

# Forest Certification UPDATE



## AT LIMITED PARTNERSHIP

### DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY

AT Limited Partnership (AT) owns and manages approximately 765,000 acres of freehold timberlands in New Brunswick, provides management services relating to approximately 1.3 million acres of Crown licensed timberlands and also owns and operates a forest nursery in Second Falls, New Brunswick. Products include softwood and hardwood saw logs, pulpwood and biomass by-products, sold to approximately 90 regional customers.

The operations have been verified to the SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE® (SFI®) Standard since 2000.

### BACKGROUND

During the period of June 3-5 2014, AT underwent a re-registration audit to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard (SFIS). The registration cycle is over 3 years with surveillance audits conducted annually. This report summarizes the audit process and results of the SAI Global re-registration audit.

### SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Forest management activities – planning, harvesting, transportation and silviculture on the company's private forestland holdings and operations controlled by the company on Crown Timber License #9, in New Brunswick. This includes the forestry nursery, and selected sub-licensee forest operations. - Objectives 1-7 and 14-20.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SFI Program third-party re-registration audit was undertaken by SAI Global. SAI Global is an independent third party registrar that is accredited by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) for registrations to SFIS 2010-2014. This ensures the integrity and credibility of the audit process.

The audit assessed active and completed harvest operations through field visits, review of documentation and interviews with AT staff and contractors. The audit also assessed the SFIS along with supporting management system documentation and



records at the AT offices. The audit used site visits and interviews with employees and logging contractors to assess the AT management system.

### THE AUDITORS

The SAI Global audit team who performed the audit consisted of Daniel Martin (Lead auditor) and Martin Litchfield. The auditors are Professional Foresters and certified lead auditors.

### KEY AREAS OF NON-CONFORMANCE

There were zero non-conformances.

### KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Consider having the Maritime SIC identify how the role of NBDNR in management planning might be addressed in SFI certification given the role changes in management planning responsibilities on Crown Lands.

Consider standardizing the schedules incorporated into service contracts (e.g. inclusion of the Environmental Inspection Procedure Reference Book in a standard listing and as an Appendix).

Consider having the Maritime Standard Implementation Committee (SIC) identify the requirements and differences for both the Trained Forest Worker and the Qualified Logging Professional.

Consider identifying the requirement to notify SAI Global if written complaints are received with specific claim of non-conformity.

### POSITIVE ASPECTS

- Awareness of harvesting prescriptions by operators.
- Merchandising of fibre for optimum use.
- Implementation of road maintenance techniques to prevent erosion and protect water quality.
  - Diversion ditches
  - Culvert installation
  - Arch culverts
  - Cross drainage culverts
  - Bridge construction

### EVIDENCE OF CONFORMITY

Evidence that was assessed to determine AT Limited Partnership's conformity with the SFIS 2010-2014 standard appears below:

#### SFI-01 Forest Management Planning

- Crown land forest management plan initially expired on March 31, 2012. The New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources (NBDNR) has approved the extension of the

### SFIS 2010-2014

Periodic Assessments	
Major non-conformances:	0
Minor non-conformances:	0
Opportunities for Improvement:	4
Positive Aspects:	3

### Major Non-Conformances

None

### Minor Non-Conformances

None

### Opportunity for Improvement

- Consider having the Maritime SIC identify how the role of NBDNR in management planning might be addressed in SFI certification given the role changes in management planning responsibilities on Crown Lands.
- Consider standardizing the schedules incorporated into the contracts (in relation to presence and absence of the Environmental Inspection Procedure Reference Book).
- Consider having the Maritime SIC identify the requirements and differences for both the Trained Forest Worker and the Qualified Logging Professional.
- Consider identifying the requirement to notify SAI Global if written complaints are received with specific claim of non-conformity.

### Positive Aspects

- Awareness of harvesting prescriptions by operators.
- Merchandising of fibre for optimum use.
- Implementation of road maintenance techniques to prevent erosion and protect water quality.
  - Diversion ditches
  - Culvert installation
  - Arch culverts
  - Cross drainage culverts
  - Bridge construction

- previous Crown plan for the last two years and existing AACs remain in effect
  - Company is awaiting NBDNR finalization of the Protected Natural Areas and conservation forest
  - The Crown has announced the potential of moving to a 10 year management planning cycle
- Freehold Forest Management Plan term is 2011 to 2015
  - AT is projecting a reduction of Softwood AAC
  - Plan includes the maintenance of wildlife habitat levels
  - Commercial thinning in plantations

### **SFI-02 Forest Productivity**

- Forest planners designate the regeneration plans
- Within the operating year, Unit Superintendents are responsible to have visual regeneration surveys conducted for the completion of update coding forms for all clearcuts and over story removal harvest areas. These surveys will be used to determine future activities. Areas identified as natural regeneration are assessed for stocking five years after harvest
- Unit Superintendents are responsible for further evaluating the regeneration success on any areas identified as requiring future assessment from the update coding form information. Evaluation occurs by means of a survey, either formally structured or visually estimated,
- So long as species stocking estimates are recorded.
- Planting program primarily uses native species; there is a small amount of Norway spruce
- Criteria to judge regeneration on Acadian Timber Freehold, version 1.0, effective July 15, 2013. Suitable regeneration is considered to be any commercial tree species (softwood or hardwood) that is in a healthy condition (vigorous and undamaged)
- Pesticides applied only on sites requiring release
- No chemical release is used for site preparation
- Pesticide applications follow label rates
- GPS guidance and control systems are used by pesticide applicators
- Field inspections in block F985502-2014 confirmed the use of depth to water table information to avoid sensitive sites. Operator was aware of the existence of the depth to water table on the harvesting map and demonstrated good knowledge of this tool.
- Sensitive sites are identified in the GPS for the feller buncher.
- The audit confirmed the retention of good trees in selective cut in block F985502-2014.
- Nursery manager participates in New Brunswick Tree Improvement Council

### **SFI-03 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources**

- The program to implement provincial best management practices during all phases of management activities are found in the Environmental Inspection Procedure Reference Book.
- Reviewed contracts, they contain provision that specify conformance to best management practices.

- Plans to address wet-weather events are implemented. Adequate training was provided to staff, contractors and operators. The audit confirmed knowledge of key personnel by interview.
- The audit confirmed the implementation of the Environmental Inspection System. Reviewed EI forms for blocks 2416, 2087, 2416 (SH), 0337 for the 2013 season.
- Rivers, streams, lakes and other water bodies are appropriately identified on maps. Buffer zones are flagged on the field prior to harvesting.

#### **SFI-04 Conservation of Biological Diversity**

- Programs to address biodiversity include the following:
  - Forest management Values & Goals
  - Forest Management Plan harvest block planning
  - Habitat management areas
  - Deer Wintering Areas
  - Special area identification
  - Over mature Spruce and Fir Habitat management
- No prescribed burns on Crown lands or Freehold. Natural fires are suppressed.

#### **SFI-05 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits**

- Visual quality management incorporated into block harvest design
- 2013 average clearcut size of 22 ha. Internal records are maintained for each block. The size calculation system was reviewed during the audit.
- Recreational opportunities are provided on company Freehold land. Passes are required

#### **SFI-06 Protection of Special Sites**

Special site identification on Crown land is provided by DNR

Freehold sites provided by:

- Forest advisory committees
- Company staff
- Information from the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Center or Nature Trust of New Brunswick is used periodically to evaluate regional conservation initiatives

The information for special sites appears on each block map with specific description for:

Special Areas Program  
Wetlands Mapped  
Designated Well Sites mapped  
Riparian Buffers managed  
Habitat Management Plans  
Reserve areas

Currently awaiting final Protected Natural Areas designation from DNR

There are 13 reserves in total (11 Freehold and 2 Crown)

Reserves include items such as:

- Balsam Fir reserve
- White Pine reserve
- Virgin Sugar Maple and Oak
- NB Trust wetlands
- Shea Lake ecological reserve

#### **SFI-07 Efficient Use of Forest Resources**

Field inspections confirmed excellent utilization and merchandizing

Sorts of:

- hardwood veneer
- hardwood logs
- hardwood pulp
- softwood logs
- softwood studwood
- biomass chipping

Environmental Inspections provide adequate monitoring to ensure efficient utilization.

#### **SFI-08 Land Outreach**

This objective is not applicable as AT Limited Partnership does not purchase any wood; they sell wood products to appropriate mills.

#### **SFI-09 Use of Qualified Resource and Logging Professionals**

This objective is not applicable as AT Limited Partnership does not purchase any wood; they sell wood products to appropriate mills.

#### **SFI-10 Adherence to Best Management Practices**

This objective is not applicable as AT Limited Partnership does not purchase any wood; they sell wood products to appropriate mills.

#### **SFI-11 Promote Conservation of Biological Diversity, Biodiversity Hotspots and Major Tropical Wilderness Areas**

This objective is not applicable. AT Limited Partnership does not source fiber from outside North America.

#### **SFI-12 Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Illegal Logging**

This objective is not applicable. AT Limited Partnership does not source fiber from outside North America.

#### **SFI-13 Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Sources without Effective Social Laws**

This objective is not applicable. AT Limited Partnership does not source fiber from outside North America.

#### **SFI-14 Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

Legal and regulatory compliance is monitored by:

- External legal update subscriber service
- Internet access to legal and government sites
- Legal changes highlighted during the 2014 Management review meeting

- 289 Environmental Inspections were conducted in 2013-4 season to address legal compliance monitoring.
- Compliance trends were highlighted during the 2014 Management review meeting
- Company woodlands unionized employees are members of the CEP
  - Green River Local 15N
  - Tobique Local 114

### **SFI-15 Forestry Research & Technology**

Participation in the following:

- Maritime SIC
- FP Innovations
- Forest Protection Limited
- NB Growth and Yield Cooperative
- NB Tree Improvement Council
- CFS Green River thinning trials
- Université de Moncton Northern Hardwood Research Institute

There is no research on genetically engineered trees. Monitoring information on climate change is available through the Department of Natural Resources and the Canadian Forest Service.

### **SFI-16 Training and Education**

The ***Forest Management Values and Goals*** document cover all the requirements of the SFI 2010-2014 standard

The audit verified all staff participated in the 2014 spring orientation training. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in the organizational chart and job descriptions. Field interviews with AT staff confirmed a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities related to SFI implementation.

Contractors were provided training during the 2014 spring orientation program. Field interviews confirmed a good understanding of the environmental and safety requirements. Verified training records for all operators interviewed (26) in the field.

Verified 20 workers recognized as CLP (primarily associated with chain saw use)  
Verified all AT supervisors are QLP. The auditor reviewed the Maritime SIC decision that all that attend the orientation sessions are recognized as QLP. As approved in the September 30, 2013 SIC minutes. However there is confusion whether this approval is for “Trained Forest Worker” or “Qualified Logging Professional”.

An opportunity for improvement was identified to attempt to clarify the differences between the two designations.

***Consider having the Maritime SIC identify the requirements and differences for both the “Trained Forest Worker” and the “Qualified Logging Professional”***

### **SFI-17 Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry**

The audit allowed concluding that AT are actively involved and providing financial support to the Maritime SIC.

Educational tours were provided to the Forest Advisory Committee. Maritime SIC have sponsored the annual Atlantic Teachers Tours. SFI hotline is implemented and effective. There are no complaints for AT Limited Partnership in 2013. The audit team reviewed the AT External communications procedure.

An opportunity for improvement was identified to:

***Consider identifying the requirements to notify SAI Global if written complaints are received with a specific claim of non-conformity.***

### **SFI-18 Public Land Management Responsibilities**

AT Limited Partnership hosts four Forest Advisory Committees (FAC) (Tobique, Green River, Restigouche and Juniper). The FAC provide appropriate contact with local stakeholders over forest management issues. Affected indigenous peoples are invited to sit on the advisory committee in closest proximity to their community.

### **SFI-19 Communications and Public Reporting**

The audit verified both the submission of the SFI progress report and the posting of the public report on the SFI website. Past reports were available for the audit.

### **SFI-20 Management Review and Continual Improvement**

Interview with the senior manager confirmed commitment to the SFI certification. Management Review of April 15, 2014 included the following;

- Management review indicators
- Prepare for the 2015-2019 SFI standard
- Certification scope
- Environmental Focus update review
- 2013 MR follow-up
- External communications
- FAC concerns
- Audits and penalties
- Environmental inspections
- Sustainable long term wood supply
- Harvest performance
- Silvicultural performance
- Invasive species sightings
- Review of procedures
- Legal changes
- Recommendations for improvement
- Senior management evaluation and approval



SAI Global forestry specialist group registers/certifies forest companies to ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, CSA Z809 and CSA Z804 SFM, SFIS, SFI CoC, PEFC CoC. QMI-SAI Global registers/certifies forest companies to FSC FM and CoC The group, led by Sylvain Frappier, Technical Manager - Forestry, consists of a highly qualified team of professional foresters, technical and industry experts. Contact [certification.americas@saiglobal.com](mailto:certification.americas@saiglobal.com) for more information.

**Company Contact:**

Kevin Topolniski  
AT Limited Partnership  
365 Canada Road  
E3V 1W2  
Edmundston, N.B.  
Company Tel.: (506) 737-2345 ext 2545

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