A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council Certification for Community Forests in Ontario

Eastern Ontario Model Forest

www.certification.eomf.on.ca

Forest Certification

In response to the growing concern surrounding forest sustainability the concept of forest certification arose. The idea was to develop a process for certifying forest management practices to a pre-determined set of standards which define sustainable forest management. Independent third party auditors evaluate forest operations to determine whether owners and/or managers meet the required standards. Forest certification ensures that forest owners, practitioners, and operators comply with established and accepted management standards. Certification provides assurance to forest owners, managers, operators, consumers, and the local community that the production of wood products from a certified land base does not damage the overall health of the forest, the stability of the ecosystems, or the livelihoods of local communities. Forest certification is a voluntary, market-based concept.

There are several third party certification systems for forestry in Canada, they are; Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI).

The EOMF chose the FSC system as the most appropriate system for small-scale, group forest certification in Ontario. The FSC has developed regional standards specific to the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region in which we are located. The FSC standards have stipulations specific to smaller-scale forest operations. When the EOMF began to pursue forest certification, the FSC indicated a keen interest in working with the EOMF to make the system realistic for small scale operations in Ontario. And finally, because the FSC is an international organization, their labeling scheme is recognized worldwide.

The EOMF Forest Certification Program

The EOMF Forest Certification Program provides an opportunity for community forests and private woodlot owners to become certified to the internationally recognized standards for responsible forest management developed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The EOMF has become a leader in small scale forest certification in Canada.

The EOMF manages a FSC certificate (SW-FM/COC-232) on behalf of private woodlot owners and community forests in eastern Ontario. The EOMF has developed a collaborative certification process for private land and community forests. The certification process is traditionally an onerous and expensive undertaking for individual landowners to pursue alone. The

EOMF Forest Certification Program allows for numerous landowners and community forests to share the benefits and costs of FSC certification by certifying their lands, with one certificate.

Interested community forest managers and landowners must sign a memorandum of understanding with the EOMF that indicates their commitment to managing their forest within the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council and within the guidelines laid out in the *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual.*

"FSC certification of community forests provides assurances to the public that their forests are being managed for current and future generations."

~ Martin Streit,
Registered Professional Forester
South Nation Conservation

The Benefits of Forest Certification

Within a forestry context, the balance of environmental, social, and economic values is challenging. There are many competing values as is seen in *Diagram 1: Sustainable Forest Management*. There is also growing public interest in the environment and in the sustainable use of our natural resources.

Diagram 1: Sustainable Forest Management

Certification works to ensure that management practices are consistently applied across the forest landscape assuring everyone, from the community members to forest managers to wood product consumers, that the forest and all its values have been considered. Forest certification provides:

- A framework to implement sustainable forest management
- Assurance of a forest well-managed for all values
- Credibility and accountability for forest management practices
- Access to unique markets and potential for increased revenues from the sale of wood products.

The Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization formed to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable forest management around the world through the certification of forest management practices.

There are two types of FSC certification which are interdependent in producing certified forest products: forest certification and product certification.

There are five independent organizations in Canada accredited as certifiers by FSC:

- KPMG Forest Certification Services Inc.
- Scientific Certification Systems
- SGS International
- SmartWood
- Soil Association – Woodmark

"Independent, internationally renowned standards provide credible results and the ability to ensure sound forest management activities at Larose Forest for the residents of Prescott and Russell."

~ Louis Prévost, Director - Planning
United Counties of Prescott & Russell

Forest certification is directed towards on-the-ground forest management practices and related procedures. Those obtaining forest management certification are responsible for ensuring compliance with the FSC's principles and criteria and they are termed "Resource Managers". Resource Managers are certified and audited to the FSC's principles of forest stewardship on an annual basis by independent third party auditors accredited by FSC. *Diagram 2: The FSC Forest Certification Process (Page 5)* shows the steps involved in obtaining and maintaining a Resource Manager Certificate.

Product Certification is directed at those producing the wood product (i.e. sawmills, pulpmills, and printers) and it is referred to as "Chain of Custody". The FSC has introduced an international labeling scheme for forest products which provides a credible guarantee that a given product comes from a well-managed forest by ensuring full chain of custody for the materials used in producing a given product. For a wood product to be labeled and sold as "certified" it must originate from a certified forest management operation and be produced in a facility that holds chain of custody certification.

The 10 FSC Principles of forest stewardship are:

1. Compliance with local laws & FSC Principles
2. Tenure & Use Rights & Responsibilities
3. Indigenous People's Rights
4. Community Relations, Worker's Rights & Human Resources
5. Benefits from the Forest
6. Environmental Impact
7. Management Plan
8. Monitoring & Assessment
9. Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests
10. Plantations

FSC Principles & Criteria

The FSC has developed a set of 10 principles and related criteria to define responsible forest management. These principles and criteria apply to all tropical, temperate, and boreal forests around the world. They use a consultative process to develop regionally specific standards that can be used to implement sustainable forest management (SFM) within a more local context. The regional standards include operational specifications unique to the given forest type, protective devices unique to local conservation challenges, and in some cases, other details depending on scale and intensity of forest operations (i.e. private woodlots versus crown land). In Ontario there are regional standards developed specifically for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region and the Boreal forest region.

Throughout the principles and related criteria there is a focus on community forest management, on local benefits from the forest (both intrinsic and monetary), and on operating within local objectives while considering landscape level effects. From a planning perspective, the concentration is on adaptive management and using the precautionary approach.

Forest Certification Tools Developed by the EOMF

The EOMF has developed a suite of publications and tools for forest certification that are directly applicable across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region and beyond:

- *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual*
- *EOMF Forest Certification Program Information Brochure*
- *A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification for Community Forests in Ontario*
- *A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification for Private Woodlot Owners in Ontario*
- *Certification Tool Kit for Private Woodlot Owner Groups*

Please visit www.eomf.on.ca/publications/ or contact the EOMF if you are interested in obtaining any of these documents.

Steps to becoming a FSC Certified Community Forest

For Community Forest Managers interested in pursuing FSC certification in Ontario, there are two options. You can either pursue certification on your own OR you can pursue certification in collaboration with an existing Resource Manager.

1. Pursuing FSC certification on your own

Depending on the scale and intensity of your annual harvesting operations and your forestry budget, you may consider pursuing your own certificate. If you determine that it is viable to pursue certification on your own, make use of the tools available from the EOMF in order to ease your process, and follow these steps:

- Review the **Checklist for Community Forest FSC Certification in Ontario** included within this document and the *EOMF Forest Certification Policies & Procedures Manual*. These tools can be used to determine if your current management practices are within the requirements for certification, and they can be used to identify areas where changes are needed.
- Contact a certifying body directly (i.e. SmartWood, SCS, SGS, Soil Association, KPMG).
- Go through the steps outlined in *Diagram 2: The FSC Forest Certification Process*.

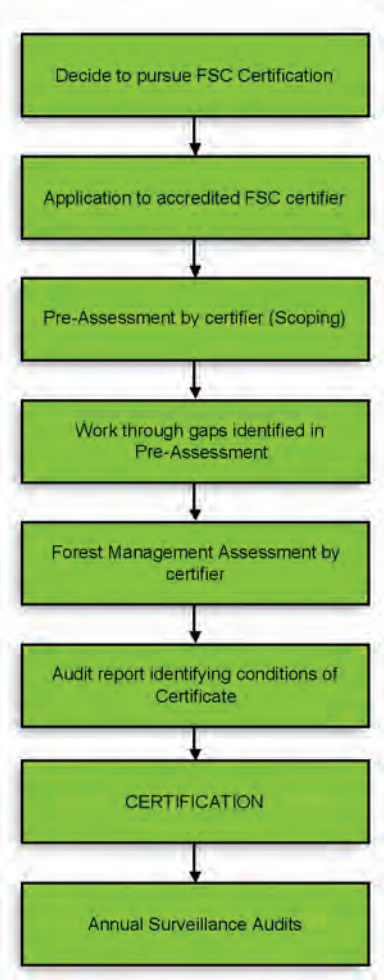

Diagram 2: The FSC Forest Certification Process

2. Pursuing FSC certification with an existing Resource Manager

There are several forestry consultants and forest-based organizations throughout the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region that hold Resource Manager Certificates; the EOMF is one. Depending on the location of the community forest you manage, you may want to pursue certification with a Resource Manager in your area. For a current list of Resource Managers, please contact the EOMF Forest Certification staff. While working with local Resource Managers, you can take advantage of the tools available through the EOMF to ease your certification process.

If you decide to pursue forest certification with the EOMF's Forest Certification Program, the steps involved are likely similar to the steps that would be taken by any Resource Manager in the region. The EOMF steps are as follows;

- **Obtain** a copy of the *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual*.
- **Review** the **Checklist for Community Forest FSC Certification in Ontario** included within this document to assess current forest management practices against the requirements for FSC certification.
- **Refer** to the Costing Policy in the Policies & Procedures Manual and contact the EOMF to determine your cost to join the program.
- **Present** the option of forest certification to your relevant decision-makers. Contact EOMF for communications materials such as presentations, brochures, and facts & figures.
- **Contact** the EOMF to schedule a visit and field tour with Forest Certification Staff. This visit will explore your compatibility with the FSC standards, and will review your plans for growth where necessary. Be prepared to provide the Forest Certification Staff with the following information:
    - o Management Plan (strategic & operational)
    - o Contact information for those involved in forest management
    - o Total area to be certified
    - o Estimated average annual harvest
    - o A document list outlining where all relevant documents can be found
- **Work out** a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the EOMF. See sample MOU included within the Policies & Procedures Manual.
- **Get the MOU signed** by the Forest Manager or the Director of Public Works (whichever staff member is in charge of lands) and send it to the EOMF Forest Certification Staff.
- **Payment** of fees to the EOMF.
- **Coordinate** and host annual visits with EOMF for internal auditing.
- **Be available** for participation in the EOMF's annual surveillance audit (to be coordinated by the EOMF and conducted by the certifier, SmartWood).

Checklist for Community Forest FSC Certification in Ontario

Key Examples of Forest Management Requirements

- ❑ Public consultations for management planning – make use of forest advisory committees made up of groups representing diverse forest values
- ❑ Forest Management Plan – including annual allowable cut (AAC)
- ❑ Harvest Prescriptions (signed by Registered Professional Forester or associate)
- ❑ Planning & Prescriptions shall include landscape level considerations
- ❑ Where species represent < 10% of the stand composition, an Acceptable Growing Stock (AGS) of that species shall be retained
- ❑ Movement towards natural forest condition in plantations
- ❑ Areas of concern as per Policies & Procedures Manual – examples include:
  - Hawk Nests
  - Deer Wintering
  - Cavity Trees
  - Supercanopy Trees
- ❑ Use of Certified Tree Markers
- ❑ Use local workers where possible
- ❑ Ensure all forest workers have WSIB coverage and public & employers liability insurance
- ❑ Contracts in place with all forest workers
- ❑ Boundary lines are well established and are not in contention
- ❑ Notice to adjacent landowners of operations
- ❑ Monitoring of harvest – fill in forms, keep on file, as per Policies & Procedures Manual:
  - Logging damage assessments
  - Wood utilization
  - Verifications of Areas of Concern (AOC)
  - Skid Trails
  - Landings
  - Rutting
  - Wood tracking
  - Access Roads
  - Water crossings
- ❑ Use a bill of lading process for wood tracking
- ❑ Efforts made to send wood to a chain of custody mill
- ❑ Pesticides & Herbicides – limit use

This is not an exhaustive list, it is a list of key items; all items required for certification are listed within the *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual*.

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest

As one of eleven large-scale working model forests in Canada's Model Forest Network, which represents the five major forest ecoregions of Canada, the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) works with government, NGOs, landowners, industry, First Nations, and other stakeholders in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region to develop new ways to sustain and manage our forest resources.

The EOMF champions the belief that we all have a stake in ensuring that the environmental, economic, cultural and social values of Eastern Ontario's forests are maintained for the benefit of all, now and in the future. The model forest provides a unique forum where forest users, many of whom may never have met before, can forge partnerships and gain a greater understanding of conflicting views, share their knowledge, and combine their expertise and resources.

The principle behind the model forest program is simple: demonstrate how partners, representing a diversity of forest values, can work together to achieve sustainable forest management using innovative, region-specific approaches.

The Forest Certification Program is just one of many EOMF projects. The EOMF currently has over 30 projects and initiatives underway, ranging from courses for landowners on timely topics and educational programming for children, to monitoring and reporting on the state of the forests in eastern Ontario. For more information on EOMF projects and initiatives, please visit www.eomf.on.ca.

Useful Forest Certification Links:

www.eomf.on.ca
www.certification.eomf.on.ca
www.eocfo.eomf.on.ca
www.fsccanada.org
www.smartwood.org
www.certifiedwood.org

For more information on Forest Certification contact:

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Our Partners:

Ontario

Prescott Russell

METCALF FOUNDATION

South Nation Conservation / de la Nation Sud

Ontario Woodlot Association

United Counties of Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry

Mohawk Council of Akwesasne

Ontario Forestry Association

"Forest Certification has provided forest owners with a sound framework to implement sustainable forestry from formulating their objectives to carrying out on the ground activities all the while considering a wide range of forest values and setting a high standard for others to follow."

~ Brian Barkley, General Manager
Eastern Ontario Model Forest

FSC
Mixed Sources
Product group from well-managed forests and other controlled sources
www.fsc.org Cert no. SW-FM/COC-232
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