

# FSC® US FSS EXPLAINERS SERIES – FEDERAL LANDS & FSC CERTIFICATION EXPLAINED



## Federal lands in the FSC framework

Federal lands are eligible for FSC certification under certain circumstances. Federal land management units must follow a set of supplementary requirements in the FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard's Annex M (in addition to the indicators that are applicable to all FSC-certified management units in the U.S.), and the applicable federal agency must be in conformance with the FSC US Federal Lands Policy. The Federal Lands Policy requires that federal agencies seeking eligibility to pursue possible certification meet two conditions: 1) the agency demonstrates it is a willing landowner to participate in the certification process, and 2) the agency follows a set of national-level requirements that address the special resource management, legal, technical, procedural, and governance issues associated with federal ownership.

At the time of publication of the revised FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard, eligible federal agencies include: the USDA Forest Service (USFS; National Forests), the US Department of Defense (DOD), and the US Department of Energy (DOE) lands. Other federal agencies are able to pursue certification given they conform with the requirements of the FSC U.S. Federal Lands Policy, including development of any additional supplementary requirements that might be needed to fulfill the requirements of the Federal Lands Policy.

The existing set of supplementary requirements for federal lands includes additional requirements to existing Indicators of the Standard, guidance specific to federal lands on how to conform with certain indicators, some additional Indicators that are not applicable to non-federal management units, and additional Intent statements outlining the Intent of certain sections of the Standard specifically for federal lands. Federal lands must conform with the full FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard in addition to these supplementary requirements mentioned here.

## Federal Lands & the Family Forest Indicators:

To help provide greater equity of access to certification for small or low-intensity managed forests, the FSC allows modified certification procedures and alternate or adapted indicators to reflect an anticipated lower level of risk for these types of management units. The focus of this has been to address challenges faced by small, non-industrial private landowners (i.e., family forests). Federal land management units are recognized to usually have greater access to resources and often include more significant environmental and social values (increasing risk) than typical U.S. family forests. Therefore, the revised FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard clarifies that federal lands are not eligible to use the Family Forest Indicators, even if they meet the criteria for either size or management intensity, with the exception of Indicator 6.8.1 which has been deemed infeasible for small management units of any ownership type.

**For more information:**

Annex M of the revised Forest Stewardship Standard contains the eligibility criteria and supplementary requirements for Federal Lands certification.