



# **SMALL-SCALE, LOW-INTENSITY MANAGED + COMMUNITY FORESTS**

## **STANDARD GUIDEBOOK**

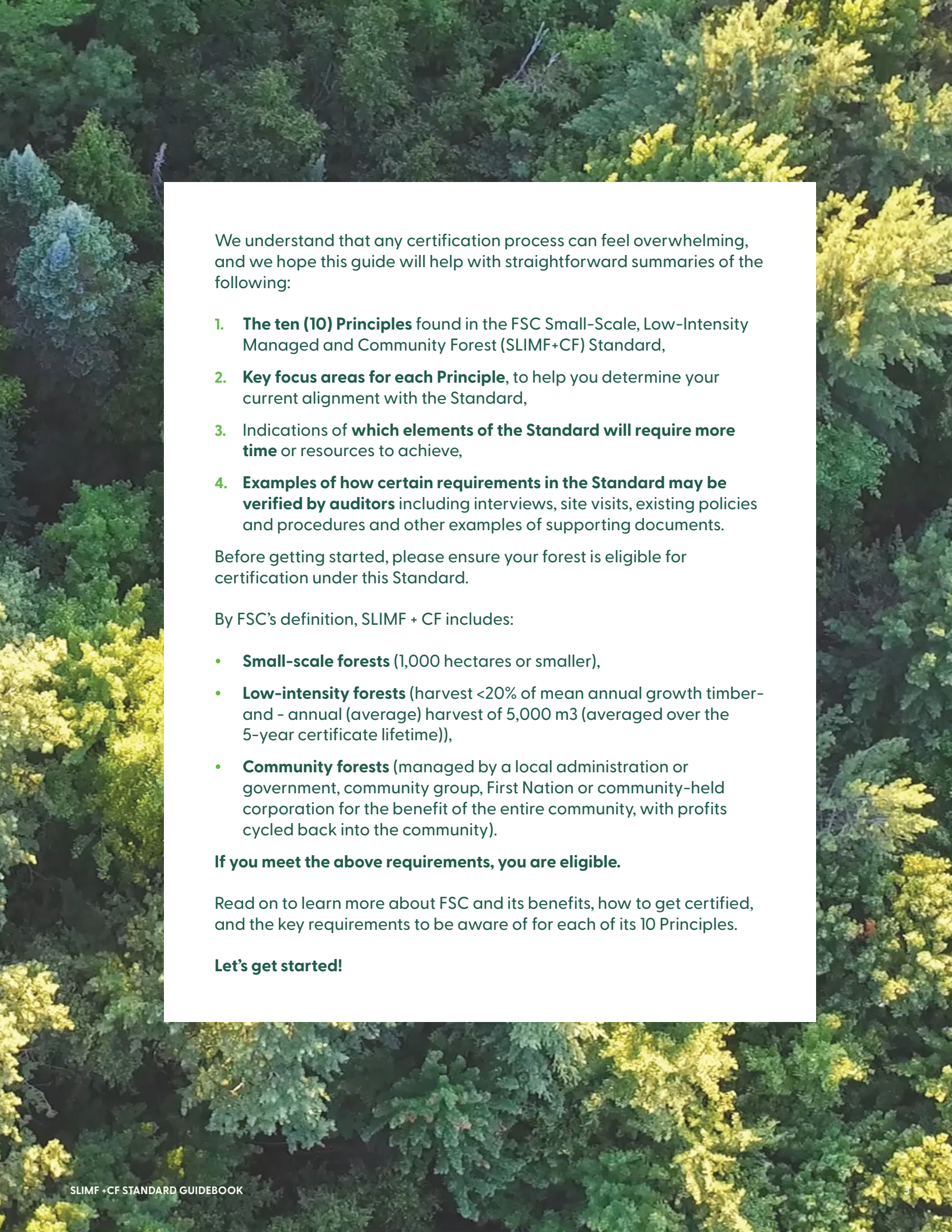
Photo: Quinte Conservation, Glen Prevost



# **WELCOME SMALLHOLDERS & COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGERS!**

The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) Canada developed this Guidebook to help Canadian smallholders and community forests, like you, gain a better understanding of FSC certification and its benefits.

FSC Canada would like to thank the Eastern Ontario Model Forest for their support in the development of this Guidebook.



We understand that any certification process can feel overwhelming, and we hope this guide will help with straightforward summaries of the following:

1. **The ten (10) Principles** found in the FSC Small-Scale, Low-Intensity Managed and Community Forest (SLIMF+CF) Standard,
2. **Key focus areas for each Principle**, to help you determine your current alignment with the Standard,
3. Indications of **which elements of the Standard will require more time** or resources to achieve,
4. **Examples of how certain requirements in the Standard may be verified by auditors** including interviews, site visits, existing policies and procedures and other examples of supporting documents.

Before getting started, please ensure your forest is eligible for certification under this Standard.

By FSC's definition, SLIMF + CF includes:

- **Small-scale forests** (1,000 hectares or smaller),
- **Low-intensity forests** (harvest <20% of mean annual growth timber- and - annual (average) harvest of 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> (averaged over the 5-year certificate lifetime)),
- **Community forests** (managed by a local administration or government, community group, First Nation or community-held corporation for the benefit of the entire community, with profits cycled back into the community).

**If you meet the above requirements, you are eligible.**

Read on to learn more about FSC and its benefits, how to get certified, and the key requirements to be aware of for each of its 10 Principles.

**Let's get started!**

# Small-Scale, Low-Intensity Managed + Community Forests Standard Guidebook

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## THE SLIMF+CF STANDARD

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# What is FSC?

The Forest Stewardship Council Canada, or FSC Canada is a small, non-profit membership organization that certifies over 45 million hectares of forests across Canada.

For 30 years, FSC's forest management Standards have been linked to robust chain of custody requirements - from forest to manufacturer and finally, to the consumer. It is an effective way to indicate to consumers that the product they are buying comes from sustainably managed forests. FSC's 10 Principles for responsible forest

management were developed with support from experts in environmental, economic, and social spheres and ensure that certified forests are being managed in a way that preserves biological diversity, upholds Indigenous Peoples' rights, benefits the lives of local people and workers, and is economically viable.







Photo: Northumberland, Laura Wunderlich



**06**

**Environmental  
Values And  
Impacts**



**07**

**Management  
Planning**



**08**

**Monitoring  
And  
Assessment**



**09**

**High  
Conservation  
Values**



**10**

**Implementation  
Of Management  
Activities**



# Introduction



# Small-Scale, Low-Intensity Managed and Community Forests Standard (SLIMF+CF)

FSC Canada's Small-Scale, Low-Intensity Managed & Community Forests (SLIMF+CF) Standard is a modified version of the National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) that accommodates the **unique needs of smallholders and community forests with fewer requirements and complexities** than the NFSS.

## BENEFITS OF FSC CERTIFICATION FOR SMALLHOLDERS AND COMMUNITY FORESTS

Community and small-scale, low-intensity commercial forests have the opportunity to be leaders in sustainable forest management in Canada. There are also many stakeholders, Indigenous people and communities who have a keen interest in the well-being of these forests.

The many benefits of FSC certification include:

- **Sustainable Forest Management**  
The certification process encourages sustainable forest management practices including biodiversity protection, conserving water resources, and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- **Less Burden, More Benefits**  
By simplifying requirements, FSC makes it easier for small, low-intensity managed forests and community forests to achieve FSC certification. This will reduce costs and administrative complexities, allowing these groups to focus on sustainable practices and community development.
- **Credibility and Trust**  
FSC is one of the world's most recognized and respected forest certification systems, which can enhance credibility and build trust with customers, investors, and other stakeholders.
- **Environmental Conservation**  
By achieving FSC certification, smallholders and community forests contribute to global efforts to conserve forests and protect natural habitats, which plays a key role in combating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and sustaining ecosystem services.
- **Social Benefits**  
By becoming FSC certified, smallholders and community forests demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and ethical practices, including fair treatment for workers, gender equality, respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- **Market Access and Premiums**  
FSC certification promotes a growing market for sustainably-sourced forest products by providing a competitive advantage and potentially commanding premium prices for FSC-certified wood products.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR SLIMF+CF CERTIFICATION IN CANADA?

- **Small-scale forests** (1,000 hectares or smaller),
- **Low-intensity forests** (harvest <20% of mean annual growth timber - and - annual (average) harvest of 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> (averaged over the 5-year certificate lifetime)),
- **Community forests** (managed by a local administration or government, community group, First Nation or community-held corporation for the benefit of the entire community, with profits cycled back into the community).



Photo: Xaayda Gwaay.yaay Haida Gwaii, Jessica Fairweather



# Getting Certified

## HERE ARE THE FIVE (5) STEPS TO FSC CERTIFICATION.

### 1. **Contact a certification body**

Contact one or more third-party Certification Bodies (CB) to receive an estimate for the cost and timeline of certification, and for more information on the audit process and requirements for FSC certification. You will find more information on FSC Canada's website at [ca.fsc.org](https://ca.fsc.org) > Get Certified > Certifications Bodies.

### 2. **Application and agreement**

Choose a certification body, fill out an application form (provided by your CB), and sign an agreement with your chosen CB.

### 3. **Complete audit preparation & an on-site audit**

This Guidebook is the first step towards becoming audit-ready. It is not a replacement for the full SLIMF+CF Standard which you can find on FSC Canada's website. For more resources to help you get fully audit-ready, please visit FSC Canada's website at [ca.fsc.org](https://ca.fsc.org) > Get Certified > Smallholder & Community Forests.

Your chosen CB will then complete an on-site audit to assess your company's qualifications for certification.

### 4. **Certification approval**

The data collected during the audit will be captured in an audit report. The CB will make a certification decision based on the evidence reviewed during the audit. If the initial certification audit does not identify any major non-conformances, then you will receive an FSC certificate. If there are any major non-conformances, then you will have to implement actions to address the finding(s) before achieving certification. Any minor non-conformances issued by the CB can be addressed after achieving certification.

### 5. **Annual audit and re-certification cycle**

The certification body will conduct annual surveillance audits of select Principles to verify your continued compliance with FSC certification requirements. Your FSC certificate will be valid for five (5) years - after which point, you may apply for recertification, and a full certification audit will be completed once again. Recertification will be significantly less resource intensive, as you will have already been in compliance with FSC requirements.

## UNDERSTANDING AUDIT RESULTS

### What Do Observations and Non-Conformities Mean?

After your FSC audit, your Certification Body (CB) will provide a report that may include different types of findings.

Understanding the difference between **observations**, **minor non-conformances**, and **major non-conformances** can help you focus your efforts and stay on track for certification.

#### Observation

An observation is not a non-conformance. It's a heads-up from your auditor. It might identify something that could become a problem down the road if not addressed. Think of it as a suggestion for improvement.

#### Minor Non-conformance

A minor non-conformance means there's a **small gap** between your current practices and an FSC requirement. When non-conformances are identified during an audit, you have the chance to resolve them through corrective actions. Minor non-conformities must be corrected within one year - before your next annual audit. Failure to address minor non-conformances may result in being upgraded to a major non-conformance. Examples might include incomplete documentation or a missing training record.

#### Major Non-conformance

A major non-conformance is a **fundamental breakdown** with a significant part of an organization's management system or where the objectives of an FSC Criterion are **not** met.

During the initial or re-assessment audit, a certificate will be issued or renewed after the CB has decided that there are no major non-conformances.

If a major non-conformity is identified during a surveillance audit, it **must** be corrected within three (3) months to prevent the suspension of a certificate.

Photo: Xaayda Gwaay, yaay Haída Gwaii, Jessica Fairweather



# About Group Certification

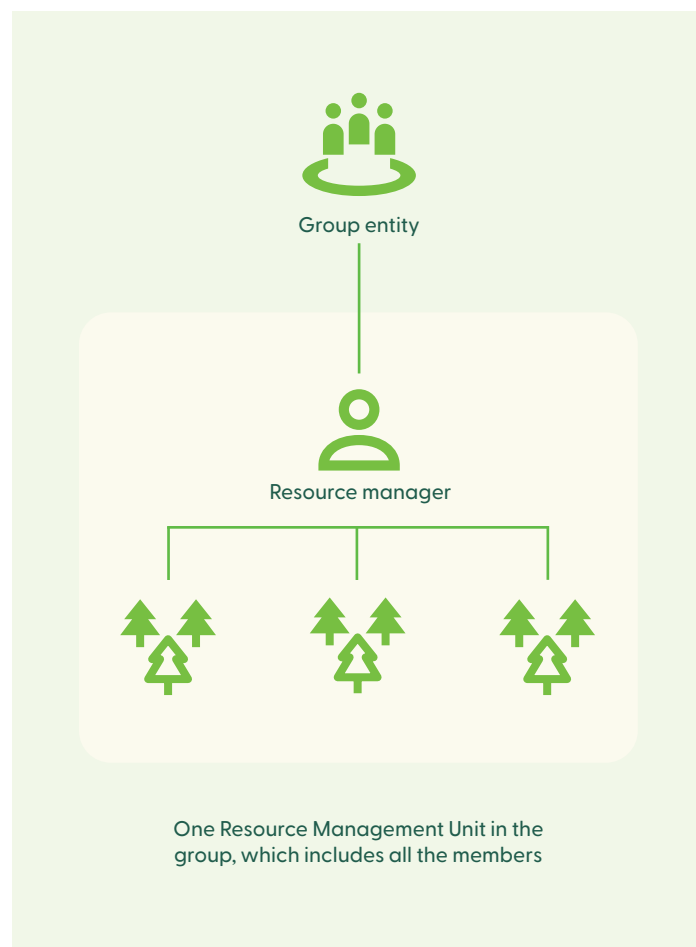
FSC group certification allows multiple forest operations to be certified under a single FSC certificate.

Group certification can help **lower costs** and **simplify the certification process** for your forest by allowing multiple forestry operations to apply together as a Forest Management Group.

In addition to **reducing individual costs**, group certification may **improve access to markets** and **help secure better prices for forest products**. Groups can include a mix of SLIMF+CF and larger operations. In a mixed structure, smaller operators may benefit from the infrastructure and expertise of larger enterprises.

Under a group certificate, responsibilities are shared among members to make certification more manageable. A Group Entity often appoints a Group or Resource Manager to take charge of ensuring compliance with FSC Standards, and providing guidance and support to members. The Group Entity may be an individual or an organization registered as a legal entity, responsible for internal organization and maintaining conformance with the Standard. **While the group holds a single certificate, each member retains full autonomy over their own forest.**

Some larger groups may have more complex group structures. Please reach out to FSC Canada ([info@ca.fsc.org](mailto:info@ca.fsc.org)) for further information if this situation applies to you.







## IS GROUP CERTIFICATION RIGHT FOR YOU?

Group certification might be a good fit for your forest operation if:


- Certification costs are too high for you to pursue it independently,
- You struggle to meet certain FSC requirements on your own,
- You lack the time, resources, or expertise to manage certification independently.

You could benefit from joining a group for peer-to-peer, professional or general support on activities related to forest management or market development e.g. sharing contractors, pursuing better rates for large contracts, etc.

Here are some examples:

Criterion 6.5 requires setting aside 10% of total harvest areas for a Conservation Areas Network (CAN), which must consist of native ecosystems. If your forest management unit (FMU) doesn't have enough native ecosystems to meet this threshold, other FMUs in your group can contribute a higher percentage on your behalf.

Criterion 2.3 requires a health and safety risk assessment and checklist. Instead of each member developing their own, a Group Entity could assign one member to create a Standardized template for everyone, reducing the workload and ensuring compliance across the group. By pooling resources, expertise, and compliance efforts, group certification can make FSC certification more achievable and sustainable for your operation.



“For our group, we lower costs and time by over 50% versus certifying alone. These are just the monetary and time benefits and does not count the other benefits our group provides such as support, learning and more.”

Glen Prevost, P.Eng., R.P.F.  
Program Manager  
Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) / Ontario  
Woodlot Association (OWA)

Photo: Larose, Wolf Eye Productions



## WANT TO JOIN AN EXISTING GROUP?

If you are interested in joining an existing group, please reach out directly to any of the group managers listed below (as of April 2025):

### **Chabot, Pomerleau & Associes**

Contact: Claude Chabot

T: 819-791-8668

E: cpa@chabotpomerleauass.com

W: www.chabotpomerleauass.com

### **Corporation de gestion de la certification forestière des territ**

Contact: Normand Simard

T; 418-493-2097 x 114

E: normand.simard@groupelebel.com

### **Eastern Ontario Model Forest Group (EOMF)**

Contact: Glen Prevost

T: 705-358-7913

E: glen.prevost@ontariowoodlot.com

W: www.eomf.on.ca

### **Fédération des organismes de gestion en commun du Bas-Saint-Laur**

Contact: Serge Leclerc

T: 418-495-2054 ext.102

E: serge.leclerc@gfkam.com

### **Forêts privées certifiées du Québec**

Contact: Dominic Besner

E: dbesner@upa.qc.ca

W: www.upa.qc.ca

### **Nova Scotia Landowners & Forest Fibre Producers**

Contact: Peter Burchill

T: 902-625-3800

E: pete@nslffpa.org

### **Silv-Econ Ltd. - Resource Management Consultants**

Contact: David Puttock

T: 905-898-3085

E: silvecon@rogers.com

## STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS FOR GROUP CERTIFICATION

You don't have to do this process alone. Your group manager will often walk you through the whole certification process to ensure you understand the requirements within the SLIMF+CF Standard and the necessary verification to meet these requirements.

### **1. Declaration of Consent**

- All members joining the group must sign a Declaration of Consent, which can be documented in meeting minutes signed by all parties. The document must specify:
  - » The relationship between the Group Entity and its members,
  - » The roles of Group/Resource Managers (RMs) and Resource Management Units (RMUs) (if applicable),
- Ensure that the Group Entity and all group members meet the requirements outlined in the SLIMF+CF Standard.

### **2. Define & Assign Responsibilities**

- Clearly divide responsibilities among group members to ensure:
  - » Each member has the capacity to fulfill their assigned duties,
  - » Compliance with FSC requirements is met for each forest management unit.

“Assurance Services International (ASI) is responsible for checking certification body (CB) compliance with FSC’s rules and procedures through a combination of field and office audits. All FSC-accredited certification bodies must meet FSC accreditation requirements.”



- Document the roles, responsibilities, and obligations of:

- » Group Entity
- » Group Manager/Resource Manager
- » Group Members

### 3. Develop an Information Package

- Distribute an info package to all group members containing key details:
  - » Group Rules,
  - » The SLIMF+CF Standard and guidelines for compliance,
  - » The CB's evaluation process (provided by the CB).
  - » Audit access requirements:
    - Certification Body (CB), FSC, and Accreditation Services International (ASI) must have access to members' management units and documentation.
  - » Transparency commitments:
    - The CB will publish a public summary of its evaluation report,
    - ASI may publish a public summary of its CB assessment,
    - FSC will include the group's details in its official database,
  - » Cost Breakdown: Explanation of any fees associated with joining the group.
    - There are costs associated with the CB audits and the management of the Group Entity. Costs of certification are reduced because the CBs do not have to complete third-party audits on all group members every year. Instead, there is a sample of members chosen annually.

### 4. Maintain Records & Internal Systems

- Establish a record-keeping system to track:
  - » Group membership and signed Declarations of Consent,
  - » Internal management and training activities,
  - » Internal monitoring results, non-conformities, and corrective actions,

- » Annual harvesting volumes (actual or estimated),
- » Annual FSC-certified sales volumes for the group.

### 5. Implement Internal Monitoring & Compliance

- Develop an internal monitoring system to:
  - » Conduct regular audits of group members,
  - » Ensure compliance with FSC certification requirements,
  - » Identify and address non-conformances promptly.

### 6. Establish a Tracking & Tracing System

- Implement a chain-of-custody system for FSC-certified products to:
  - » Track material flow from harvesting to sale,
  - » Ensure FSC-certified products remain segregated from non-certified materials,
  - » Maintain compliance with FSC labeling and reporting requirements.

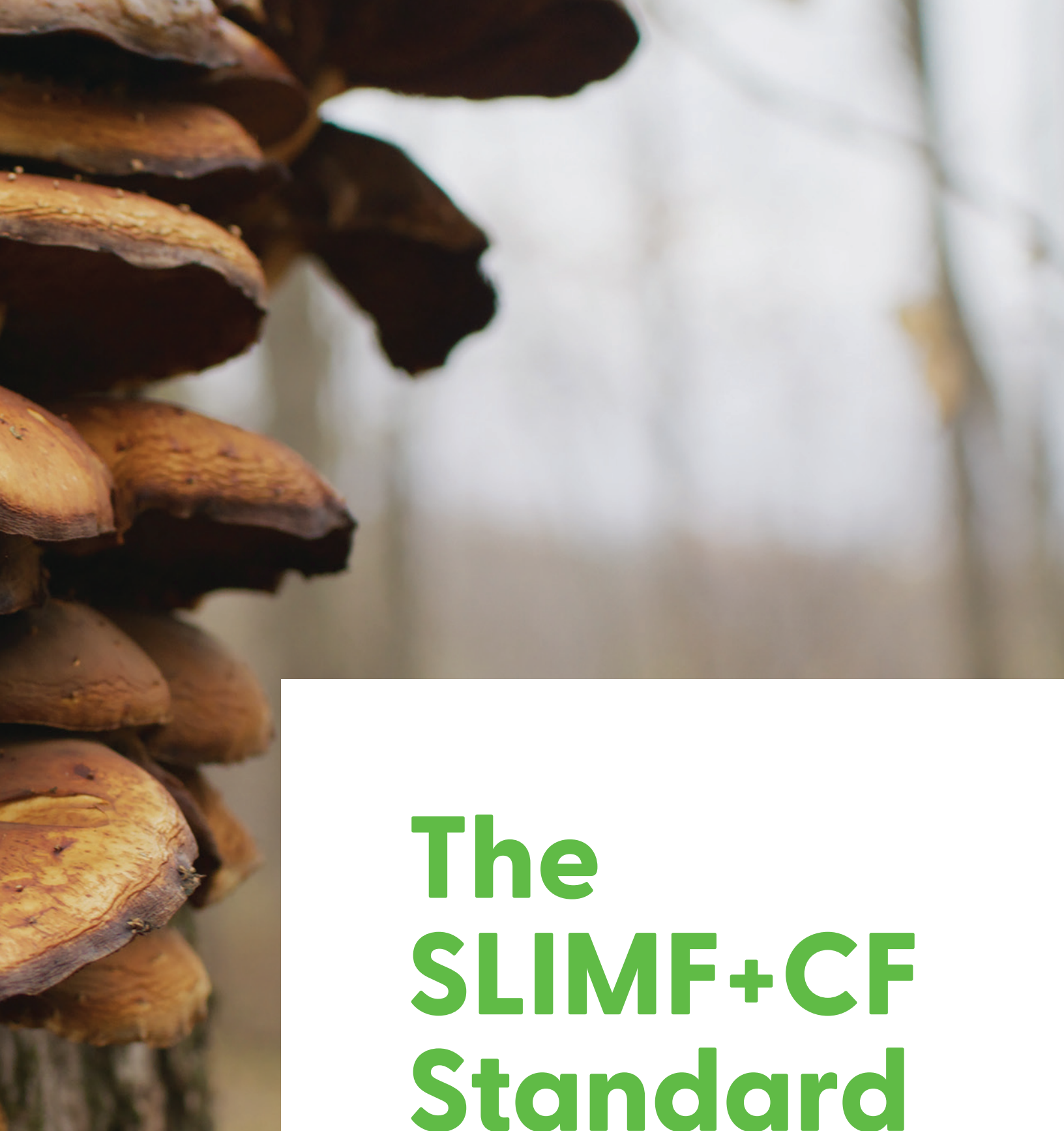


Photo: Quinte Conservation, Vivian Peachey



Photo: Larose, Wolf Eye Productions





# The **SLIMF+CF** Standard



In this section, you will find our straightforward summaries of FSC's ten (10) Core Principles and key focus areas to help you determine your current alignment with the SLIMF+CF Standard.

This Guidebook is not a replacement for the full SLIMF+CF Standard which you can find on FSC Canada's website ([ca.fsc.org](https://ca.fsc.org)).

Other useful resources to support your journey to certification can also be found on the FSC Canada website including our:

- Pesticides Policy
- Excision Policy
- Trademark Policy
- FPIC Guidance Documents
- Applicable Laws (Annex A Companion Documents)



When you see the “**ALERT DIAMOND**”, please pay attention to these Principles as they will likely need more attention, time, and resources to achieve conformance.

### What You May Need to Show

As you read through each Principle, look for call-out boxes like this! They’ll highlight the types of evidence you may need to provide during an FSC audit. Each type of evidence is marked with a symbol:



#### Documents

Management plans, policies, maps, monitoring reports, etc.



#### Interviews (Internal)

Conversations with you or your staff.



#### Interviews (External)

Feedback from stakeholders or Indigenous groups.



#### On-Site

What auditors can see on the ground. Use these call-out boxes to help you get audit-ready.

## ABOUT SCALE, INTENSITY AND RISK

The FSC's Scale, Intensity, and Risk (SIR) approach, implemented through our SLIMF+CF Standard, acknowledges that forest management activities vary in size, intensity, and the level of potential impact.

This approach allows for a more appropriate and cost-effective certification process for smaller, less intensive operations while still ensuring core FSC Principles are upheld.

Here's a more detailed explanation:

### Scale:

Refers to the size of the forest or the area under management.

### Intensity:

Describes the amount and frequency of management activities such as logging, harvesting, or reforestation taking place.

### Risk:

Represents the likelihood and severity of potential impacts of forest management practices on economic, environmental, and social values.

The SLIMF+CF Standard requirements are more relevant to the realities of smaller operations. The SIR approach helps to prioritize and manage risks proportionally to the scale and intensity of the operations.

How SIR is applied in SLIMF+CF:

- **Streamlined Certification:**  
SLIMF+CF Standard adjusts the national requirements and auditing procedures to make certification more accessible and affordable for smaller operators.
- **Proportional Requirements:**  
The level of detail and rigour in forest management practices can be adapted to the scale, intensity, and risk of each operation, ensuring compliance with FSC Principles while recognizing the resources and capacities of smaller and community forests.
- **Focus on Core Principles:**  
While SLIMF+CF reduces complexity, all certified operations must still adhere to the core Principles of the FSC, including respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples, protecting biodiversity, and maintaining the health and productivity of forests.



## PRINCIPLE 1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

Principle 1 checks that **your operations are legal and ethical** – that you are following the law, keeping your paperwork in order, managing any disputes in the right way, and showing your commitment to anti-corruption.

You'll need to prove it through **documentation, interviews, and on-site checks.**

Review the following key focus areas to determine your current alignment with Principle 1.



# Key Focus Areas

## LEGAL REGISTRATION & DOCUMENTATION

- Do you have written documentation proving your legal right to operate (e.g., tenure, ownership, or use rights)?
- Are the boundaries of your certified Management Unit(s) clearly mapped and not disputed?



### Documents

- Proof of legal status for all forest land, showing legal, long-term (or renewable) rights to manage or use forest resources,
- Documentation and maps in your management plan identifying any Treaty lands, land claims, traplines, traditional hunting or gathering areas, water licenses and permits, or community watersheds.

## COMPLIANCE WITH FOOD SAFETY REGULATIONS (IF APPLICABLE)

- If you produce consumable products that you wish to sell with the FSC claim (e.g. maple syrup), do you have evidence of compliance with food safety regulations (e.g. SOP 7.0)?

## FINANCIAL, LEGAL & TRADE COMPLIANCE

- Do you have documentation to demonstrate timely payment of required forest management fees?
- Have you taken steps to prevent illegal activity in your Management Unit? Do you have documentation of these measures or collaborations with regulatory bodies?
- Are you compliant with all laws and codes of practice relating to the transportation of trade of forest products?
- Does all your transportation and trade of products adhere to laws? Please find “Annex A” on the FSC Canada website which outlines applicable laws.



## PRINCIPLE 1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS



### Documents

- Annual financial reports, official receipts, or payment records,
- Procedures for preventing, recording and reporting illegal activities.



### Interviews (Internal)

- Conversations with staff about how illegal activities are monitored and prevented.



### Interviews (External)

- Feedback from law enforcement or other relevant agencies on enforcement measures.



### On-Site

- On-site verification of procedures to prevent illegal activities.



### Documents

- Documentation of a complaint and dispute resolution process,
- Interim measures agreements.



### Interviews (External)

- Feedback from disputants involved in a process.

## ANTI-CORRUPTION & RESPONSIBLE FORESTRY COMMITMENTS

- Do you have a policy showing your commitment not to offer or accept bribes?
- Does the policy in place meet or exceed anti-corruption laws in your area?
- For Community Forests: Is the anti-corruption policy publicly available?
- Do you have a public statement confirming your commitment to responsible forest management in line with FSC Principles, Criteria, and Standards?

## COMPLAINT AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Do you have a system for receiving complaints-related to the impact of forest management activities-from local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and stakeholders?
- Do you have a procedure for keeping records of all complaints and disputes?
- Does it show the steps taken to respond, and if yes, how and when they were resolved?



### Documents

- Documented public statement of commitment to FSC Principles, Criteria, Standards and related policies.







## PRINCIPLE 2: WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Principle 2 aims to ensure that **all workers are treated fairly** – following labour laws, ensuring safe working conditions, upholding workers' rights, and promoting gender equality.

You'll need to prove it through **policies, records, interviews, and site visits.**

A useful resource for finding applicable laws can be found on the FSC Canada website - see "Annex A Companion Document".

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 2.

# Key Focus Areas

## LABOUR LAWS & EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

- Are you aware of and following all labour laws?
- Are workers able to freely establish or join worker organizations?
- Are collective bargaining agreements with worker organizations negotiated in good faith?



### Documents

- No evidence of interference in unionization activities.



### Interviews (Internal)

- Conversations with employees about unionization or employment practices.

## GENDER EQUALITY & WORKPLACE POLICIES

- Do you have policies that reflect your commitment to gender equality (e.g. hiring practices, pay equity, parental leave)?
- Can cases of sexual harassment and discrimination be reported confidentially?

## HEALTH & SAFETY COMPLIANCE

- Are you compliant with all health and safety laws and regulations? See Applicable Laws (Annex A Companion Documents) on the FSC Canada website for a full list of applicable laws.
- Do workers always wear or use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- Do you have up-to-date records proving that all workers, including forest owners, family members, and volunteers, have received appropriate training to do their role safely?



## PRINCIPLE 2: WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

- Do you maintain records of health and safety practices, details of accidents, and any revisions made following major incidents?
- Are workers covered by the required safety insurance in your province?

### FAIR WAGES & COMPENSATION

- Do all workers receive at least the minimum legal wage or a production-based rate comparable to forestry standards?
- Do you have records demonstrating that all wages, salaries and contracts are paid on time?

### TRAINING & SUPERVISION

- Do you have up-to-date records proving that all workers, including forest owners, family members, and volunteers, have received appropriate training for their role?

### GRIEVANCES & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Do you have a system in place to receive and document past and ongoing worker complaints?
- Is there a process in place to provide fair compensation for occupational injuries or loss or damages to properties where applicable?



#### Documents

- Documented safety policy,
- Written contracts or agreements with contractors or other forest worker employers,
- Equipment and building certification and inspection records,
- Safety training records,
- Records of lost time injuries,
- Records from safety audits.



#### Interviews (Internal)

- Worker interviews about health and safety practices.



#### On-Site

- First aid and safety equipment access on the ground.







## PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS



Principle 3 focuses on recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples – including their legal and customary rights to land, resources, and decision-making.

You must demonstrate that your **forest management activities do not impact these rights and that you are engaging with Indigenous communities** with genuine effort and through a culturally appropriate approach.

For more information about culturally appropriate engagement and **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)**, you can find the FPIC Guidance Document on FSC Canada's website.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 3.

# Key Focus Areas

## UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS LEGAL AND CUSTOMARY RIGHTS

- Are you familiar with Indigenous treaty rights associated with your forest area?
- Have you identified Indigenous customary (traditional) rights and responsibilities related to your forest area?

## ENGAGEMENT AND CONSENT

- How have you engaged with Indigenous Peoples whose rights may be affected by your operations in a culturally appropriate manner?
- Have you got a process in place to obtain Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) when required?



### Documents

- Documented evidence of communication to engage and inform Indigenous Peoples of management activities that may affect their rights,
- A protocol or agreement for developing a relationship with affected Indigenous Peoples, the identified values/rights where consent is required, and how a dispute should be resolved,
- No documented evidence, including dispute logs, indicating that the rights, customs, and culture of Indigenous Peoples have been violated.



### Interviews (External)

- Conversations with Indigenous Peoples to confirm culturally appropriate engagement.





## PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS



### Documents

- Evidence of compensation being provided in line with agreements or expectations.



### Interviews (External)

- Feedback from Indigenous Peoples confirming they were informed and received agreed compensation.



### Documents

- Maps identifying any areas of cultural significance,
- Measures in the management plan to protect sites of social, cultural, ecological or spiritual importance.



### Interviews (External)

- Conversations confirming feedback from engagement were meaningfully integrated into management planning and procedures.



### On-Site

- Confirmation that workers are aware of cultural sites and are actively protecting them during operations.

## PROTECTION OF CULTURAL VALUES AND SITES

- Have you engaged with Indigenous Peoples to identify and protect sites of special cultural, ecological, economic, religious, or spiritual significance?
- Do you have measures to protect traditional knowledge and intellectual property?
- Are Indigenous Peoples compensated when traditional knowledge and intellectual property are used for commercial purposes?



Photo: Xaayda Gwaay, yaay Haida Gwaii, Jessica Fairweather





## PRINCIPLE 4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Principle 4 ensures that your forest management activities consider the communities around you.

This includes engaging local people, recognizing their rights and interests, providing opportunities for involvement, and resolving disputes in a fair and respectful manner.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 4.



# Key Focus Areas

## ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

- Have you identified the impacts of your operations on local communities, land users, and interest groups?
- How do you maintain open and transparent communication with local communities?

## POSITIVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Does your organization provide opportunities for local employment and procurement from local suppliers and services when possible?
- Do you support activities that contribute to local social and economic benefits (e.g. participating in community events)?

## DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- Do you have a process in place for receiving and resolving concerns or complaints from the community?

*Please note: The Standard references upholding customary rights of Traditional, Non-Indigenous communities. In Canada, there are no recognized customary rights established for non-Indigenous communities, at this time – therefore this currently does not apply.*



### Documents

- Evidence of communication with the community e.g. emails, dates and times of communications, parties involved etc.,
- Procurement policy,
- Complaint procedures showing timely response and resolution e.g. feedback form on a website, evidence of response.



### On-Site

- Evidence of economic opportunities for local communities and people,
- Evidence of social and community development opportunities supported,
- Evidence of ways that local input has been considered in management planning activities.

*If part of a group certificate, the group can provide some of the above requirement*



## PRINCIPLE 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST

Principle 5 ensures that your forest continues to provide long-term economic, social, and environmental benefits to you and your community.

To meet this Principle, you'll need to demonstrate that **your forest management follows sustainable harvesting practices, encourages a range of products derived from the forest, and supports local economic opportunities** - now and into the future. This can be shown through your management plan, harvest level calculations, annual monitoring reports, and interviews.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 5.

# Key Focus Areas

## DIVERSIFYING FOREST BENEFITS AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

- Have you identified all potential forest benefits – timber, non-timber forest products, and ecosystem services – that could strengthen or diversify your local economy?
- Do you attempt to use or support the capacity of local goods, services, processing and value-added facilities where possible?



### Documents

- Records or plans showing how your operations support a range of products, and benefits that contribute to local economic diversification where possible.



### Interviews (External)

- Conversations with local timber and non-timber forest product businesses about your collaboration or support for local economic initiatives.

## PROMOTIONAL CLAIMS

- Are you making any promotional claims about the ecosystem services in your forest e.g. recreation, biodiversity, carbon storage? If yes, are you familiar with FSC's ecosystem services procedure? For more information on ecosystem services, please visit [ca.fsc.org](https://ca.fsc.org).

## SUSTAINABLE TIMBER HARVEST LEVELS

- Are your timber harvest levels based on best available information – such as growth and yield projections, forest inventory data, mortality rates, and ecological functions?
- Does your harvest level allow the forest to continue providing long-term ecosystem services and functions?
- Are you keeping records of actual annual timber harvest levels?



### Documents

- Calculations or management plans showing that your harvest rates are based on relevant up-to-date data.





## PRINCIPLE 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST

### SUSTAINABLE NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCTS

- Are you managing and harvesting non-timber forest products (e.g. maple syrup, medicinal plants) at sustainable levels based on best available information?



#### Documents

- Document of best practices or best available information on sustainable levels and methods of harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Products.



#### Interviews (External)

- Conversations with forest-dependent businesses and local community members.

### MANAGING IMPACTS

- Does your management plan consider the long-term environmental and social impacts of your operations – both positive and negative?



#### Documents

- Documents supporting an analysis of the long-term environmental and social impacts.



#### Interviews (External)

- Conversations with local people about changes to forest benefits.

## NOTES



## PRINCIPLE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND IMPACTS



This Principle is about keeping ecological integrity; a healthy and functioning forest for all that live in it. It includes maintaining or restoring biodiversity, preventing damage to soils and water features, and conserving native ecosystems.

You'll need to consider how your management practices affect rare species, natural habitats, and ecosystem functions – and show that you've taken steps to avoid or minimize negative impacts.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 6.

# Key Focus Areas

## ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Have you gathered the best available information to identify environmental values (e.g. species at risk, wildlife habitat, water sources, soil conditions) both within and around your forest?
- Have you assessed the scale, intensity, and risk of your forest activities on those values?
- Are you avoiding negative impacts during harvesting, road building, and other activities?



### Documents

- Environmental value assessments, including maps and field observations,
- Standard Operating Procedures that identify measures to avoid or minimize physical damage to environmental values,
- A monitoring program is in place.



### Interviews (Internal)

- Interviews with owner/managers and/or forest workers to ensure they can identify ecosites with operating limitations.



### On-Site

- Demonstration that the selection of road sites and silviculture systems reflect an understanding of potential impacts,
- No evidence of negative impacts to soils, watercourses, or High Conservation Values.





## PRINCIPLE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND IMPACTS



### SPECIES AND ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK

- Do you have an up-to-date list of species at risk (SAR) based on federal/provincial legislation and COSEWIC assessments?
- Have you developed strategies or plans with qualified specialists to protect SAR and their habitats?
- Do you take measures to prevent illegal harvesting, hunting, or collection of SAR?



#### Documents

- List of species at risk in areas where harvest, stand improvement, or road-building activities will take place,
- Management plan addressing the protection of species at risk.



#### Interviews (Internal)

- Interviews with management staff and forest workers demonstrating knowledge of occurrences and procedures related to species at risk that may occur in the area,
- Interviews confirming that qualified specialists were consulted.



#### On-Site

- Evidence that disturbance to critical habitat is minimized.

### CONSERVATION AREAS NETWORK

- From the list below, could you identify at least 10% of your forest area (or your group-level area) to be protected in a Conservation Areas Network (CAN)?
  - » Representative native ecosystem,
  - » Rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems, habitats, or refugia,
  - » Conservation zones or protected areas,
  - » Connectivity areas,
  - » Areas that support species diversity or species at risk,
  - » Areas that support critical ecosystem services,
  - » Large and undisturbed areas,
  - » Areas that protect water courses, water bodies, and riparian zones,
  - » Areas of special cultural, ecological, or spiritual significance for Indigenous Peoples.



#### Documents

- Document review of CAN assessment, maps, and area calculations showing a minimum 10% of the area is identified.

## WATER PROTECTION AND RIPARIAN AREAS

- Are best management practices in place to protect water bodies, riparian zones, and their connectivity during operations?
- Have past damages to water quality or quantity been identified and addressed through restoration?



### Documents

- Documentation of best management practices for the protection of water features



### On-Site

- No evidence of degradation to water features, water quality, or water quantity.



### Documents

- Regeneration and restoration plans,
- Management plans and silvicultural prescriptions.



### On-Site

- Confirmation of ongoing regeneration in harvested areas,
- No evidence of conversion of forested area to non-forest area.

## BIODIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPE-LEVEL PLANNING

- Are you maintaining or restoring a mosaic of tree species, stand ages, and forest structures to support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience?
- Are you avoiding the conversion of natural forest to plantations or non-forest land uses?
- Where there has been past conversion (e.g. before 1994), can you show you were not responsible? Or that the change has led to long-term conservation benefits?

## NOTES

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## PRINCIPLE 7: MANAGEMENT PLANNING



Principle 7 outlines the need for a **comprehensive and adaptive management plan** that aligns with your forest's long-term values and goals.

Your plan should be proportionate to the scale, intensity, and risk of your activities, and should be kept current through regular updates based on monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and new information.

A management plan is not necessarily a single document. **It can be a collection of documents, reports, records, and maps that justify and regulate the activities carried out on the Management Unit.** This can be built from existing planning processes and is not solely confined to what is provincially regulated or required.

This Principle ensures your plan can guide operations, justify decisions, and communicate clearly with stakeholders.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 7.

# Key Focus Areas

## MANAGEMENT PLANNING

- Have you clearly articulated a vision, values, and management objectives that align with FSC's environmental, social, and economic principles?
- Does your management plan document how you will meet the requirements of the FSC Standard?

## DOCUMENTATION

- Have you documented:
  - » The resources and environmental limitations in your forest and the surrounding area?
  - » Your planned management activities and rationale for the silvicultural systems used?
  - » Your rationale for timber harvesting levels and species selection?
  - » Measures to prevent and mitigate negative impacts of management activities?
  - » Maps that demonstrate forest resources, key infrastructure, planned activities, land use, and high conservation values (HCVs)?



### Documents

- Forest Management Plan and associated planning documents,
- Procedures for identifying and safeguarding vulnerable, rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats (as per 6.2), included in the management plan,
- Procedures for identifying and protecting sites of significant cultural, spiritual, or aesthetic value,
- Guidelines and specifications for avoiding ecosystem damage.





## PRINCIPLE 7: MANAGEMENT PLANNING



### MONITORING

- Have you established verifiable targets for each management objective to help assess progress over time?
- Are your targets and objectives monitored regularly and is this information used to improve your plan?

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- Is a summary of your management plan publicly available upon request (at no cost)?
- Have you provided opportunities for affected stakeholders and Indigenous rights holders to engage in your planning and monitoring processes that affect their interests?



#### Documents

- Records of engagement activities such as town halls, advisory committees, direct outreach, and web postings.



#### Interviews (External)

- Stakeholders and Indigenous Peoples may be asked to confirm that meaningful engagement took place in a culturally appropriate manner.



Photo: Vivian Peachey





## PRINCIPLE 8: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

Principle 8 assesses if you're keeping track of the condition of your forest and how well your management strategies are working.

Even small operations must show that they are monitoring the outcomes of their actions, especially when it comes to ecosystem health, harvesting levels, and compliance with FSC requirements.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 8.

# Key Focus Areas

## BASIC MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

- Are you monitoring environmental impacts, such as:
  - » Effectiveness of forest regeneration?
  - » Adverse effects of pesticides?
  - » Site level damage from harvesting and extraction on residual trees and environmental values?
- Are you monitoring social and economic impacts, such as:
  - » Sexual harassment and gender discrimination?
  - » Occupational health and safety?
  - » Timely payment of wages?
  - » Effectiveness of binding agreements with Indigenous Peoples?
  - » Actual annual harvests compared to projections?
  - » Transportation of products marketed as FSC-certified?
- Are you monitoring changes in environmental conditions, such as:
  - » Maintenance and/or enhancement of ecosystem services?

- » Species at risk and their habitat?
- » Water quality and quantity?
- » Forest types and age classes?

- Use of Monitoring Results
  - » Do you use your monitoring findings to adjust your practices over time?



### Documents

- Monitoring checklists and up-to-date observation logs,
- Post-harvest regeneration surveys and operation compliance reports,
- Maps of land designation changes (e.g. conservation zones, conservation areas networks, HCVs),
- Process to track and trace all products sold and transported from the forest,
- Notes or minutes from annual reviews or adaptive management decisions.





## PRINCIPLE 9: HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES



High Conservation Values (HCVs) are important or unique parts of your forest: places with rare species, critical habitat, cultural significance, or exceptional ecosystem services.

Principle 9 is about finding those values and managing them carefully.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 9.

# Key Focus Areas

## IDENTIFYING HCVS

- Have you reviewed your forest to identify the six HCV categories (e.g. rare species, old-growth stands, important community water sources)?
- Are these values documented in your management plan and mapped where appropriate?
- Have you engaged local communities and Indigenous Peoples to help identify culturally significant sites or ecosystem services?

## HCV MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- Are you taking steps to maintain or enhance HCVs through appropriate management strategies?
- Were Indigenous Peoples, affected and interested stakeholders, and qualified specialists or experts engaged in the development of management strategies?



Photo: Larose, Wolf Eye Productions



## PRINCIPLE 9: HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES



### MONITORING HCVS

- Are you monitoring HCV areas regularly to assess their status and ensure their effective protection?

### UPDATING HCV INFORMATION

- Are your HCV maps, documentation, and strategies kept up-to-date as new information becomes available?



#### Documents

- HCV assessment reports,
- Maps of HCV areas and associated protection strategies,
- Engagement records with Indigenous or local stakeholders,
- Monitoring records showing HCV condition over time,
- Documentation of any adaptive changes made to management strategies to better protect HCVs.



#### Interviews (Internal)

- Interviews with management staff or collaborators on HCVs were identified and by whom,
- Assessing the knowledge of management staff and forest workers as to how HCVs are protected and monitored.



#### On-Site

- Buffers visibly maintained,
- Management strategies for HCVs are effectively implemented.







## PRINCIPLE 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Principle 10 focuses on putting forest management planning into action!

Your planning is only effective if it is carried out responsibly on the ground. This Principle ensures harvesting, road building, regeneration, and other management activities are implemented in a way that conserves environmental, social, and economic values for generations to come.

Review the key focus areas below to determine your current alignment with Principle 10.

# Key Focus Areas

## MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY PRACTICES

- Are you following your management plan and are your actions consistent with FSC Principles and Criteria?
- Are you using silvicultural practices that are ecologically appropriate for the site and management objectives?
- Is the use of fertilizers and pesticides either minimized or avoided?
- Are you using harvesting techniques to minimize damage to soils, water sources, and residual trees?

## ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- Are you planning and maintaining roads to minimize erosion and protect waterways?
- Are stream crossings properly designed and removed when no longer needed?

## WASTE

- Are you removing waste from the forest and disposing of materials properly?
- Can you demonstrate minimal or no use of fertilizers?
- Do you have a strategy to reduce, minimize, or eliminate impacts from the use of pesticides?



### Documents

- Operation logs, harvest block records, road-building maps,
- Standard Operating Procedures.



### On-Site

- Demonstration that harvesting is consistent with Standard Operating Procedures,
- No evidence of garbage, neglected fuel spills, or unsafe practices.



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Photo: South Nation Conservation Authority

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