

2018-2021 FSC US Forest Management Standard Revision: Priority Issues

Regional Requirements

The revision process will include an assessment to determine whether information that has become available since the FSC US regional boundaries and region-specific requirements were established suggests a need for any adjustments. Additionally, a goal of the process will be to eliminate the regional appendices and incorporate any regional requirements into the body of the Standard.

Conservation Area Networks & High Conservation Values

The revision process will include formal adoption of a methodology for Representative Sample Areas (RSA) and an assessment of RSA documentation requirements. It will also include formal adoption of a national High Conservation Value (HCV) Framework and will improve clarity of and guidance around indicators related to HCV assessments, expert and stakeholder consultation, and management activities within HCV areas. Finally, the revision process will evaluate instructions and indicators in the FSC International Generic Indicators (FSC-STD-60-004) related to Conservation Areas Networks that are not currently addressed in the FSC US Forest Management Standard.

Customary and Traditional Rights and Engagement

The revision process will evaluate instructions and indicators in the FSC International Generic Indicators (FSC-STD-60-004) related to customary and traditional rights that are not currently addressed in the FSC US Forest Management Standard. In addition, an evaluation will be completed of relevant terminology used in the FSC US Forest Management Standard, with close attention to the US national context.

Family Forest Indicators

The revision process will include an evaluation of the Family Forest indicators with particular consideration of FSC-GUI-60-002, “Guideline for Standard Developers for addressing risk of unacceptable activities in regard to scale and intensity” and any outcomes from FSC’s ‘New Approaches to Smallholder Certification’ initiative. The goal will be to improve accessibility for family forests (SLIMFs) without negative impacts on the credibility of the system.

Climate Change

The revision process will include an evaluation of how climate change adaptation strategies can be supported by the existing framework of the FSC US Forest Management Standard to help promote responsible forest management.

Climate change adaptation strategies associated with ecosystems and biodiversity are generally categorized into three types: resistance, resilience and facilitated transformation. Resistance strategies maintain the current system for as long as possible even as changes occur. Resilience strategies help a system cope with a changing climate, particularly through maintenance of critical ecological processes. Facilitated Transformation strategies facilitate transitions within a system to better align

the system with anticipated future climate conditions. When applied to forest ecosystems, each of these categories of adaptation strategies reflects an element of responsible forest management and therefore are closely aligned with the existing framework of the FSC US Forest Management Standard.

Examples of revisions to the Standard that could be proposed:

- Inclusion of climate refugia as a consideration in the identification and/or management of representative sample areas and/or HCV areas.
- Inclusion of guidance that encourages management plans to incorporate available climate projections and associated information, consider available vulnerability assessments for ecosystems, species and local communities, or assess trade-offs of particular management objectives to promote a more climate-resilient forest.
- Building flexibility into specific indicators when it will support facilitated transformation adaptation strategies.

This priority issue is not intended to address carbon capture, or how certification to the Standard could lead to climate change credits or to 'high carbon stock.' It is also not intended to represent or replace the FSC 'Ecosystem Services' initiative.

US Forest Service Supplemental Requirements

The revision process will include a re-consideration of the supplemental indicators for FSC certification of US Forest Service lands. These indicators were developed for the current version of the US Standard, with consideration of FSC Principles and Criteria Version 5 (P&C V5) and the International Generic Indicators. However, they need to be re-evaluated for their alignment with revised indicators and a determination made as to whether edits are then needed, once the transition of the full Standard from P&C V4 to V5 has been completed. This reconsideration should include all aspects of the Standard, including the Glossary.