MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD ADDRESS KEY SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

Working together is critical to ensuring the sustainability of our planet. People and organizations are seeking solutions that go beyond limiting negative impacts to make positive contributions to the long-term health of the planet. Sustainable forests, and products sourced from those forests, are a great tool to move towards shared sustainability goals such as climate action, reduced waste, clean water, and economic development.

SFI standards, when leveraged with our three other pillars of work–conservation, community, and education– provide practical, scalable solutions for markets and communities working to pursue this growing commitment to a sustainable planet. When companies, consumers, educators, and community and sustainability leaders collaborate with SFI, they are making active, positive choices to achieve a sustainable future.

Through SFI standards, more forests are sustainably managed, which means more effort is put into conserving healthy wildlife, providing clean water, and making more sustainable wood, paper, and packaging products available for consumers and companies. Choosing SFI is a practical choice that helps combat climate change, conserve nature, and increase the number of products in the marketplace that have a positive impact on the planet.

SFI Standards are made up of Objectives, Performance Measures and Indicators. An Objective is a fundamental goal an organization must achieve for sustainable forest management. The SFI Forest Management Standard has 17 Objectives. The SFI Forest Management Standard covers a diversity of Objectives which are highlighted on the next page.

BETTER CHOICES FOR THE PLANET

SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD OBJECTIVES

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

SFI-00001

OBJECTIVE 1. FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

OBJECTIVE 2. FOREST HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY

OBJECTIVE 3. PROTECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 4. CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

OBJECTIVE 5. MANAGEMENT OF VISUAL QUALITY AND RECREATIONAL BENEFITS

OBJECTIVE 6. PROTECTION OF SPECIAL SITES

OBJECTIVE 7. EFFICIENT USE OF FIBER RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE 8. RECOGNIZE AND RESPECT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

OBJECTIVE 9: CLIMATE SMART FORESTRY

OBJECTIVE 10. FIRE RESILIENCE AND AWARENESS

OBJECTIVE 11. LEGAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

OBJECTIVE 12. FORESTRY RESEARCH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

OBJECTIVE 13. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

OBJECTIVE 14. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND LANDOWNER OUTREACH

OBJECTIVE 15. PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

OBJECTIVE 16. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC REPORTING

OBJECTIVE 17. MANAGEMENT REVIEW AND CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS
IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD ADDRESS KEY SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

A regular, transparent process for revision of the SFI standards is a critical part of SFI's commitment to continual improvement. By leveraging expertise across our network through focused engagement, and by including open comment periods, SFI creates standards that are grounded in science, include diverse perspectives, and benefit consumers, communities, and ultimately forests across the U.S. and Canada. This commitment to collaboration strengthens the positive impact of our standards in addressing sustainability challenges.

The goal for the SFI standards revision process is to create standards that are grounded in science, include diverse perspectives, and benefit consumers, communities, and ultimately forests across the U.S. and Canada. To achieve this goal SFI ensured strong participation from a diverse group of individuals representing forest sector, brand owners, conservation groups, resource professionals, landowners, educators, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and universities.

Starting in October 2019, SFI officially launched a two-year process that included two public comment periods, a dozen webinars, and over 30 task group meetings. Nearly 2,300 individuals and organizations participated in webinars and/or submitted comments on the draft SFI 2022 standards.

From this two-year process, major engagements in the SFI standards were made to address key sustainability challenges. The following pages highlight those major enhancements.

SFI SOLUTIONS
NOW, MORE THAN EVER

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
SFI-00001

CONVERSION OF FOREST COVER

AFFORESTATION

SOIL HEALTH

CLIMATE SMART FORESTRY

FIRE RESILIENCE AND AWARENESS

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY

BIODIVERSITY

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

LOGGER TRAINING

SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
SFI-00001

FOREST CONSERVATION

CONVERSION OF FOREST COVER TYPES
OBJECTIVE 1, PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.2

SFI's requirements relative to forest conversion are critical to addressing climate change, preventing species loss, and depletion of water resources.

The SFI Forest Management Standard has two requirements to safeguard against the negative impacts of conversion of forest types.
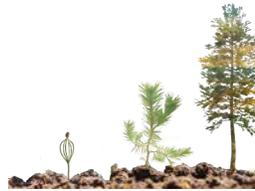
1. Certified organizations must exclude any forestlands converted to non-forestland use from their SFI certificate to ensure that any fiber resulting from deforestation, does not count towards certified forest content in any SFI-labeled product.
2. The SFI standard requires certified organizations to conduct a landscape assessment to determine ecological impacts and prohibits conversion if there would be negative impact and requires appropriate justification for any conversion of one forest cover type to another forest cover type.

The enhancements made to this performance measure address situations when an SFI-certified organization considers converting one forest cover type to another forest cover type.

When considering a conversion of forest cover types, certified organizations must ensure the proposed conversion does not pose a threat to important ecological systems, species, or natural communities, including a provision to consider scale, which can constitute an inherent impact. Provided that this assessment determines there is no threat, the certified organization then must consider how the conversion could impact forest health, reforestation challenges and riparian protection. The assessment must consider ecological impacts, and impacts to site productivity, economics, or stand quality. Finally, the assessment must consider if consultation with local communities, Indigenous Peoples and other stakeholders is required. Any conversion activity would require this level of assessment, and justification.

AFFORESTATION
OBJECTIVE 1, PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1.4

Afforestation activities are generally viewed as favorable toward the environment, but it is important to ensure afforestation activities do not negatively impact ecologically important areas. A new performance measure ensures any proposed afforestation activity is assessed to determine if such activity could affect the presence of ecologically important communities, threatened and endangered species or native natural communities at risk of becoming rare. If any of these potential impacts are identified, the afforestation activity shall not occur.

SOIL HEALTH
OBJECTIVE 2, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2.3

Soil health is essential to forest productivity and ecosystem function. Healthy soils provide many functions including tree and plant growth, nutrient cycling, control of forest and plant pests, and the regulation of water and air resources. A new indicator requires the use of practices that protect and maintain soil health in addition to soil productivity. To assist certified organizations with implementing these practices new guidance was developed.

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

LANDSCAPE BIODIVERSITY OBJECTIVE 4, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 4.1

SFI's requirements on landscape-level conservation help conserve biodiversity at that scale. Enhancements ensure that landscape-scale analyses and research inform management decisions at the landscape level. By linking management decisions to analyses of landscape conditions and biodiversity conservation goals, managers will be better able to respond to the needs of wide-ranging species, the distribution of ecologically important natural communities, and the role of the managed area toward attaining critical biodiversity outcomes. Further enhancements now call out the use of credible relevant planning and priority setting efforts to conserve biological diversity including Indigenous planning processes.

FORESTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL CONSERVATION VALUE OBJECTIVE 4, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 4.2, 4.3, AND 4.4

Species decline is a global concern, and SFI requires the protection of Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV), which are defined as forest areas harboring species and ecological communities that are imperiled or critically imperiled.

Specific requirements for attention to FECV provide assurance that forest managers will tailor strategies to protect such populations and natural communities as a specific obligation on their managed lands.

Enhancements to the standard were made to ensure the standard reinforces and clarifies conservation requirements relative to "ecologically important" sites and "ecologically important species" and "natural communities." This language provides greater clarity and consistency toward protective requirements relative to species and natural communities,

replacing and expanding the former term "significant species of concern." The use, and associated guidance for "ecologically important" species and "natural communities" facilitates the ability of managers to address conservation of species considered vulnerable, locally rare, suffering decline, or otherwise at potential risk.

Further enhancements require application of knowledge gained from the results of monitoring the effectiveness of conservation-related programs when managing wildlife habitat and contributing to conservation of biological diversity. Additionally, a program is now required to incorporate data from field applications and ecosystem research results into forest management decisions.

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

WATER QUALITY AND WATER QUANTITY

OBJECTIVE 3, PERFORMANCE MEASURES 3.1 AND 3.2

Forests maintain and clean our water supplies. Water is a vital resource for both human communities, and for the preservation of aquatic species and ecosystems. Protection of water quality and quantity are both important for the effective protection and maintenance of water resources, and forests play a vital role in ensuring both. Forests protect groundwater by assuring healthy rates of filtering, infiltration, and evapotranspiration. Forests are at least as critical for filtering surface water, and many forested watersheds are vital to human health as a primary resource for downstream communities.

Edits were made that now distinguish the protection of water quality in one performance measure (3.1) while measures for protection of water, wetlands, and riparian buffers are included in another performance measure (3.2). Additionally, there is a new indicator for protection of water quantity during all phases of management. Guidance was developed to assist SFI-certified organizations with addressing these new requirements.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

OBJECTIVE 8–PERFORMANCE MEASURES 8.1 AND 8.2

SFI RESPECTS THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND BELIEVES OUR SHARED QUALITY OF LIFE IMPROVES WHEN FORESTS ARE SUSTAINABLY MANAGED FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

These shared values allow for a strong and multi-faceted link between SFI and Indigenous communities across Canada and the U.S. and help support certified organizations in growing meaningful forest-focused relationships within their operating areas. The SFI Forest Management Standard is aligned with Indigenous values, including rights, knowledge, and environmental considerations.

Edits were made to Objective 8 that clarify the intent toward a meaningful process relative to relationship building and rights recognition. All certified organizations must:

- identify the Indigenous Peoples whose rights may be affected by the SFI-certified organization's forest management practices;
- determine the specific rights that may be affected by drawing on federal, provincial, state laws, and/or treaties and agreements between governments and Indigenous Peoples, and/or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and
- provide appropriate training so that all staff and contractors are competent to recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge for the purposes of Objective 8.

Certified organizations with management responsibilities on public lands are now required to implement additional requirements intended to further enhance

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

their ability to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples within their operating areas. These measures include:

- promoting meaningful dialogue through respecting Indigenous Peoples' representative institutions and communications protocols;
- providing opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to review certified organizations' forest management practices and forest management plans;
- ensuring respect for Indigenous Peoples' traditional knowledge, including non-timber forest products and sites of spiritual, historical, and cultural importance; and
- developing additional guidance developed for certified organizations regarding approaches to identifying and implementing appropriate communications protocols.

SFI is developing tools that will assist certified organizations in training personnel and contractors, rights identification and recognition, and relationship building for the purposes of Objective 8.

CLIMATE CHANGE

OBJECTIVE 9–PERFORMANCE MEASURES 9.1, 9.2

FORESTS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AND STORING CARBON

Given the increasing global impact of climate change, and increased understanding about the important role of forests, SFI developed a new objective focused on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The new objective requires certified organizations to individually or through cooperative efforts, such as the engagement of SFI Implementation Committees, identify and address climate change risks to forests and forest operations and develop adaptation objectives and strategies. Similarly, it requires certified organizations to identify and address opportunities to mitigate effects of climate change associated with forest operations. Guidance was developed to assist certified organizations in identifying options for addressing stored carbon and greenhouse gas emissions.

Additional requirements point to existing elements of the SFI Forest Management Standard that contribute favorably to the certified organization's adaptation plan as well as those that contribute to opportunities to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations.

Certified organizations will be required to report annually to SFI on progress toward achieving climate change strategies (9.1.4) and plans and measures to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations (9.2.4).

Finally, certified organizations are required to have a program to identify and address GHG emissions associated with forest operations within their operational control.

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE
SFI-00001

FIRE RESILIENCE AND AWARENESS

**OBJECTIVE 10 –
PERFORMANCE MEASURES
10.1, 10.2**

MITIGATING THE UNDESIRABLE IMPACTS OF WILDFIRE

The link between wildfires and climate is well-documented. The planet is warming with many regions in the United States and Canada experiencing increased incidence of wildfire and the undesirable impacts that result. Undesirable impacts are those which threaten public safety, human health, property, water quality and quantity, air quality, species habitat, or those which increase atmospheric carbon or have the capacity to destroy forests on a scale that significantly diminishes their inherent values.

Sustainable forest management can reduce risk of these undesirable impacts of wildfire. The new Objective 10 – Fire Resilience and Awareness – elevates SFI's role in addressing wildfire to ensure the efficacy of such efforts. The objective requires that Certified Organizations limit the susceptibility of the forests they own or manage to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of wildfire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.

The objective has two Performance Measures. Performance Measure 10.1 requires that on the forests they own or manage, Certified Organizations limit susceptibility to undesirable impacts of wildfire, promote healthy and resilient forest conditions through management techniques, actions and/or policies, and support restoration of forests following wildfire damage.

Performance Measure 10.2 requires that Certified Organizations individually or through cooperative efforts involving government agencies, SFI Implementation Committees, Project Learning Tree, or other partners, engage in efforts to raise awareness of the benefits of fire management and minimization of undesirable impacts of wildfire and take action to address these important topics.

Guidance has been developed to assist Certified Organizations with implementing the requirements of the objective.

MAJOR ENHANCEMENTS IN THE SFI FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD

LOGGER TRAINING

FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARD–OBJECTIVE 13

LOGGERS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE ON THE GROUND IMPLEMENTING THE SFI STANDARDS. LOGGER TRAINING HAS BEEN A KEY COMPONENT OF SFI SINCE 1995

Loggers who are aware of their responsibility as professionals are better equipped to protect the environment, underscoring the importance of logger training as a core requirement in the SFI Forest Management Standard. By the end of 2019, 214,000 loggers and foresters had completed training programs approved by SFI Implementation Committees.

All requirements for logger training are in Objective 13. Performance Measure 13.2 is reorganized into two indicators, with Indicator 13.2.1 detailing the core training requirements needed to attain qualified logging professional status. Indicator 13.2.2 has the continuing education requirements needed to maintain qualified logging professional status. These enhancements add more structure to the qualified logging professional training requirements and raise the overall quality and impact of logger training. The definition of "certified logging company" was updated to ensure the requirements for a certified logging company build on the already high level of training provided by qualified logging professional training programs. Specifically, key personnel are required to complete a SFI Implementation Committee approved qualified logging professional training program. Certified logging companies are required to hold independent, in-the-forest verification of conformance with a logger certification program.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS INVOLVING SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

Using a cooperative approach where appropriate could result in efficiencies and consistency of application for the certified organizations. As such, the new Forest Management Standard stipulate several requirements that could be effectively addressed through cooperative efforts involving SFI Implementation Committees. Examples include working cooperatively to address conservation of biological diversity, climate-smart forestry, fire resilience and awareness, forest research, improvement in logger training, and outreach to landowners.