



**Southern Forests Network
Group Certification Program
Operations Manual**

www.SouthernSustainableForests.org

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Acknowledgements

We should first acknowledge the work done by the many groups across the U.S. who have pioneered group certification. In particular, the following groups generously provided us with important information for this manual and template documents for managing group certification:

- [The Community Forestry Resource Center](#)
- [Massachusetts Woodlands Co-op](#)
- [Northwest Certified Forestry](#)
- [The Residents Committee to Protect the Adirondacks](#)
- [Vermont Family Forests](#)

We are grateful to the partners that have worked with the Southern Forests Network to make FSC certification accessible for small landowners and mills in the South, especially:

- [Appalachian Sustainable Development](#)
- [The Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative](#)
- [The Natural Resources Initiative of North Mississippi](#)
- [North Carolina State University's Forestry & Environmental Outreach Program](#)
- [The Rainforest Alliance TREES Program](#)

A number of talented people provided the Southern Forests Network with exceptional support and expertise during the development of the Group Certification Program:

- Ian Hanna, Denise Pranger, and Kirk Hansen at [Northwest Certified Forestry & Northwest Natural Resources Group](#), who generously shared their expertise, group certification management tools, and strategic insight, and helped us establish the Group Certification Program with a minimal investment of time and frustration.
- Katie Fernholz at [Dovetail Partners](#), who has always provided expert guidance on everything from criteria & indicators to the many vagaries of group certification.
- Jim Sitts and Richard Taylor at [Columbia Forest Products](#), who generously volunteered their technical expertise, moral support, and valuable guidance documents.
- Dr. John Hodges, a [SmartWood](#) auditor who formerly worked with Mississippi State University Extension, who generously volunteered his expert guidance to SFN staff and landowners.
- Carla Frisch, A [Duke University](#) Stanback Intern & student of Environmental Management, who compiled and edited the first drafts of this manual and other technical documents with the grace of a seasoned professional.

Finally, we want to thank the funders whose investments have made the Group Certification Program possible:

- The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation
- The US Department of Agriculture Conservation Innovation Grant Program
- The Town Creek Foundation

1. Introduction

1.1 The Southern Forests Network

The [Southern Forests Network](#) (SFN) is a network of people, organizations, and businesses working to conserve private forestlands and cultivate sustainable forest economies in the South. SFN was founded in 2002 by an informal coalition of conservation and forestry organizations, forestry professionals, landowners, and forest products businesses. SFN is a project of [WildLaw](#), a nonprofit environmental organization with offices in Alabama, Florida, and North Carolina.

Southern forests are among the most ecologically and economically productive forests in the world. In many Southern communities, forests dominate our landscape, economies, and culture. Today, development pressures, changes in the forest products industry, and declining forest health are creating uncertainty about the future of our forests. In many cases, forest management is maximizing ecological costs while minimizing economic and social benefits to landowners, workers, and communities.

Southern forests:

- harbor some of the greatest wildlife diversity in the world- but are also home to more threatened forest ecosystems than any other region in the US
- provide clean water, clean air, and other ecosystem services- but none of us have to pay for them, and landowners aren't paid for providing them
- are the world's largest producer of timber, producing more timber each year than any other region in America or any other country in the world- yet local communities do not benefit from this resource as much as they should
- are owned primarily by families and individuals who care about the land- but they face the greatest development pressures on forests anywhere in the US

The Southern Forests Network works to address the conditions by facilitating the development of sustainable forest economies throughout the South.

Sustainable forest economies rely first on restoring and maintaining healthy forest ecosystems, second on managing forests to produce useful goods or services, and third on ensuring economic and social justice for landowners and the people who make their living from the forest. We believe that the key to conserving our landscape, our heritage, and our rural economies lies in conserving our forests, managing them sustainably to produce high-value forest products, and establishing strong regional markets for local value-added wood products.

SFN is working to:

- Create strong, active partnerships among landowners, forestry professionals, local forest products businesses, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, educational and research institutions, and economic development organizations.
- Provide landowners with tools and resources that help them practice sustainable forestry and realize greater benefits from their forestland.
- Enhance rural economies through local value-added processing of sustainable forest products.
- Develop markets for local & sustainable forest products.

1.2 Forest Certification

For several decades forest communities and the public at large have had growing concern over the future condition of forests and the long-term sustainability of harvesting and other management activities. To address these concerns, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) created a system of independent forest inspection and certification in the early 1990s to assure landowners, consumers, industry, and other stakeholders that forests certified under the FSC system are well-managed and that products from these forests are produced in a ecologically, economically, and socially responsible manner.

FSC certification provides a tool to assure landowners that their forests are being well-managed and continually improved to meet long-term ecological, economic and social goals. Landowners, consumers, and the public can have confidence that products from an FSC certified forest are produced without compromising the health or productivity of forests.

FSC certification also provides a product label that is increasingly recognized and demanded in wood products markets. Markets for FSC certified wood products are growing rapidly. The Forest Stewardship Council estimates the size of the global market in FSC-certified products at over \$5 billion a year. In the Southern US, FSC certification is seen as a critical tool for setting wood products apart in the marketplace and for creating distinct market niches that provide benefits for sustainable forestry, small producers, and local value-added processing.

1.3 The Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a non-profit organization devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world's forests. FSC sets high standards that ensure forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable way. The goal of the FSC is to promote environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests by establishing a worldwide standard of recognized and respected Principles & Criteria for forestry.

FSC's Principles & Criteria (P&C) were developed through a rigorous process that included professional foresters, forest product manufacturers, timber companies, environmental groups, community development organizations, indigenous groups, and other forestry stakeholders.

The Forest Stewardship Council offers two types of certification: forest management certification and chain of custody certification.

Forest management certification is exactly what its name describes, certifying forestland under FSC's Principles and Criteria. Family Forest certification (one type of forest certification) follows the same principles as forest management certification but is streamlined for small ownerships and those that are under low-intensity management. Family Forest certification is not necessarily for 'family' owned land, but this name is used to distinguish it from certification of larger operations.

Chain of custody certification is issued to the businesses that process and sell certified wood products. Chain of custody certification ensures that products that are labeled "FSC" are made from raw materials from certified forests, tracking the products through the entire processing and distribution "chain". Chain of custody certification applies to mills, brokers, retailers, and others.

The FSC sets standards, but it does not enforce them. Independent third party organizations called “Certifiers” see that standards are actually applied to management. Certifiers provide FSC certification and make sure that certified operations continue to meet FSC standards.

FSC Principles for Forest Stewardship		What they mean
PRINCIPLE #1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND FSC PRINCIPLES	Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.	Forest management has to follow all U.S. laws and FSC Principles.
PRINCIPLE #2: TENURE AND USE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.	You must have legal documentation of land ownership or use rights.
PRINCIPLE #3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES’ RIGHTS	The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use, and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected.	Indigenous peoples in the Southeast are Native Americans. Their rights and lands must be respected.
PRINCIPLE #4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND WORKER’S RIGHTS	Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well being of forest workers and local communities.	Forests and forest-based businesses should contribute to the quality of life in the community and for those who make their living from the forest.
PRINCIPLE # 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST	Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest’s multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.	It is best to use many types of products from the forest.
PRINCIPLE #6: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT	Forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest.	Your primary goal as a forest manager is to restore and/or conserve a healthy forest landscape.
PRINCIPLE #7: MANAGEMENT PLAN	A management plan -- appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations -- shall be written, implemented, and kept up to date. The long-term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.	You should keep a written plan of how you are going to manage your land and your goals for your land.
PRINCIPLE #8: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT	Monitoring shall be conducted -- appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management -- to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social	You should keep records of all activities completed on your land and take note of how those activities affect forest health

	and environmental impacts.	and your community's wellbeing.
PRINCIPLE # 9: MAINTENANCE OF HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS	Management activities in high conservation value forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach.	Special care must be taken in the management of High Conservation Value Forests. These are unique forests that require special protections and management.
PRINCIPLE # 10: PLANTATIONS	Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1 - 9, and Principle 10 and its Criteria. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.	There are special criteria for the management of certified plantations.

You can find the complete version of the Forest Stewardship Council Principles and Criteria on the FSC website, or in hard copy in the SFN office. For more information about the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): www.fscus.org

1.4 Benefits of certification

FSC certification is defining a new paradigm for forest management and a new market for products from the forest, generating very real benefits for both forests and forest-based businesses.

Benefits for forests:

- An assurance of excellent forestry, resulting in a healthier, more productive forest
- A more effective management plan and more efficient plan implementation
- Input from forestry professionals on improved forest management through assessments and monitoring

Benefits for landowners and forest-based businesses:

- Access to specialized niche markets for sustainable forest products
- Recognition in the marketplace as an environmentally responsible company
- Access to the market for green building
- Recognition for good forest stewardship
- Access to a support network of expertise and resources
- Easier access to ecosystem service markets such as carbon markets, watershed protection programs, etc.

Is certification right for you?

Whether or not certification is an advantage for a particular landowner or business depends on many factors, including the size of the operation, level of income-producing activities, and current conditions and management.

If you are a landowner or mill who earns little income from the sale of forest products, the marketing advantages of certification may be of little use to you. However, you may want the assurance of good management that certification requires. If you are having difficulties making a decision, we would be glad to advise you.

1.5 The Group Certification Program

SFN's Group Certification Program (GCP) is designed to make FSC certification practical, accessible, and profitable for family forest owners and small mills. Group certification is a voluntary process by which multiple independent landowners and/or mills are certified under a single FSC certificate that is managed by a single entity. This reduces the costs of certification for each member, and centralizes many of the administrative responsibilities associated with certification.

As the group manager, SFN acts as a source of information and organizes the certification process. SFN communicates between the Certifier and group members and helps members maintain compliance with FSC standards. For the group to maintain certification, SFN must ensure that each member meets all FSC criteria.

Landowners, manufacturers, or producers who become members of the group agree in partnership with the SFN that FSC standards will be met and maintained on their forestland or in their facilities. When available, SFN works closely with the landowner's forestry cooperative or local association to provide these services. SFN also provides the necessary paperwork to make sure you are following the right steps to achieve and maintain certification.

How It Works

The structure of FSC group certification involves FSC, a Certifier, a Group Manager, and Group Members. For the GCP, [*Undetermined] is the Certifier; SFN is the Group Manager; and the individual landowners and mills are the Group Members. Contracts and other documentation define the relationships between each level of the structure.

As Group Manager, SFN is responsible for establishing the rules for admission into the Group Certification Program, resignation or expulsion from the program, and for monitoring compliance with FSC standards. SFN accomplishes this through an operational system that includes management plan reviews, site visits, and member services. SFN is directly accountable to the Certifier for all activities on member properties and all FSC related claims.

Beyond Certification

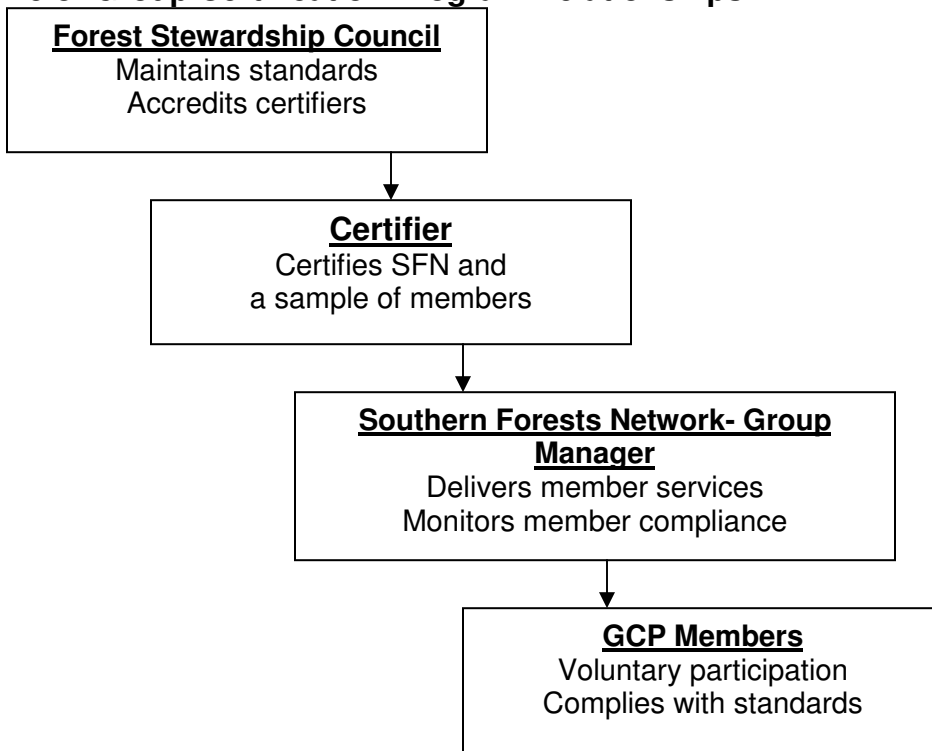
Certification is only the first step in making sustainable forestry profitable for landowners and businesses. The Southern Forests Network also works to expand regional markets for FSC certified products, identify and overcome barriers to certification, and facilitate the local value-added processing of certified forest products.

While group certification and the FSC Family Forests program have increased the accessibility of certification, there are still obstacles to both achieving certification and making certification profitable for small landowners and businesses. SFN works with GCP members, other stakeholders, and other groups to identify and address obstacles to certification. These activities include developing new resources and tools for landowners, and advocating for changes to FSC standards and policies.

SFN is also working with GCP members and other partners to expand markets for FSC certified products and facilitate local value-added processing. SFN's activities include market

assessments, outreach to key markets, regional coordination for the National Community Forestry Business Alliance, and facilitating market linkages.

Outline of Group Certification Program Relationships



2. Standard Operating Procedures for Members

This section reviews what you need to do to be a member and how being a member works. It is very important to understand the membership process and requirements.

About “Scale and Intensity”

You will note that FSC Principles and Standards frequently refer to “scale and intensity”. FSC Criteria and Indicators are intended to be implemented and evaluated according to the “scale and intensity” of an operation, whether it is a forest or a manufacturing facility. The intent of this language is to allow a case-by-case evaluation of each application for certification.

“Scale” refers to the size of a forest or facility. “Intensity” refers to the intensity and complexity of management. The Group Certification Program only provides certification to small-scale and/or low-intensity operations. This means that GCP members are not required to provide the same level of detail in their management plans as large landowners or mills. FSC standards may seem detailed and strict, but when they are considered in relation to the “scale and intensity” of your forest or mill, they should be very manageable. As long as the management activities you propose are sufficient to ensure sustainability in your forest or your facility, you will qualify for certification. SFN staff can advise you on “scale and intensity” issues.

2.1 Forest Certification

2.1.1 FSC Forest Management Standards

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has established Standards, Criteria, and Indicators for sustainable forest management. There are nine separate regional standards for different geographic regions in the U.S.

The Standards specify how FSC expects forest management to accomplish FSC Principles. You should familiarize yourself with FSC standards- your forest management plan must meet the requirements of your regional forest management standard. All standards documents, and documents that provide guidance on implementation of the standards, can be found on the FSC websites: FSC-US www.fscus.org & FSC-International www.fsc.org

Members of the SFN GCP certificate must meet all FSC standards for forest management including:

- [Regional Standards](#): FSC standards for forest management for either the Appalachian, Southeast, or Mississippi Alluvial Valley region
- [FSC-GUI-60-100 Guidance on the Interpretation of FSC Principles and Criteria to take account of scale and intensity](#)

In the regional standards document, you will see principles, criteria, indicators, and verifiers. The roles of principles, criteria, indicators, and verifiers are as follows:

Principle: An essential element of forest stewardship.

Criterion: A specific means of judging whether a principle has been fulfilled.

Indicator: A variable that specifically tells whether a criterion is met in a regional context, and that specifically states desired management outcomes and processes.

Verifier: An example of a way in which a forest or management condition or state can be easily assessed to determine whether an indicator has been met.

For example: (excerpted from the FSC Southeast Standards)

Principle →	PRINCIPLE #1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND FSC PRINCIPLES Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.
Criterion →	1.1. Forest management shall respect all national and local laws and administrative requirements.
Indicator →	1.1.a. Forest (see Glossary) management plans and operations comply with federal, state, county, municipal, and tribal laws, case law, and regulations.
Verifier →	<i>For example, permits and/or authorization are obtained when required.</i>

2.1.2 Eligibility requirements for Forests

Membership in the Group Certification Program (GCP) is available to private forest landowners in the Southeast who qualify as “Family Forests” according to FSC policies. Landowners must be committed to meeting and upholding FSC standards in forest management over the long term.

Eligibility Requirements for Family Forests

Family Forest certification is designed for small forest ownerships and forests that harvest low volumes of timber. Family Forest certification streamlines the planning, reporting, and inspection requirements for forestlands, reducing the cost and complexity of certification.

To be certified as a Family Forest, a member has to meet at least one of these two qualifications:

- Forest area or ownership is no larger than 2470 acres.
- OR**
- The average annual harvest is no more than 20% of mean annual increment and no more than 5000M³/yr (2.2 MMBF or million board feet).

Information published by FSC (FSC-PLO-20-101)

For more detailed information about how requirements are streamlined for the Family Forests Program, see the FSC Guidance document on the FSC website:

- [FSC-GUI-60-100 Guidance on the Interpretation of FSC Principles and Criteria to take account of scale and intensity](#)

Mean annual increment is the potential or actual yield of a forest, calculated as the total volume of wood produced divided by the age (Volume of stand [m³/ha or MBF/ac]/Age of stand [yrs]).

Access to property for visits

All landowners must make their property and forest management records available for inspection by SFN and SFN’s Certifier. Site visits occur when a landowner applies for GCP membership, and on a periodic basis to ensure compliance with FSC Principles & Criteria. SFN and certifiers must be able to access the property for these visits.

Eligible ownership size

Landowners must own a minimum of ten acres of forested land to qualify for GCP membership.

Eligible management history

Almost all forest areas are eligible for FSC certification, but there are some restrictions on plantations. According to FSC, plantations are *“forest areas lacking most of the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems as defined by FSC approved national and regional standards of forest stewardship, which result from the human activities of either planting, sowing or intensive silvicultural treatments.”*

Plantations created *from natural or semi-natural forests* after November 1994 are not eligible for certification, *unless* the current landowner is not responsible for the forest conversion.

Note that most private forestlands in the South are considered “second or third growth forests”- meaning that they have been cleared one or more times for timber harvest or agricultural use and have since grown back. In most cases, these forests are not considered either natural or semi-natural, and establishment of plantations in these areas is certifiable.

Also note that all planted stands are not considered plantations. It is acceptable to establish planted stands of trees on a previously forested area as part of a restoration-based forest management plan. In addition, if you have planted trees on non-forest land and plan to either restore the land to a native forest type or manage according to the FSC standards for plantations, you are eligible for certification.

2.1.3 Certifiable products

Timber

If your forestland is FSC certified, the timber that you harvest is FSC certified. More detailed information about forest management and timber harvesting standards is provided in this manual.

Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

Products from the forest other than timber can also be FSC certified. Theoretically, any product or service from a certified forest could be certified. Whether or not a particular NTFP is certifiable depends on whether SFN and the Certifier can develop procedures for satisfying FSC Principle & Criteria. A number of NTFPs are already being FSC certified, and SFN will work with GCP members to facilitate the certification of NTFPs whenever possible. Examples of non timber forest products are:

- Medicinal plants
 - i.e. ginseng, black cohosh
- Decorative plants and landscaping products
 - i.e. pine straw, pinecones, galax, moss
- Forest foods
 - i.e. mushrooms, blackberries, syrup, nuts
- Recreation and tourism
 - i.e. hiking trails

2.1.4 Management Planning and Inventory Requirements

Requirements for Forest Management Plans

Each property enrolled in the GCP must have its own written management plan that meets FSC Principles and Criteria, and this plan must be approved by SFN. Developing a good

management plan requires a keen understanding of forest science and familiarity with the art of sustainable silviculture. It is highly recommended that landowners work with a professional forester that specializes in sustainable forestry. It is also important that your forester be familiar with, or willing to learn about, FSC certification requirements.

The two most important steps in the management planning process are completing a forestland assessment and developing management goals.

A forestland assessment should provide you with detailed information about your forestland. The assessment could include an inventory of plant and animal species, an inventory of timber and non-timber forest products, identification of ecologically significant areas, and an assessment of forest health and restoration needs. An assessment can also describe your forest's relationship to the larger landscape, and identify important connections between the management of your forest and the overall health of your community's forests and watersheds.

Once you have learned as much as possible about your forest, you should very carefully consider your management options and work with your forester to develop management goals. Well-informed, specific, and practical management goals create a framework for management that will ensure that you maximize desired benefits from the forest, are prepared to respond quickly to changing conditions, and improve forest health and productivity over time.

The level of detail of your forest management plan will depend on the condition and size of your forest, and the intensity of your management activities. For instance, landowners who occasionally harvest timber or carry out restoration activities to improve forest health are able to operate under a simpler plan than landowners who harvest larger volumes of timber on a more frequent basis. SFN can advise you and your forester on the level of management planning required for your property.

Below is a list of all the things that must be included in the management plan:

1. Description of the property in terms of location, acreage, proof of legal ownership status, deed location, tax map information, history of past management, and key topographic features;
2. Description of the forest resource including information for silvicultural operations and fragile or protected areas that will receive limited or no silvicultural treatment (e.g. wetlands; riparian areas, cliffs, old growth, threatened, rare, locally endemic, or endangered plant and animal species);
3. A forest inventory at the stand level to provide sufficient information to describe stand structure, species composition, basal area of acceptable and unacceptable growing stock, volumes of saw timber and pulpwood, soil and site conditions, insect and disease conditions, habitat conditions, presence of invasive species, and other parameters that are needed to describe the stand;
4. Management goals for the property;
5. A plan for regular monitoring to update the forest inventory and management plan;
6. Silvicultural recommendations that reflect the landowner's goals, improve stands, and protect the growing site and unique attributes such as the amounts of coarse woody debris, niche habitats, and buffer zones;

7. A rationale for control of harvesting including area control, volume control, or a combination of the two. Scheduling the treatment of stand or designating a certain percentage of the forest to be harvested each year is considered area control.
8. A schedule of work for 10–15 years that covers specific management activities such as harvesting, site preparation, road construction, mechanical operations, maintenance of high conservation value forests, restoration activities, management of protected areas, prescribed burning, fire management plan, monitoring procedures, fertilizer application, and integrated pest management activities.
9. Maps describing the forest resource base including:
 - Protected areas such as wetlands, rare and endangered species and plant communities, and riparian areas and streams, archaeological sites, cultural and customary use areas;
 - Relevant landscape-level factors such as mountains, rivers, lakes, property boundaries, areas of ownership, area being certified, adjacent ownerships, roads, trails and structures;
 - Stands with forest type and area;
 - Soils and site conditions;
 - “High Conservation Value Forests,” if present; and,
 - Scale, north arrow, legend, locus, border and date of preparation and name of the forester preparing the plan

Plans for Non-Timber Forest Products

All materials that come from a certified forest could potentially be marketed with the FSC label. However, there are different levels of understanding about how to manage non-timber forest products in an appropriate way. Landowners selling non-timber forest products (NTFPs) as FSC certified must demonstrate that they are practicing sustainable harvesting and cultivation techniques.

Members interested in harvesting non-timber forest products must:

- Investigate and document current knowledge regarding appropriate management, harvest levels, utilization standards, and regeneration rates for the harvested species
- Provide a species management plan that ensures that harvest rates, cultural techniques and harvest methods are appropriate for the particular plant and part used (exudate, reproductive propagule, vegetative structure) and management activities maintain viable populations of target NTFPs. This plan should be submitted with the Forest Management Plan and updated according to monitoring data.
- Include consideration of NTFPs in identification of High Conservation Value Forests
- Collect harvest volume records
- Document the location of existing populations and harvests
- Develop and implement a monitoring plan
- Maintain compliance with all FSC certification standards, with special attention to High Conservation Value Forests and rare, threatened, or endangered species standards

For more guidance on certification of NTFPs, see Appendix 4: Guidelines for Non-timber Forest Product Management.

2.1.5 Forest Management Activities

This section provides details about FSC requirements for common forest management activities.

Rare, Threatened or Endangered Resources

SFN is committed to identifying and protecting rare, threatened, or endangered (RTE) resources on all properties enrolled in the GCP. Forest management plans must include investigations to identify RTE plants, animals and/or natural communities in the field. Plan writers must investigate existing RTE databases and records.

If an RTE plant, animal or community is identified, it must be documented in the forest management plan. Appropriate management guidelines must also be clearly outlined in the management plan and during any subsequent site disturbing activities. The management guidelines must be species and site specific and comply with the most current available knowledge about the habitat or management requirements of the identified resource and any applicable regulation. The management plan, recommendations, and eventual treatment designs must include guidance for species-specific protection, conservation, or restoration of critical habitat elements where RTE species exist. The appropriate State or Federal agencies will be notified as required by law and the certification standards.

Historical, Archeological, Architectural, and Cultural Resources

SFN is extremely concerned about any loss or damage to any historically or culturally significant resources on member properties. It is well known that properties in the South can include a wide variety of cultural resources related to indigenous populations, early pioneers, and various waves of settlement and land use activities.

SFN requires that the forest management plan development process include an investigation of known or potential historical and cultural resources. This information can be gathered through interviews with the landowners, consultation with state agencies or state maintained databases, and site reconnaissance.

If historical and/or cultural resources are identified on the property or in a nearby location that may be affected by management on the property, the location of the resource must be recorded in the plan and the resource described. Management or protection of the resource must be detailed in the management plan and in subsequent site disturbing activities. All protection measures must comply with Best Management Practices or site level guidelines (both mandatory and voluntary). All applicable laws must also be followed and the state archaeologist must be notified in the event that a burial site or human remains are found or suspected to be present.

Tenure, Use Rights, and Indigenous Peoples' Rights

SFN is committed to upholding FSC Principles 2 and 3 in relation to Tenure and Use Rights and Responsibilities and Indigenous Peoples' Rights. To this end, SFN expects all participating landowners to verify that the land they are enrolling is clear and legally secure and that the boundaries are properly identified on the ground and that timber harvesting or other operations are legally permitted. SFN may request copies of a land title or other document to verify claims.

SFN is committed to identifying and protecting any known or suspected cultural or historical resources or sites on member lands. SFN has made a commitment to developing strong working relationships with indigenous groups in the region and staying informed about current land use issues.

High Conservation Value Forests and Habitats

High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) are those that possess one or more of the following attributes:

- a) Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or large landscape-level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance
- b) Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- c) Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g., watershed protection, erosion control)
- d) Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

Endemism refers to a species that only exists in one place.

The designation of HCVFs on family forests is very rare. Owners and managers of small forests that practice low-intensity forestry may meet this requirement with brief, informal assessments. More extensive and detailed assessments are expected by owners and managers of large forests and/or those who practice more intensive management. Examples of HCVF forest types in the South are included in Appendix 2: High Conservation Value Forests in the South.

Management activities in HCV forests must maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. SFN requires that forest management plans identify HCVFs and provide information about the location, size and composition. These communities can be identified through existing records and databases, interviews with the landowner, and site reconnaissance. If a high conservation value habitat is identified, the management plan must provide information about the location, size and composition. The management plan must also provide guidance for appropriate management that is in compliance with both the FSC standards and the most current and reliable knowledge about effective protection, restoration or maintenance of the identified habitat.

Conservation Zones and Protected Areas

Although SFN anticipates that members of the GCP will meet the definition of a “small” or “low-intensity” operation and therefore be largely exempted from requirements for conservation zones, SFN encourages the development of conservation zones when appropriate with special emphasis given in the following situations:

- the member property contains rare, threatened or endangered species or their habitats, or any identified High Conservation Value Forest areas
- the member property includes plantation(s)
- the member is committed to establishing protected areas or conservation zones
- the property contains an area or habitat most appropriately managed through conservation or protection.

Timber Harvesting Standards

As a group certificate holder, SFN must ensure that the planning and implementation of forest management activities under our certificate meet FSC national and regional standards. The following standards, written by the Community Forestry Resource Center, provide guidelines for how FSC principles translate into on-the-ground logging operations. There are not meant to be inflexible or all-inclusive, but to provide a set of clear expectations that should apply to harvest operations under most conditions.

Land and Forest Protection

- Basal scarring/barking of residual trees is minimized through use of careful skidding, forwarding where appropriate, and use of bumper trees.
- Top damage to residual trees or established reproduction is minimized through use of directional felling or use of mechanized harvesters where appropriate. Damaged trees are felled and/or made safe before leaving the cutting unit.
- Logging slash is cut or managed such that no slash is left hanging in residual trees or fences, and no slash is left with a height more than three feet from the ground.
- Trees are felled whenever possible into the harvest unit, and not onto roads, fences, wetlands, streams or other areas. Where such felling occurs, trees and tops are removed from such areas at the time of felling and skidding.
- Damage to fences and other improvements are avoided and any damage that occurs is repaired before conclusion of job.
- Skidder ruts are minimized through use of low impact equipment, cabling on steep slopes, and avoiding logging during wet or unsuitable conditions. Skidder ruts are repaired or re-graded before conclusion of job, or during otherwise suitable ground conditions.
- Stumps are cut wherever possible to a maximum height of 10", or to a height no greater than the stump diameter.
- All non-commercial trees designated for felling are cut to specifications at time of harvest.
- It is important that your boundaries are correct and made clearly visible to avoid timber theft (unauthorized harvesting of trees).

Environmental Protection

- Applicable best management practices for water quality are adhered to in all aspects of the logging operation.
- Crossing of, or operating within 50 feet of navigable streams shall be avoided at all times in the absence of specific approval and designated crossing areas and crossing methods.
- Sensitive areas, sites of threatened or endangered species, or otherwise designated excluded areas are avoided at all times, or otherwise managed in accordance with written guidelines provided by forester.
- Logging slash shall be kept out of streams, ditches, wetlands and other designated sensitive areas.

Road and Landing Maintenance

- Primary skid trails or haul roads shall be designated in advance, or identified and discussed by logger and forester at time of start-up meeting.
- Landing and decking areas shall be designated prior to harvest. No other clearings shall be established or used for decking without prior approval.
- Cull logs, defective pieces, topwood and all other non-merchantable products shall be cut and left in the woods to the extent possible. Landings, fields, roads and main skid trails shall be cleared of all such material prior to job completion.
- Skid trails with slopes in excess of 15% shall have water bars or other approved water diversion structures established prior to job conclusion.
- Skid trails, landings and other areas with significant soil disturbance shall be re-bladed and contoured as necessary to re-establish natural drainage patterns.
- To the extent possible, restoration treatments for roads (grading, water bars, etc.) shall be discussed and planned for prior to beginning work.
- All roads, whether paved or unpaved, must meet local Best Management Practices (BMPs) and other recommended guidelines for road building and maintenance.
- When selecting an equipment operator to perform access road work, look for contractors who have lots of experience working in the forest and who are familiar with BMPs.

Check references and, even better, visit job sites. Most consulting foresters have lists of contractors they have used for forest access construction and maintenance.

Product Care and Utilization

- All products for harvest shall be felled, bucked, handled and sorted for the highest and best value.
- Logs shall be decked and piled by product whenever possible to allow for field scaling.
- Trucking shall occur as soon as possible after cutting to minimize product degrade and help ensure prompt payment to all parties

General Cooperation

- A start-up meeting is held prior to beginning work on all jobs. Objectives of harvest, harvest unit boundaries, trail and landing layout, timing of harvest, and any special conditions will all be discussed at this meeting, and changes may be agreed to as appropriate.
- Logger and forester communicate at least 2-3 times per week on progress of job and any unforeseen developments
- All trash, solid waste or other debris brought to site or generated on site shall be removed prior to conclusion of harvest
- Any condition which would pose a safety hazard or liability to the property owner, whether related to the harvest operation or not, shall be reported in a timely manner. Examples could include fire hazards, evidence of trespass, leaking hazardous waste, illegal dumping, etc.
- Landowners play a lead role in communicating with neighbors and other stakeholders about their planned activities. During harvest or other treatment planning, interactions with surrounding properties, ownerships and uses must be addressed along with transportation and access arrangements.

Logging Safety

- All OSHA required personal protective equipment is provided and properly used by logging crews and forestry field crews.
- Logging crews and forestry field crews are Game of Logging (GOL) certified, or can otherwise demonstrate a regular program of logging safety training.
- Logging crews and forestry crews operate in a safe and professional manner at all times.
- First aid kits are available at all times and crews receive training in emergency first-aid and CPR.
- Use of alcohol or illegal drugs on job-site or during the workday by logging or forestry crews is forbidden.

Business Practices

- Forester and logger will negotiate a rate for services on each job which reflects the cost of all work required and provides fair compensation to all involved.
- Load tickets will be properly completed for each load leaving the logging site. A copy of the completed load ticket will be left in the job lock box prior to removing the load from the site.
- Mill scale tickets will be obtained for each load delivered to a mill. A copy of the mill scale ticket shall be attached to a copy of the load ticket and returned to forester for each load removed no later than one week from time of delivery.

Pesticide Use

The aim of forest managers of certified forests, whether in plantations or natural forests, should be to control diseases, pest insects and animals, or unwanted, competitive plants only when necessary and without the use of chemical pesticides, which include fungicides, insecticides or herbicides.

If pesticides are being used as a component of forest management, a program of phased reduction of chemical use could be used to achieve eventual non-chemical disease, pest, or weed management. However, only a plan of phased pesticide reduction is, in itself, insufficient for certification unless it explicitly aims at pest or weed management without chemicals.

Sustainable forestry requires that landowners manage forest pests using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques. IPM programs manage pests through an understanding of their interactions with other organisms and the environment. IPM programs consist of four basic elements:

1. Acquisition of knowledge about the target organism's biology and population dynamics,
2. Monitoring of the target organism's population levels,
3. Determining the acceptable injury and action threshold levels of the disease, insect, animal, or weed, and
4. Employment of the lowest-impact population control method for the organism.

These components of IPM should be followed to assess any potential disease, pest or weed problem, and to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of control methods.

The Appendices include further information on pesticides and a list of prohibited chemicals. FSC periodically revises the list of prohibited chemicals, so it is important to check the latest version of the "FSC Pesticides Policy" document before beginning use of a chemical. SFN will keep our members informed of policy changes. Note that in some cases FSC allows for exceptions to the pesticide rules in specific instances. See the "Approved derogations for use of pesticides" document below for more information.

For more information, see the FSC website www.fscus.org for guidance on pesticide use, including:

- [FSC Pesticides Policy \(FSC-POL-30-001\)](#)
- [FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation \(FSC-GU-30-001\)](#)
- [Chemical Pesticides In Certified Forests: Interpretation Of The FSC Principles & Criteria, FSC International Policy, FSC-IP-0001](#)
- [Use of Chemical Pesticides in Certified Forests: clarification of FSC criteria 6.6, 6.7, and 10.7](#)
- [Approved derogations for use of pesticides \(FSC-GUI-30-001a\)](#)

Also see the Community Forestry Resource Center's guides on pesticide use on their website <http://www.forestrycenter.org/pesticides.cfm>:

- A Step-by-Step Guide to Planning for Pesticide Use
- Thinking Ahead: A Visual Guide to Pesticide Application Planning

Plantations

FSC has specific standards for the management of timber plantations. Management of plantations must meet all FSC Principles, including Principle 10 which provides specific criteria that apply only to plantations.

Safety Policy

Throughout all forest management operations and harvesting activities, all timber purchasers, operators, contractors and other agents or staff members are required to conform to standard OSHA safety measures.

Forest Aesthetics

SFN recognizes that the aesthetic impacts of forest management extend beyond the property level. SFN believes that forest landowners and resource managers have a responsibility to maintain long-term aesthetic quality. What is aesthetically acceptable differs greatly among individuals, making it impossible to set specific guidelines and measurable targets for aesthetics management. SFN believes that high aesthetic quality is not a management goal in and of itself, but rather a byproduct of well-planned management that respects the biological and physical limitations of a site and promotes landscape-level ecological diversity. All of SFN's management implementation guidelines are firmly rooted in these concepts.

When addressing forest aesthetics, SFN references the publication "*A Guide to Logging Aesthetics: Practical Tips for Loggers, Foresters, and Landowners*," published by the Northeast Region Agricultural Engineering Service.

2.1.6 Harvest & Sale Documentation

When you harvest logs or other products from your forest you must keep careful records for several reasons:

1. To ensure your forest products can be labeled as FSC certified;
2. To protect yourself from misunderstandings and bad forestry or business practices;
3. To demonstrate compliance with FSC criteria and your management plan; and
4. To maintain good inventory and monitoring information to evaluate the impacts of management activities on forest health.

Timber Harvest Documentation

Timber harvesting plans, timber sale contracts, and other harvesting agreements must include the following items. These documents can mention the items directly or through reference to the management plan (as appropriate for the size and complexity of the operation). This will ensure that there are no misunderstandings between the landowner, forester, timber buyer, and logging crew that might result in loss of certification status.

1. Assurance of compliance with applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs), Site-Level Guidelines, and OSHA Safety Measures
2. Stand-level silvicultural prescriptions and marking guidelines (a detailed description of the process for selecting trees for harvest, crop trees, cull trees, etc)
3. Stand-level information about the forest's condition and composition
4. A description of "desired future conditions", including volume or basal area and species composition
5. Evaluations of potential stand level and landscape level impacts of proposed activities and related design elements for avoidance or mitigation
6. Strategies for regeneration, structural diversity, species diversity, ecological processes, landscape issues, and protection of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered resources
7. Maximum acceptable levels of residual stand damage (stand damage assessments will be conducted and documented on all operations included in the GCP)
8. Retention of adequate coarse woody debris

9. Transportation and access plans that include general harvesting logistics, techniques, equipment, transportation systems, area limitations, and operational restrictions
10. A map depicting the locations of property boundaries, harvest units, roads, and other special features.

Harvest Inventories

You must keep detailed records of all harvests from your forest, including timber and non-timber forest products. These records should include the products, species, and volumes of products harvested. GCP members are required to submit an annual harvest report each year they harvest products from the forest. A form for this report is provided by SFN.

Chain of Custody Procedures

You should follow these procedures when you ship products from your forest to maintain “chain of custody” certification of your products. This means your products should arrive at their destination with proof of certification. [For more detailed information about chain of custody certification and how final products (such as a wooden table or an herbal medicine) meet requirements for FSC labeling, see section 3.6.]

1. Provide documentation of all shipments of forest products: All loads leaving the forest are marked with a unique load ticket that includes the member’s chain of custody code [SA-FM/COC-XXX, may be written onto ticket]. Forms for the log tickets are multi-part copies. One copy goes with the load, one ticket stays with the operator, and one ticket is turned into the timber consultant or landowner. SFN provides a “Chain of Custody Shipping Ticket” form that you can use to record the volumes of products you ship.
2. Keep good records: After the harvest is completed, the landowner receives copies of all load tickets, scaling sheets or weigh documents, and mill payment sheets. The landowner keeps a spreadsheet, database, or ticket folder summarizing all information from the document copies received in #2 above.
3. You may choose to label your products: Logs can be branded with a unique hammer or other mark; other products can be branded on packaging (bundles, crates, etc)- this can be helpful but is not required.
4. Resolve questions quickly: All questions on certified wood tickets should be resolved within 60 days of the last load leaving the harvest site.

2.1.7 Monitoring and Quality Control

Your forest management plan must include a plan for monitoring your forest and using monitoring data to update your management plan. Good monitoring and record-keeping make it possible to evaluate the impacts of management activities, adapt management plans to produce better results, identify problems such as pests or timber theft, and document your progress toward desired future conditions for your forest.

It is important to monitor a broad set of forest conditions over the long-term in order to assess the impacts of management on the landscape. Exactly what forest attributes are evaluated, and how frequently they are monitored, varies on property-by-property basis *according to the forest’s composition, size, and intensity of management*. Every monitoring program, however, must collect sufficient information to be able to track changes in forest health and composition over time, assess the relative success of management activities in relation to landowner goals, track the flow of products from the land, and evaluate the impacts of management on the surrounding landscape.

Group Certification Program members can generally meet FSC criteria for monitoring with the collection of basic information such as timber inventories, surveys of plant and animal species, and identification of threats to water quality. Below we provide more detailed information on monitoring goals and methods- remember that your monitoring plan will most likely not require a high level of detail if you are managing a small acreage.

Components of a Monitoring plan

The following components should be included in a forest monitoring plan:

1. Goals and objectives for monitoring—rationale for monitoring, intensity of monitoring
2. Indicators to be monitored
3. Incorporating monitoring results into the management plan
4. Monitoring summary for public review

You should monitor, at a minimum, the following indicators:

1. Volumes of all forest products harvested.
2. Growth rates, regeneration, and condition of the forest.
3. Composition and observed changes in the flora and fauna.
4. Environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.
5. Cost, productivity, and efficiency of forest management.

Property Level Monitoring

The purpose of property level monitoring is to maintain an up-to-date evaluation of overall forest health and development.

The Forest Management Plan should identify critical forest attributes that should be monitored, and provide information on the methods and timing for evaluating each attribute. The forest inventory that is completed when the plan is written is the best time to identify critical attributes and decide how often they should be re-evaluated. Property-wide critical attributes that might be identified in the management plan could include the following:

- Presence of specific exotic/invasive species known to occur in the area.
- Occurrence of insect or disease outbreaks or natural disasters.
- Boundary maintenance and occurrence of trespass.
- Occurrence and condition of any important wildlife habitat components; rare, threatened, or endangered species, and sensitive or unique natural communities.
- Implementation of, or deviation from, the management plan.

A landowner can assess most property-wide attributes with a careful walk through the woods once or twice a year, preferably during the growing season. SFN will provide an “Annual Forest Health Report” form to guide landowners through this simple process. More detailed monitoring assessments are expected to be carried out every 5-10 years.

Stand Level Monitoring

The purpose of stand level monitoring is to track an individual forest stand’s progress towards the desired future condition described in the management plan.

When designing a project such as a commercial timber harvest, timber stand improvement, tree planting, or exotic species control operation, it is important to identify the critical attributes that will be used to evaluate the positive and negative impacts of the project. These attributes are also used to track progress towards the desired future condition, and can trigger a consulting forester to re-evaluate the management strategy.

Critical attributes for a specific stand or project area might include the following:

- Volume of forest products harvested
- Growth rates, regeneration, forest composition, and condition of the forest
- Seedlings or saplings per acre of specific species.
- Environmental impacts of any management activities to the property, nearby properties, or the larger landscape.
- Social and economic impacts of management activities on the larger community.
- Costs and return on investment associated with forest management activities.
- Incidence of a forest pest and impacts of IPM programs.

Landscape Level Monitoring

If significant landscape-level management concerns are identified, SFN may require that a landowner address these concerns in their management plan. This might include tracking the extent of regionally significant species, the economic impact of wood or non-timber forest products sold, or the extent of different land cover types.

2.2 Chain of Custody Certification

The term Chain of Custody (COC) refers to the tracking of certified material through various stages of production (harvesting, milling, distribution, etc). Chain of custody certification is issued to the businesses that process and sell certified wood products. Chain of custody certification applies to mills, brokers, retailers, and others.

Chain of custody certification ensures that products that are labeled “FSC” are made from raw materials from certified forests, tracking the products through the entire processing and distribution “chain”. Each party in the supply chain that handles certified materials, up to and sometimes including the retailer, must have an active FSC certificate to sell or label FSC materials.

Do Landowner Members Need Chain of Custody Certification?

A very basic form of Chain of Custody certification is automatically included in SFN’s GCP certification for forests. This allows landowners in the group to process logs from their own land, using their own or borrowed or rented equipment, and sell the products as FSC certified. However, certified landowners *DO* need additional Chain of Custody certification if they process wood from anywhere other than their own land.

2.2.1 FSC Chain of Custody Standards

COC certification is simply an assurance to consumers that wood products labeled FSC are really made with FSC certified wood. To receive COC certification, you must be able to demonstrate that FSC certified forest products are carefully accounted for during transportation, storage, etc., and that certified materials are always distinguishable from non-certified materials in your inventory.

Members of the SFN GCP certificate must meet all FSC standards for Chain of Custody certification:

- [FSC-STD-40-004: FSC standard for companies supplying and manufacturing FSC certified products](#)
- [FSC-STD-40-005: FSC standard for controlling non-FSC certified wood](#)
- [FSC-STD-30-010: FSC standard for forest managers for controlled wood](#)

The FSC Chain of Custody standards can be viewed online at: www.fsc.org

2.2.2 Eligibility Requirements for Chain of Custody

Eligible Ownership Size

Anyone with an interest in manufacturing and marketing FSC certified wood products may apply to join the GCP, provided that the business qualifies as a “Small Forest Enterprise”. That is, you must have:

- no more than 15 employees (including part-time and seasonal staff),
OR
- gross annual income from wood products of no more than \$1 million AND no more than 25 employees (including part-time and seasonal staff).

Businesses with more than one division, such as an architectural millwork company with a design division and a construction division, need only apply this standard to the division that is seeking certification.

Access to property for visits

All GCP members must make their property available for inspections. SFN’s certifier may also come to the property for monitoring. SFN and certifiers must be able to access the property at scheduled times for these visits.

Availability of public summaries

After an assessment is completed, a summary of findings must be made accessible to the public. According to FSC, “an additional public summary is not required if the main assessment itself is made publicly available.”

2.2.3 Certifiable products

Any products manufactured from FSC certified raw materials by a facility with FSC COC certification are certified according to the labeling requirements in section 4.

2.2.4 Chain of Custody Group Certification Details

Documented Control System

To receive COC certification, you must have a Control System approved by SFN. The Control System Proposal Form provided by SFN will help you develop this system. The Control System must explain:

- Your procedures for the tracking and handling of certified material from harvesting through final sales and shipping
- The personnel responsible for the control system
- Forms and records used for COC tracking and handling and how they will be used
- Procedures for labeling and logo use
- The protocol for keeping records that pertain to certification
- Procedures for outsourcing, if applicable

The member must:

- Verify that suppliers of certified materials have valid FSC certificates, and that the certified status, percentage-based claim, volume received of inputs, as well as the supplier’s FSC certificate code is provided on accompanying delivery documentation and/or supplier invoice.
- Store certified products as separate, secure units
- Use distinguishing marks/logos and/or the SFN FSC certification number on certified loads or products. Examples of markings on at least one, and preferably all, logs in a load include:

- Green end paint
- If the Member is FSC exclusive, a stencil or hammer mark with logo
Stencil or hammer mark that includes the GCP certification number
- Bar code that designates certified status
- Maintain records of volumes of certified materials shipped, received, and processed
- Include the following information on sales invoices and shipping documentation:
 - Member business name, contact details, and logo
 - Date of sale
 - Harvest site (if not FSC exclusive)
 - Buyer
 - Line-item certified description
 - Quantity/volume for each item
 - The GCP certification number

Personnel Training

The member must:

- Provide employees with training/orientation on the handling and representation of certified products
- Provide employees with its documented control system as well as any additional materials about COC handling procedures and policies for certified products

Records & Reporting

The member must:

- Submit an Annual Inventory Report that includes summary records of the volumes of certified materials shipped, received, and processed; applicable conversion factors; and certified sales figures.
- Maintain and provide access to records of all purchases, processing, and sales of certified products, as well as marketing, advertising, and any other public information pertaining to certification for a minimum of 5 years

Marketing, Advertising, & Public Information

The member must:

- Submit all public information referencing SFN, SFN's Certifier, or FSC to SFN for review and approval prior to use (to ensure consistency with program guidelines). This includes products labels, web pages, catalogues, brochures, mailings, letters, information for investors, etc.
- Accept responsibility for independent certification and FSC logo materials provided upon certification and ensure the logos are only used on FSC-certified products

Outsourcing

A COC certified facility can “outsource” work to a non-certified processor and still label products as FSC certified if a Chain of Custody Outsourcing Agreement is in place. SFN allows GCP members with COC certification to outsource to an uncertified facility for one year. After one year, the outsourcing facility must become FSC certified. In some cases, SFN may be willing to extend this one-year time limit.

An Outsourcing Agreement template is available from SFN. This Agreement allows a COC certified company to outsource processing or manufacturing of certified wood products to another company that is not certified. You are responsible for getting the non-certified company to sign the Agreement and ensuring that the non-certified company is fully aware of its responsibilities outlined in the Agreement.

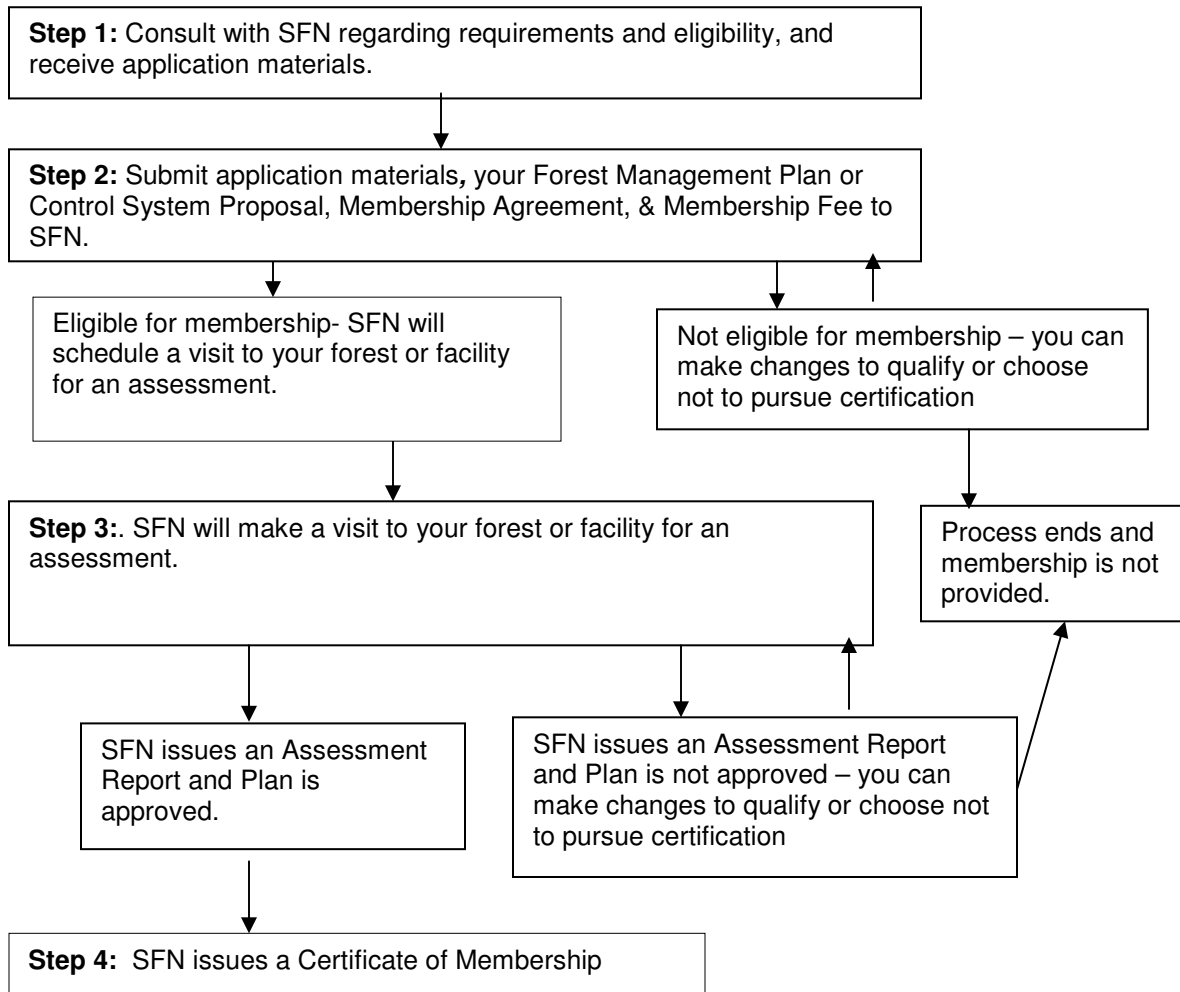
The following steps are necessary in outsourcing:

1. All certified products must be clearly labeled (see section 3.6).

2. Provide documentation of all shipments of forest products: All loads are marked with a unique load ticket that includes the member's chain of custody code, and the certified facility must keep a copy of each load ticket for their records. SFN provides a "Chain of Custody Shipping Ticket" form that you can use to document products you ship.
3. The exact materials shipped to the non-certified company are the only materials that can be used in the final wood product.
4. Dates and quantities of all materials sent out and received must be documented.
5. All questions on certified wood tickets should be resolved within 60 days of the last load leaving the harvest site.

3. The Certification Process

There is a specific process for group certification assessment – both for forest certification and chain of custody certification. The following flow chart outlines the process a landowner, manufacturer, or distributor would go through to become a member of GCP.



Membership Duration

The GCP FSC certificate has a five year duration. After five years, a new assessment is conducted to qualify the GCP for another five-year contract. Members can enroll at any time during the contract period. Once enrolled, members are strongly encouraged to remain committed for the remainder of the contract. If a member wishes to end their membership before the end of the contract, he or she will not be eligible to re-enroll. If ownership of an enrolled property changes, the membership does not automatically transfer to the new owner(s). If the new owner(s) are interested in retaining the certification, a new Memorandum of Agreement can be established to maintain certification.

3.1 Applying for GCP Membership

The first step in joining the GCP is submitting the Membership Application, Membership Agreement, your Forest Management Plan, and your Membership Fee.

The Membership Agreement is a contract between GCP members and SFN, and signifies that you:

- acknowledge and agree to the obligations and responsibilities of SFN GCP membership,
- agree to membership for the full period of validity of the group certificate and will provide SFN with a 30-day advance notification in writing if you ever desire to withdraw from the Group Certification Program; and
- authorize SFN to apply for certification on your behalf.

It will take SFN about six weeks to review your application materials. During this time, SFN will determine whether you are able meet all program requirements. If you are not eligible to join the group, SFN explain what you can do to qualify.

Pre-Assessments

SFN will decide if an applicant is ready for a full assessment or a pre-assessment. If an applicant is not ready for a full assessment and there are significant questions about whether the applicant will qualify, a pre-assessment may be completed to identify potential barriers to certification.

It is important to be prepared for the main assessment ahead of time since this is the more thorough and detailed assessment. Many landowners prefer a pre-assessment visit or hire consultants to help them prepare. It is important to clarify any doubts that you may have about certification requirements or management procedures. The more questions you ask during this time period, the fewer questions you will have later on in the certification process.

Stakeholder notification

FSC requires “stakeholder input” for all certifications. Stakeholders include neighboring landowners, local government, environment and conservation groups, social organizations, workers and employees, and anyone else who will be affected by your management. Stakeholder input ensures that FSC certified forests and facilities minimize negative environmental, economic, and social impacts to your community as a whole.

FSC gathers information from targeted stakeholders throughout the assessment process. Sometimes SFN or the certification body will interview stakeholders. SFN has a very systematic way of dealing with stakeholder comments to ensure that real information is treated seriously while unfounded accusations are not. Personal information and stakeholder comments are kept confidential.

3.2 The Certification Assessment

There are two kinds of assessments associated with the Group Certification Program:

- GCP Assessments are internal assessments completed by SFN staff or contractors. Assessments are done when you apply for GCP membership, and repeated every few years to confirm that you are meeting FSC requirements.
- Certifier Assessments occur every 5 years when SFN undergoes a certification audit to renew our group certificate. Certifiers will choose a small number of GCP members to assess during each audit. Because there are so many members in the GCP, the chances of your property being visited for a Certifier Assessment are small.

Below we describe the process for GCP Assessments. These assessments occur when you apply for GCP membership, and again every few years to ensure that you are following FSC requirements.

The Assessment Team

A one to four member assessment team is assigned to assess your property or facility. Teams will include forestry professionals experienced in FSC certification assessments, and other experts with knowledge and experience in the forestry practices, ecology, and social issues of the region.

Assessment Tasks

When performing a certification assessment for forestlands, the team:

- Reviews your management planning and monitoring documents
- Evaluates ongoing and completed management activities on your land (for example: harvesting, road building, silviculture, habitat retention, biodiversity protection, and worker safety)
- Interviews stakeholders for input on your forest management operations and activities if needed

When performing a certification assessment for Chain of Custody facilities, the team:

- Reviews your control system and monitoring documents
- Evaluates control systems and operations at your facilities (for example: Chain of Custody tracking, waste disposal)
- Interviews stakeholders for input on your facility management operations and activities if needed

Site Visits

Site visits are required for GCP membership and for periodic re-assessment of GCP members. The assessment team will visit your forest and/or facility to ensure that conditions are consistent with the information in your application and approved plans. The site visit is a time for you to explain your management activities to the team, and for the team to identify any recommended improvements.

For certified forests, the frequency of site visits will depend on how often, and to what extent, your management activities are impacting the forest. For certified chain of custody facilities, the frequency of your visits will depend on factors such as changes to your control system or changes at your facilities.

The Assessment Report

The team writes an assessment report over a period of 4-6 weeks after the completion of the assessment. The report will be shared with the GCP member or applicant, and they will have an opportunity to provide additional input or dispute items in the report. The report includes:

- Findings - a description of what the team found, and/or how the candidate meets the requirement of each indicator.
- Evaluation of compliance - based upon the team's analysis of each indicator. The entire assessment team provides input on scoring through a consensus process.

Peer Review

SFN may submit the report for confidential peer review if we decide we need more information to evaluate a GCP member. Peer reviews strengthen the assessment process by adding independent evaluations of the certification process and conclusions.

SFN's Certifier will also use peer reviews when they do SFN's certification audit. Peer reviewers are selected by the certifier and are bound to confidentiality. Peer reviewer comments are considered by the assessment team and summarized in the audit report.

Receiving certification

Once SFN makes a positive decision, a contract laying down the terms of certification is sent to you for your signature. A certificate is issued when SFN and the landowner, manufacturer, or distributor both sign the contract.

The Southern Forests Network GCP is intended to facilitate certification for forest management and forest-based enterprises that are ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable. SFN can reject any application for GCP membership if it is determined that the membership will not contribute to meeting this goal.

Availability of public summaries

SFN's Certifier will provide a written summary of all assessments and audits they perform to evaluate the Group Certification Program's compliance with FSC criteria. This summary, which may include references to Group Certification Program members, is made available for public viewing. We do not anticipate that any of these public summaries will infringe on the privacy of our members, and will endeavor to protect members' privacy as much as possible.

Documents Required for Forest Certification

Stage in Certification Process	What to Submit to SFN	When to Submit It	Guidance
Application Process	Forest Certification Application Membership Agreement Membership Fee Forest Management Plan	When you are ready to begin the certification process	A site visit will be conducted before the management plan receives final approval and the landowner is granted certification.
When you change your Forest Management Plan	Forest Management Plan Modifications	1) If you make changes to your plan & 2) An updated management plan is required every 15 years	Changes to your plan must be approved by SFN
Annual Reporting	Annual Forest Health Report Annual Harvest Report Annual Pesticide Use Report	Every year; submitted with membership renewal form and fee. Every year you harvest products from the forest Every year pesticides are used; submitted with membership renewal form and fee.	A site visit will be conducted at least once during the five-year certification period.

Documents Required for Chain of Custody Certification

Stage in Certification Process	What to Submit to SFN	When to Submit It	Guidance
Application Process	Chain of Custody Certification Application Form Membership Agreement Membership Fee Chain of Custody Control System Proposal	When you are ready to begin the certification process	At least one site visit will be conducted before the Control System Proposal receives final approval and the facility is granted certification. An updated control system proposal is required every 15 years
	Control System Proposal Modifications	When you make any changes to your Control System	Changes must be approved by SFN.
Annual Reporting	Annual Inventory Report	Every year; submitted with membership renewal form and fee.	SFN staff will visit all certified facilities at least once during the five-year certification period.

3.3 Ensuring Compliance with FSC standards

Site Visits

All GCP members must make their certified forests and facilities accessible for site visits, which are required for membership approval and periodic audits. SFN can require a site visit at any time in order to ensure that a member's management activities are complying with GCP policies. In general, site visits will occur during application review and during periodic audits of either the member's certification or of SFN's group certification. SFN will endeavor to keep the frequency and number of site visits at a minimum, but is committed to ensuring compliance with FSC and GCP policies. In general, you can expect a site visit once every 1-5 years.

Record Keeping

Members are required to maintain printed copies of all documents related to forest management and certification for at least five years.

Each member will be responsible for maintaining and updating his/her own records regarding certified products. Members must make all such records available during audits and upon request. These records include:

- purchase orders
- invoices and shipping documents for materials received
- production records
- inventory records
- invoices and shipping documents for products that have been sold
- any public information referencing FSC, the certifier, SFN, or certification, including brochures, advertisements, and websites
- any other forms or records related to certified material or status

Pre-conditions, Conditions, & Corrective Action Requests

SFN may apply Pre-conditions, Conditions, or Corrective Action Requests (CARs) to any member or prospective member of GCP. Similarly, SFN's certifier may apply preconditions, corrective actions, or CARs to specific SFN members or the entire SFN membership. *Receiving Pre-conditions, Conditions, and CARs is a normal process and should not be a cause for concern.*

After receiving certification, each group member's performance will be observed to see whether he or she is meeting all the necessary standards. Non-compliance with any indicator is classified as either major or minor based on whether there is a fundamental failure to meet the objective of the associated condition.

Pre-conditions and Conditions for Receiving Certification

In many cases, an applicant will be required to make a few changes in order to qualify for certification. Three different mechanisms can be used to bring performance to acceptable levels either prior to or during certification.

Pre-conditions - If an aspect of management is grossly out of line with FSC standards, correction of the issue will be required as a pre-condition of GCP membership. Preconditions will be communicated to the prospective member in writing. Membership is not possible without first satisfying preconditions.

Conditions - If an aspect of management is largely in compliance with FSC standards, but needs improvement to achieve total compliance, GCP can provide conditional membership. Conditions will be communicated to the new member in writing. Compliance with specific conditions will be required within a specified timeframe,

typically one year, as deemed appropriate by GCP in consultation with the landowner. Non-compliance with a condition will result in a Corrective Action Request.

Corrective Actions Required for Receiving or Maintaining Certification

Corrective Action Requests (CARs) - SFN will issue a CAR if any activities or conditions do not meet FSC standards or GCP requirements. CARs generally will have a short time period for compliance (0-180 days) and will be determined by GCP in consultation with the landowner. Non-compliance with a CAR is grounds for immediate expulsion from the SFN GCP.

Compliance with Corrective Actions

Once a CAR has been issued, it is important to address the problem in a timely manner. Once you have done so, there are multiple ways to demonstrate compliance.

Records - Many criteria are straightforward and it is clear what is required to meet them. It may be helpful, but not required, for you to maintain records to show an assessment team as evidence of compliance (e.g., tax receipts, professional licenses, and training certificates). Often conversations between the team and your management staff provide the information and assurance the team needs regarding compliance for straightforward issues.

Documents - Other criteria relate to your management policies and procedures. Some documents are specifically called for, but often it is simply practical for you to prepare documents in order to convey their policies and procedures. These documents are useful to the operation's personnel as well, defining goals, facilitating training of new staff, supporting consistent application of management practices, and ensuring that information is not lost if a key manager leaves.

Forest conditions - The forest itself often reveals the answer to whether a criterion is being met, and this is where the on-the-ground, field tours are important times for you to "show off" your best and most challenging management sites, and for the assessment team to look for indications that what has been said is really being done.

Procedures in the Event of Noncompliance with a CAR

1. SFN will inform you of the issue.
2. SFN will review all documentation and other available information related to the issue. SFN may also conduct a site visit.
3. SFN will discuss the issue and possible remedies with you, in an effort to reach a collaborative solution.
4. SFN will prepare a written report, including proposed corrective actions. This report will be presented to you and to the Steering Committee.
5. The SFN Steering Committee will decide what corrective action(s) will be required and the time frame within which they must be completed. Corrective actions will be case-specific and may include further training.
6. SFN will follow up with you to verify that all of the corrective actions are implemented within the specified time frame.

3.4 Maintaining Certification

Annual Fees

Annual fees will be billed to the group member. These costs are detailed in section 3.5.

Annual Reporting

GCP members are required to submit annual reports when they submit their annual fees. For certified forests, members must submit the Annual Forest Health Report, a Annual Harvest Report, and Annual Pesticide Use Report (when pesticides are used). Chain of Custody certification holders must submit an Annual Inventory Report.

Periodic Re-assessment

Periodic re-assessment is required for members of the GCP. While most FSC certifications require an annual assessment, membership in the GCP streamlines these requirements. As a member of the GCP, you will be re-assessed every 1-5 years. The Re-Assessment will include a review of your application materials and records, and a site visit.

3.5 Costs of Certification

There are two types of costs associated with certification through SFN: annual membership fees and site visit fees.

Annual Fees

GCP members are responsible for an annual membership fee which helps cover the costs of certification, landowner support, and other GCP activities. The membership fee is payable to SFN. SFN reserves the right to raise fees if necessary.

The annual membership fee does not include the costs associated with forest management planning, harvest operations, or other contract services. Members are responsible for paying any and all service fees to loggers, foresters or other natural resource professionals that provide management planning, harvest, or other services.

GCP Annual Membership Fees
Forests

Acres	Annual Fee
1-200	<i>To be determined</i>
201-500	“
501 – 1,000	“
1,001 – 2,470	“
>2,470	“

Chain of Custody

Annual Sales	Annual Fee
\$0-	<i>To be determined</i>

Site Visit Fees

Landowners will be charged a fair rate for site visits when they are required for application approval, approval of management plans or amendments to management plans, and monitoring

activities. SFN will arrange for qualified assessors to conduct site visits, and will continuously work to make site visits as affordable and convenient as possible for GCP members.

3.6 Marketing and labeling of forest products

There are specific requirements for the use of the FSC logo and product labeling. FSC and certifiers place great emphasis on labeling requirements because proper use of labeling is what guarantees truth in advertising. Without that guarantee, the FSC label would be meaningless. Selling or labeling uncertified materials as FSC certified will lead to loss of certification and is illegal.

The rules for logo use and labeling are fairly complex. Nevertheless, it is important for every GCP member to understand and commit to following these rules, because the actions of any one member could threaten the certification of the entire group. If you have any questions about labeling, contact SFN for guidance.

Labeling and Use of FSC Logos

The FSC label can only be used on FSC certified wood and products. Labeling must include:

- the FSC logo
- a copyright symbol
- the SFN GCP certificate number
- an FSC copyright claim
- the following on-product claim: *“The wood in this product comes from well managed forests, independently certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).”*



Types of FSC Labels

The FSC has three categories of labels:

- 1) **FSC Pure:** products made entirely from FSC certified wood/wood fiber.
- 2) **FSC Recycled:** products made entirely from 100% post-consumer recycled wood/wood fiber.
- 3) **FSC Mixed:** products made from some combination of
 - a) FSC certified wood/wood fiber,
 - b) 100% post-consumer reclaimed or recycled wood/wood fiber, and
 - c) Uncertified wood/wood fiber.

Requirements for FSC Mixed labeling are very complicated. If you are interested in using the FSC Mixed label, you are encouraged to seek advice from SFN.

Non-wood materials, such as wheatboard or fabric, are not eligible for FSC certification, and thus can be used in products bearing any of the above labels. For example, FSC certified veneer on a wheatboard core qualifies as FSC Pure. Likewise, journals made from 100% post-consumer recycled paper and cardboard with a fabric cover qualify as FSC Recycled.

Changes to Labeling Requirements

In response to rapidly expanding markets and the needs of manufacturers, FSC periodically updates policies related to labeling. To ensure you are using the most up to date policies, check the FSC International website: www.fsc.org and the FSC-US website: www.fscus.org.

4. Internal Operations

4.1 SFN's Management Authority and Responsibility

The Southern Forests Network is the group manager for the Group Certification Program. This means that SFN makes decisions for the group and maintains authority over the group. SFN is responsible to the Certifier for ensuring that group members meet the requirements of the certification standard. Therefore, SFN will establish and enforce relevant rules.

4.2 Dispute Resolution Process

Members are encouraged to communicate clearly and consistently with service providers, assessors, SFN staff, and other relevant parties to avoid misunderstandings. Conflicts will largely be avoided if management treatments are done in accordance with the approved management plan.

Any member or applicant may appeal any decision of the SFN Coordinator or the SFN Steering Committee that directly impacts his or her business. If the disputed decision was made by SFN staff, the member must first discuss the matter with the staff member.

If disputes cannot be resolved by the SFN staff, the SFN Steering Committee will be asked to review the case and propose a resolution. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee, and must include a full explanation of the reasons for the request and all relevant documentation. The SFN Steering Committee shall consider the appeal and inform the member of its decision in writing, generally within 2 months.

If the SFN Steering Committee cannot facilitate a resolution, the two parties will contract with a third-party dispute resolution service. The two parties will share the cost of this service equally. If more than two parties are involved in a dispute, the cost will be shared proportionately. If a dispute resolution service cannot facilitate a resolution, the parties involved will enter into binding arbitration.

4.3 Complaint resolution process

SFN maintains a central register for all complaints which clearly shows when they were received, who was made responsible for dealing with them, when the complaint was resolved and where the full information on the complaint can be found.

Complaints against a group member

SFN will investigate the complaint and, if appropriate, take action. The complainant will be told the outcome of the investigation. If either the complainant or the member is not happy with the outcome, then either person can make an appeal to the SFN Steering Committee. This appeals process is the same as that for appeals against expulsions.

Complaints against the group management

SFN staff members will not investigate complaints against themselves. Instead, the complaint will be dealt with by the SFN Coordinator and the SFN Steering Committee as discussed above. If the complaint is against only one person in SFN, this person's manager can carry out the investigation. Appeals will be accepted from either party.

4.4 Process for Ending or Revoking Membership

To ensure that SFN continues to meet FSC standards, all members must continue to follow the Membership Agreement. If you violate the Agreement or your management is not up to standards, you can be issued a Corrective Action Request or expelled from the certification.

Certification is entirely voluntary, and landowners can terminate their membership at any time with 30 days notice. SFN will request a written notice explaining the reason for ending membership. Landowners who voluntarily terminate their membership will not have fees refunded, and will be ineligible for readmission to the GCP during SFN's five-year contract period with the Certifier.

Landowners will be removed from the certified group if they:

- Request to be removed from the group, giving at least 30 days notice.
- Do not adhere to their management plan, the GCP service agreement, or FSC standards.
- Refuse to allow SFN and/or the certifier access to their land for monitoring or visiting purposes.
- Sell their property.
- Do not pay their membership fee.
- Fail to provide requested information- After three requests or 60 days (whichever is longer), the membership will be suspended until the requested information is received or an alternative solution is identified.

Landowners that are exiting the group:

- Can no longer place any FSC or SFN GCP claim, logo, or the SFN GCP certification number on any product, invoice, or marketing material, or make any FSC certified sales.
- Will no longer receive the benefits of SFN membership.
- Must return their GCP certificate.
- Cannot reinstate their membership during the five year FSC contract period.

4.5 Maintenance of Records

SFN maintains a database which contains all contact information for GCP members as well as information pertaining to their membership status. The database includes information related to the management plans and activities on properties within the GCP. SFN also maintains hard copy files for all members. These files contain copies of management plans, operational plans, the Membership Application, a Memorandum of Agreement, proof of legal land tenure, monitoring records, harvest yield information, and other relevant documents.

All records, including both centralized records and individual members' records, must be kept for at least 5 years. SFN will be responsible for maintaining and updating all centralized records for the GCP, including:

- 1) SFN Steering Committee minutes and related documentation.
- 2) Individual member records, including:
 - Membership Application, Forest Management Plan, Control System Proposal, Membership Agreement, and Application Assessment.
 - Annual reports.
 - Copies of any records related to annual internal audits and other internal monitoring, non-compliance identified in such inspections, and actions taken to correct any such non-compliance.
 - If the member leaves the GCP, the date of departure and reasons for leaving.

Document Control and Confidentiality Policy

Documents and information related to the GCP and the individual members will be kept confidential. Only the individual member, the certifier, and the SFN will have access to records for individual properties. The member is free to share their own records as they see fit, but the member must give SFN written permission before SFN is allowed to share non-public documents with other parties. Summarized management plan information regarding the aggregated membership will be available to the public and provided upon request. A small fee may apply. All operational information regarding the structure of the GCP is available from SFN.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Forest Management & Planning Resources

Understanding Forestry Terms: A Glossary for Private Landowners

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/woodland/won-26.html>

About Forest Management

The Benefits of Forestry - Add Value to Your Woodlot

http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage/pubs/articles/fortom/benefits_of_forestry.htm

Cornell University Extension

The Kentucky Forest Landowner's Handbook

<http://www.maced.org/landowners-handbook.htm>

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development

Understanding Forestry Terms: A Glossary for Private Landowners

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/woodland/won-26.html>

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Print Publications

Managing Your Woodlands: A Guide for Southern Appalachian Landowners

Appalachian Voices www.appvoices.org 828-262-1500

Low-impact Forestry: Forestry as if the future mattered

Maine Environmental Policy Institute www.meepi.org/lif/ 207-622-9766

Full Vigor Forestry: Sustainable Forest Management from the Forest Owner's Point of View

Timbergreen Forestry www.timbergreenforestry.com 608-588-7342

Woodland Ecology: Environmental Forestry for the Small Owner

Minckler, Leon S., Syracuse University Press, 1975

Finding a Professional Forester

Selecting a Forester, quick decisions and long-term impacts

From Cornell University Cooperative Extension

http://www.dnr.cornell.edu/ext/forestrypage/pubs/articles/fortom/selecting_forester.htm

The Forest Guild has a directory of foresters who practice sustainable forestry on their website

www.forestguild.org, or call 505-983-3887.

The Association of Consulting Foresters has a directory of consulting foresters on their website

www.acf-foresters.org.

Your state or county forestry department should be able to provide you with a list of consulting foresters.

Land Conservation Programs

There are a number of public and private programs designed to help landowners conserve their forestland.

Tax Reduction Programs: Many state and local governments have programs that reduce property taxes for forestland. Contact your local government (county/city) to find out about any local forestland conservation programs.

Conservation Easements: A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values. Landowners essentially “donate” certain development rights for their property- this qualifies as a tax-deductible donation for income tax purposes. For more information:

Land Trust Alliance <http://www.lta.org> 919-424-4427

Working Forest Conservation Easements: A Primer for Forest Landowners
<http://www.naturalresources.umd.edu/Pages/Workingforests/Workingforest.htm>
Maryland Cooperative Extension

Financial Incentive Programs: State and Federal agencies administer several programs that provide financial incentives and cost-sharing for land conservation and restoration activities. To learn about these programs, contact your local state forestry extension office, or go to this US Forest Service’s website for a listing of programs by state:

<http://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/econ/data/forestincentives/>

Online Mapping Tools

MapServer (FREE maps, right click on the image and choose “save picture as”)

<http://mapserver.maptech.com/homepage/index.cfm?advancedsearch=yes>

Get Maps & Aerial/Satellite Photos Online

<http://nationalmap.gov/gio/viewonline.html>

Find Your Coordinates (Longitude & Latitude)

http://www.geocode.com/modules.php?name=TestDrive_Eagle

Forest Assessment Resources

Trees of Alabama and the Southeast

An online listing of southern trees with descriptions and photos

<http://www.forestry.auburn.edu/samuels/dendrology/>

Endangered & Threatened Species by State

Find out what species are listed in your state, and find links to more information

http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/StateListing.do?state=all

Invasive Plants Field and Reference Guide: An Ecological Perspective of Plant Invaders of Forests and Woodlands

A great resource for identifying invasive plants

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/wildlife/nnis/invasive-species-field-guide.pdf>

Income Opportunities in Special Forest Products

Information about non-timber forest products you should look for in your forest

<http://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/documnts/usda/agib666/agib666.htm>

Wildlife Inventory Resources

Resources for conducting inventories and monitoring for wildlife

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/publ/wildland.htm>

Estimating the Volume of a Standing tree Using A Scale (Biltmore) Stick

A brief guide to DIY timber inventories

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/forest/pdf/WON/won05.pdf>

Measuring Standing Trees

More info and useful tables for timber inventories

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/for-fact/pdf/0035.pdf>

Insects and Diseases of Trees in the South

Resources for identifying and understanding insects and disease in the forest

<http://www.forestpests.org/southern/>

The National PLANTS Database

Information about the vascular plants, mosses, liverworts, hornworts, and lichens of the U.S. and its territories

<http://plants.usda.gov/>

NatureServe Explorer

A source for information on more than 65,000 plants, animals, and ecosystems with in-depth coverage for rare and endangered species

<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/>

Find more resources on the SFN website <http://www.southernsustainableforests.org/>

Appendix 2: High Conservation Value Forests in the South

Forest and community types in the Appalachia region that have HCV attributes include, but are not limited to:

- Old-growth oak-hickory (*Quercus* spp.-*Carya* spp.) forests on the Cumberland Plateau and on the Highland Rim of Tennessee;
- Mixed mesophytic cove sites on the Cumberland Plateau;
- Limestone glades in Tennessee and Kentucky;
- Pocosins (evergreen shrub bogs) and other mountain bogs in Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina;
- other forest and woodland plant community types listed by NatureServe as critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable (G1-G3, N1-N3, and S1-S3) in the region, unless further refined by consultations with heritage programs, local native plant societies, local experts, and ENGOS;
- un-entered old-growth stands and intact old-growth forests;
- roadless areas (areas without roads, logging roads, or skid trails), larger than 500 acres;
- habitats for threatened or endangered species;
- unique and sensitive geophysical features, such as caves and rock outcrops; and forested wetlands or glades, such as springs, fens, and seeps;
- Spruce-fir (*Picea rubens*-*Abies fraseri*) forests in southern Appalachia;
- Atlantic white-cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*) stands Red spruce (*Picea rubens*) forests in central Appalachia.

Appendix 3: Guidance on Silvicultural Practices

Limits on the Use and Size of Clearcuts

From the Forest Stewardship Council Southeast U.S. Regional Standard

The Southeast Working Group was strongly encouraged by the US Office of the Forest Stewardship Council to place maximum limits on clear-cut sizes for forest operations in the Southeast. The working group had a diversity of opinions on the issue of clearcutting (ranging from not allowing clear-cutting to placing no limits on the use of clearcuts) and on appropriate maximum size limits. During the 2001 SE Draft-US Standard harmonization meeting, the working group discussed at length whether to retain the existing SE language on the use and size of clear-cuts or to adopt the language of the National Indicators. The final decision was, for the time being, to adopt the national language and to closely monitor its interpretation by certification bodies and forest managers. Nevertheless, the following appendix has been retained in the Harmonized Draft in order to provide certification bodies and other stakeholders in forest certification with the spirit of the original, Southeast Regional Standard position on the use and size of clearcuts.

The guidelines describe below are not binding to the certification of forest management in the Southeastern United States.

First, the working group decided that forest type should both determine if clear-cutting is allowed and influence limits on size of clear-cuts. They came up with the following guidelines for each of the different forest types:

- a. *Primary and natural forests*: clear-cutting is not allowed. Harvesting is not allowed at all in primary forests. For natural forests, the majority of the working group believes uneven-aged management techniques are more appropriate.
- b. *Semi-natural forests: stands with trees greater than 100 years old*: clear-cutting is not allowed; *even-aged stands of hardwood and cypress*: clear-cutting is allowed; the size of openings should be conservative
- c. *Even-aged stands of pine and pine/hardwood*: clear-cutting is allowed; the size of openings should not be higher than the limit for plantations and should be justified by natural regeneration requirements
- d. *Plantations*: clearcutting is allowed; the limit for the size of openings is 40 acres. The working group chose 40 acres because, based on scientific literature and the personal experiences of the foresters and landowners in the Group, this was determined to be a size that would normally be economically operable.

The working group then identified a series of reasons for exceptions to these rules. Justification must be provided for any deviation from the rules. Exceptions are as follows:

1. Clear-cuts up to 80 acres are allowed in cases where a 40-acre stand would not provide enough timber volume to secure an economically operable timber sale, meaning that the sale would not attract a buyer and/or the landowner would not make a profit from the sale. Examples of such cases include stands that have been high graded and the most valuable species of trees have already been removed, or where a site has been planted with inappropriate, poorly growing species and the landowner/manager wants to clear and restore the site. This exception cannot be used when a 40-acre clear-cut would be economically operable and a landowner wants to cut 80 acres simply to make a greater profit.

2. Clear-cuts up to 80 acres are allowed in cases where harvesting a stand in 40 acre blocks would cause unnecessary environmental disturbance to the area surrounding the stand. This applies to plantations that are surrounded by ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., seasonally wet areas), which must be passed through or otherwise impacted in order to harvest the plantation. In such cases, harvesting up to 80 acres is allowed if it would result in less of an impact on ecologically sensitive areas (e.g., harvesting the stand once instead of dividing it and revisiting the stand for the rest of the timber at a later date).

3. An exception to all of the limits on the use and size of clear-cuts was made in cases of ecologic necessity. Some may question the legitimacy of this exception, but it was advocated by the more environmentally active segment of the working group. They wanted this exception so that clear-cutting could be used in natural forest stands--where appropriate and necessary--as a tool for maintaining ecosystems that are dependent on large, contiguous openings. The primary motivation was the sand pine scrub ecosystem, which supports the ecologically significant Florida scrub jay and is currently being managed with large, contiguous clear-cuts. Ecologists urge the use of large clear-cuts in the sand pine scrub ecosystem to mimic the stand-replacing, catastrophic fires that historically maintained the ecosystem. The working group made it clear that this exception could only be used when supported by scientific literature. Some issues could not be resolved through exceptions. For example, there was great deal of discussion regarding fragmentation. The working group recognized that smaller clearcuts contribute to fragmentation, as do requirements for large age differences between adjoining stands. In addition, if a stand happens to be 45 acres, but does not meet any of the exceptions that would allow an 80-acre clear-cut, the landowner/manager is at a disadvantage. Such cases, as well as additional exceptions to the Standard will need to be discussed and resolved with the certification body.

Age-Class Distribution and Long-term Sustainability

From the Forest Stewardship Council Appalachian U.S. Regional Standard

Criterion 5.6. The rate of harvest of forest products shall not exceed levels which can be permanently sustained.

5.6.a. The sustainability of harvest levels is based on documented data on growth and regeneration, site index models, and classification of soils, appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operation. .

For example:

- *The rates and volumes of stocking conform to projections of the management plan.*
- *The age-class distribution required for sustainability and predicted yields in volume are justified by empirical data.*

5.6.b. After an age-class distribution (see Glossary) commensurate with long-term sustainability is achieved [see below], records of growth and harvest show that growth rates meet or exceed harvest rates over a period of no more than 10 years. Forest owners or managers ensure that, after harvest the size-class distribution is maintained.

5.6.c. Exceptions to the constraint that growth rates meet or exceed harvest rates within a 10-year period may be granted to forest owners or managers whose periodic re-entry cycle is longer than 10 years. In such cases, allowable harvest is determined by examining the volume of re-growth and harvest since the previous harvest and the owner or manager's commitment to allow an equivalent amount of re-growth before additional harvests.

5.6.d. Species selection meets the economic goals and objectives of the forest owner or manager, while maintaining or improving the ecological composition, structures, and functions of the forest.

This indicator assumes that active management through regeneration harvests has produced a variety of age classes across the forest. It may not apply to newly acquired forests or to forests in which regeneration harvests have not been applied. However, this indicator was constructed to assure that the distribution of age classes created by forest operations provides the potential for maintaining sustainable productivity and revenues. This does not necessarily mean that the forest contain a “balanced” age-class distribution, where all age classes are represented. This would be particularly difficult for owners or managers of small forests or for any forest size in which an appreciable portion of the forest is even-aged. In the latter case, or where rehabilitation of the forest is required regardless of size, forest management activities would initially produce a bimodal age/class distribution that will continue for some period of time. It is understood that long term management of the forest, particularly mid-sized or large forests, will ultimately produce a forest that has a number of different age classes. This indicator is designed to ensure that exploitive harvesting is not occurring and that forest owners or managers create, through proper management, a forest that is capable of providing future revenues at intervals that can maintain protection and management of the forest.

Appendix 4: Guidelines for Non-timber Forest Product Management

From the Forest Stewardship Council Appalachian U.S. Regional Standard

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1-10, and criteria and indicators in this Guide. Harvest of NTFPs usually have lower impacts on the forest ecosystem than timber harvesting; can provide an array of social and economic benefits, particularly to community operations; and is an important component of managing the forest ecosystem. NTFPs require special considerations with respect to management and monitoring in order to ensure the long-term viability of species and to minimize adverse social and ecological impacts.

Note: This Guide only applies to those landowners that receive social or financial benefits from NTFP management.

1. The management plan identifies and provides specific guidelines for each NTFP species or species group that is considered for commercial harvest, and identifies the most important NTFPs for subsistence uses.

- a. Provisions of CITES and other relevant treaties and agreements are adhered to.

2. Management plans, operational activities, and monitoring address the ecological impacts to NTFP production and ensure the long-term viability of NTFP populations. Plans, operations, and monitoring activities are developed when NTFP production: (1) requires the removal of individuals, (2) affects the growth of other species, (3) potentially reduces forest stand productivity, (4) causes damage to trees or other forest products, (5) critically impacts nutrient cycling, (6) impacts wildlife habitat or wildlife populations, (7) impacts species through known ecological interdependencies, and (8) that limits harvest for subsistence use.

- a. All plant NTFPs are inventoried, and their populations are monitored to assure the maintenance of minimum, viable populations. Up-to-date management plans are written and maintained for each plant NTFP species. Animal NTFPs are managed under a wildlife management plan. Potential impacts of the use and harvest of NTFPs are documented, including environmental and economic impacts that have resulted and that might result from timber management operations.

- b. Enrichment plantings of plant NTFPs are encouraged, particularly in areas where populations have been depleted by previous collection, management activities, and/or disturbances. Locally collected materials are used for enrichment plantings when available.

- c. Extraction of mineral NTFPs are carried out in an environmentally sensitive and non-degrading manner. Appropriate reclamation is carried out as necessary.

3. Management plans that prioritize timber production include specific provisions to describe and minimize short-term and long-term negative impacts on NTFPs.

- a. Appropriate management methods and harvest levels of NTFPs are articulated in the written long-term management plan, using all available biological, ecological, and soil science.

- b. Monitoring NTFP populations includes assessment of the regenerative capabilities of each NTFP. Where it is relevant, minimum viable populations of NTFP species are determined. Monitoring includes methods for determining potential impacts that might result from the implementation of management plans in neighboring forests. Forest owners or managers collaborate with adjacent landowners and land managers to establish wildlife corridors, to conserve critical habitats, and to achieve other goals of biological conservation.

4. The management plan addresses the social and economic impacts of NTFP management, including utilization and traditional harvesting practices, and respects the cultural and religious significance of NTFPs to local and indigenous communities.
5. The methods and levels of harvesting NTFP are appropriate to the species or species group, and reflect scientific, local, and indigenous knowledge.
 - a. The methods of production and harvest of NTFP resources are based on ecological and environmental limitations of the site, and on detailed knowledge of the natural history of the species.
 - b. Where a detailed scientific account of the natural history of a species is not available, adequate populations of NTFP species and species groups are defined as those that are comparable to natural populations of the region (i.e., populations that are substantially unmodified by human interventions and management).
 - c. Control areas (i.e., check plots or unmanaged natural populations) are set aside and monitored for each managed NTFP species or species group to provide a sound basis for NTFP management decisions.
6. Monitoring evaluates the impacts of timber management on non-timber resources and the forest ecosystem. Monitoring also evaluates the impacts of managing non-timber resources on timber resources.
7. In addition to the requirements of Criterion 3.4, indigenous and local communities receive fair and adequate benefits for use of their name or image in the process of marketing NTFPs. Whenever local or indigenous knowledge is the basis for an NTFP-related patent or registration, the community whose knowledge is patented or registered receives fair and adequate benefits.

Appendix 5: Painting Your Property Boundaries

From Vermont Family Forests

Landowners wishing to certify their forestlands with Southern Forests Network need to clearly mark their property boundaries. The process is really quite straight-forward, and can be downright enjoyable!

Here's what you need to do:

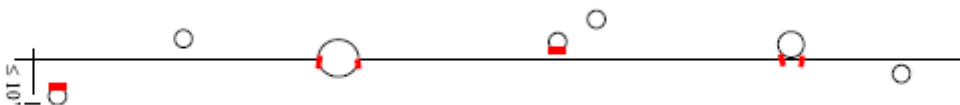
1. Identify your boundaries. Use your survey map to identify the blazes and monumentation with which the surveyor marked the property boundaries.

2. Repaint blazes.

Some state laws allow property owners to maintain existing boundary monumentation. Here's how:

(Note: When painting old blazes, do not make new marks with an ax, as only licensed surveyors can add to survey monumentation in any way.)

- Paint centerline trees with a 2"x6" vertical mark at the two points that the tree intersects the property line.
- Trees on either side and within 10' of the property line receive a single 3" to 4" wide band facing the property line. (Only paint the half of the tree facing the line.)
- Trees indicating a directional change receive a double 3" to 4" wide band painted on the side of the tree to which the property line changes direction.
- Corner trees located within 5' of the corner receive a triple 3" to 4" wide band on the side of the tree directly facing the corner stake or post.



3. Cut away limbs or brush that hide existing blazes from view.

4. Maintain corner monuments by cutting away brush and dead limbs around the monument. Paint the monument itself, but not the whole mound of stones. Also repaint pointers. If the monument is in bad shape or missing, contact a licensed land surveyor to perform remonumentation.

Latex Boundary Marking Paint

Most boundary paints are petroleum oil-based. Chemicals used in the production of oil-based paint can threaten human health and the health of the natural environment if handled or disposed of improperly. VFF stocks red, latex boundary marking paint. This paint has a weathering durability of 4-9 years and has an added solvent that allows cold-weather application. SFN sells the paint at cost, for \$20/gallon.

One mile of boundary line requires roughly one gallon of paint.

Appendix 6: Guidance on Pesticide Use

From the Forest Stewardship Council

Selection of harvesting operation to avoid chemical use.

Maintaining forests in mixed species, uneven-aged conditions is one of the best protections against disease, pest and weed infestations, and for avoiding chemical use. Dramatic changes in tree and shrub composition often result from harvesting practices employed by landowners, such as clearcutting. Such changes in plant species composition and dominance usually set forest structure and composition back to an early successional stage, which may be lengthy. Herbicides are then used to reduce the rotation time by reducing the population densities or growth rates of undesirable tree, shrub or herbaceous species and improve the survival or growth rates of artificially or naturally regenerated trees. Thus, a clearcutting-herbicide treadmill can be created in which the harvesting practice, creates a weed problem, and dictates continued routine herbicide use across an ownership. The key to avoiding and eliminating such over-use of herbicide is to develop and then employ a management plan that does not include harvesting tactics that create a vegetation management problem. Although not exclusive to plantations, a clearcutting-herbicide treadmill is more likely to exist with them than well-managed uneven-aged, naturally regenerated forests. Overstocked stands are often subject to insect or disease outbreaks. A regime of periodic thinning to maintain appropriate stocking levels, species mixes, and remove affected trees can both maintain a healthy productive forest, and avoid pesticide or fungicide use. Similarly, periodic thinning or selective harvests can maintain site dominance by desirable tree species and reduce the competitive influence of understory species, requiring little, if any, herbicide use. In planning and implementing any harvesting operation the concept of an ecological rotation should be employed (Kimmins, 1997). An ecological rotation is a period of time for a site to return to the pre-disturbance ecological condition. Thus, the length of time between harvests should be commensurate with the degree of disturbance to the site.

When limited chemical use is allowed.

Landowners frequently are faced with areas of degraded land, resulting from the management practices of previous owners or a major catastrophic event such as wildfire. Changes in soil structure and fertility, as well as plant species composition, may occur from such events. In such cases, less environmentally hazardous methods than the use of chemical pesticides may be ineffective for forest regeneration, restoring forest health, or establishing an appropriate balance of plant species and animal habitats. Therefore, managers might need to temporarily resort to chemical use for such restorative purposes. If so, plans should be in place to phase out the chemical use in the shortest time period possible, and pesticide use should not become a routine component of management. If a chemical pesticide is considered for use because of a degraded land condition or severe catastrophic event, the components of an IPM program—information acquisition, population monitoring, injury and action thresholds, and selection among alternative control measures—should be performed

Constraints for when pesticides are used.

If pesticides are found necessary to be used, specific sites should be identified for application and a rationale for the pesticide application developed. Criteria for such site selection should include a quantifiable assessment of risk to desirable tree species based on their abundance and growth rates, and the development of an action threshold according to IPM principles. Pesticides should not be applied in a general or broadcast manner, but rather, be restricted to specific, plants or stands. Adequate buffer areas should be employed so that pesticide drift, runoff, or leaching does not occur into riparian areas, waterways, or areas of human habitation. Wildlife should not be endangered by the application. A pesticide-monitoring program should be

employed to document that pesticide movement did not occur during or following application. Indigenous and recreational food sources also exist in forests. Applications of pesticides should not be made to such food sources and if they are, established pesticide toxicity tolerances must not be exceeded. All laws and regulations regarding pesticide applicator safety and pesticide container disposal must be followed.

Methods to reduce/eliminate pesticide use.

The best way to eliminate pesticide use over time is for managers to not continue to make pest or weed management problems. Thus avoidance of harvesting or other management tactics that create pest and weed problems is the best strategy to reduce and eliminate pesticide and herbicide use. In cases where disease, weed, or pest problems are presumed to exist, careful monitoring and documentation of the disease, pest or weed organism's population dynamics is essential to determine an action threshold for any management activity, especially pesticide use. The population dynamics of disease, pest and weed populations is cyclic, dynamic. Managers should be certain that population growth of the target organism is, indeed, exponential before pesticide treatments are made. Appropriate interpretation of biological information is a critical aspect of any disease, pest, or weed assessment and monitoring program. Data gathered from either the literature or field study, are often expressed as averages. However, average response of a desirable tree species to a treatment, i.e. pesticide application, can be misleading from a management perspective. At the stand level, what actually needs to be known is whether the number and growth of individual trees is adequate to maintain the stand through the next harvest cycle. If adequate, no treatment is needed regardless of the effectiveness of a pesticide treatment. Expressing treatment responses as averages, rather than as individuals, usually biases the interpretation in favor of a pesticide application.

Where to find more information about pesticide hazards

From the Agricultural Resources Center & Pesticide Education Project

PAN Pesticides Database (website) from Pesticide Action Network. This is a searchable database that provides current toxicity and regulatory information for almost all pesticides. Search by product name or chemical name. Available only on the web: <http://www.pesticideinfo.org>.

Pesticide Fact Sheets (articles) from NCAP, published in the *Journal of Pesticide Reform* (magazine). Available by calling (541) 344-5044 or online at: <http://www.pesticide.org/factsheets.html>. These are in-depth articles about pesticide active ingredients, and they cover environmental as well as health effects.

Chemical Watch Fact Sheets (articles) from Beyond Pesticides. Available free by calling (202) 543-5450 or online at: <http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pesticides/factsheets/index.htm>. These are two- to three-page articles about pesticide active ingredients that cover both environmental and human health effects.

NPIC Fact Sheets (website) from the National Pesticide Information Center (sponsored by Oregon State University and EPA). NPIC's Fact Sheets provide basic information for consumers about various pesticide products, which are listed by active ingredient on the website: <http://npic.orst.edu/npicfact.htm>. The fact sheets are written in simple language and are easy for most people to understand. NPIC also maintains a toll-free telephone service for pesticide information (1-800-858-7378), and lists emergency treatment information for humans and animals.

ToxFAQ's (website) from the US Centers for Disease Control's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. These are short summaries of basic health

information about many contaminants that are commonly found at hazardous waste sites, including some pesticides. These are written in simple language and are easy for most people to understand; many are also in Spanish. Only available on the website: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq.html>.

Right to Know Hazardous Substance Fact Sheets (website) from the New Jersey Department of Health. These are summaries of health information about many environmental contaminants, including some pesticides. They are designed for people who are exposed to these chemicals at work, and they are written in simple language and are easy for most people to understand. Available in English and in Spanish on the website: <http://www.state.nj.us/health/eoh/rtkweb/rtkhsfs.htm>

Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisoning (book) by Reigart & Roberts, 5th edition (1999), U.S. EPA. This is an excellent handbook for health care providers. Note that information about pesticides is grouped by chemical class, *not* by the pesticide name or active ingredient. Available free, in Spanish or English, from the US EPA by calling (703) 305-7666, or online at: <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/safety/healthcare/handbook/handbook.htm>.

Appendix 7: Complete List of Active Ingredients Prohibited on FSC-Certified Lands

Updated January, 2008

This list of pesticides is identified by FSC as 'highly hazardous.' They are prohibited unless a temporary derogation for use in the applicable territory has previously been approved by the FSC Board of Directors.

Aldicarb	flufenoxuron
aldrin	gamma-HCH, lindane
alpha-cypermethrin	heptachlor
aluminium phosphide	hexachlorobenzene
amitrole	hexazinone
atrazine	hydramethylnon
atropine	isoxaben
benomyl	lamba-cyhalothrin
brodifacoum	mancozeb
bromadiolone	metam sodium
carbaryl	methoxychlor
carbosulfan	methylarsonic acid (monosodium
chlordane	methanearsenate, MSMA)
chlorpyrifos	methylbromide
chlorothalonil	mirex
cyfluthrin	naled
cypermethrin	oryzalin
alpha-cypermethrin	oxydemeton-methyl, metasystox
zeta-cypermethrin	oxyfluorfen
2,4-D, 2-ethylhexyl ester	paraquat
2-(2,4-DP), dma salt (= dichlorprop, dma salt)	parathion
DDT	pendimethalin
deltamethrin	pentachlorophenol
diazinon	permethrin
dicamba, dma salt dichlobenil	propaquizafop
dicofol	propyzamide
dieldrin	quintozene
dienochlor	simazine
difethialone	sodium cyanide
diflubenzuron	sodium fluoroacetate, 1080
dimethoate	strychnine
diquat dibromide	sulfuramid
diuron	tebufenozide
endosulfan	terbumeton
endrin	terbutylazine
epoxiconazole	terbutryn
esfenvalerate	thiodicarb
ethion	toxaphene (camphechlor)
fenitrothion	triadimenol
fipronil	trifluralin
fluazifop-butyl	warfarin
	zeta-cypermethrin
	zinc phosphide

GLOSSARY

Age-class: A distinct aggregation of trees originating from a single natural event or management activity.

Allottee(s): Person(s) owning an Indian allotment. An Indian allotment is private land owned by one or more individuals (rather than a tribe) but held in trust by the federal government.

Annual summary report: A summary of the Member's certified inputs (purchases), outputs (sales), and inventory, submitted annually to the Group Manager.

Annual audit: A review of the implementation of chain of custody standards and protocols. Two types of audits happen annually: Internal audits of members by the Group Manager, focusing primarily on members' control systems, and audits of SFN by the Certification body, which include audits of a sample of SFN members.

Aquatic habitat: Habitat that occurs in free water (as opposed to water that is unavailable for habitat).

Assessment: The initial certification evaluation of a forest management operation or group entity for compliance with the FSC P&C

Audit: The surveillance of a forest management operation and group entity for the purpose of determining compliance with preconditions or conditions and the FSC P&C after they have received a determination of certified status from the certification body.

Biological control agents: Living organisms used to eliminate or regulate the population of other living organisms.

Biological diversity: The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are a part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. (see Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992)

Biological diversity values: The intrinsic, ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values of biological diversity and its components. (see Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992)

Buffer: A strip of vegetation that is left or managed to reduce the impact of a treatment or action of one area on another.

COC: Chain of custody: the process by which certified wood products are tracked as they move from the forest, to the mill, to processing facility (or facilities), to the wholesale or retail market. Chain of custody ensures truth in advertising of FSC certified products. / The channel through which products are distributed from their origin in the forest to their end-use.

COC Number: An alphanumeric code assigned to the SFN by the Certifier. The SFN COC Number is a unique identifier of the SFN within the FSC.

COC Sub-Code: A suffix to the SFN's COC Number, assigned to a member by the Group Manager upon admission to the SFN.

Canopy: The foliar cover in a forest stand consisting of one or several layers.

Canopy closure: The progressive reduction of space between tree crowns as they spread laterally.

Certification body or certifier: An organization accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council to assess a forest management and/or a chain of custody operation and grant an FSC certificate; An independent organization that is empowered to award, suspend, and/or terminate FSC Certifications. Certifiers are accredited by FSC as competent to evaluate the conformance of forest management and chain of custody operations to FSC principles. Examples of Certifiers include Scientific Certification Systems and SmartWood.

Certification team: The professional assessors assigned by the certifier to assess a forest management operation against the FSC P&C.

Certified: When a forest management operation or group entity has received a certificate by an accredited certification body.

Certified resource manager: A resource manager (e.g., professional forester) that has been certified by a FSC-accredited certifier.

Chemicals: The range of fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides, and hormones, which are used in forest management.

Chlorinated hydrocarbons: A specific chemical family of insecticides identified by EPA and USDA in "Applying Pesticides Correctly: A Guide for Private and Commercial Applicators," which includes insecticides such as lindane and chlordane.

Commercial plantation: A stand established through artificial regeneration for the commercial production of forest products, usually at the shortest practical rotation, with a single species, and at regular spacing in rows. Although commercial plantations may assume the characteristics of a semi-natural forest, these plantations should continue to fall under the guidelines set for Principle 10.

Community: An assemblage of plants and animals living together and occupying a given area.

Community type: A generalized category comprising a number of similar units or stands of vegetation and including animal life.

Configuration: The shape or outline of a forest stand or plant community; the degree of irregularity in the edge between forest stands or communities; varying from simple to mosaic.

Conservation zones: Areas managed with the objective of protecting specific characteristics. The management of these areas is to be based on the following primary goal: to protect these ecosystems by maintaining and enhancing, where necessary, the health, distinctive characteristics, and functions of the native ecosystems. All management activities necessary to achieve this goal are carried out. In addition, all management activities and economic uses that do not conflict with the primary purpose, including logging when appropriate, are permitted.

Convention on Biological Diversity: One of the key agreements adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was the Convention on Biological Diversity. This agreement has been signed by a vast majority of the world's governments. It outlines the commitment for maintaining the world's ecological composition in the face of economic development. The Convention establishes three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources. www.biodiv.org

Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species (CITES): An international agreement to regulate the trade in listed endangered wild animals and plants. Forestry concerns are primarily in the trade of endangered plants, both timber and non-timber. www.cites.org

Control system: A strategy for segregating and tracking FSC certified raw material as it goes through the production process, and for ensuring that finished products are tagged with the appropriate FSC logo (see “FSC logos”).

Controlled sources: Sources of wood that are not FSC certified as well managed forests, but are known to exclude the following:

- a) wood harvested from forest areas where traditional or civil rights are violated;
- b) wood harvested from non FSC-certified forest areas having high conservation values which are threatened (see “High Conservation Value Forests”);
- c) wood harvested from genetically modified trees;
- d) natural forest that has been converted to plantations or non-forest use;
- e) illegally harvested wood;
- f) wood that is covered by CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) but is not accompanied by relevant licenses and/or export permits.

Wood from controlled sources is acceptable in products labeled FSC Mixed or FSC Mixed/Recycled (see “FSC logos”).

Cooperative: A business that is owned and controlled by the people who use it. Its primary purpose is to provide goods and/or services to its members.

Corrective actions: Actions required by SFN/ the Certifier to address deviations from the member’s approved control system or failure to adhere to chain of custody policies and procedures.

Criterion (pl. Criteria): A means of judging whether or not a Principle (of forest stewardship) has been fulfilled.

Critical situations: (as pertain to the definition of a High Conservation Value Forest; see Principle 9); Critical situations are those where conditions exist with all of the following characteristics:

- 1) The forest area deemed critical is sufficiently different from surrounding forests and can be easily delineated.
- 2) The forest area performs one or more functions of such a nature that specialized management is required to maintain those functions.
- 3) The critical nature of the situation can be documented.
- 4) The effectiveness of the proposed management treatments, or the potential harm caused by forbidden treatments, is documented in peer-reviewed literature.
- 5) The forest area provides resources basic to human survival (e.g., fresh drinking water).

Customary rights: Rights, which result from a long series of habitual or customary actions, constantly repeated, which, have, by such repetition and by uninterrupted acquiescence, acquired the force of a law within a geographical or sociological unit.

Degraded semi-natural forest: A subset of semi-natural forests with some of the principle characteristics and key components of native ecosystems; a return to a seminatural forest is unlikely to occur in a reasonable amount of time (i.e., decades) without human intervention.

Desirable species: Any organism held to be beneficial, having pleasing or useful qualities or properties that humans decide to advance or retain by their management activities.

Ecosystem: A community of all plants and animals and their physical environment, functioning together as an interdependent unit; All of the living and non-living elements in a given area, together with their interactions and interrelationships.

Endangered species: Any species of plant or animal defined through the Endangered Species Act of 1976 as being in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and published in the Federal Register.

Endemic species: A species whose entire native range is particular to a restricted geographic area.

Erosion: The wearing away of the land surface by rain, running water, wind, ice, gravity, or other natural or anthropogenic agents.

Even-aged management: A system of forest management in which stands are produced or maintained with relatively minor differences in age.

Even-aged stand: For hardwood (including upland and bottomland) and cypress forests, a stand in which the ages of 90% of the canopy trees vary by no more than plus or minus 20% of the average age. For other (including pine and pine/hardwood) forests, a stand in which the ages of 90% of the canopy trees vary by no more than plus or minus five years from the average age. Clear-cutting, seed trees, and shelter-wood regeneration systems result in even-aged stands.

Exotic species: An introduced species not native or endemic to the area in question (FSC). For the Forest Certification Standard for the Southeastern U.S., terrestrial exotic species are further defined as species not native or endemic to the Southeastern United States.

FSC: Forest Stewardship Council, an international not-for-profit organization that sets standards for certified forestry, accredits certification organizations (see "Certifier") and governs the use of the FSC logo.

FSC Code: The SFN COC Number combined with the member's COC Sub-Code. The FSC Code is a unique identifier of the member within the FSC system.

FSC Logos: FSC certified products fall in four categories, each of which has its own logo:

FSC Pure: Products made from 100% FSC certified wood/wood fiber.

FSC Recycled: Products made from 100% post-consumer recycled wood/wood fiber.

FSC Mixed: Products made from a mix of FSC certified wood/wood fiber and wood/wood fiber from Controlled Sources (see "Controlled Sources").

FSC Mixed/Recycled: FSC certified wood/wood fiber and or wood/wood fiber from Controlled Sources, AND 100% post-consumer recycled wood/wood fiber. More information on FSC labels can be found in the manual.

First-party verification: An operation evaluates itself.

Forest: An ecosystem that, when intact, is characterized by tree cover usually consisting of stands varying in characteristics, such as species, structure, composition, age class, and commonly including streams and wildlife. While forest ecosystems are not bound by property lines, for the purpose of this document, "forest" may be delimited by ownership or other qualifying characteristics.

Forest certification: The voluntary process of verifying responsible forest stewardship according to set standards.

Forest integrity: The composition, dynamics, functions and structural attributes of a natural forest.

Forest management/manager: The people responsible for the operational management of the forest resource and of the enterprise, as well as the management system and structure, and the planning and field operations.

Forest Management Area: For the Forest Certification Standard for the Southeastern U.S., the overall forest management area is defined as the portion of total property being assessed for certification (i.e., agricultural land is not included).

Genetically modified organisms: The modification of the genetic characteristics of a microorganism, plant or animal by inserting a modified gene or a gene from another variety or species. Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) may be microorganisms designed for use as bio-pesticides or seeds that have been altered genetically to give a plant better disease resistance or growth. For the Forest Certification Standard for the Southeastern U.S., genetically modified organisms are further defined to exclude the products of traditional tree breeding methodology.

Group entity: The individual or organization that applies for group certification, and holds any group certificate that is issued. The group entity is responsible to the certification body for ensuring that the requirements of all relevant FSC guidelines are met by the forestland owners/managers covered by the certificate.

Group policies: The group entity's written rules that provide guidance to the group members for maintaining certifiable management practices and that provide assurances to the certifier that the group entity is maintaining proper oversight of the group members.

Group selection: An uneven-aged harvest and regeneration system of selecting small groups and single trees in order to create openings for full sunlight to reach the forest floor. This system is suitable for species that must have direct sunlight to regenerate.

High Conservation Value Forests: High Conservation Value Forests are those that possess one or more of the following attributes:

- a) forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance
- b) forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- c) forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g., watershed protection, erosion control)
- d) forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

High grading: The removal of the most commercially valuable trees (high-grade trees) leaving a residual stand composed of trees of poor condition or species composition. Note: High grading may have both genetic implications (i.e., dysgenic effects) and long term economic or stand-health implications.

Indigenous lands and territories: The total environment of the lands, air, water, sea, sea-ice, flora and fauna, and other resources that indigenous peoples have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used. (Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Part VI)

Indigenous peoples: "The existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement, or other means reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial situation; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form a part, under State structure which incorporates mainly the national, social and cultural characteristics of other segments of the population which are predominant." (Working definition adopted by the UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples).

Intact old-growth forest: A forest that is unroaded or lightly roaded, with no evidence of previous logging, that is of sufficient size and configuration to maintain ecological integrity – 500 acres or larger in size. Such forests differ from unentered old-growth stands (see Glossary) in that they are not only rare, but are also large enough to maintain significant biological diversity, genetic diversity, and a broad array of ecological functions on given acres through long periods of time.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM): A sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, silvicultural, and chemical tools in a way that minimizes economic, health, and environmental risks.

Integrity: The state of being unimpaired; soundness; completeness; unity.

Intensive forestry: The practice of forestry to obtain a high level of volume of wood products per unit of area; accomplished through the application of the best techniques of silviculture and management.

International Labor Organization: A United Nations' specialized agency, which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights. The ILO formulates international labor standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations setting minimum standards of basic labor rights: freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labor, equality of opportunity and treatment, and other standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work related issues. www.ilo.org

Invasive exotic plant species: A non-native plant that is able to invade and multiply in healthy native plant communities to the extent that it can result in the decline or elimination of populations of native plants and/or animals.

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

Large forest: A forest that is at least 50,000 acres in size.

Legal entity: Any entity that has a right, recognized by law, to do business and sign agreements.

Local laws: Includes all legal norms given by organisms of government whose jurisdiction is less than the national level, such as departmental, municipal and customary norms.

Long term: The time-scale of the forest owner or manager as manifested by the objectives of the

management plan, the rate of harvesting, and the commitment to maintain permanent forest cover.

The length of time involved will vary according to the context and ecological conditions, and will be a function of how long it takes a given ecosystem to recover its natural structure and composition following harvesting or disturbance, or to produce mature or primary conditions.

Managed forest: A forest that has been brought under management to accomplish specified objectives.

Managed old-growth: Old growth stands under management that maintains old-growth characteristics. Such management may include but is not limited to prescribed fire, low impact logging (e.g., single tree and small group selection), and exotic plant removal.

Mean Annual Increment: The potential or actual yield of a forest, calculated as the total volume of wood produced divided by the age (Volume of stand [m³/ha or MBF/ac]/Age of stand [yrs])

Members: Unless otherwise specified, refers to member of SFN i.e. businesses that have been approved to participate in group chain of custody certification through SFN, and are thereby legally authorized to manufacture and market FSC certified products.

The landowners or managers affiliated with the group entity applying for certification. Members are responsible for implementing any requirements of group membership at the level of their own procedures, and for implementing the procedures necessary for compliance with the FSC Principles and Criteria. Members of a group do not hold individual certificates, but so long as they comply with all the requirements of group membership, the group certificate covers them.

Mid-Sized Forest: A forest between 5000 and 50,000 acres in size.

Native ground cover: A community of herbaceous and woody plants (grasses, ferns, forbs, and small shrubs), generally less than one meter in height, and native to the region and the particular forest ecosystem. (An example demonstrating the importance of native ground cover is pineland ecosystems, where most of the plant and animal biodiversity is associated with the native ground cover the health of which depends on periodic fire).

Native species: A species indigenous to the area covered by the Southeast Region as delineated by The Forest Stewardship Council.

Native to the site: A plant species that is or was part of the plant community typically occurring on a site due to soil characteristics, topography, climate or disturbance pattern that would have occurred at the time of European contact or prior to first logging activities, conversion to agriculture, or suppression of the natural fire regime.

Natural community typing: A natural community is “an interacting assemblage of organisms, their physical environment, and the natural processes that affect them” (Thompson, Sorenson. Wetland Woodland Wildland, 2000). Managing land according to its natural community type allows managers to identify and conserve rare or fragile communities. Such mapping also allows managers to predict and manage for the plants and animals associated with each natural community.

Natural cycles: Nutrient and mineral cycling as a result of interactions between soils, water, plants, and animals in forest environments that affect the ecological productivity of a given site.

Natural forest: A forest ecosystem with most of the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems, such as complexity, structure and diversity, as defined by FSC approved

national and regional standards of forest management. Natural forests may lack the abundance of mature trees and freedom from human disturbance that characterize primary forests.

Non-timber Forest Products: All forest products except timber, including other materials obtained from trees such as resins and leaves, as well as any other plant and animal products.

Nutrient cycling: The circulation of elements, such as nitrogen and carbon, via specific pathways from abiotic to biotic portions of the environment and back again; all mineral and nutrient cycles involving human, animals, and plants—such as the carbon cycle, phosphorous cycle, and nitrogen cycle.

Old-growth forest: Ecosystems distinguished by old trees and related structural and functional attributes. Generally a forest of sufficient age to have obtained the following characteristics of the original forests of this same type: A diverse, patchy and multi-leveled canopy dominated by large overstory trees; some with broken tops, cavities and other indications of old and decaying wood; numerous large snags; and heavy accumulations of wood, including large logs on the ground. A diversity of native subcanopy, shrub, and ground cover species, as well as a diversity of associated native fauna. Additional attributes generally include patchiness from tree fall gaps and a well-developed soil profile.

Outsourcing: Contracting by a member with a business outside the GCP to do custom processing of certified wood products, in which the outside business maintains the separate identity of the wood products, and the member retains ownership of the wood products throughout the transaction.

Other Forest Types: Forest areas that do not fit the criteria for plantation or natural forests and that are defined more specifically by FSC-approved national and regional standards of forest stewardship.

Pathogen: Any agent that causes disease, especially microorganisms, such as bacteria or fungi.

Percentage based claims: An FSC policy that governs the proportion of products that can be labeled as FSC certified if only a percentage of the wood/wood fiber inputs are certified.

Plant community: A vegetative complex unique in its combination of plants; occurs in particular locations under particular influences; a reflection or integration of the environmental influences on the site—such as soils, temperature, elevation, solar radiation, slope, aspect, and rainfall; denotes a general kind of climax vegetation, such as ponderosa pine or bunchgrass, from which several plant community types may be derived on the basis of characteristic lesser vegetation.

Plantation: Forest areas lacking most of the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems as defined by FSC-approved national and regional standards of forest stewardship, which result from the human activities of either planting, sowing, or intensive silvicultural treatments.

Precautionary approach: Tool for the implementation of the precautionary principle.

Primary forest: A forest ecosystem with the principal characteristics and key elements of native ecosystems, such as complexity, structure, diversity, an abundance of mature trees, and relatively undisturbed by human activity. Human impacts in such forest areas have normally been limited to low levels of hunting, fishing, and harvesting of forest products. Such ecosystems are also referred to as "mature," "old-growth," or "virgin" forests.

Principle: An essential rule or element; in FSC's case, of forest stewardship.

Proprietary Information: Any information that derives independent economic value, actual or potential, from being withheld from other persons who can obtain economic value from its disclosure or use, and/or information that is the subject of efforts that are reasonable in the circumstances to maintain its secrecy.

Protected area: Areas managed with specific objectives to protect specific characteristics that do not necessarily exclude logging. The management of these areas should be based on the following primary goal: to protect these ecosystems by maintaining and enhancing, where necessary, the health, distinctive characteristics, and functions of the native ecosystems. All management activities necessary to achieve this goal shall be carried out. In addition, all management activities and economic uses that do not conflict with the primary purpose may be carried out.

Public claims: Public claims about certification include use of the FSC, Certifier, or SFN names, logos, and trademarks and statements in advertisements, catalogs, websites, sales documentation, posters, reports, brochures, etc.

Public land: Any land, including public forestland, held in government ownership in trust for the citizens of a city, county, state, or nation.

Refugium (pl. refugia): Locations and habitats that support populations of organisms that are limited to small fragments of their previous geographic range.

Restoration: The process of returning ecosystems or habitats to their original structure and species composition.

Restoration plantation (Restoration planting): A stand established through artificial regeneration with the primary purpose of returning a site to a natural forest condition. Secondary forest: The FSC definition of secondary forests was found to be confusing and therefore it will not be included in the Glossary of the Forest Certification Standard for the Southeastern U.S.

Riparian zone: A terrestrial area, other than a coastal area, of variable width adjacent to and influenced by a perennial or intermittent body of water. Riparian zones provide a functional linkage between terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems through the input of coarse and fine organic matter, bank stability, regulation of water temperature, regulation of sediment and nutrient flow, maintenance of unique wildlife habitat, and in limiting or mitigating non-point source pollution.

Second-party verification: Evaluation of an operation by a customer or organization (e.g., trade or professional association) of which the operation being evaluated is a member.

Sediment: Material suspended in liquid or air; the deposition of that material onto the surface underlying this liquid or air.

Semi-natural forest: A forest ecosystem with many of the characteristics of native ecosystems present. Semi-natural forests exhibit a history of human disturbance (e.g., harvesting or other silvicultural activities), are very common in the Southeastern United States, and include a considerable amount of unmanaged and most of the managed forest land other than plantations.

Silviculture: The art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health, and quality of forests and woodlands to meet the diverse needs and values of landowners and society on a sustainable basis./ The art of producing and tending a forest by manipulating its

establishment, composition, and growth to best fulfill the objectives of the owner. This may, or may not, include timber production.

Single-tree selection: An uneven-aged harvest and regeneration system of selecting individual trees. Trees of any or all sizes are selected for harvest based on their individual merits, as compared to their closest counterparts. This system is suitable for species that regenerate under partially open canopies, where filtered sunlight reaches the floor.

Slope: The incline of the land surface measured in degrees from the horizontal or in percent as determined by the number of units change in elevation per 100 of the same measurement units; also characterized by the compass direction in which it faces.

Small forest: A forest less than or equal to 5,000 acres, except for the purposes of FSC-US's Family Forest Program (SLIMF) Streamlined Certification Procedures (FSC-POL-20-101 at <http://www.fscus.org/documents/>) under which a small forest is defined as less than or equal to 2,470 acres.

Small Forest Enterprise: A business having no more than 15 employees (including part-time and seasonal staff) OR having up to 25 employees and gross annual income from wood products of no more than \$1 million.

Snag: A standing dead tree from which the leaves and most of the limbs have fallen.

Social impacts: Intended and unintended effects on the human population and the surrounding environment.

Soil: Earth material so modified by physical, chemical, and biological agents that it will support rooted plants (American Geological Institute 1962).

Species: A unit of classification on plants and animals consisting of the largest and most inclusive array of sexually reproducing and cross-fertilizing individuals that share a common gene pool; the most inclusive Mendelian population.

Species composition: The species that occur on a site or in a successional or vegetative stage of a plant community.

Stakeholder: Any individual or organization that has a social, environmental, or economic interest in a forest management operation, group entity, or certified pool. They can be neighbors, workers, businesses, government, community members, advocacy groups, recreation groups, etc.

Stand: A contiguous group of trees sufficiently uniform in age-class distribution, composition, and structure and growing on a site of sufficiently uniform quality to be a distinguishable unit.

Steering Committee: Decision-making body that governs the SFN Group Certification Program.

Structural diversity: The diversity in a plant community resulting from the variety of physical forms of the plants within the community (such as the layering or tiering of the canopy of a forest from the ground to the tops of the tallest trees).

Succession: Progressive changes in species composition and forest community structure caused by natural processes (nonhuman) over time.

Team Leader: The supervisor, spokesperson, and liaison for a certification team.

Tenure: Socially defined agreements held by individuals or groups, recognized by legal statutes or customary practice, regarding the "bundle of rights and duties" of ownership, holding, access, and/or usage of a particular land unit or the associated resources therein (such as individual trees, plant species, water, minerals, etc).

Third-party verification: Evaluation of an operation performed by an independent, outside body that has no interest in or ties to the operation being evaluated.

Threatened species: Any species that is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Unentered old-growth stand: A stand of trees that is unroaded or lightly roaded, with no evidence of logging, up to 500 acres, and of sufficient size and configuration to maintain specific ecological functions. Such stands differ from intact old-growth forests in that they are too small to maintain significant biological diversity, and/or genetic diversity on given acres through long periods of time, but as a collection of various sized acreages, contribute to a landscape scale safety net in which a mosaic of biological diversity, genetic diversity, and ecological functions are maintained in space through various scales of time.

Uneven-aged management: A system of forest management designed to maintain and regenerate a stand with three or more age classes.

Uneven-aged stand: A stand with trees of three or more distinct age classes, either intimately mixed or in small groups.

Use rights: The right to use forest resources as defined by local custom, mutual agreements, or prescribed by other entities holding access rights.

Value-added processing: Any conversion of timber from its 'raw' state into a more 'finished' state. Examples include sawing, kiln-drying, and furniture making.

Water quality: The quality of water determined by a series of standard parameters such as turbidity, temperature, bacterial count, pH, and dissolved oxygen.

Woody debris: All woody material, from whatever source, that is dead and lying on the forest floor.

Southern Forests Network Group Certification Program Operations Manual

Updated January, 2008

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This manual is available on the Southern Forests Network website:

www.SouthernSustainableForests.org

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