NEW JERSEY AUDUBON SOCIETY
www.njaudubon.org

Appendix 1 - Forest Certification Explained

Introduction to Forest Stewardship Council Certification

What is Forestry?

The European practice of forestry was introduced in the United States over one hundred years ago in an effort to offer an alternative to the destructive logging that swept across North America from the time of European settlement through the industrial revolution. The forestry profession in Europe developed during a time of timber scarcity and evolved with a strong land ethic, an element lacking in the developing industrial culture in the United States. Forestry in the United States was first practiced on large properties often owned by the nation's most wealthy families.

In layman's terms, sustainable forestry is simply periodically harvesting forest growth while maintaining the productivity of the land, maintaining biodiversity, and improving the quality of products grown in the forest.

What is Forest Certification?

Late in the 1980s, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) movement was initiated as a result of European consumers boycotting the use of imported tropical hardwoods in light of concerns about tropical deforestation. The boycott was intended to reduce the demand for tropical hardwoods harvested in an exploitive way. However, the boycott had a negative effect on the enterprises harvesting timber through responsible forest management. Members of European environmental organizations and forest industries met to discuss the standards of practice for harvesting tropical hardwoods in an effort to distinguish environmentally-benign management and harvest techniques from those that were destructive. In 1993, in Switzerland, the World Wide Fund for Nature, now the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), along with other conservation organizations, helped to form the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) with its mission of developing a set of Principles and Criteria to apply to the management of forestland throughout the world. FSC was also charged with developing a process for an independent third party to evaluate these Principles and Criteria.

FSC certification provides a guarantee to the consumer that the forestland owner is managing their lands in a way that protects a range of values including water quality, biological diversity, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, nutrient cycling, and forest regeneration. FSC

certification also provides a guarantee to the consumer that the wood they are purchasing comes from well managed forests.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international body that enables Certification Bodies (CB's), to provide third-party certification and auditing services on a global scale in order to guarantee the authenticity of well-managed forests. More information regarding when and how to contact CB's may be found in *Section 2.0 – FSC Certification Body Contact Information.* The goal of the FSC is to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

The ten FSC Principles of Forest Stewardship are summarized below, a full version is available from the FSC via the web at http://www.fsc.org/1093.html. Criteria subtend each Principle and provide direction for its implementation. The ten Principles address the following:

- Compliance with laws;
- The legal right to own and produce timber;
- Recognition and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples;
- Economic and social well-being of local communities;
- Conservation of the forest's economic resources;
- Protection of biological biodiversity;
- A written management plan;
- Regular monitoring;
- Conservation of primary forests and well-developed secondary forests;
- Management of plantations to alleviate pressures on natural forests.

The Group Entity

Qualifying forestland owners have two choices to obtain FSC certification. They may work directly with CB's or if the land owner fits the criteria they may pursue certification through a Group Entity. The Group Entity is an independently managed group, not publically traded, with a documented strategy that includes helping member landowners achieve their objectives for healthy forests and clean water with economically beneficial, environmentally appropriate and socially considerate forest management practices. The Group Entity must contract with an accredited Certification Body to conduct periodic, third party certification audits. More specifics regarding Group Entities may be found within the FSC Family Forest Operations Manual in Section 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities. New Jersey Audubon (NJA) is a registered Group Entity who maintains their accreditation to supply FSC Certification through the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program.

Become FSC Certified Through New Jersey Audubon
Forestland owners interested in becoming a FSC certified cooperative under NJA's Group Certificate should first contact one of our foresters based out of our Wattles Stewardship Center in Port Murray, New Jersey. Our forester's, also referred to as NJA's Group Managers, will request you to fill out an Enrollment Form during which time you will have an opportunity to simply state goals for your forestland(s). A Group Manager, will meet with you at your property. The Group Manager will discuss the specific requirements of obtaining FSC certified status through NJA.

Having a forest management plan written for your property and having it implemented with the aid of a professional forester will help you attain your goals for your forest. A forester can administer your timber sales by marking the trees that should be removed in order to leave room for healthier trees instead of letting the logger select trees to be cut (the logger may be unaware of or unsympathetic towards your forest management goals). Employing the services of a professional forester will also help you attain the economic goals that you have for your forest by harvesting trees which are economically mature or are inhibiting the growth of more valuable trees. A forester can also assist you with enrolling in your state's preferential forest tax law program. Some landowners seek FSC certification as proof that they are practicing the highest standards of forestry. Other landowners seek FSC certification because they are not practicing forestry on their lands and seek assurance that an effort to manage their lands will provide a result that meets their goals and objectives. As part of the forest management plan, field data for an inventory of the forest will be collected. This inventory will be used to prepare a plan, which will provide direction for forest management activities for ten to fifteen years. For each stand of trees, there will be a description of the conditions, a recommended cutting system, also called a silvicultural system, and a timetable of work.

Before landowners decide to pursue FSC certification they should take time to consider some of the new rules and responsibilities they will assume as a Group Member in NJA's Group Certificate. Below landowners will find an explanation of services provided by NJA as well as expectations they can expect as a newly certified woodland owner.

NJA, as a Group Manager, will assume the below responsibilities:

- Ensure their internal management system is adequately staffed, funded and human and technical capabilities are capable of supporting all Group Members within the certificate. As the Group Membership increases NJA is prepared to add support personnel and allocate additional resources to continue responsible management of Group Member certification.
- To date NJA's Group Certificate includes roughly 13,000 acres and three members. Under the current management system, given human and technical capabilities, NJA can support up to 50 members or approximately 75,000 acres. It is believed that beyond

that threshold the organization will need to add staff that will dedicate their time to specific regions of the state.

- Apply for group certification and pay for the initial audit at the time of contract signing with the certification body.
- Act as a contact point for the certification process.
- Keep the group members informed of their responsibilities during the process.
- Make sure that FSC requirements are being met by each member, including periodic monitoring of sites (usually at least once annually).
- Maintain records of the certification audit, group members, and related reports.
- NJA provides forum for Group Members to express grievances and/or concerns. Prior to completion of the management plan NJA sends a draft version of the plan to the potential Group Member for review. At this time the Group Member can evaluate the management activities proposed over the course of the next ten to fifteen years. Group Members comments, concerns and complaints will be addressed prior to finalization of plan. Upon receiving certified status the Group Member will have access via email and phone to the Group Manager. The Group Manager will ask each new Group Member to contact him/her if any issues or complaints arise. The Group Manager will attempt to resolve complaints internally and maintain a digital folder containing correspondences and summaries of complaint oriented conversations. The Group Member also has contact information for NJA's certification body if they believe the complaint has not been adequately resolved internally.

As a FSC certified land owner, NJA must ensure all Group Members are responsible for the following:

- Manage their forests according to FSC standards.
- Pay a portion of the annual recertification expenses each year. The annual cost will vary depending on the size and number of group members each year, but will not exceed $1,500 the first year. Annual recertification expenses include auditor fees and costs associated with compliance monitoring.
- Agree to the group rules.

Participation as a Group Member is voluntary and a Group Member can opt to leave the Group Certificate at any time. Group Members who wish to remain FSC certified must voluntarily agree to the following rules:

- Group members are responsible for managing their forests in accordance with FSC standards. This includes developing, implementing, and maintaining their forest management plans, harvesting, managing timber sales, marketing of products, etc.

- Group members will need to periodically provide documents and information used in connection with the group certification auditing process (e.g. copies of forest management plans, copies of permits authorizing management activities, etc.). When requested, documentation should be submitted in a timely manner so as not to delay the group certification process.
- In the event that a group member is found to have a major non-conformance with FSC standards during the initial assessment (which is a pre-condition to certification in the auditing process), that member will be given a corrective action request that identifies the non-conformance and a timeline for correcting that issue prior to the initial audit. If the member does not take the steps necessary to correct that issue, they will be removed from the group prior to the initial certification audit.
- In the event that a group member is found to have either a minor or a major non-conformance during the annual audits, the certification body (Smart Wood auditors) will issue a corrective action request that identifies the non-conformance and a timeline for correcting that issue. If the member does not take the steps necessary to correct that issue, they will be removed from the group at the expiration of said timeline.
- Group members may be added or removed at the discretion of the Group Entity Manager, with no prior notification.
- Group Members agree to make publicly available a summary of the primary elements of their forest management plan per Criterion 7.1. The owner or manager of a private forest may withhold proprietary information such as timber volumes by size and age class, marketing strategies, and other financial information, however, is required to share information from the plan that informs stakeholders of management activities and implementation of the Principles, Criteria and Indicators found in this Standard. A private Group Member is not required to disclose their name or exact location of property. More information pertaining to confidentiality of information is available within Criterion 8.5 of the FSC standards given to you by NJA. The following are elements of the management plan which will be publically disclosed:

  1. Management objectives.
  2. Description of the forest resources to be managed, environmental limitations, land use and ownership status, socio-economic conditions, and a profile of adjacent lands.
  3. Description of silvicultural and/or other management system, based on the ecology of the forest in question and information gathered through resource inventories.
  4. Rationale for rate of annual harvest and species selection.
  5. Provisions for monitoring of forest growth and dynamics.
  6. Environmental safeguards based on environmental assessments.
  7. Plans for the identification and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species.

8. Maps describing the forest resource base.
9. Description and justification of harvesting techniques and equipment to be used.

NJAS Group Limitation of Liabilities & Indemnification:

The Group Entity and each Group Member agree to indemnify and hold harmless any Group Member, or its subsidiaries and its employees, including the Group Entity, or its subsidiaries and its employees, for any financial losses, claims, property damage, personal injuries and expenses, including attorney fees, made against or incurred by Third Parties arising out of activities performed by a Group Member, it's employees or its subcontractors hereunder, or Group Entity, it's employees, or its subcontractors hereunder, or arising out of any act or omission of a Group Member, it's employees or subcontractors, or the Group Entity, it's employees or subcontractors, or arising out of any product liability.

FSC Certification Commitment Term

The term of commitment for certification is determined by the landowner. For some it may be the duration of their ownership, for others they may desire to see certification continued with the next generation, and still others may desire to attempt to sell their property with the evidence that it meets FSC certification standards. Individual landowners who are certified by a Group Entity may leave at will. NJA shall notify RA of significant changes in ownership and/or significant changes in management planning within 90 days of such change. While landowners are encouraged to certify all their holdings it is not a requirement. Partially certified FMU's must document, in brief, reasons for seeking partial certification.

Benefits of FSC Certification for the Landowner

Two general benefits of FSC certification are often seen. First is that participation in the program will hold forest management activities on the property to a high standard; this will have an impact on how forestry is practiced on other private woodlands by setting a good example. On private Family Forests, the amount of wood available for harvest is increasing and these lands will become more important to our nation's wood basket. This increased pressure can be used in two ways; as an economic driving force to allow good forestry to be realized or as a shortsighted opportunity to harvest timber in ways that leaves only low-quality trees in the forest. Forest owners can choose to pursue certified forestry and make a commitment to be part of an on-the-ground movement to advance high quality forestry. A second benefit is that the forest products from certified lands may displace some non-FSC-certified wood from the marketplace. A consumer demand for FSC-certified wood products in a finite market place will put pressure on owners of non-FSC-certified lands to get certified and practice better forest management.