

# US FOREST STEWARDSHIP STANDARD – KEY ELEMENTS OF EACH FSC® CRITERION



The purpose of this document is to provide the key elements for conformance with each Criterion of the FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard (US FSS). This document is provided to communicate a summary of requirements and can be used as guidance for those interested in seeking FSC Forest Management Certification, but it is not part of the FSC normative framework. Importantly, all auditing is completed using the Indicators in the approved US FSS published by FSC at FSC.org.

## **PRINCIPLE 1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS**

The Organization shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and nationally-ratified international treaties, conventions and agreements.

*1.1. The Organization shall be a legally defined entity with clear, documented and unchallenged legal registration, with written authorization from the legally competent authority for specific activities.*

- Demonstrate that the organization is legally recognized.

*1.2. The Organization shall demonstrate that the legal status of the Management Unit, including tenure and use rights, and its boundaries, are clearly defined.*

- Provide evidence of the legal status of the management unit, and identify its boundaries on maps.
- Document any long-term use rights associated with the management unit, and identify boundaries of these areas on maps.

*1.3. The Organization shall have legal rights to operate in the Management Unit, which fit the legal status of The Organization and of the Management Unit, and shall comply with the associated legal obligations in applicable national and local laws and regulations and administrative requirements. The legal rights shall provide for harvest of products and/or supply of ecosystem services from within the Management Unit. The Organization shall pay the legally prescribed charges associated with such rights and obligations.*

- Demonstrate the right to manage land within the management unit in accordance with management plan.
- Ensure that the management plan and activities comply with applicable laws.
- Document situations when conformance to this standard would result in a conflict with laws and refer them to the Certification Body.
- Make legally required [ACE1] payments in a timely manner.[ACE2] [ACE3]

1.4. *The Organization shall develop and implement measures, and/or shall engage with regulatory agencies, to systematically protect the Management Unit from unauthorized or illegal resource use, settlement and other illegal activities.*

- Implement strategies to prevent illegal activities from occurring within the management unit.
- Implement strategies to correct situations resulting from illegal activities.

1.5. *The Organization shall comply with the applicable national laws, local laws, ratified international conventions and obligatory codes of practice, relating to the transportation and trade of forest products within and from the Management Unit, and/or up to the point of first sale.*

- Comply with all relevant laws and binding agreements for elements of the management plan and activities related to transportation and trade of forest products.

1.6. *The Organization shall identify, prevent and resolve disputes over issues of statutory or customary law, which can be settled out of court in a timely manner, through engagement with affected stakeholders.*

NOTE: The requirements for conformance with Criteria 1.6, 2.6 and 4.6, plus a portion of Indicator 3.2.4, have been combined into a single set of indicators in Criterion 1.6.

- Have a documented dispute resolution process in place, use it to receive and resolve disputes, and publicly share a summary of the process.
- Establish the scope of the above process to include (at minimum) disputes related to:
  - Applicable laws
  - Workers' loss of or damage to property, or occupational diseases or injuries
  - Violations of Native American indigenous peoples' rights
  - Impact of management activities on other individuals, groups, local communities or entities
- Develop the dispute resolution process through engagement with potentially affected stakeholders, and ensure it includes mechanisms for providing fair compensation and for dealing with disputes of substantial magnitude.
- Maintain records of disputes.

1.7. *The Organization shall publicize a commitment not to offer or receive bribes in money or any other form of corruption, and shall comply with anti-corruption legislation where this exists. In the absence of anti-corruption legislation, The Organization shall implement other anti-corruption measures proportionate to the scale and intensity of management activities and the risk of corruption.*

- Establish and follow a publicly available bribery and anti-corruption policy that is fully aligned with applicable laws.

1.8. *The Organization shall demonstrate a long-term commitment to adhere to the FSC Principles and Criteria in the Management Unit, and to related FSC Policies and Standards. A statement of this commitment shall be contained in a publicly available document made freely available.*

- Establish and follow a publicly available policy that demonstrates a long-term commitment to conformance with this standard and other FSC policies.

## PRINCIPLE 2: WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

The Organization shall maintain or enhance the social and economic wellbeing of workers.

*2.1. The Organization shall uphold the principles and rights at work as defined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998) based on the eight ILO Core Labour Conventions.*

- Comply with federal legislation regarding workers' rights related to child labor, forced labor, discrimination, and rights of workers to organize and collectively bargain.

*2.2. The Organization shall promote gender equality in employment practices, training opportunities, awarding of contracts, processes of engagement and management activities.*

- Promote gender equity and prevent gender discrimination, including in employment, training, stakeholder engagement, awarding contracts, and implementing management activities.
- Provide a minimum of 6 weeks parental leave (through organizational policy), even if not required by federal or local law.
- Establish mechanisms, aligned with applicable laws, for preventing, reporting, and addressing cases of harassment and discrimination.
- Pay individuals of all genders equally when they do the same work, with consideration of experience, performance, qualifications, skills, and responsibilities.

*2.3. The Organization shall implement health and safety practices to protect workers from occupational safety and health hazards. These practices shall, proportionate to scale, intensity and risk of management activities, meet or exceed the recommendations of the ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Forestry Work.*

- Adhere to applicable laws regarding health and safety of workers.
- Demonstrate that the frequency and severity of accidents over time remain low or are decreasing.

*2.4. The Organization shall pay wages that meet or exceed minimum forest industry standards or other recognized forest industry wage agreements or living wages, where these are higher than the legal minimum wages. When none of these exist, The Organization shall through engagement with workers develop mechanisms for determining living wages.*

- Pay wages that meet or exceed prevailing wages for the forest industry in the area surrounding the management unit.
- Pay wages, salaries, and contracts on time.
- Consider factors that affect costs for the contracted party when negotiating contracts, including expectations related to conformance with this standard.

*2.5. The Organization shall demonstrate that workers have job-specific training and supervision to safely and effectively implement the Management Plan and all management activities.*

- Ensure workers have adequate training and supervision to implement management activities and maintain records of training.

*2.6. The Organization through engagement with workers shall have mechanisms for resolving grievances and for providing fair compensation to workers for loss or damage to property, occupational diseases, or occupational injuries sustained while working for The Organization.*

NOTE: The requirements for conformance with Criteria 1.6, 2.6 and 4.6, plus a portion of Indicator 3.2.4, have been combined into a single set of indicators in Criterion 1.6.

### **PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

The Organization shall identify and uphold Indigenous Peoples' legal and customary rights of ownership, use and management of land, territories and resources affected by management activities.

*3.1. The Organization shall identify the Indigenous Peoples that exist within the Management Unit or those that are affected by management activities. The Organization shall then, through engagement with these Indigenous Peoples, identify their rights of tenure, their rights of access to and use of forest resources and ecosystem services, their customary rights and legal rights and obligations, that apply within the Management Unit. The Organization shall also identify areas where these rights are contested.*

- Identify indigenous peoples who may be affected by management activities.
- Engage with these peoples to identify any legal or customary rights that they hold within the management unit, to identify resources and lands within the management unit that are important to them for other reasons, and to understand how management activities might affect these values.

*3.2. The Organization shall recognize and uphold the legal and customary rights of Indigenous Peoples to maintain control over management activities within or related to the Management Unit to the extent necessary to protect their rights, resources and lands and territories. Delegation by Indigenous Peoples of control over management activities to third parties requires Free, Prior and Informed Consent.*

- Uphold all identified rights.
- Engage with identified indigenous peoples during management planning to promote protection of their rights and interests.
- Engage with rights holders in a Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process before implementing management activities that may affect their rights.
- Correct any situations where rights were violated through engagement with the rights holder, and if necessary, the dispute resolution process defined in Criterion 1.6.

*3.3. In the event of delegation of control over management activities, a binding agreement between The Organization and the Indigenous Peoples shall be concluded through Free, Prior and Informed Consent. The agreement shall define its duration, provisions for renegotiation, renewal, termination, economic conditions and other terms and conditions. The agreement shall make provision for monitoring by Indigenous Peoples of The Organization's compliance with its terms and conditions.*

- Document FPIC process results in a formal agreement that describes what control has been given by the rights holder to the certificate holder over management activities that could affect identified rights, and includes certain key terms and conditions.
- Allow rights holders to monitor compliance with the agreement.

*3.4. The Organization shall recognize and uphold the rights, customs and culture of Indigenous Peoples as defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and ILO Convention 169 (1989).*

- Demonstrate a commitment to upholding the rights, customs, and cultures of indigenous peoples through compliance with federal laws and conformance with other Principle 3 and Criterion 1.6 indicators.
- Document violations of indigenous peoples' rights, customs and/or cultures and the steps taken to resolve them.

3.5. *The Organization, through engagement with Indigenous Peoples, shall identify sites which are of special cultural, ecological, economic, religious or spiritual significance and for which these Indigenous Peoples hold legal or customary rights. These sites shall be recognized by The Organization and their management, and/or protection shall be agreed through engagement with these Indigenous Peoples.*

- Engage with identified indigenous peoples, to identify sites important to them and for which they hold legal or customary rights, and to determine how to protect or enhance these sites.
- Document these decisions and how they were implemented.

3.6. *The Organization shall uphold the right of Indigenous Peoples to protect and utilize their traditional knowledge and shall compensate Indigenous Peoples for the utilization of such knowledge and their intellectual property. A binding agreement as per Criterion 3.3 shall be concluded between The Organization and the Indigenous Peoples for such utilization through Free, Prior and Informed Consent before utilization takes place, and shall be consistent with the protection of intellectual property rights.*

- Respect and protect indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge and intellectual property, and only use it when consent for use has been achieved through an FPIC process which is documented in a formal agreement that includes how the knowledge holder(s) will be fairly compensated.

#### **PRINCIPLE 4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

The Organization shall contribute to maintaining or enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.

4.1. *The Organization shall identify the local communities that exist within the Management Unit and those that are affected by management activities. The Organization shall then, through engagement with these local communities, identify their rights of tenure, their rights of access to and use of forest resources and ecosystem services, their customary rights and legal rights and obligations, that apply within the Management Unit.*

- Identify local communities that may be significantly affected by management activities.
- Engage with these communities to identify any legal or customary rights that they hold within the management unit.

4.2. *The Organization shall recognize and uphold the legal and customary rights of local communities to maintain control over management activities within or related to the Management Unit to the extent necessary to protect their rights, resources, lands and territories. Delegation by traditional peoples of control over management activities to third parties requires Free, Prior and Informed Consent.*

- Uphold all identified rights.
- Engage with rights holders when management activities might affect rights to ensure rights are not violated and to mitigate any violations that occur; if the community is a "traditional people," do this through a FPIC process and agreement.

4.3. *The Organization shall provide reasonable opportunities for employment, training and other services to local communities, contractors and suppliers proportionate to scale and intensity of its management activities.*

- Provide work opportunities to qualified local applicants and use local goods and services when equal in price and quality to non-local options.
- Provide or support forest management-associated vocational learning opportunities.

4.4. *The Organization shall implement additional activities, through engagement with local communities, that contribute to their social and economic development, proportionate to the scale, intensity and socio-economic impact of its management activities.*

- Participate in local economic development and civic activities identified through engagement with local communities and/or other relevant organizations.

4.5. *The Organization, through engagement with local communities, shall take action to identify, avoid and mitigate significant negative social, environmental and economic impacts of its management activities on affected communities. The action taken shall be proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of those activities and negative impacts.*

- Engage with identified local communities to determine likely significant negative social, environmental, and economic community-level impacts from management activities.
- Develop and implement strategies to avoid or mitigate these impacts.

4.6. *The Organization, through engagement with local communities, shall have mechanisms for resolving grievances and providing fair compensation to local communities and individuals with regard to the impacts of management activities of The Organization.*

NOTE: The requirements for conformance with Criteria 1.6, 2.6 and 4.6, plus a portion of Indicator 3.2.4, have been combined into a single set of indicators in Criterion 1.6.

4.7. *The Organization, through engagement with local communities, shall identify sites which are of special cultural, ecological, economic, religious or spiritual significance, and for which these local communities hold legal or customary rights. These sites shall be recognized by The Organization, and their management and/or protection shall be agreed through engagement with these local communities.*

- Engage with identified local communities to develop and implement measures to manage and/or protect sites identified via other Principle 4 indicators that are important to the communities and for which they hold legal or customary rights.

4.8. *The Organization shall uphold the right of traditional peoples to protect and utilize their traditional knowledge and shall compensate traditional peoples for the utilization of such knowledge and their intellectual property. A binding agreement as per Criterion 3.3 shall be concluded between The Organization and the traditional peoples for such utilization through Free, Prior and Informed Consent before utilization takes place, and shall be consistent with the protection of intellectual property rights.*

- Respect and protect traditional peoples' traditional knowledge and intellectual property, and only use it when consent for use has been achieved through an FPIC process which is documented in a formal agreement that includes how the knowledge holder(s) will be fairly compensated.

## **PRINCIPLE 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST**

The Organization shall efficiently manage the range of multiple products and services of the Management Unit to maintain or enhance long-term economic viability and the range of social and environmental benefits.

5.1. *The Organization shall identify, produce, or enable the production of, diversified benefits and/or products, based on the range of resources and ecosystem services existing in the Management Unit in order to strengthen and diversify the local economy proportionate to the scale and intensity of management activities.*

- Demonstrate knowledge of current and potential impacts on the local economy and implement actions to stimulate and diversify local economic activity.
- Public land only: Provide opportunities to diversify the local economy and stimulate local economic activity.
- Follow the FSC Ecosystem Services Procedure when making FSC Ecosystem Services Verified Impact claims.

5.2. *The Organization shall normally harvest products and services from the Management Unit at or below a level which can be permanently sustained.*

- Establish a sustained yield harvest level for each planning unit, based on analysis of key information, and provide rationale for size and layout of the planning units.
- Record average annual harvests levels (over rolling periods of time equal to the management plan revision cycle) and ensure they do not exceed the sustained yield harvest level, except when justified to improve or maintain forest health and quality.
- Ensure that harvesting rates and methods improve or maintain health and quality across the management unit and return stands to desired stocking levels and composition.
- Establish and abide by non-timber forest product sustained yield harvest levels or harvest guidelines that maintain or enhance affected species populations and other environmental values.

5.3. *The Organization shall demonstrate that the positive and negative externalities of operations are included in the management plan.*

- Consider the long term positive and negative environmental and social impacts of management activities and incorporate into the management plan.

5.4. *The Organization shall use local processing, local services, and local value adding to meet the requirements of The Organization where these are available, proportionate to scale, intensity and risk. If these are not locally available, The Organization shall make reasonable attempts to help establish these services.*

- Demonstrate a preference for local harvesters, facilities, and other service providers when available at competitive rates, and try to help establish these services if they are not adequate or available.
- Public land only: Scale or structure a portion of forest product sales and/or contracts to allow small businesses to bid competitively.

5.5. *The Organization shall demonstrate through its planning and expenditures proportionate to scale, intensity and risk, its commitment to long-term economic viability.*

- Demonstrate the financial and operational capacity necessary for activities required to meet this standard, and make the expenditures and investments needed to implement these activities in a way that ensures long-term economic viability.

## **PRINCIPLE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND IMPACTS**

The Organization shall maintain, conserve and/or restore ecosystem services and environmental values of the Management Unit, and shall avoid, repair or mitigate negative environmental impacts.

6.1. *The Organization shall assess environmental values in the Management Unit and those values outside the Management Unit potentially affected by management activities. This assessment shall be undertaken with a level of detail, scale and frequency that is proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities, and is sufficient for the purpose of deciding the necessary conservation measures, and for detecting and monitoring possible negative impacts of those activities.*

- Complete a broad assessment of conditions within the management unit, including a comparison of historic vs. current conditions, identification of environmental values that may be affected by management activities, and consideration of the potential future impacts of climate change and catastrophic natural disturbances.
- Repeat the assessment periodically to incorporate new learnings about management activity impacts and risks, and to inform conservation and monitoring measures.
- Public land only: Share draft and final assessments publicly and provide members of the public with an opportunity to comment on drafts prior to finalization.

6.2. Prior to the start of site-disturbing activities, The Organization shall identify and assess the scale, intensity and risk of potential impacts of management activities on the identified environmental values.

- Assess potential current and future impacts of management activities on environmental values before implementing those activities, considering a range of potential scales of impact (from stand to landscape levels).

6.3. The Organization shall identify and implement effective actions to prevent negative impacts of management activities on the environmental values, and to mitigate and repair those that occur, proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of these impacts.

- Develop and implement management strategies that prevent or minimize negative impacts on environmental values and that maintain or enhance the values.
- Public land only: Share draft and final management strategies publicly and provide members of the public with an opportunity to comment on drafts prior to finalization.
- Mitigate and/or repair negative impacts that occur, and adopt measures that will prevent further damage.

6.4. The Organization shall protect rare species and threatened species and their habitats in the Management Unit through conservation zones, protection areas, connectivity and/or (where necessary) other direct measures for their survival and viability. These measures shall be proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities and to the conservation status and ecological requirements of the rare and threatened species. The Organization shall take into account the geographic range and ecological requirements of rare and threatened species beyond the boundary of the Management Unit, when determining the measures to be taken inside the Management Unit.

- Conduct surveys to confirm the presence or absence of potential rare, threatened, or endangered (RTE) species, or alternatively, implement management activities as if these species were present (even if not confirmed).
- Modify management activities to restore, maintain or enhance RTE species and their habitats, including when potential impacts would occur outside of the management unit.
- Establish conservation areas where necessary to maintain or improve viability of RTE species and their habitats.
- Prevent hunting, fishing, trapping and collection of RTE species, to the extent legally possible.
- Public land only: Design management plans and management activities to support species' recovery and landscape-level biodiversity conservation goals.

6.5. The Organization shall identify and protect Representative Sample Areas of native ecosystems and/or restore them to more natural conditions. Where Representative Sample Areas do not exist or are insufficient, The Organization shall restore a proportion of the Management Unit to more natural conditions. The size of the areas and the measures taken for their protection or restoration, including within plantations, shall be proportionate to the conservation status and value of the ecosystems at the landscape level, and the scale, intensity and risk of management activities.

- Identify native ecosystems that would typically occur within the management unit, and then assess the adequacy of representation and protection within the landscape for each of identified ecosystem.
- Identify high quality examples of inadequately represented/protected ecosystems and/or places where they could feasibly be restored within the management unit, and then designate these as Representative Sample Areas (RSA).
- Ensure that the extent of RSAs is proportionate to the level of ecosystem representation and protection in the landscape and the size and management intensity of the management unit, or if this is not possible with RSA alone, manage additional portions of the management unit to restore more natural conditions.
- Document the process and rationale for RSA designation and regularly review RSA designations as part of the management plan.

- Limit management activities within RSAs to those that maintain or enhance the conservation objectives for the area.
- Demonstrate that at least 10% of the management unit is RSA, high conservation value area, an area managed for more natural conditions, or some other kind of conservation area (i.e., the conservation areas network).
- Public lands only: Ensure the conservation areas network is sufficient in size to maintain species dependent on interior core forest habitat.

*6.6. The Organization shall effectively maintain the continued existence of naturally occurring native species and genotypes, and prevent losses of biological diversity, especially through habitat management in the Management Unit. The Organization shall demonstrate that effective measures are in place to manage and control hunting, fishing, trapping and collecting.*

- Implement management activities that maintain, enhance, or restore ecological communities and habitats associated with native ecosystems in the management unit, with particular attention to rare ecological communities.
- Maintain, enhance, or restore habitat components and associated stand structures in an abundance and distribution that would be expected from naturally occurring processes, with particular attention to certain key components and structures.
- Develop and implement a strategy to prevent or control invasive species that includes a threats assessment, identification of management activities that minimize risks, and a description of monitoring to assess prevention/control activity effectiveness.
- Demonstrate that even-aged silvicultural systems result in harvest opening sizes and live retention that are consistent with natural disturbance regimes, unless a lower level of retention is needed for restoration or rehabilitation purposes. NOTE: Some regions have specific thresholds and/or additional limitations associated with these requirements.
- Justify departures from harvest opening size limits with a well-developed and documented plan that has certain required elements, including stakeholder collaboration.
- Demonstrate that management of native species hunting, fishing, trapping and collection should effectively maintain within-species diversity and species distribution.

*6.7. The Organization shall protect or restore natural water courses, water bodies, riparian zones and their connectivity. The Organization shall avoid negative impacts on water quality and quantity and mitigate and remedy those that occur.*

- Maintain, enhance, or restore habitat for riparian-associated species and to benefit adjacent aquatic habitats.
- Meet or exceed Best Management Practices (BMPs) for protection of water quality and quantity when implementing management activities.
- Document and implement Riparian Management Zone (RMZ)/Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) guidelines that include buffer widths and associated measures to protect and restore water quality and hydrologic conditions in adjacent water bodies and hydrologically sensitive areas. NOTE: Some regions have specific buffer widths and/or additional limitations associated with RMZ/SMZ areas.
- Justify deviations from minimum RMZ/SMZ widths with well-documented rationale that demonstrates the alternative approach will maintain the same extent of buffer area and provide equal or greater environmental protection.

- Implement restoration activities when RMZ/SMZ protections are not adequate, including working with responsible bodies when the activities causing harm are outside of the organization's control.
- Manage authorized recreation to avoid impacts on environmental values.
- Manage domestic animal grazing to protect aquatic and riparian habitats and water quality, and to avoid stream bank erosion.

*6.8. The Organization shall manage the landscape in the Management Unit to maintain and/or restore a varying mosaic of species, sizes, ages, spatial scales and regeneration cycles appropriate for the landscape values in that region, and for enhancing environmental and economic resilience.*

- Maintain, enhance, or restore a mosaic of forest community types and successional stages that would naturally occur in the management unit given ecological conditions, with particular attention to forest types and successional stages that are underrepresented in the surrounding landscape.
- Protect old growth forests, and manage them to maintain their area, structure, composition and processes. NOTE: Some landowner types have specific activity limitations or allowances within old growth forests.
- Justify timber harvest in certain upper Midwest old growth forests with well-developed rationale and when strong protections are in place for environmental values and to maintain landscape level extent of these old growth forests above historic levels.
- Justify larger harvest opening sizes by establishing rotation lengths that meet or exceed the culmination of mean annual increment for natural forests without a history of human disturbance.

*6.9. The Organization shall not convert natural forest or High Conservation Value Areas to plantations or to non-forest land-use, nor transform plantations on sites directly converted from natural forest to non-forest land use, except when the conversion:*

- a) Affects a very limited portion of the Management Unit, and
  - b) Will produce clear, substantial, additional, secure long-term conservation and social benefits in the Management Unit, and
  - c) Does not damage or threaten High Conservation Values, nor any sites or resources necessary to maintain or enhance those High Conservation Values.
- Avoid converting natural/semi-natural forest or high conservation value areas to plantation or to non-forest uses and avoid transforming plantations to non-forest uses, unless the specific circumstances included in the Criterion text are met.

*6.10. Management Units containing plantations that were established on areas converted from natural forest between 1 December 1994 and 31 December 2020 shall not qualify for certification, except where:*

- a) The conversion affected a very limited portion of the Management Unit and is producing clear, substantial, additional, secure long-term conservation benefits in the Management Unit, or
  - b) The Organization which was directly or indirectly involved in the conversion demonstrates restitution of all social harms and proportionate remedy of environmental harms as specified in the applicable FSC Remedy Framework, or
  - c) The Organization which was not involved in the conversion but has acquired Management Units where conversion has taken place demonstrates restitution of priority social harms and partial remedy of environmental harms as specified in the applicable FSC Remedy Framework.
- Compile information on conversions of natural/semi-natural forest or high conservation value areas that occurred within the management unit between December 1, 1994 and December 31, 2020, and then avoid certifying these areas unless the specific circumstances included in the Criterion text are met.

6.11 Management Units shall not qualify for certification if they contain natural forests or High Conservation Value Areas converted after 31 December 2020, except where the conversion:

- a) Affected a very limited portion of the Management Unit, and
  - b) Is producing clear, substantial, additional, secure long-term conservation and social benefits in the Management Unit, and
  - c) Did not threaten High Conservation Values, nor any sites or resources necessary to maintain or enhance those High Conservation Values.
- Compile information on conversions of natural/semi-natural forest or high conservation value areas that occurred within the management unit after December 31, 2020, and then avoid certifying these areas unless the specific circumstances included in the Criterion text are met.

## **PRINCIPLE 7: MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

The Organization shall have a management plan consistent with its policies and objectives and proportionate to scale, intensity and risks of its management activities. The management plan shall be implemented and kept up to date based on monitoring information in order to promote adaptive management. The associated planning and procedural documentation shall be sufficient to guide staff, inform affected stakeholders and interested stakeholders and to justify management decisions.

7.1. The Organization shall, proportionate to scale, intensity and risk of its management activities, set policies (visions and values) and objectives for management, which are environmentally sound, socially beneficial and economically viable. Summaries of these policies and objectives shall be incorporated into the management plan, and publicized.

- Establish organizational policies that support the management plan and are aligned with the requirements of this standard, and then summarize them in the management plan.
- Describe current forest resource conditions, historic conditions, desired future conditions, and management objectives in the management plan.

7.2. The Organization shall have and implement a management plan for the Management Unit which is fully consistent with the policies and management objectives as established according to Criterion 7.1. The management plan shall describe the natural resources that exist in the Management Unit and explain how the plan will meet the FSC certification requirements. The management plan shall cover forest management planning and social management planning proportionate to scale, intensity and risk of the planned activities.

- Describe the following components in the management plan:
  - Activities to achieve management objectives
  - Ownership and legal status of the management unit and resources, including rights held by the owners and others
  - History of land use and management, current forest types, forest size classes/successional stages, and natural disturbance regimes that affect the management unit
  - Potential impacts of climate change and any strategies being implemented to address these impacts
  - Surrounding landscape and how landscape-scale habitat elements will be maintained or restored
  - Key environmental values in the management unit and activities to conserve these values
  - High conservation value assessment results and management strategies needed to conserve these values
  - Invasive species conditions, applicable management objectives, and prevention/control strategies

- Approach(es) for addressing current or anticipated impacts of insects or diseases on forest conditions and management objectives
- Integrated pest management system and strategies to prevent, mitigate and/or repair damage to environmental values and human health from pesticide use
- Potential impacts of management activities on key social values addressed within the standard and strategies needed to maintain or enhance these values
- Transportation system general purpose, condition, and maintenance needs
- Silvicultural and other management systems and how they will sustain forest ecosystems over the long-term
- Development of harvest rate calculations for achieving sustained yield harvest levels
- Monitoring protocol and how it assesses progress towards management objectives, management activity impacts and conditions of the management unit
  - Stakeholder engagement process for management planning and monitoring
- Include maps of key conditions and management unit areas in the management plan
- Ensure that activities undertaken in the management unit are consistent with the management plan

*7.3. The management plan shall include verifiable targets by which progress towards each of the prescribed management objectives can be assessed.*

- Establish verifiable targets (i.e. measurable goals) for each management objective, and determine the frequency at which they will be monitored.

*7.4. The Organization shall update and revise periodically the management planning and procedural documentation to incorporate the results of monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement or new scientific and technical information, as well as to respond to changing environmental, social and economic circumstances.*

- Review the management plan at least every 10 years (unless there are statutory requirements for a longer period) and update it to incorporate new information and to respond to changing conditions.

*7.5. The Organization shall make publicly available a summary of the management plan free of charge. Excluding confidential information, other relevant components of the management plan shall be made available to affected stakeholders on request, and at cost of reproduction and handling.*

- Make the management plan or a summary of the plan publicly available at no cost
- Provide affected stakeholders with relevant components of the management plan upon request, at cost for reproduction and handling.

*7.6. The Organization shall, proportionate to scale, intensity and risk of management activities, proactively and transparently engage affected stakeholders in its management planning and monitoring processes, and shall engage interested stakeholders on request.*

- Seek and consider management planning input from affected stakeholders, including providing opportunities for input prior to implementation of activities that may affect them
- Provide interested stakeholders with opportunities for input into management planning that affects their interests (when requested) and consider the input in good faith.
- Maintain a comprehensive and diverse stakeholder list, including contact information.
- Public lands only: Include certain additional components as part of stakeholder engagement, including prior public notification of upcoming review and comment opportunities and an accessible appeals process for planning decisions.

## **PRINCIPLE 8: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

The Organization shall demonstrate that, progress towards achieving the management objectives, the impacts of management activities and the condition of the Management Unit, are monitored and evaluated proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities, in order to implement adaptive management.

*8.1. The Organization shall monitor the implementation of its Management Plan, including its policies and management objectives, its progress with the activities planned, and the achievement of its verifiable targets.*

- Develop and consistently implement a protocol to monitor policies, management objectives, and achievement of verifiable targets.
- Include in the protocol measures to evaluate changes in potential impacts of climate change, ability to achieve management objectives and desired future conditions given these changes, and effectiveness of implemented climate change adaptation strategies.

*8.2. The Organization shall monitor and evaluate the environmental and social impacts of the activities carried out in the Management Unit, and changes in its environmental condition.*

- Develop and consistently implement a protocol to monitor and evaluate environmental and social impacts of management activities and changes in environmental conditions, with consideration of stakeholder responses to management activities.
- Offer indigenous peoples the opportunity to jointly monitor sites for which they hold rights and management activities that may affect resources of interest to them.

*8.3. The Organization shall analyze the results of monitoring and evaluation and feed the outcomes of this analysis back into the planning process.*

- Revise the management plan if monitoring indicates that management objectives and verifiable targets are not being met.
- Modify management objectives and verifiable targets if monitoring indicates that they are not adequate for achieving conformance with this standard.

*8.4. The Organization shall make publicly available a summary of the results of monitoring free of charge, excluding confidential information.*

- Make monitoring results or a summary, including maps, publicly available at no cost.

*8.5. The Organization shall have and implement a tracking and tracing system proportionate to scale, intensity and risk of its management activities, for demonstrating the source and volume in proportion to projected output for each year, of all products from the Management Unit that are marketed as FSC certified.*

- Implement a documented tracking and tracing system for forest products sold from the management unit with an FSC claim.
- Provide data, materials and/or information as requested by Certification Bodies to support supply chain verification processes.
- Maintain (for at least 5 years) records of key information for all forest products sold.
- Keep (for at least 5 years) sales invoices with key information and transport documents for all products sold or delivered with an FSC claim.

## **PRINCIPLE 9: HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES**

The Organization shall maintain and/or enhance the High Conservation Values in the Management Unit through applying the precautionary approach.

*9.1. The Organization, through engagement with affected stakeholders, interested stakeholders and other means and sources, shall assess and record the presence and status of the following High Conservation Values in the Management Unit, proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of impacts of management activities, and likelihood of the occurrence of the High Conservation Values:*

*HCV 1 – Species diversity. Concentrations of biological diversity including endemic species, and rare, threatened or endangered species, that are significant at global, regional or national levels.*

*HCV 2 – Landscape-level ecosystems and mosaics. Intact Forest Landscapes and large landscape-level ecosystems and ecosystem mosaics that are significant at global, regional or national levels, and that contain viable populations of the great majority of the naturally occurring species in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.*

*HCV 3 – Ecosystems and habitats. Rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems, habitats or refugia.*

*HCV 4 – Critical ecosystem services. Basic ecosystem services in critical situations, including protection of water catchments and control of erosion of vulnerable soils and slopes.*

*HCV 5 – Community needs. Sites and resources fundamental for satisfying the basic necessities of local communities or Indigenous Peoples (for livelihoods, health, nutrition, water, etc.), identified through engagement with these communities or Indigenous Peoples.*

*HCV 6 – Cultural values. Sites, resources, habitats and landscapes of global or national cultural, archaeological or historical significance, and/or of critical cultural, ecological, economic or religious/sacred importance for the traditional cultures of local communities or Indigenous Peoples, identified through engagement with these local communities or Indigenous Peoples.*

- Record the location and status of high conservation values (HCV) and areas on which the HCV rely in a documented assessment that includes input from stakeholder engagement and is regularly reviewed/updated as part of the management plan review.
- Public lands only: Conduct a transparent and accessible public review of HCVs, areas on which they rely and associated management strategies, and then integrate relevant input back into these elements.

*9.2. The Organization shall develop effective strategies that maintain and/or enhance the identified High Conservation Values, through engagement with affected stakeholders, interested stakeholders and experts.*

- Identify and document threats to HCVs.
- Develop management strategies to maintain or enhance HCVs before implementing potentially harmful management activities, using a process that includes consultation with stakeholders and experts.
- Protect and maintain core areas of intact forest landscapes, allowing only limited industrial activities that meet certain criteria.

*9.3. The Organization shall implement strategies and actions that maintain and/or enhance the identified High Conservation Values. These strategies and actions shall implement the precautionary approach and be proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities.*

- Implement management strategies and ensure that all management activities prevent damage and avoid risks to HCVs.
- Immediately cease any activities that are causing harm to HCVs and promptly mitigate negative impacts.
- Work to coordinate conservation efforts with adjacent landowners when HCVs or the areas on which they rely cross ownership boundaries.

9.4. *The Organization shall demonstrate that periodic monitoring is carried out to assess changes in the status of High Conservation Values, and shall adapt its management strategies to ensure their effective protection. The monitoring shall be proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities, and shall include engagement with affected stakeholders, interested stakeholders and experts.*

- Monitor for changes in HCV status and to assess effectiveness of management strategies in a program that includes engagement with stakeholders and experts.
- Adapt management strategies when monitoring or other new information indicates that they are insufficient to maintain or enhance HCVs.

## **PRINCIPLE 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

Management activities conducted by or for The Organization for the Management Unit shall be selected and implemented consistent with The Organization's economic, environmental and social policies and objectives and in compliance with the Principles and Criteria collectively.

10.1. *After harvest or in accordance with the management plan, The Organization shall, by natural or artificial regeneration methods, regenerate vegetation cover in a timely fashion to preharvesting or more natural conditions.*

- Regenerate harvested sites in a timely manner to maintain environmental values and to achieve a replacement stand that is similar to pre-harvest or that represents natural/semi-natural forest composition and structure.
- Regenerate to achieve more natural conditions following harvests in degraded stands.

10.2. *The Organization shall use species for regeneration that are ecologically well adapted to the site and to the management objectives. The Organization shall use native species and local genotypes for regeneration, unless there is clear and convincing justification for using others.*

- Choose species for regeneration that are ecologically well-adapted to the site and management objectives, and that are native species of local provenance, unless non-local native genotypes are justified or the criteria for use of non-native species are met.
- Limit use of non-native species for regeneration to situations where the species existed in the stand pre-harvest, the species is being used to achieve restoration objectives, or the species is essential to maintain or enhance local diversity while achieving climate change adaptation or disease/pest resistance objectives.

10.3. *The Organization shall only use alien species when knowledge and/or experience have shown that any invasive impacts can be controlled and effective mitigation measures are in place.*

- Intentional use of non-native species is limited to species that are demonstrated to be non-invasive and not a risk to native biodiversity.
- Control the spread of non-native species that are used and monitor for any adverse ecological impacts.

10.4. *The Organization shall not use genetically modified organisms in the Management Unit.*

- Do not use genetically modified organisms.

10.5. *The Organization shall use silvicultural practices that are ecologically appropriate for the vegetation, species, sites and management objectives.*

- Implement silvicultural practices that are ecologically appropriate for the site and management objectives.

10.6. *The Organization shall minimize or avoid the use of fertilizers. When fertilizers are used, The Organization shall demonstrate that use is equally or more ecologically and economically beneficial than use of silvicultural systems that do not require fertilizers, and prevent, mitigate, and/or repair damage to environmental values, including soils.*

- Minimize or avoid the use of fertilizers, and when used, document use, protect environmental values, mitigate or repair any environmental damage that does occur, and demonstrate that using fertilizers will result in equal or greater ecological and economic benefits than not using them.

10.7. *The Organization shall use integrated pest management and silviculture systems which avoid, or aim at eliminating, the use of chemical pesticides. The Organization shall not use any chemical pesticides prohibited by FSC policy. When pesticides are used, The Organization shall prevent, mitigate, and/or repair damage to environmental values and human health.*

- Document pesticide applications and use Integrated Pest Management to avoid or minimize the frequency, extent, and amount of pesticide applications.
- Demonstrate that pesticide selection and application methods are the most effective, practical and cost-effective approaches for pest control and that compared to other pesticide options, they will result in the least risk to humans and environmental values (NOTE: Chemical pesticides require formal environmental and social risk assessments).
- Comply with pesticide labels, Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and environmental and social risk assessments when using pesticides.
- Prevent damage to environmental values and human health, and mitigate or repair any damage that does occur.

10.8. *The Organization shall minimize, monitor and strictly control the use of biological control agents in accordance with internationally accepted scientific protocols. When biological control agents are used, The Organization shall prevent, mitigate, and/or repair damage to environmental values.*

- Minimize, monitor, and control the use of biological control agents and when used, document use, comply with internationally accepted protocols, protect environmental values, mitigate or repair any environmental damage that does occur, and demonstrate that they are non-invasive and that using the bio-control agents will result in greater ecological benefits than not using them.

10.9. *The Organization shall assess risks and implement activities that reduce potential negative impacts from Natural Hazards proportionate to scale, intensity, and risk.*

- Assess potential impacts of natural hazards on infrastructure, forest resources and communities and implement or adapt management activities to mitigate these impacts, while maintaining natural disturbances where feasible.
- Implement management activities to increase the resilience of ecosystems to catastrophic natural disturbances.

10.10. *The Organization shall manage infrastructural development, transport activities and silviculture so that water resources and soils are protected, and disturbance of and damage to rare and threatened species, habitats, ecosystems and landscape values are prevented, mitigated and/or repaired.*

- Design, construct and maintain infrastructure and transportation systems to reduce and minimize impacts on environmental values, including adverse cumulative effects and other certain key considerations.
- Avoid stream, wetland, and waterbody crossings when possible, and minimize aquatic impacts when they are unavoidable.
- Prevent damage to environmental values, mitigate and repair any damage that does occur, and modify management activities to prevent further damage.

*10.11. The Organization shall manage activities associated with harvesting and extraction of timber and non-timber forest products so that environmental values are conserved, merchantable waste is reduced, and damage to other products and services is avoided.*

- Prepare and follow written plans for harvesting and other site-disturbing activities that include maps and describe the activity, its relationship to management objectives, intended outcomes, and measures to protect and/or enhance environmental and social values including human health.
- Optimize the use of, and minimize the loss and/or waste of, harvested forest products.
- Select and implement management activities in a manner that protects environmental values, including certain key considerations.

*10.12. The Organization shall dispose of waste materials in an environmentally appropriate manner.*

- Collect, clean up, transport, and dispose of waste materials in an environmentally appropriate way.
- Ensure equipment for hazardous spill response is available
- Store hazardous materials in leak-proof containers, in designated storage areas, outside of riparian management zones, away from other ecologically sensitive areas, and in compliance with applicable guidance and laws.