciniosa</i>		Shumard Oak	<i>Quercus shumardii</i>	
Shagbark Hickory	<i>Carya ovata</i>		Post Oak	<i>Quercus stellata</i>	
Mockernut Hickory	<i>Carya tomentosa</i>		Black Oak	<i>Quercus velutina</i>	
Catalpa	<i>Catalpa speciosa</i>		Black Locust	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>		Black Willow	<i>Salix nigra</i>	
Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>		Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>	
American Beech	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>		Basswood	<i>Tilia americana</i>	
White Ash	<i>Fraxinus americana</i>		American Elm	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	
Black Ash	<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>		Red Elm	<i>Ulmus rubra</i>	
Green Ash	<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>		Rock Elm	<i>Ulmus thomasi</i>	
Blue Ash	<i>Fraxinus quadrangulata</i>				
Honeylocust	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>				
Kentucky Coffee	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i>				
Butternut	<i>Juglans cinerea</i>				
Black Walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>				
Sweetgum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>				
Yellow Poplar	<i>Lyriodendron tulipifera</i>				
Osage-orange	<i>Maclura pomifera</i>				
Cucumber	<i>Magnolia acuminata</i>				

See FSC-STD-40-004b (Version 1-0) EN for additional species.

Appendix 1. Service Provider Policies

Family Forests Group Members are encouraged to contract with Family Forests Group Preferred Providers for forestry related services, though Members may contract with any natural resource professional meeting Family Forests Group requirements. These services may include, but are not limited to, management plan development, harvest planning, tree marking, logging, road construction, tree plantings, or habitat enhancement.

Service Provider Requirements

Members are responsible for communicating all Family Forests Group requirements to service providers, preferably within the context of a service contract. The Group Entity provides FSC standards and policies, template management plans, sample contracts, and all other documents and materials to Family Forests Group Members via this manual, the Group Entity website, or by mail on request.

Service providers shall:

- Follow the Member's Group Entity-approved management plan
- Follow Group Entity approved Chain of Custody procedures
- Carry appropriate liability insurance
- Through their actions, demonstrate a commitment to serving Family Forests Group Members and helping them maintain FSC certification by complying with all Family Forests Group policies

Members are encouraged to consider contractors from the Family Forests Group Preferred Provider list. ***The Group Entity does not, however, guarantee the performance of Preferred Providers.*** The Group Entity reserves the right to de-list a contractor if the services they provide are inconsistent with group policies.

Check the service provider's references. Group Members may also check with the State Trade and Consumer Protection Agency for complaints that might have been filed about particular businesses.

Members may hire other outside contractors to complete forest management work. It is the Member's responsibility to verify that the contractor has appropriate training, meets the above listed qualifications, and complies with state health and safety laws and licensing requirements.

Appendix 2. Applicable Laws and Regulations⁵³

The principal regulations of greatest relevance to forest managers in the Family Forests Group are associated with the following legal and institutional structures:

Pertinent Regulations at the Federal Level:

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS)
- Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act
- Clean Air Act (CAA) (most recently amended 1990)
- Clean Water Act (CWA) (1972)
- Endangered Species Act (ESA) (1973)
- Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- Lacey Act Amendment (Illegal Logging)
- National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) (1969)
- National Historic Preservation Act
- Occupational Safety and Health Act
- U.S. ratified treaties, including CITES

Adjudicated Settlements (a Wisconsin example):

- Lac Courte Oreilles Indians v. State of Wis., 775 F. Supp. 321 (W.D. Wis. 1991) (A federal court decision regarding Indian treaty rights)

Pertinent Regulations at State and Local Level (such as these Wisconsin examples):

State Laws:

- WSS Ch. 102 Worker's Compensation Insurance
- WSS Ch. 23 Conservation
- WSS Ch. 236 Platting Lands and Recording and Vacating Plats
- WSS Ch. 26 Forest Protection
- WSS Ch. 29 Wild Animals and Plants
- WSS Ch. 30 Navigable Waters, Harbors and Navigation
- WSS Ch. 70 General Property Taxes
- WSS Ch. 77; Subch. I Taxation of Forest Croplands
- WSS Ch. 77; Subch. VI Managed Forest Land

⁵³ As provided in FSC-US Indicator 1.1.a for family forests, the management plan or other documents provided to the Certification Body should include a brief qualitative description of applicable laws.

- WSS Ch. 840 Real Property Actions; General Provisions
- WSS s. 157.70 Burial sites preservation
- WSS s. 23.095 Protection of natural resources
- WSS s. 23.22 Invasive species
- WSS s. 23.235 Nuisance weeds
- WSS s. 23.27 Natural areas; definitions; importance; inventory; acquisition; sales.
- WSS s. 23.28 State natural areas; designated state natural areas
- WSS s. 23.29 Wisconsin natural areas heritage programs
- WSS s. 26.03 Harvest of raw forest products
- WSS s. 26.05 Timber theft
- WSS s. 26.09 Civil liability for unauthorized cutting, removal or transportation of raw forest products
- WSS s. 26.11 Forest fires; department jurisdiction; procedure
- WSS s. 26.12 Forest protection areas, organization, emergency fire wardens, county cooperation, setting fire
- WSS s. 26.14 Forest fires, authority of fire fighters, compensation, penalties, civil liability.
- WSS s. 26.21 Civil liability for forest fires
- WSS s. 26.30 Forest insects and diseases; department jurisdiction; procedure
- WSS s. 895.52 Recreational activities; limitation of property owners' liability

State Administrative Codes:

- WAC s. ATCP 21 Plant Inspection and Pest Control
- WAC s. ATCP 30 Pesticide product restrictions
- WAC s. ATCP 40 Fertilizer and Related Products
- WAC s. ATCP 50 Soil and Water Resource Management Program
- WAC s. NR 100 Environmental protection
- WAC s. NR 102 Water quality standards for Wisconsin surface waters
- WAC s. NR 103 Water quality standards for wetlands
- WAC s. NR 115 Wisconsin's shoreland management program
- WAC s. NR 12 Wildlife damage and nuisance control
- WAC s. NR 120 Nonpoint source pollution abatement program
- WAC s. NR 13 Chippewa treaty rights participants
- WAC s. NR 27 Endangered and threatened species
- WAC s. NR 28 Wild plants
- WAC s. NR 30 Forest fire control
- WAC s. NR 302 Management of Wisconsin's wild rivers
- WAC s. NR 35 Zones for infestation of forest pests
- WAC s. NR 37 Lower Wisconsin state riverway aesthetic management specifications for cutting and harvest of timber

- WAC s. NR 80 Use of pesticides on land and water areas of the state of Wisconsin
- WAC s. Tax 12 Property tax
- WAC s. Tax 18 Assessment of agricultural property
- WAC s. Trans 230 Permits for loads exceeding size, weight, and vehicle combination limits
- WAC s. Trans 250 Oversize and overweight permits for vehicles and loads
- WAC s. Trans 251 Vehicle weight authorized by multiple trip permits
- WAC s. Trans 278 Vehicle weight limit exceptions
- WAC s. Trans 280 Roadside vegetation management

State Conservation Agency Guidelines (Advisory Information)

- MC 1724.5 Handbook; Endangered Resources
- MC 1750.2 Handbook; Natural Areas Management
- MC 1805.1 Handbook; Ecological Landscapes
- MC 1810.1 Handbook; Historic Preservation
- MC 2431.5 Handbook; Silviculture
- MC 2450.5 Handbook; Forest Tax Law
- MC 2480.5 Handbook; Old Growth & Old Forests
- MC 4325.1 Handbook; Fire Management
- MC 4360.5 Handbook; Prescribed Burns

Appendix 3. Example Group Monitoring Plan

{Monitoring indicators in the left column are from the FSC-US Forest Management Standard. Effective Who, How and When measures are up to each group program and depend upon group and external partner roles. Items marked below as “Generally Not Applicable – Family Forests” are so designated in the standard but could vary depending on Group Type.}

What is Monitored?

(Based on FSC-US Forest Management Principle 8)

	Who?	How?	When?
8.1.a. Consistent with the scale and intensity of management, the forest owner or manager develops and consistently implements a regular, comprehensive, and replicable written monitoring protocol.			
FF Indicator 8.1.a. For Family Forests, the forest owner or manager develops and consistently implements a regular, comprehensive, and replicable written monitoring protocol. Monitoring may be scaled to the size and intensity of the management operations that affect the resources identified in C8.2.			
8.2.a.1. For all commercially harvested products, an inventory system is maintained. The inventory system includes at a minimum:			
a) species, b) volumes, c) stocking,	Forest Manager/Landowner	Forest inventory used to prepare forest management plan; post-harvest inventory updates; data updates after management or other stand-changing events	Planning reconnaissance; after active management practices
d) regeneration	Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)	Post-harvest site inspections; reforestation survival exams	Typically four to five months after harvest or planting and again three years after harvest or planting.
e) stand and forest composition and structure; and	Forest Manager/Landowner	Forest inventory used to prepare forest management plan; post-harvest inventory updates; data updates after management or other stand-changing events	Planning reconnaissance; after active management practices

f) timber quality	Forest Manager/Landowner	Forest inventory used to prepare forest management plan; post-harvest inventory updates; data updates after management or other stand-changing events	Planning reconnaissance; after active management practices
8.2.a.2. Significant, unanticipated removal or loss or increased vulnerability of forest resources is monitored and recorded. Recorded information shall include date and location of occurrence, description of disturbance, extent and severity of loss, and may be both quantitative and qualitative.	Forest Manager/Landowner	Post-event site inspections	After fires, catastrophic pest outbreaks, wind storms, etc.
8.2.b The forest owner or manager maintains records of harvested timber and NTFPs (volume and product and/or grade).	Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)	The forest manager/owner keeps records of commercial harvests (typically as needed for state and federal income tax purposes). Harvest volumes are reported to the Group Entity, who prepares annual summary data.	Ongoing with annual summary reports.
8.2.c. The forest owner or manager periodically obtains data needed to monitor presence on the FMU of:			
1) Rare, threatened and endangered species and/or their habitats;	Shared (Forest Manager/Cooperating External Entity)	As part of initial forest inventory and prior to commencing site disturbing activities based on a check of the State Biological Survey/Natural Heritage Inventory. The State Conservation Agency and other partners like The Nature Conservancy usually conduct landscape-level monitoring and prepare Wildlife Action Plans and other ecological assessments referenced as part of the Group's Forest Management Planning System.	Ongoing

2) Common and rare plant communities and/or habitat;	Shared (Forest Manager/Cooperating External Entity)	As part of initial forest inventory and prior to commencing site disturbing activities based on a check of the State Biological Survey/Natural Heritage Inventory/Wildlife Action Plan and other ecosystem planning tools. The State Conservation Agency and other partners conduct landscape-level monitoring and prepare Wildlife Action Plans and other ecological assessments referenced as part of the Group's Forest Management Planning System.	Ongoing
3) Location, presence and abundance of invasive species;	Shared - All Parties	Forest inventories, internal monitoring, FIA-CFI plots, state forest health reports.	Ongoing
4) Condition of protected areas, set-asides and buffer zones;	Shared - All Parties	Forest inventories, timber harvest administration, internal monitoring, Natural Heritage Inventory reviews, etc.	Typically as part of management planning process, internal audits, State Conservation Agency assessments
5) High Conservation Value Forests (see Criterion 9.4).	Shared (Forest Manager/Cooperating External Entity)	Usually, landscape level assessments conducted by the State Conservation Agency. See assessments identified in the Group's Forest Management Planning System.	Ongoing

<p>8.2.d.1. Monitoring is conducted to ensure that site specific plans and operations are properly implemented, environmental impacts of site disturbing operations are minimized, and that harvest prescriptions and guidelines are effective. [See also: Indicator 6.5.b Forest operations meet or exceed Best Management Practices (BMPs) that address components of the Criterion where the operation takes place. Indicator 5.3.a Management practices are employed to minimize the loss and/or waste of harvested forest products. Indicator 5.3.b Harvest practices are managed to protect residual trees and other forest resources, including: soil compaction, rutting and erosion are minimized; residual trees are not significantly damaged to the extent that health, growth, or values are noticeably affected; damage to NTFPs is minimized during management activities; and techniques and equipment that minimize impacts to vegetation, soil, and water are used whenever feasible. See indicators regarding opening size limits, tree retention, and RMZ buffers in 6.3.f, 6.3.g and 6.5.e. Also, safety-related considerations in 4.2.a and 4.2.b.]</p>	<p>Shared - All Parties</p>	<p>Forest Manager/Landowner timber sale administration; internal monitoring by the Group Entity; BMP compliance monitoring by State Conservation Agencies; OSHA safety compliance monitoring by federal or state agencies.</p>	<p>During and after active management</p>
<p>8.2.d.2. A monitoring program is in place to assess the condition and environmental impacts of the forest-road system. [Guidance: Road system monitoring may include but is not limited to: potential slope failures, erosion and water quality impacts, aquatic species' passage, overall road extent and density, and impacts of skid trails and other non-permanent roads. Monitoring requirements may be minimized in areas where there is no management activity and/or on non-active roads]</p>	<p>Shared - All Parties</p>	<p>Usually informal monitoring during property visits by Forest Manager/Landowner, although larger properties might have regular road/trail inspections; timber harvest administration; Group Entity as part of internal monitoring; State Conservation Agency as part of BMP monitoring</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>8.2.d.3. The landowner or manager monitors relevant socio-economic issues (see Indicator 4.4.a), including the social impacts of harvesting, participation in local economic opportunities (see Indicator 4.1.g), the creation and/or maintenance of quality job opportunities (see Indicator 4.1.b), and local purchasing opportunities (see Indicator 4.1.e).</p>	<p>Generally Not Applicable - Family Forests</p>		

8.2.d.4. Stakeholder responses to management activities are monitored and recorded as necessary.	Generally Not Applicable - Family Forests		
8.2.d.5. Where sites of cultural significance exist, the opportunity to jointly monitor sites of cultural significance is offered to tribal representatives (see Principle 3).	Generally Not Applicable - Family Forests		
8.2.e. The forest owner or manager monitors the costs and revenues of management in order to assess productivity and efficiency.	Forest Manager/Landowner	Informal for family forests, usually associated with taxes and investment planning	Ongoing or after active management
8.3.a. When forest products are being sold as FSC-certified, the forest owner or manager has a system that prevents mixing of FSC-certified and non-certified forest products prior to the point of sale, with accompanying documentation to enable the tracing of the harvested material from each harvested product from its origin to the point of sale.	Group Entity	Included in Group operating procedures	Group establishment, with procedures updated as needed.
8.3.b The forest owner or manager maintains documentation to enable the tracing of the harvested material from each harvested product from its origin to the point of sale.	Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)	Forest manager/owner keeps certified harvest records and reports volumes to the Group Entity. Owner submits cutting notice/report to Group Entity. Group Entity reviews harvests and prepares annual summaries.	In conjunction with harvests
8.4.a. The forest owner or manager monitors and documents the degree to which the objectives stated in the management plan are being fulfilled, as well as significant deviations from the plan.	Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)	Forest management database review of scheduled/completed practices, internal monitoring	Annual work planning, internal reviews

<p>8.4.b. Where monitoring indicates that management objectives and guidelines, including those necessary for conformance with this Standard, are not being met or if changing conditions indicate that a change in management strategy is necessary, the management plan, operational plans, and/or other plan implementation measures are revised to ensure the objectives and guidelines will be met. If monitoring shows that the management objectives and guidelines themselves are not sufficient to ensure conformance with this Standard, then the objectives and guidelines are modified.</p>	<p>Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)</p>	<p>Internal monitoring.</p>	<p>Group policies outline conditions under which plans should be updated.</p>
<p>8.5.a. While protecting landowner confidentiality, either full monitoring results or an up-to-date summary of the most recent monitoring information is maintained, covering the Indicators listed in Criterion 8.2, and is available to the public, free or at a nominal price, upon request. [FF Applicability: Only those elements determined to be applicable to Criterion 8.2 need to be included in the monitoring results and/or summary.]</p>	<p>Group Entity</p>	<p>Annual public summary report.</p>	

Additional Monitoring Issues Elsewhere in the FSC-US Forest Management Standard

<p>Indicator 6.6.e If chemicals are used, the effects are monitored and the results are used for adaptive management. Records are kept of pest occurrences, control measures, and incidences of worker exposure to chemicals. FF Guidance: Monitoring and recordkeeping may be brief and less technical for family forests, such as keeping a log or list of chemical use and application dates, rates, methods of application, the application area and effectiveness.</p>	<p>Shared (Forest Manager/Group Entity)</p>	<p>Forest Manager/Landowner keeps logs or informal records of pesticide use (especially for over-the-counter type products), although group policies might involve more formal record keeping for restricted use products or products covered FSC derogations. Landowner may also want to keep records of non-chemical controls to show that pesticides are only used when alternatives are not available or practical.</p>	<p>Ongoing with pesticide use prescriptions, purchases, application. Possibly involving annual summary reports for restricted use products.</p>
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<p>Indicator 6.8.c If biological control agents are used, their use is documented, monitored and strictly controlled in accordance with state and national laws and internationally accepted scientific protocols. A written plan will be developed and implemented justifying such use, describing the risks, specifying the precautions workers will employ to avoid or minimize such risks, and describing how potential impacts will be monitored.</p>	<p>Cooperating External Entity</p>	<p>Federal Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulator review; State Conservation Agency implementation or permits</p>	
<p>Indicator 6.9.b If exotic species are used, their provenance and the location of their use are documented, and their ecological effects are actively monitored. [Guidance: Monitoring intensity reflects the persistence and risk posed by the species and may be justified by consultation with regional experts or literature.]</p>	<p>Cooperating External Entity</p>	<p>State Conservation Agency invasive species assessments and control regulations</p>	
<p>Indicator 9.4.a The forest owner or manager monitors, or participates in a program to annually monitor, the status of the specific HCV attributes, including the effectiveness of the measures employed for their maintenance or enhancement. The monitoring program is designed and implemented consistent with the requirements of Principle 8. FF Indicator 9.4.a Low risk of negative social or environmental impact for private family forests.</p>	<p>Generally Not Applicable - Family Forests</p>		
<p>Principle 10 Plantations: C10.4 The selection of species for planting shall be based on their overall suitability for the site and their appropriateness to the management objectives. In order to enhance the conservation of biological diversity, native species are preferred over exotic species in the establishment of plantations and the restoration of degraded ecosystems. Exotic species, which shall be used only when their performance is greater than that of native species, shall be carefully monitored to detect unusual mortality, disease, or insect outbreaks and adverse ecological impacts</p>	<p>Shared - All Parties</p>	<p>Site specific analysis by Forest Manager/Landowner, perhaps with assistance from the Group Entity, State Conservation Agency, University Extension or other party</p>	

<p>Principle 10 Plantations: C10.8 Appropriate to the scale and diversity of the operation, monitoring of plantations shall include regular assessment of potential on-site and off-site ecological and social impacts, (e.g. natural regeneration, effects on water resources and soil fertility, and impacts on local welfare and social well-being), in addition to those elements addressed in principles 8, 6 and 4. No species should be planted on a large scale until local trials and/or experience have shown that they are ecologically well-adapted to the site, are not invasive, and do not have significant negative ecological impacts on other ecosystems. Special attention will be paid to social issues of land acquisition for plantations, especially the protection of local rights of ownership, use or access.</p>	<p>Shared - All Parties</p>	<p>Site specific analysis by Forest Manager/Landowner, perhaps with assistance from the Group Entity, State Conservation Agency, University Extension or other party</p>	
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{A template version of this Group Monitoring Plan is available as an Excel worksheet on the FSC-US web site.}