[DRAFT]

Landscapes Guidance: ICLs & IFLs

FSC ® National Forest Stewardship Standard of Canada

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REFERENCES

This guidance document reflects a combination of contents from several documents and the culmination of work carried out by the Standard Development Group as one of four countries (Canada, Brazil, Dem. Rep. Congo, and Peru) in a pilot process developing a landscape approach in the development of IFL related Indicators in Forest Stewardship Standards.

List of Documents and Authors:

<FSC-GUI-TBD-TBD Guidance: Landscape approach to IFLs>
Research consortium led by Professor Claude Garcia of Bern University of Applied Studies edited by consultant Andre de Freitas (commissioned by FSC Secretariat) and FSC International – Performance and Standards Unit.

<FSC-PRO-60-004 V1-0 EN Draft 1-0 Development of Indicators for the Protection of IFLs Considering the Landscape Level>
FSC International – Performance and Standards Unit

<FSC-GUI-60-004 Guideline for Standard Developers to Develop a National Threshold for the Core Area of IFLs within the Management Unit>
FSC International – Performance and Standards Unit

<DER-STD-60-004_02 V1-1 Exemption to carry out limited industrial activity within IFL core areas- 1 April 2025> FSC International – Policy & Performance Unit

<FSC-GUI-30-010 V1-0 EN Intact Forest Landscapes Guidance for Forest Managers. >
FSC International – Performance and Standards Unit

Indigenous Perspectives and Relationships to the Land: Considerations for Understanding ICLs in a FSC Context V2 May 29, 2025. Prepared by The Firelight Group.

ABBREVIATIONS

FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
NFSS or 'the Standard'	National Forest Stewardship Standard
HCV	High Conservation Value(s)
ICL	Indigenous Cultural Landscape
IFL	Intact Forest Landscape
MU	Management Unit
SDG	Standard Development Group

Indigenous Cultural Landscapes

> **NOTE:**
>
> THIS SECTION OF THE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT IS STILL UNDER INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT BY FSC CANADA.
>
> BELOW IS AN INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW AND PRELIMINARY OUTLINE OF THE CONTENT TO BE PROVIDED AT A LATER DATE.

OVERVIEW OF INDIGENOUS CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

1.1 What are Indigenous Cultural Landscapes?

There are many terms that can be used to describe the relationship of people to a given place. The term 'cultural landscape' is one way to describe the ways that people have lived in place, been affected by the landscape, and in turn altered the landscape as a reflection of their cultural traditions, social practices, economic activities, and spiritual meanings. In this way, cultural landscapes are 'living landscapes' rooted in both tangible (e.g., physical features) and intangible (e.g. language, artistic expression, cuisine) aspects of culture that serve to connect communities to their past traditions while simultaneously grounding Indigenous identity in the present with a hopeful view of the future (Harrison and Rose 2010[1]; Andrews and Buggey 2008[2]).

FSC has identified the concept of Indigenous Cultural Landscape (ICL) to represent a landscape-level dialogue within a forest management planning framework. This shifts forest management planning from delineating the existence of Indigenous Peoples rights as "sites" at the stand level— often represented as point data in a mapping system— to a landscape-level representation that captures the interdependencies between ecosystem function and integrity and the ongoing provision for Indigenous Peoples to practice their rights. Understanding and applying the concept of ICLs is not confined solely to one indicator but to the FSC standard in its entirety.

1.2 Definition of an Indigenous Cultural Landscape

FSC Canada's National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) defines an ICL as:

> **"***Living landscapes to which Indigenous peoples attribute environmental, social, cultural and economic value because of their enduring relationship to the land, water, flora, fauna and spirit as well as their present and future importance to their cultural identity. An ICL is characterized by features maintained through long-term interactions based on land-care knowledge and adaptive livelihood practices. They are landscapes over which Indigenous peoples exercise responsibility for stewardship. (FSC Canada 2018)* **"**

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[1] Harrison, Rodney, and Deborah Rose. 2010. "Intangible Heritage." In Understanding Heritage and Memory, edited by Tim Benton, 238–76.

[2] Andrews, Thomas D., and Susan Buggey. 2008. "Authenticity in Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes." Journal of Preservation Technology 39 (2–3): 63–71.

1.3 How do Indigenous Cultural Landscapes relate to Intact Forest Landscapes?

At the FSC General Assembly in 2014, FSC members of the Environment Chamber campaigned for Motion 65 to improve the protection of Intact Forest Landscapes—the world's remaining large undisturbed forests. A debate on the impact of the motion to Indigenous rights ensued as Intact Forest Landscapes are the homelands of Indigenous Peoples and support the activities and practices that are essential for the survival of cultural livelihoods and continued existence of distinct Indigenous cultures. The requirement to obtain the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of affected rights holders was added to the motion. Two critical phases of work were identified and carried out to ensure that the implementation of Motion 65 respected the FPIC requirement. First, FSC Canada took on developing non-normative guidelines on the Implementation of FPIC in Canada's forest management context. Second, FSC Canada worked with the Indigenous Chamber to identify an alternative approach to the proposed IFL model— one that respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is in this phase that the concept of ICL was formed.

In the context of FSC certification, the intended purpose of an ICL is to provide a framework for Indigenous Peoples to communicate their past, present and desired future forest and land relationships. The approach to describing, and where appropriate, delineating components of an ICL include the explicit objective of supporting Indigenous communities to exercise their rights and stewardship responsibilities, including in management decision-making around Intact Forest Landscapes.

PRELIMINARY OUTLINE OF GUIDANCE

Content to be provided in this section of the guidance document:

- Key elements of ICLs
- Building an understanding of an Indigenous communities' perspective of their cultural landscape
- Ways of describing values, connections to the land, and stewardship responsibilities
- Creating an ethical space in relationships and dialogue
- Approaches to identifying ICLs
- Preparing for culturally appropriate engagement
- Mapping ICLs
- Integrating ICLs into forest management planning

Intact Forest Landscapes

PREAMBLE

1.1 Context and Objective

Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) are part of the broader framework set out in Principle 9 for the protection of High Conservation Values (HCVs). However, support for identification, assessment, management, and monitoring of HCVs exists throughout FSC's Principles and Criteria.

IFLs in Canada exist within the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples who may rely upon or be affected by their conservation. Thus, effective implementation of the IFL requirements is grounded in Principle 3. Principle 3 requires identifying and upholding the rights, values, goals, and aspirations of local Indigenous Peoples, including the right to Free, Prior, & Informed Consent (FPIC). The interaction with Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs) as described in the first half of this Guidance, can help to ensure decision-making regarding Intact Forest Landscapes is in conformance with Principle 3.

The objective of this guide is to support forest managers to implement the requirements for the identification, management, and monitoring specific to Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) in FSC-certified forests.

This guide describes how forest managers should:

- Identify and assess IFLs
- Engage with Indigenous Peoples, local communities and other stakeholders
- Develop and implement strategies for protecting core areas
- Ensure consistency with the requirements the National Forest Stewardship Standard in Canada
- Monitor IFLs and core areas.

1.2 Background to Intact Forest Landscapes

In response to the declining abundance of IFLs globally, the FSC membership widely supported Policy Motion 65 at the 2014 General Assembly. Through subsequent motions – Motion 34/2017; Motion 71/2017; and Motion 23/2022– FSC has introduced a landscape approach for adapting protection requirements to achieve the best possible contribution to conservation of IFLs within the local environmental, social, and socio-economic conditions. This is implemented through a precautionary approach and collaborative decision-making.

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Implementing IFL Requirements

The Guidance is divided into the following sections:

1. Delineating IFLs
2. Identification of the Wider Landscape
3. Determining a protection threshold
4. Monitoring IFLs

The Guidance provided is informative and not normative; its use does not imply conformity with the standard. It remains the responsibility of The Organization to ensure full conformance with all applicable requirements.

2.2 Definition of an Intact Forest Landscape

FSC Canada's National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS) defines an IFL as:

    " *A territory within today's global extent of forest* cover which contains forest* and non-forest ecosystems* minimally influenced by human economic activity with an area of at least 500 km^2 (50,000 ha) and a minimal width of 10 km (measured as the diameter of a circle that is entirely inscribed within the boundaries of the territory).* **"**

2.3 Delineating Intact Forest Landscapes

The Organization should identify all IFLs that are located entirely within or overlapping the Management Unit based on the IFL maps published at www.globalforestwatch.org as of January 1, 2017. This is the date *Advice Note 20-007-018* for the interpretation of the default clause of Motion 65, became effective; this reference date is used to carry forward conformance as required by **Indicator 9.1.x1**.

There is flexibility in the methodology for delineating IFLs in Canada; this is provided in the [To be Updated]: *Interim Guidance for the Delineation of Intact Forest Landscapes* (2017).

The Organization may update the boundaries of the IFL to exclude areas which do not meet the IFL definition by using best available information, including:
    a. Expert knowledge and peer review (e.g. Global Forest Watch Canada; HCV Network; WWF; WRI);
    b. On-the-ground (below canopy) truthing.

For any areas excluded from the IFL maps published at GFW as of January 1, 2017, specific evidence for each exclusion must be provided as justification.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE WIDER LANDSCAPE

3.1 A Landscape-Level Approach

The IFL requirements take a landscape-level approach to adapting protection requirements. To meet conformance with *Indicator 9.1.x1*, The Organization may use approach *9.2.x1a* to continue to uphold the level of protection as previously required by *Advice Note 20-007-018*— where forest operations do not impact more than 20% of the IFL within the Management Unit. Recognizing there may circumstances where a lower threshold is more appropriate, The Organization may use approach *9.2.x1b* to determine the best possible contribution to conservation of IFLs within the environmental, social, and socioeconomic conditions. This is determined through an assessment of the IFLs within the context of what is termed the [*wider landscape*].

FSC Canada's NFSS defines a landscape as:

> "*A geographical mosaic composed of interacting ecosystems resulting from the influence of geological, topographical, soil, climatic, biotic and human interactions in a given area.*"

A landscape is a dynamic and multifaceted concept encompassing both natural and human influenced elements within a specific geographical area. It refers to the visible and tangible characteristics of an environment including physical features, landforms, ecosystems, vegetation, water bodies, human-made structures, settlements, and the interactions amongst all these elements. A landscape, however, incorporates more than just physical characteristics; it also has social, cultural and historical components.

Landscapes hold significance for Indigenous Peoples and various stakeholders including local communities, scientists, policymakers, and conservationists. This means defining a landscape—the extent that serves to function as the scope of information gathering and decision-making— often depends on the people discussing the landscape.

3.2 Identifying the Wider Landscape

To prepare for the wider landscape assessment, begin by identifying possible boundaries for delineating the wider landscape within which the IFL(s) are located. This information gathering contributes to *Indicator 9.1.x2, sub-indicator 1.* and in preparation for the collaborative process in approach *9.2.xa*.

The objective is to determine an area with uniform social, cultural, political, economic, and biological characteristics. Accurate descriptions provide the foundation for informed decision-making, planning, identification of potential conflicts and enable ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Identifying actors, resources, dynamics, and interactions can lead to more effective outcomes regarding land use, resource management, conservation, and development.

Delineating the boundaries of the wider landscape involves considering factors such as the territories of Indigenous Peoples, ecological connectivity, the distribution of IFLs, the existence of protected areas, and the overall ecological and social significance of the surrounding areas. It provides the flexibility to evaluate what protection threshold is most appropriate for responsible land use of IFLs within the ecological, social, economic, cultural, and political context.

The Organization can take different approaches in defining a landscape, including the use of bioecological zones, watersheds, or jurisdictional units, among others. For practical reasons, it is expected that the wider landscape boundaries will often coincide with the best-suited delineation from an existing and widely accepted dataset. The final delineation used in the assessment should be agreed upon by participants in the collaborative process.

A recommended boundary from existing accessible datasets is the use of <u>Ontario's Ecological Land Classification Ecoregions</u> or <u>Ecological regions defined for Québec,</u> or one similar in another province. These zones differentiate areas of similar ecology, climatic patterns, vegetation types, physiographic features, and bedrock geology. The scale of these ecoregions likely coincides or contain a relatively consistent cultural, social, socioeconomic, and political landscape. Confirm with participants in the collaborative process that they agree.

3.3 HCV 2 Description

Indicator 9.1.x2, sub-indicator 1. requires an expanded HCV2 description in the publicly available HCV assessment report. This should include descriptions, maps, and scientific insights to support the evaluation of the wider landscape context; identifying IFL locations, assessing connectivity, and outlining the land use dynamics, both over space and time.

Wider Landscape Information Collection Tool
The template on the following two pages can support your HCV 2 description.

3.1 Description of the Wider Landscape

Using best available information, provide a short description of the relevant contextual information occurring in the wider landscape*

Map delineating contextual information and the boundaries of the wider landscape*

Abundance, security, and connectivity of IFLs (i.e. How many and how large are IFLs in the wider landscape, how much of the IFL areas are under long-term protection status or could be affected by human activity, how connected are the IFLs)	
Landform, watersheds, rivers, geological and soil characteristics	
Populations of ecologically or culturally significant wildlife species, migration pathways, species at risk that require large contiguous habitats, and the sustainability and persistence of these species	
Location, size, type, and conditions of rare ecosystems	
Indigenous rights and values, and Indigenous Cultural Landscapes	
Locations of human settlements, infrastructure, development plans, and agricultural zones	
Existing and planned forestry operations, and FSC-certified and non-certified Management Units in the area	
Regulatory land use planning, presence or planned extraction of natural resources other than forests	

A map of the IFLs within or overlapping the Management Unit boundaries displaying the area in 2017 and the area using the most recent data.

For each IFL, collect the following information:

IFL Name	Total Size of IFL	Total area within FMU	Reduction of IFL area since 2017
I.e. IFL A	62,000 ha	23,000 ha	9%

DETERMINING A PROTECTION THRESHOLD

Indicator 9.1.x2 requires that a core area is designated in each IFL that exists entirely within or overlaps the Management Unit by [5,000 ha] or more. If the portion of IFL within the boundaries of the Management Unit is smaller than [5,000 ha], *Indicators 9.2.x1* and *9.2.x2* need not apply. However, The Organization should be cautious to ensure no management activities reduce the size of any IFL below 50,000 ha regardless of the number of hectares overlapping the management unit—in conformance with *Indicator 9.2.x3.*

The size of the core area is determined through an evaluation of an appropriate protection threshold within the contexts of the wider landscape. The Organization may use approach *9.2.x1a* to designate the vast majority, or 80% of the IFL area within the Management Unit as the core area. The Organization may also use approach *9.2.x1b* to determine a protection threshold through an efficient collaborative process with affected Indigenous Peoples and self-identified interested and affected stakeholders.

4.1 The Rights of Indigenous Peoples

IFLs in Canada occur within the traditional territories of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples may rely on the continued intactness of the IFL or their goals and aspirations may be affected by protection designations. *Indicators 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3* and *3.2.5* require The Organization to recognize and uphold the legal and customary right of Indigenous Peoples to maintain control over management activities to the extent necessary for protecting their rights, resources, and lands and territories. This includes the right to Free, Prior, & Informed Consent. *Criterion 3.4* requires The Organization to recognize and uphold the rights, customs, and culture of Indigenous Peoples as defined in the <u>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</u> and ILO Convention 169 (1989).

The requirement of culturally appropriate engagement throughout the Standard is intended to facilitate a relationship building process based on dialogue, knowledge sharing, and mutual respect. Through continuous engagement, The Organization and Indigenous Peoples may discuss and mutually agree on the role of FSC certification in meeting Canada's commitment to UNDRIP as well as the unratified ILO Convention No.169.

Indigenous Peoples may raise concerns related to UNDRIP and ILO 169. The ongoing engagement process set out in **Principles 1 and 3** of the Standard provides an opportunity for The Organization to determine what is actionable (within their Sphere of Control* and Sphere of Influence*) through provisions elsewhere in Principle 3, or other parts of the Standard. The purpose of culturally appropriate engagement is to prevent violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights. Additional supporting information for the implementation of culturally appropriate engagement is available in the NFSS's *Annex F: Culturally Appropriate Engagement* or in FSC Canada's *FPIC Guidance* document. The interaction with Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs) as described in the first half of this Guidance, can help ensure decision-making regarding IFLs are in conformance with Principle 3.

Do not assume the time of leaders or members of indigenous communities is free. Think about adequate ways to compensate them for their time. Take special care to understand what the outcomes of implementing the landscape-level approach may be in relation to the local Indigenous communities' rights, values, culture, goals and aspirations. Refer to the recommendations and best practices provided the first half of this Guidance on *ICLs*.

4.2 An Efficient Collaborative Process

The intent of the process is to emphasize co-creation and mutual agreement to achieve a balanced outcome for improving protection of IFLs given the local environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions. The inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in management planning ensures their concerns, desires, needs, rights, and opportunities are addressed when drafting and implementing strategies and actions.

Based on the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples [identified in **Indicator 3.1.2**], The Organization is encouraged to provide Indigenous Peoples the opportunity to lead decision-making on the design of protection and management strategies for Intact Forest Landscapes consistent with the Indicators in this Standard.

It is reasonable that The Organization, in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and stakeholders, develop a process for efficient cooperation through a variety of methods. This could involve a delegation of representation across groups that share common expertise or interests. A combination of methods may be the best option; for example, identifying agreements through online co-creation forums and using a field visit/tour to resolve differences in perspectives.

Participants in the process are to be involved in defining the wider landscape boundaries, discussing the current status and long-term outlook for IFLs within the wider landscape, and in providing feedback on the protection threshold(s) for the IFL(s) within Management Unit plus any other binding measures or actions from The Organization within their Sphere of Control or Sphere of Influence.

Collaborative Process Tool

The template on the following page can support: identification of participants to the collaborative process, methods of engagement that will provide clear and valuable insights, and creating an environment that enables sharing, collaboration, dissenting, and moving forward on a discussion that could be uncomfortable at times.

Who should be a part of the collaborative process?	Questions to identify participants: • Who or which organizations are involved (at any scale) with forests and other natural resources in the wider landscape? • Who has influence or direct decision-making power on issues that impact IFLs? • Who will face the consequences of decisions that impact IFLs? • Who or which organizations need to be involved to achieve a balanced outcome? • Who is in charge of land-use planning and how is this done? • Who has shown interest in past engagement efforts?
The engagement process involves …	Indigenous Peoples present in the wider landscape, or using any ecosystem service or product from the wider landscape Local communities present in the wider landscape, or using any ecosystem service or product from the wider landscape Governments Trade unions and forest related workers representatives Other FSC-certificate holders or forest managers of non-certified Management Units in the wider landscape Environmental, forest conservation or social organizations Academic institutions or researchers Private or public companies owning/leasing and commercially managing natural resources other than forests in the wider landscape
What methods of engagement could be used?	Examples of engagement methods: Inviting participants to a multi-party in-person dialogue Online meetings: meeting in which participants engage remotely, preferably using a videoconferencing technology platform One to one interviews (face-to-face or virtual): used to obtain answers from respondents and simultaneously observe their behaviour, preferably through a structured questionnaire, to minimize interviewer bias Focus groups: small groups of people (6-12) who share interests in certain characteristics interact with a facilitator who uses the group and its interactions to obtain information and feedback on a specific problem or goal Online co-creation processes: participants contribute to each other's proposals through an online platform where documents and input can be shared Tours or field visits: going on a tour within the activity area and engaging in active listening allows for better understanding of the lived experience of the participants.

What needs to be in place for people to participate?	An ethical space for balancing different worldviews in dialogue
	A well-structured, collective invitation might be enough, but sometimes a personalized invitation can be more effective in getting participation
	Including a precise, clear agenda.
	Using appropriate language (technical jargon only when necessary)
	Communicating if and how the costs and expenses of participants will be covered.
	Communicating how confidentiality and respect will be ensured (e.g. by abiding to The Chatham House rule).
	Managing expectations of participants, including their role and what will happen with their recommendations.
	Providing clarity about measures for transparent, accountable information exchange and timely follow-up.
The collaborative process is . . .	Legitimate
	Accessible
	Culturally appropriate
	Inclusive
	Predictable
	Equitable, including in terms of access to information
	Transparent
	Respectful of rights (legal and customary)
	Gender- and perspective-balanced
	Based on dialogue
Feedback was received, incorporated, and agreed upon regarding . . .	The boundaries of the wider landscape
	The current status of IFLs in the wider landscape and the expected future trends
	The protection threshold to be implemented and management actions
	The measures or actions that The Organization will take within their Sphere of Control of Sphere of Influence

Engagement is Successful when it:

✓ Identifies Indigenous Peoples, interested and affected stakeholders and informs them about the management planning through culturally appropriate engagement.

✓ Includes input from Indigenous Peoples, experts, affected and interested stakeholders and explores opportunities for co-management opportunities.

✓ Contains an evaluation of compliance with agreements with Indigenous Peoples and local communities achieved through FPIC

✓ Describes appropriate actions based on observations on HCVs presented by Indigenous Peoples, affected and interested stakeholders and experts

✓ Reflects the aspirations and concerns of Indigenous Peoples, affected and interested stakeholders

✓ Informs any adaptations necessary to management strategies

✓ Documents engagement strategies and outcomes and makes a summary of them publicly available

Figure 1. Elements of Successful Engagement on Intact Forest Landscapes (FSC IC 2017).

4.3 Assessing the Wider Landscape

The Organization is expected to carry out an assessment of the conditions listed in *Table 9.2.xb, Section 1* using a precautionary approach to inform the collaborative process.

Relevant Indicators in the Standard where supportive information has likely been gathered, collated, or analyzed include:

- Landscape connectivity, ecosystem integrity, wildlife habitat: Criteria 6.1, 6.4 to 6.8, 9.1
- Indigenous aspirations and cultural values: Criteria 3.1, 3.2, 3.5., 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.7, 6.5, 9.1 and through engagement in FPIC and Indigenous Cultural Landscape processes.
- Threats: Criteria 6.1, 9.2.

Using the contextual information gathered in *Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 1.* and from analyses in the Standard as listed above, The Organization should review each condition and consider its current and future impact to the Intact Forest Landscape(s) within the wider landscape.

[Risk-Assessment Tool for Evaluating a Protection Threshold]

NOTE: CURRENTLY UNDER DEVELOPMENT— A TOOL WILL BE INCLUDED TO NARROW AN APPROPRIATE THRESHOLD RANGE BASED ON CONDITION CIRCUMSTANCES TO SERVE AS A SUGGESTED BASELINE TO THE COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.

Condition 1. Threats
The protection threshold should consider how much anthropogenic activity is currently occurring within the IFL, including any known plans for future development and the extent of fragmentation likely to be caused in the short- and long-term.

Condition 2. Security and Abundance
The protection threshold should consider how much of the IFL area is currently under land-use designations which support long-term, nearly permanent, or permanent and effective protection of the IFL. It should consider the size of the IFL, and the size and number of IFLs that occur within the wider landscape.

Condition 3. The Aspirations and Goals of Indigenous Peoples
The protection threshold should consider how the IFL contributes to the aspirations and goals of Indigenous Peoples and the implications of reducing protection or applying strategies for protection. The IFL or areas of the IFL may coincide with Indigenous Cultural Landscapes.

Condition 4. Maintenance or Enhancement of Ecological Values
The protection threshold should consider how the IFL, or areas of the IFL contribute to landscape connectivity, landscape ecosystem integrity, ecosystem representation; the habitat requirements of keystone species, species at risk, and broad-ranging wildlife species that depend on large contiguous areas of unaltered forest; and whether there are concentrations of ecological and cultural values, including high carbon storage areas.

Condition 5. Opportunities for Restoration or Enhancement
The protection threshold should consider if there are opportunities to restore or enhance landscape connectivity, landscape ecosystem integrity, ecosystem representation; habitat of dependent species; or high carbon storage areas. This could be in other IFLs containing greater ecological or cultural values or in other large forests of high ecological or cultural value which contribute significant landscape-level functions but may not meet the definition of IFL (i.e. <50,000 ha).

Condition 6. Scale and Intensity
The protection threshold should consider the extent to which proposed forest operations will fragment the IFL and the resulting impact to the values and functions.

Condition 7. Objective Evidence in the Management Plan
The protection threshold may consider if there is objective evidence in the Management Plan demonstrating the necessity to harvest in areas of the ILF.

4.4 Agreement on a Protection Threshold and Actions

The guiding concept when determining the appropriate protection threshold is that smaller, more isolated, and high-risk IFLs, or those with areas of high ecological or cultural value— require a higher protection threshold. In contrast, where the conditions indicate that management activities would result in a low or positive impact to the Intact Forest Landscapes in the wider landscape or other large unfragmented landscape level forests, a lower protection threshold—mutually agreed upon in a collaborative process— may be appropriate if clear justification is provided.

Other measures or actions within The Organization's Sphere of Control or Sphere of Influence can be incorporated to mitigate risks or balance trade-offs in the decision-making of protection threshold(s). These measures or actions are considered binding and must be agreed upon in the collaborative process. Alternative measures or actions can also help to achieve agreement* in the collaborative process.

The **Sphere of Control** pertains to the area or aspects for which The Organization is legally responsible and can legally intervene. This does not mean that the control is absolute as government regulation and pre-existing rights can limit what The Organization can effectively do. The **Sphere of Influence** usually refers to where decisions and actions of The Organization interact with those of other associations to shape the landscape.

Management strategies should be implemented with appropriate measures to protect core areas and address identified threats. This means that strategies should maintain the extent and intactness of the forest ecosystems and the viability of their biodiversity concentrations, including plant and animal indicator species, keystone species, and guilds associated with large intact natural forest ecosystems.

This could include a commitment to measures or actions in non-core areas that support intactness and other values, such as:

- Reducing the duration of activities and promptly removing infrastructure
- Avoiding road building and harvesting in configurations that cause spatial bottlenecks or accelerate fragmentation
- Reducing the harvesting level or planning larger retention patch sizes
- Mitigating windthrow, degradation, and other edge effect impacts adjacent to the core area
- Restricting harvesting to specific weather conditions
- Increasing monitoring and regeneration efforts

Or in other areas;

- Supporting the aspirations and goals of Indigenous Peoples related to the Intact Forest Landscape and Indigenous Cultural Landscapes
- Restoring or enhancing ecological values in Intact Forest Landscapes or in large landscape level forests (i.e. large forest that are <50,000 ha) within the Management Unit

Examples of measures or actions that are within The Organization's Sphere of Influence:

- Adding core areas to the Conservation Areas Network in Indicator 6.5.7
- Seeking to secure a legal regulated protection status for core areas
- Supporting conservation initiatives such as the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) or Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) to strengthen long-term landscape-level protection outcomes
- Advocating against infrastructure projects within the Management Unit that would provide access to previously inaccessible Intact Forest Landscape areas

Where there is more than one IFL within the Management Unit, the protection thresholds may vary between individual IFLs based on the assessment of the conditions and the value and impact of protection relative to one another. This allows for decision-making in the collaborative process to reflect the collective context of all the Intact Forest Landscapes and achieve the best possible outcome for protection within the wider landscape.

Ensure that the process and justification for the protection threshold is clearly and thoroughly documented.

LOCATION OF CORE AREA(S)

The purpose of designating core areas is to exclude industrial activity. **Indicator 9.2.x1b** requires that the most ecologically valuable, contiguous, and intact portions are designated as the core area with particular attention to maximizing connectivity and wildlife habitat. The location of core areas should be discussed in the collaborative process.

Using best available information, the location of the core area considers the 7 elements listed in **Table 9.2.xb, Section 2:**

1. The contribution of the area to landscape values including connectivity, ecosystem integrity, ecosystem representation, and cultural importance
2. The habitat requirements of keystone species, species at risk, and broad-ranging wildlife species that depend on large contiguous areas of unaltered forest
3. Concentrations of ecological and cultural values within the Intact Forest Landscape*
4. Feedback of affected Indigenous Peoples and and self-identified interested and affected stakeholders during the collaborative process in Indicator 9.2.xb (if applicable);
5. Proximity to legislated protected areas within or adjacent to Management Unit boundaries;
6. Threats to Intact Forest Landscapes in the Management Unit; and
7. High carbon storage areas such as peatlands, wetlands, or soils with high biomass.

Review the spatial distribution of the elements listed above and identify an area that encompasses an optimal configuration of the values. There are various decision-support tools often created for conservation planning, that can help to identify priority areas through a multi-value spatial assessment.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

6.1 Management of Core Areas

The purpose of designating core areas is to exclude industrial activity. Forest managers should attempt to secure long-term protection for IFL core areas. The Organization is encouraged to add IFL core areas to their Conservation Areas Network in *Indicator 6.5.7.* All strategies and actions related to core areas should be incorporated into the management plan and implemented in a timely manner.

6.2 Activity in Core Areas

FSC Canada recognizes there may be occasional circumstances where The Organization must carry out forest operations in an area designated as core. To remain in conformance, as per *Indicator 9.2.x2,* the only circumstances where activity in core areas is permissible are for the purposes of:

- Restoring, maintaining, or conserving ecological integrity
- Activities necessary for community safety related to wildfire
- Supporting the aspirations of affected Indigenous Peoples

Prior to any activity occurring in the core area, activities must be confirmed by an independent expert [alt: a balanced working group of independent experts] as appropriate for meeting the above objectives. The expert cannot be employed by The Organization or the government and must not have an apparent conflict of interest.

If forest operations are undertaken in a core area, The Organization should take a precautionary approach to minimize degradation of intactness. The Organization must ensure the following (when possible):

- Activities occur over the least amount of time
- Prompt removal of infrastructure once activities are complete
- Activities avoid causing spatial bottlenecks or fragmentation
- They include prompt regeneration to restore a natural condition

6.3 Management of Non-Core Areas

Portions of IFLs that are not designated as core areas should be managed to protect the core area and maintain their broader HCV Category 2 values. Managers should use Best Available Information and solicit input from experts when developing management strategies and actions for non-core areas and other HCV 2 areas. Review the list of measures and actions on Page 18.

In non-core areas, buffer zones widths will be situation dependent. What is important is that forest managers identify appropriate buffer zone widths adjacent to core areas where road construction and other activities are managed to prevent edge effect impacts within the core areas.

MONITORING

Indicator 9.4.1 requires creating a monitoring program to assess both trends and impacts of management activities. The baseline condition of any variable is key, as trends and effectiveness may change over time. The specific risks to a particular IFL or core area should also be noted in guiding the elements monitored.

When monitoring, adaptive management should be practiced, defined as: "the systematic process of continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of existing measures" (World Conservation Union (IUCN)). This means that the identification, assessment, maintenance and monitoring of HCVs is framed within the adaptive management framework.

7.1 Impacts to IFLs and Core Areas

Indicator 9.4.4 requires that management strategies and actions are adapted when monitoring or other new information shows that these strategies and actions are ineffective at addressing the maintenance and/or enhancement of HCVs.

modifications of management strategies and actions to address the results of monitoring, including where there have been significant changes in the conditions listed in **Table 9.2.xb, Section 1**. If monitoring indicates that strategies are ineffective or are resulting in damage, actions shall be taken to repair the damage and ensure protection of the HCV values.

HCV 2 DESCRIPTION

After the IFL processes are complete, **Indicator 9.1.x2,** requires collating all the IFL information into a description in the public HCV assessment report. The description of the Intact Forest Landscapes and [wider landscape] in the report serves to communicate the context, processes, rationales, and outcomes for communities, stakeholders, and auditors to understand The Organization's management approach.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 1 refers to the contextual information used for the delineation of the wider landscape. The description should provide the pertinent information regarding the influences of *i. through ix.* and a map of the wider landscape used in the protection threshold evaluation.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 2 requires a map displaying the IFL boundaries from the reference date of January 1, 2017 along with the core area boundaries.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 3 requires clear and thorough documentation of the collaborative process and justifications and rationales of outcomes. The description should include the methods of engagement, timelines, and the participants involved. The justifications for the protection thresholds and how participants' concerns were addressed as well as how and why the location of the core areas were chosen.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 4 requires a clear outline of the planned operational activities to occur in the IFL and IFL core area as a result of the discussions in the collaborative process.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 5 requires an expanded outline of measures The Organization's is taking to prevent and mitigate negative impacts of management activities in Intact Forest Landscapes and their effectiveness in ensuring a precautionary approach is used.

Indicator 9.1.x2, Sub-indicator 6 and 7 require a clear outline of the methodology used to assess and monitor changes to the IFL(s) and the result from monitoring. This should include any changes over time, and the recent and expected future impacts to each IFL. Maps may also be helpful here.

These changes to the HCV assessment report must be reviewed by one or more qualified specialist as per *Indicators 9.1.6 and 9.1.7.*

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