

WELCOME!!

FSC US FSS V2 TOPICS: RSA & CAN

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*Forest Stewardship Council U.S. Webinar
February 3, 2026*



Join Us at Upcoming Events!!

Appalachian Stakeholder Events

Knoxville, TN (*FSS Workshop,
stakeholder mtg & field tour*)

March 11-12, 2026

Great Lakes Stakeholder Events

Milwaukee, WI (*FSS Workshop,
stakeholder mtg & field tour*)

Week of April 27, 2026

FSS Virtual Workshops

Western US Focus – June 4
Eastern US Focus – June 17

June 2026

Stewardship in Action 2026

Seattle, Washington
FSC US annual conference

Week of Oct. 12, 2026

AGENDA

	Topic	Time
1	Welcome	10 min.
2	Transitioning to Version 2	10 min.
3	Representative Sample Areas	30 min.
4	Conservation Areas Network	20 min.
5	Criterion 6.5 & Family Forests	15 min.
6	Polls & Wrap-up	5 min.

FSC US Antitrust Statement

As participants in this meeting, we need to be mindful of the constraints of antitrust laws. There shall be no discussions of agreements or concerted actions that may restrain competition. This prohibition includes the exchange of information concerning individual prices, rates, market practices, or any other competitive aspect of an individual company's operation. Each participant is obligated to speak up immediately for the purpose of preventing any discussion falling outside these bounds.

ANNOUNCING:

The Version 2 FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard was published on January 1, 2026!

It is available from both the FSC International (Documents Centre) and FSC US (FSS V2.0) web sites





TRANSITIONING TO VERSION 2

Implementation Timeline

Milestones	Date(s)
Publication Date	January 1, 2026
Effective Date (beginning of transition period)	April 1, 2026
End of Transition Period	September 30, 2027 (18-month duration)



What Happens During the Transition Period?

- Certificate holders continue their normal audit cycle & schedule
- Both standards are valid for audits
- Certificate holders must have their first V2 audit
- Certificate holders must conform with new/revised indicators
- If the first V2 audit is a surveillance audit, not all new/changed indicators may be audited – CBs have some flexibility to decide to audit lower risk indicators after the transition period ends
- Major nonconformances must be closed by end of transition period
- CB calibration process

FSS Transition Resources – Currently Available

- Official V2.0 FSS
- High-level summary of significant differences
- Crosswalks of V1 & V2
- Tracked changes Draft 3 to Draft 6
- Topic-specific “explainers” for high-interest issues
- Versions of standard customized for different users, different interests
- Frequently asked questions
- Schedule of 2026 engagement events



Questions?



REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE AREAS

Representative Sample Areas – Criterion 6.5

Version 1.0/1.1

- **Document ecosystems** that would naturally exist within the management unit
- **Assess adequacy of representation and protection** in the landscape
- If RSA outside the management unit are not adequate for representation and protection, **identify RSA within the management unit**, if possible

Version 2.0

- **Identify native ecosystems** that would typically occur within the management unit
- **Assess adequacy of their representation and protection** in the landscape
- If not adequately represented and protected, **designate viable or restorable examples within the mgmt. unit** as RSA
- If no RSA are designated, manage a portion of the mgmt. unit to promote more natural conditions (not applicable if ecosystems are adequately represented and protected in the landscape)

Important Terms

- **Ecosystem**: “A dynamic complex of plant, animal, and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.”

Annex G suggests a scale aligned with mid-level classification, roughly equivalent to the “Group” level in the National Vegetation Classification.

- **Landscape**: “A geographical mosaic composed of interacting ecosystems resulting from the influence of geological, topographical, soil, climatic, biotic and human interactions in a given area.”

The “Ecological Section” scale within the USFS’s ecological classification system or smaller units are recommended to define landscapes for RSA assessment and establishment.

- **Protection/Conservation**: “...referring to management activities designed to maintain the identified environmental or cultural values in existence long-term.”

Annex G indicates general alignment with GAP Status 1 & 2, and sometimes GAP Status 3 (if lands are managed with goals and activities that support conservation/restoration of native ecosystems.)

Summary of Indicators 6.5.1 – 6.5.6

1. Identify native ecosystems that would typically occur within the management unit & assesses the adequacy of representation and protection within the landscape for each
2. For ecosystems not adequately represented or protected, designate & manage viable examples in the management unit as RSA. If none exist, designate restorable examples as RSA.
3. *Non-FF Only:* If no RSA are designated, or are insufficient per #4, manage a portion of the management unit to restore more natural conditions. [NOTE: These are not RSA.]
4. *Non-FF Only:* The combined extent of areas per #2 & #3 is proportionate to representation and protection levels in the landscape, management unit size & forest management intensity.
5. Management activities in RSA are limited to those that maintain or enhance conservation objectives for that area.
6. Document the process and rationale for #1 and #2 & review RSA designation as part of the review of the management plan and, if necessary, update it.

START

1a. Identify native ecosystems for management unit

1b. Are these ecosystems adequately represented & adequately protected in the landscape?

No

2a. For each ecosystem not well represented/protected, are there existing or restorable examples in the management unit?

No

Yes

3. Identify other ecosystems within management unit for restoration activities

2b. Designate these as RSA

Conservation areas (RSA + others) in mgmt. unit exceed 10%

4. Total areas identified are proportionate to landscape levels of representation/protection, mgmt unit size and mgmt intensity

Steps within blue box are not necessary if the identified ecosystems are adequately represented & protected in the landscape.

#3 & #4 not applicable for family forests, regardless of the above.

6.5.1: Identify native ecosystems that would typically occur within the management unit & assesses the adequacy of representation & protection within the landscape for each

Guidance from Annex G

- Does not require a new landscape evaluation if existing assessments provide adequate info
- The management unit is part of the landscape in which it exists (i.e., areas in the management unit should be considered as part of the landscape assessment)
- Suggested considerations:
 - The extent (number, size) of viable examples of the ecosystem currently within the landscape
 - The percentage (estimated) of historical extent of the ecosystem that remains within the landscape
 - The percentage of ecosystem examples within the landscape that are protected
 - Whether there are any under-represented ecological conditions (e.g., successional stages, plant community types) for the ecosystem

6.5.2: For ecosystems not adequately represented or protected, designate & manage viable examples in the management unit as RSA. If none exist, designate restorable examples as RSA.

Guidance from C6.5: RSA will generally be fixed in location, unless representative of ecosystems within a shifting mosaic of ecosystems (e.g., those resulting from frequent disturbance)

Guidance from Annex G

- “Viable” means the future existence of critical components (i.e., those used to define/describe the ecosystem) and critical functions (i.e., those essential for the system to exist) is highly probable
- Suggested additional considerations for RSA identification:
 - RSA size may range from a few acres to hundreds of acres depending on the ecosystem; should be large enough to include critical components and functions
 - A single larger RSA is generally preferable to multiple smaller RSAs
 - For ecosystems that naturally occur in mosaics, adjacent RSAs are preferable to isolated
- “Restoration” does not require creation of a particular pre-existing ecosystem if infeasible (e.g., climate changes, invasive species presence, economic infeasibility, critical collaborators unwilling, dependent on functions that cannot be restored, created or mimicked)

6.5.3: If no RSA are designated, or are insufficient per #4, manage a portion of the management unit to restore more natural conditions.

Guidance from Annex G

- If landscape-level representation or protection is lower, the management unit is larger and/or intensity of management is greater, but only a very small extent of RSA has been designated, required to identify additional areas that will be managed to restore more natural conditions
- “Managing to restore more natural conditions” means:
 - managing sites to favor or restore native species and associations of native species that are typical of the locality
 - by introducing or reintroducing composition, structures and functions that are native to the site, and
 - managing species/associations and other environmental values to form ecosystems typical of the locality (i.e., that have the critical components & functions necessary to be “viable”)

NOTE: Indicator not applicable for family forests

6.5.4: The combined extent of areas is proportionate to representation and protection levels in the landscape, management unit size & forest management intensity.

- Annex G does not provide guidance specifically for interpreting this indicator
- As part of the CB calibration process, FSC US will be working with CBs to support consistent interpretation

NOTE: Indicator not applicable for family forests

6.5.5: Management activities in RSA are limited to those that maintain or enhance conservation objectives for that area.

Guidance from Indicator 6.5.5

- Primary purpose of an RSA is to conserve or restore a particular native ecosystem or ecological condition and management activities need to be aligned with this purpose
- Management activities could range from more “hands-off” to more intensive
- Other (non-management) activities are not prohibited as long as they support, or do not detract from, the primary purpose
- If management activities have created or maintain conditions that emulate a particular ecological condition (e.g., an intact, mature forest) and the area is designated as RSA, the management may continue as long as it continues to be aligned with the primary purpose

Guidance from Annex G: In rare occurrences, when an activity is essential for achieving overall management objectives, and any alternative outside of the RSA would result in extensive damage to environmental or social values, but could be accomplished within the RSA with limited negative impacts, this may be allowable if still possible to achieve the RSA’s primary purpose

A landscape photograph of a forest. In the foreground, there is a field of green grass and low-lying shrubs. In the middle ground, a dense forest of tall, thin trees, likely pines, stands prominently. To the left and right, there are larger, more mature trees with full canopies. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall scene is a healthy, diverse forest.

Questions?

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a forest. The trees are in full autumn foliage, with leaves in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The path is covered in fallen leaves. The sky is overcast and grey. The text "Conservation Areas Network" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Conservation Areas Network

Conservation Areas Network – Indicator 6.5.7

Version 1.0/1.1

- **No explicit threshold** for designation of conservation areas, except for mgmt. units that include lands where natural ecosystems were previously converted to FSC plantations
- Conservation areas expected to be designated if needed for conservation of a specific value (e.g., species, sites, RSA, HCV)

Version 2.0

- Expectation to **designate at least 10% of the management unit** as a conservation area
- If not achieved via existing requirements, additional areas need to be established
- For family forests within a certified group, this responsibility may be shared by other group members

6.5.7. Representative Sample Areas designated per Indicator 6.5.2 and areas being managed to restore more natural conditions per Indicator 6.5.3, in combination with other components of the conservation areas network, comprise a minimum 10% area of the management unit.

6.5.8. Large, contiguous management units on public lands establish and maintain a conservation areas network sufficient in size to maintain species dependent on interior core forest habitat.

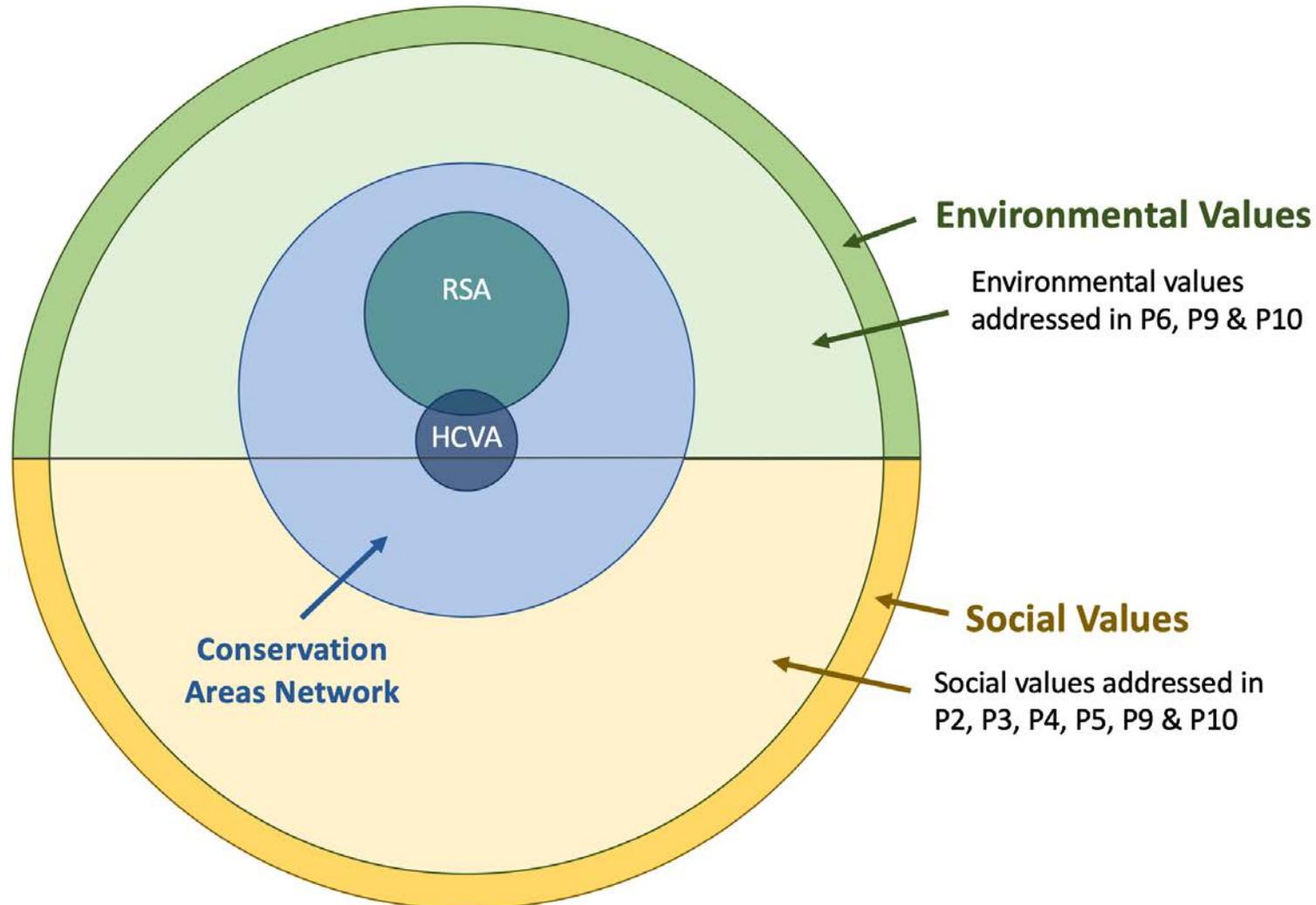
Important Terms



- **Conservation Areas Network**: “Those portions of the management unit for which conservation is the primary and, in some circumstances, exclusive objective”
Includes RSAs, conservation zones, protection areas, connectivity areas, HCVA & potentially more
- **Protection/Conservation**: “...referring to management activities designed to maintain the identified environmental or cultural values in existence long-term.”
- **Conservation Zones/Protection Areas**: “Defined areas that are designated and managed primarily to safeguard species, habitats, ecosystems, natural features or other site-specific values because of their natural environmental or cultural values, or for purposes of monitoring, evaluation or research, not necessarily excluding other management activities.”
- **Cultural**: “Relating to customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group, which are passed down from generation to generation.”
- **Environmental Value**: “The following set of elements of the biophysical and human environment: ecosystem functions, biological diversity, water resources, soils, atmosphere, landscape values (including cultural and spiritual values)...”

Conservation Areas Network – Annex H

Environmental and Social Values that Occur within the Management Unit & Areas Designated to Conserve Them



CAN Guidance from Annex H



- Conformance may not require additional conservation outcomes
- While termed a “network,” the CAN areas do not need to be spatially connected
- If the management unit includes multiple sites, the 10% may be achieved across these sites
- Areas associated with conservation easements, Habitat Conservation Plans, or Cooperative Management Areas with federal/state agencies or conservation organizations could be eligible
- Not all recreational areas may be included, only those where the intent is to provide for or support culturally-oriented recreational activities
- May include both forested (commercial and non-commercial) and non-forested areas but should not disproportionately represent non-forested areas
- Activities that support or do not detract from conditions/values for which an area is recognized would be allowable, unless otherwise restricted

Examples of Potential CAN Inclusions via FSS Conformance (Per Annex H)



Areas managed primarily to conserve/protect environmental or cultural values associated with:

- Rights held by individuals, indigenous peoples or local communities (C1.2, C3.2, C4.2)
- Sites significant to indigenous peoples or local communities (C3.5, C4.7)
- Potential impacts of management activities on local communities (C4.5)
- Ecosystem services (C5.1 & C6.3)
- Potential impacts of management activities on environmental values (C6.3)
- Rare, threatened and endangered species & their habitats (C6.4)
- Representative Sample Areas (C6.5)
- Rare ecological communities (Indicator 6.6.2)
- Natural watercourses, water bodies & riparian areas (C6.7)
- Ecological connectivity (C6.4 & C6.7)
- Restoration of under-represented species or successional stages, including old growth (C6.8)
- High conservation values (P9)

Questions to Ask Yourself



- In which areas have you diverted away from “ideal” timber production management due to considerations for a particular environmental or cultural value?
- Which areas have you designated for conservation of a particular environmental or cultural value?
- For the above situations, have you prioritized the conservation of that value above economic returns and/or other management objectives?

A photograph of a forest floor covered in green moss and brown leaves. Several mushrooms with pale, ribbed caps and thick stems are growing from the moss. The background is a blurred forest with tall trees and green foliage. The word "QUESTIONS?" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

QUESTIONS?



Criterion 6.5 & Family Forests

C6.5 & Family Forests

- Indicators 6.5.3 & 6.5.4 are not applicable for family forests
- An interpretation provides an exception to C6.5 requirements for management units that are less than 124 acres (50 hectares), when additional criteria are met
- If C6.5 conformance is not possible for Family Forests in groups, this responsibility can be taken on in part or in full by other group members:
 - Non-FF group members must conform on their own, but can increase their RSA/conservation areas to cover requirements for FF group members
 - FF group members can also designate additional RSA/conservation areas to cover requirements for other FF group members

From the FM Group Standard (FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0):

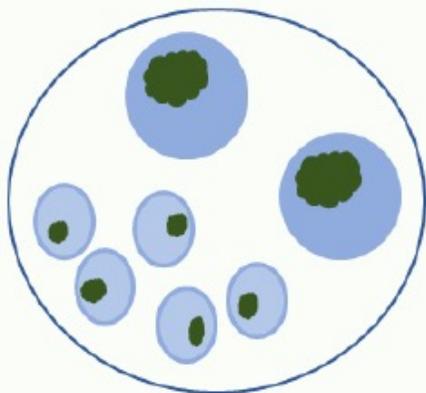


Figure 1. All management units conform with Criterion 6.5 and contain 10% devoted to the conservation areas network.

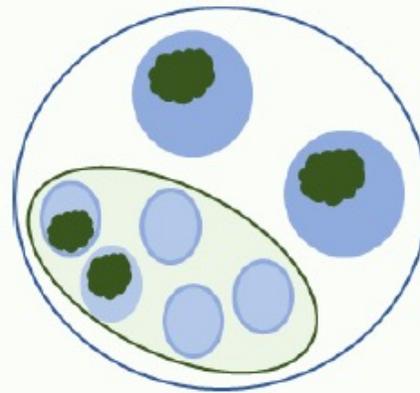


Figure 2. Some SLIMF management units conform with Criterion 6.5 on behalf of all SLIMF management units. of the group.

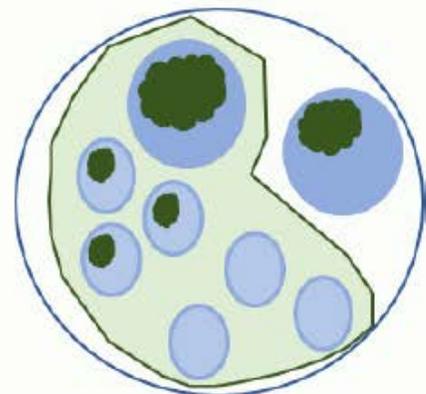


Figure 3. Some SLIMF and some non-SLIMF management units of the group conform with Criterion 6.5 on behalf of all SLIMF management units of the group.

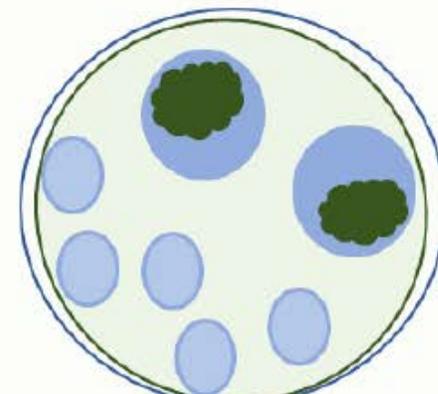
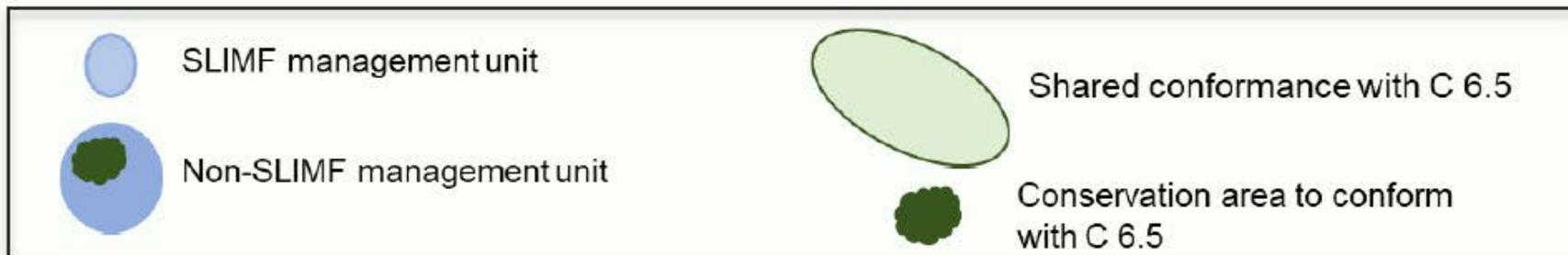


Figure 4. The non-SLIMF management units of the group conform with Criterion 6.5 on behalf of all SLIMF management units of the group.



QUESTIONS?

Please participate in our polls!

**Feedback for
FSC US**

**SAF CFE
Credit Hours
Request**

Thank you



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