



# FSC® STANDARD FOR SMALL SCALE, LOW INTENSITY + COMMUNITY FORESTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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# 1. GENERAL

## Why are you launching a new standard?

### **Integrity with FSC System**

There was a need to develop a standard that reflect a newer version of the FSC Principle and Criteria (v-5) and the International Generic Indicators (IGI V-2) to ensure the highest level of integrity across the broader FSC system.

### **Alignment with the National Forest Stewardship Standard for Canada 2018 (NFSS)**

In 2019, FSC Canada published a new standard applicable to large scale and normal to higher intensity forests. At the time, a conscious decision was made *not* to include specific requirements for small scale and low intensity forests, but to leave the adaptation for a later time. Five years later, we are proud to say that we have succeeded at adapting the NFSS with specific standard requirements that are applicable and workable in the context of small scale, low-intensity forests (SLIMF) and Community forests.

### **Consistency across Canada**

The new Standard for Small-Scale, Low Intensity and Community Forests was developed to replace the three existing standards (Maritimes SLIMF Standard, BC Small Operators Standard, Great Lake St-Lawrence SLIMF Standard) currently applicable to small scale and low intensity forests. Having one standard instead of three will also ensure a level playing field among Canadian producers, whether they are located in Western, Central or Eastern Canada

### **Recognition of Community Forests**

This new standard aims to recognize Community Forests and encourage FSC certification among this very unique forest management model, which was not the case in previous standards.

## How does it differ from the old standard(s)?

The new standard is based on the most recent version of the FSC Principle and Criteria (v-5) and a newer version of the International Generic Indicators, reflecting the highest level of international expertise of our FSC network.

More specifically, it will help address our forest's most pressing issues, including the **rights of Indigenous Peoples; workers' rights including gender equality** and the need for a strong **conservation area network**.

To review the full summary of changes for the new SLIMF+C Forests Standard please click [here](#).

## Who can be certified under this new standard?

This Standard only applies to a specific size and types of forests in Canada identified as:

- **Small-scale forests:** Forests that are less than or equal to 1,000 ha in size.
- **Low intensity forests:** Forests\* with a harvesting rate of less than 20% of the mean annual growth in timber, **and** either an annual harvest or an annual average harvest of less than 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> (averaged over the 5-year certificate lifetime).
- **Community Forests:** Any forest managed by a local administration or government, community group, First Nation or community-held corporation for the benefit of the entire community, in which profits are cycled back into the community

## 2. DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

### Who was involved in developing the new SLIMF+Community Forest standard?

FSC Canada convened an eight-member Standards Development Group (SDG) who provided strategic and technical direction for this new Standard. The group was comprised of two members from each stakeholder group or chamber (Indigenous, Social, Environmental and Economic) with consideration for regional representation, gender balance and diversity of experience.

### How did you develop the new standard?

The SDG first assessed each indicator of the NFSS in the context of small producers, low intensity and community forests. If the indicator was suitable, it was kept as is or slightly modified, and incorporated into the new SLIMF+Community Forest Standard. In cases where the NFSS indicator was not suitable, the SDG went back to the IGI and chose one of the following four options:

1. **Adopt:** The SDG could copy an International Generic Indicator into the new Standard.
2. **Adapt:** The SDG could revise an International Generic Indicator in order to address terminology, scope or effectiveness in measuring conformance to a Criterion\*.
3. **Drop:** The SDG could omit an International Generic Indicator where it is determined to be inapplicable or otherwise non-contributing in measuring conformance to a Criterion.
4. **Add:** The SDG could suggest additional Indicators\* in order to better establish conformance to a Criterion\* as appropriate in a Canadian context.

Two draft versions of the Standard were submitted for public consultation and comment. Another draft was also submitted for targeted consultation and discussion. In addition, a testing program evaluated the auditability and ease of implementation of the third Draft of the Standard, as well as several key topics and Indicators.

The final draft Standard was submitted to the FSC Canada Board of Directors, who endorsed the submission of the Standard to FSC's Policy and Standards Committee for final approval.

### 3. TRANSITION – TIMELINE & RULES

#### What does this mean for existing certificate holders?

The standard will become effective on January 1, 2024. From that date, certificate holders will have one year to transition to the new standard (by December 31, 2024).

Within the transition period, certificate holders can choose to be evaluated to their current forest management regional standards or the new Standard for Small-Scale, Low Intensity and Community Forests. However, **all certificate holders must be evaluated against the new Standard within that 12-month transition period** (see questions below for further clarification)

At the end of the transition period on December 31, 2024, all FSC Forest Management Certificate Holders will have been audited at least once against the new standard and all audits after that date must be carried out to the new standard.

FSC Canada will support certificate holders and certification bodies with the transition and implementation of the revised standard. A series of webinars and other support documents will be released in the coming months to help prepare for the transition.

# IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

**NEW STANDARD LAUNCH**

**September 26, 2023**

**The Standard is finalized and published.**

**EFFECTIVE DATE AND START OF TRANSITION PERIOD**

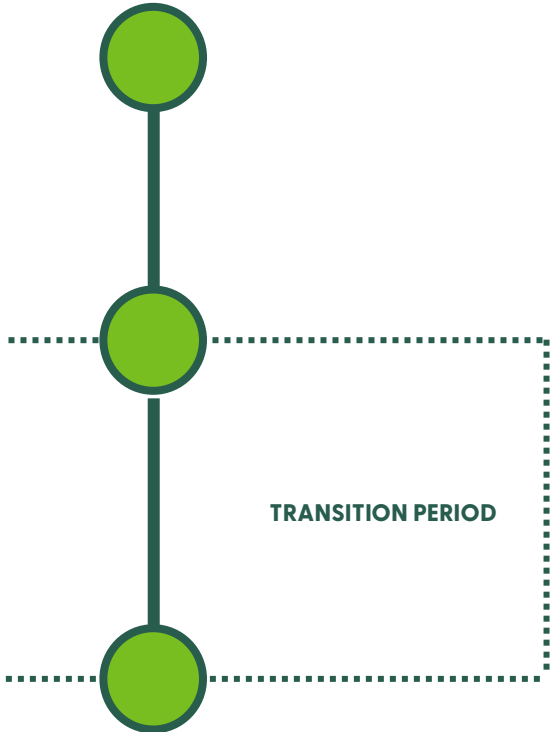
**January 1, 2024**

**FSC Forest Management Certificate Holders have 12 months to implement and be audited against the new Standard.**

**END OF TRANSITION PERIOD**

**December 31, 2024**

**After this date, all FSC Forest Management Certificate Holders have been audited at least once against the new Standard and all audits must be carried out to the new Standard.**



## If the certificate holder chooses to be evaluated under the current regional Standard after the effective date, what will happen?

If a certificate holder chooses to be evaluated against the applicable regional standard for an evaluation schedule after January 1, 2024, a **second evaluation** to the new Standard will be required before the end of the transition period, so within the same calendar year.

## If the certificate holder is scheduled for a reregistration audit during the transition period, what options does he have?

The certificate holder who is due to have a full re-registration audit during the transition period has two options:

1. Have its reregistration audit conducted against the new Standard
2. Have its reregistration audit conducted against the applicable regional standard early in the transition period, and have a surveillance audit against the new Standard later on in the transition period. That scenario means that two audits will be conducted during the transition period.

## If the certificate holder is scheduled for a surveillance audit during the transition period, what needs to be audited?

The certificate holder (CH) needs to be audited to all aspects of the new standard within the surveillance cycle (a surveillance cycle is 5 years). Depending to what year of the cycle the certificate is, two scenarios may be possible:

1. For a certificate holder who has three or more surveillance audits left in the cycle, the CH will need to meet all the requirements of new standard, divided between the remaining years of his cycle. To this, the annual mandatory requirements (according INT\_STD-20-007\_49) will need to be also evaluated.
2. For a certificate holder that has one or two surveillance audits left in the cycle, it may be difficult to monitor all of the requirements in the remaining period. The certification bodies shall make a best attempt to cover the criteria in the remaining period of validity of the certificate. If this is not feasible, a risk-based approach shall be taken focusing on the most relevant issues in the management unit. The approach taken shall be justified in the certification report. To this, the annual mandatory requirements according INT\_STD-20-007\_49) will need to be also evaluated.



**What are the mandatory Criteria and/or Indicators that will need to be audited at each surveillance audit? Is that concept still applicable? Is the list in FSC-STD-20-007 (V3-0) (clause 6.3.8) still applicable?**

The interpretation INT-STD-20-007\_49, published on June 15, 2018, stipulates:

For the following types of operations, the certification body shall at minimum evaluate at each surveillance all indicators of the following sets of criteria from the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard (according to FSC Principles and Criteria V5-2) in addition to the elements as defined in Clause 6.3.7:

- a) Plantations larger than 10 000 ha:  
Criteria 1.6; 2.3; 4.4; 4.5; 7.6; 10.2; 10.3; 10.6; 10.7 and 10.12.
- b) All non-plantation forest types larger than 50,000 hectares, unless the whole area meets the requirements for classification as a “low intensity managed forest” (see FSC-STD- 01-003 SLIMF eligibility criteria)  
Criteria 1.4; 1.6; 2.3; 3.2; 3.4; 4.4; 4.5; 5.2; 6.4; 6.6; 7.6; 8.2 and 9.4.
- c) FMUs containing high conservation value attributes, unless the whole area meets the requirements for classification as a “small forest” (see FSC-STD-01-003 SLIMF eligibility criteria)  
Criteria 6.4; 6.6; 9.4 and 10.3



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