

## **NSF International Forestry Program Public Summary Audit Report Delaware Wild Lands**

The SFI Program of Delaware Wild Lands in Delaware and Maryland has achieved conformance with the SFI 2015-2019 Standard and Rules<sup>®</sup>, Section 2, according to the NSF SFIS Certification Audit Process. NSF initially certified these lands to the SFIS in September of 2010 and recertified them in 2013. This report describes the second Surveillance Audit designed to review the program to determine continued conformance.

The organization's SFI Program is managed by Andrew Martin, supported by Larry Walton of Vision Forestry. Delaware Wild Lands, a non-profit organization, owns some 10,336 acres of forestland in Sussex County, Delaware and Worcester County, Maryland. The land has been in conservation-oriented management for some 50 years, and is composed largely of the Great Cypress Swamp and surrounding forests. In 2005, DWL turned to Vision Forestry, LLC, to prepare a sustainable forest management plan and oversee the day-to-day management of the property.

The property comprises the largest contiguous forest ownership on the Eastern Shore, and is highly regarded throughout the region as an important conservation area. It has remnants of bald-cypress, possibly some of the furthest north in the range of that species, as well as Atlantic white cedar. Restoring some of these former stands is a high priority. The land has been managed as a Quality Deer Management property for years, and hunting is a major activity. The main timber production comes from old stands of Loblolly pine that established following major fires in the 1930's and survived the pine bark beetle epidemics that have occurred episodically since. These large trees return good revenue when timber markets are active, but the low, wet nature of the sites can mean a very short season when mechanized operations are possible.

The surveillance audit was performed by NSF on October 21, 2015 by Norman Boatwright, Lead Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting SFIS Certification Audits of SFI 2015-2019 Standard and Rules<sup>®</sup>, Section 9.

The objective of the audit was to assess conformance of the firm's SFI Program to the requirements of the SFI 2015-2019 Standard and Rules<sup>®</sup>, Section 2. The scope of the SFIS Audit included fee timberland forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been conducted since the previous surveillance audit conducted in October 2014. In addition practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example). Use of the SFI logo and the requirement to provide a public of audit reports were also reviewed.

As with the initial audit, several of the SFI Performance Measures were outside of the scope of Delaware Wild Lands' SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.3 involving planting exotic species
- Indicator 2.1.5 involving planting non-forested areas
- Indicator 2.5.1 involving improved planting stock
- Indicator 8.2.1 involving the management of public lands

No indicators were modified.

### **SFIS Surveillance Audit Process**

The review was governed by a detailed audit protocol designed to enable the audit team determine conformance with the applicable SFI requirements. The process included the assembly and review of audit evidence consisting of documents, interviews, and on-site inspections of ongoing or completed forest practices. Documents describing

these activities were provided to the auditor in advance, and a sample of the available audit evidence was designated by the auditor for review.

During the audit NSF reviewed a sample of the written documentation assembled to provide objective evidence of SFIS Conformance. NSF also selected field sites for inspection based upon the risk of environmental impact, likelihood of occurrence, special features, and other criteria outlined in the NSF SFI-SOP. NSF also selected and interviewed stakeholders such as contract loggers, landowners and other interested parties, and interviewed employees within the organization to confirm that the SFI Standard was understood and actively implemented.

The possible findings for specific SFI requirements included Full Conformance, Major Non-conformance, Minor Non-conformance, Opportunities for Improvement, and Practices that exceeded the Basic Requirements of the SFIS. Surveillance Audits generally focus on conformance issues and do not generally address exceptional practices.

### **Overview of Audit Findings**

Delaware Wild Lands' SFI Program was found to be in basic conformance with the SFIS Standard. A minor non-conformance, three transitional minor non-conformances and 3 opportunities for improvement were identified:

#### **Transitional Minor non-conformances:**

CI 8.1.1: *Program Participants will provide a written policy acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.*

Finding: The Company has not developed a written policy acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

CI 8.3.1: *Program Participants are aware of traditional forest-related knowledge, such as known cultural heritage sites, the use of wood in traditional buildings and crafts, and flora that may be used in cultural practices for food, ceremonies or medicine.*

Finding: The Company is not aware of traditional forest-related knowledge, such as known cultural heritage sites, the use of wood in traditional buildings and crafts, and flora that may be used in cultural practices for food, ceremonies or medicine.

CI 11.1.1: *Written statement of commitment to the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard communicated throughout the organization, particularly to facility and woodland managers, and field foresters.*

Finding: There is no written statement of commitment.

#### **Minor non-conformance:**

CI 14.2.1: *Prompt response to the SFI annual progress report survey.*

Finding: This was a minor CAR for the 2014 audit as the Company was very late submitting the 2013 report. Confirmed by review of an email from Rachel that the report was not submitted by the deadline but was submitted in time for SFI to do its data runs. The report submittal system for SFI Inc. for 2014 is new and had substantial issues and report submittal issues are common.

Delaware Wild Lands will develop plans to address these issues. Progress in implementing the corrective action plans will be reviewed in subsequent surveillance audits.

Opportunities for improvement:

CI 1.3.1: *Forest lands converted to other land uses shall not be certified to this SFI Standard.*

Finding: The Company has approximately 132 acres in actively farmed fields within the scope.

CI 2.2.4: *The World Health Organization (WHO) type 1A and 1B pesticides shall be prohibited, except where no other viable alternative is available.*

Finding: The Company has not reviewed the list and only uses glyphosate and imazapyr, which are not on the list.

CI 2.2.5: *Use of pesticides banned under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) shall be prohibited.*

Finding: The Company has not reviewed the list and only uses glyphosate and imazapyr, which are not on the list.

The 2014 Surveillance audit identified minor non-conformances for CIs 19.1.1 and 19.2.1. The CAR for 19.1.1 is closed and the CAR for 19.2.1 is reissued as a minor.

The next surveillance audit is scheduled for September 28, 2016.

### **General Description of Evidence of Conformity**

NSF's audit team used a variety of evidence to determine conformance. A general description of this evidence is provided below, organized by SFI Objective.

**Objective 1. Forest Management Planning** - To broaden the implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on the use of the best scientific information available.

**Summary of Evidence** – The forest management plan for Delaware Wild Lands and supporting documentation and the associated inventory data and growth models were the key evidence of conformance.

**Objective 2. Forest Productivity** - To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation and other measures.

**Summary of Evidence** – Field observations and associated records were used to confirm practices. Delaware Wild Lands has programs for reforestation, for protection against insects, diseases, and wildfire, and for careful management of activities which could potentially impact soil and long-term productivity.

**Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity including Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value** To manage the quality and distribution of wildlife habitats and contribute to the conservation of biological diversity by developing and implementing stand- and landscape-level measures that promote habitat diversity and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species.

**Summary of Evidence** – Field observations, written assessments, plans and policies, planning and involvement in monitoring and research by college-trained field biologists and ecologists, availability of specialists, and regular staff involvement in conferences and workshops that cover scientific advances were the evidence used to assess the requirements involved biodiversity conservation.

**Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites** - To manage lands that are ecologically, geologically, or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

**Summary of Evidence** – Field observations of completed operations and of special sites, and written protection plans were assessed during the evaluation.

**Objective 7. Efficient Use of Forest Resources** - To promote the efficient use of forest resources.

**Summary of Evidence** – Field observations of completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising field foresters provided the key evidence.

**Objective 8 Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples’ Rights** - To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples’ rights and traditional knowledge.

**Summary of Evidence:** Transitional minor non-conformance.

**Objective 9 Legal and Regulatory Compliance** - To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

**Summary of Evidence:** Field reviews of ongoing and completed operations were the most critical evidence.

**Objective 10 Forestry Research, Science and Technology** - To invest in forestry research, science and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based and broaden the awareness of climate change impacts on forests, wildlife and biological diversity.

**Summary of Evidence:** Review of documentation revealed a long legacy of basic and applied research on these lands.

**Objective 11 Training and Education** - To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

**Summary of Evidence:** Transitional minor non-conformance.

**Objective 12 Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach** - To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.

**Summary of Evidence:** Mailing lists, agendas for meetings, and selected summaries of comments and thank you notes were sufficient to assess the requirements.

**Objective 14 Communications and Public Reporting** - To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.

**Summary of Evidence:** Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided the key evidence.

**Objective 15. Management Review and Continual Improvement** - To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

**Summary of Evidence:** Records of program reviews, agendas and notes from management review meetings, and interviews with personnel from all involved levels in the organization were assessed.

## **Relevance of Forestry Certification**

Third-party certification provides assurance that forests are being managed under the principles of sustainable forestry, which are described in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard as:

### **1. Sustainable Forestry**

To practice sustainable forestry to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, carbon, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation and aesthetics.

### **2. Forest Productivity and Health**

To provide for regeneration after harvest and maintain the productive capacity of the forest land base, and to protect and maintain long-term forest and soil productivity. In addition, to protect forests from economically or environmentally undesirable levels of wildfire, pests, diseases, invasive exotic plants and animals and other damaging agents and thus maintain and improve long-term forest health and productivity.

### **3. Protection of Water Resources**

To protect water bodies and riparian areas, and to conform with forestry best management practices to protect water quality.

### **4. Protection of Biological Diversity**

To manage forests in ways that protect and promote biological diversity, including animal and plant species, wildlife habitats, and ecological or natural community types.

### **5. Aesthetics and Recreation**

To manage the visual impacts of forest operations, and to provide recreational opportunities for the public.

### **6. Protection of Special Sites**

To manage lands that are ecologically, geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

### **7. Responsible Fiber Sourcing Practices in North America**

To use and promote among other forest landowners sustainable forestry practices that are both scientifically credible and economically, environmentally and socially responsible.

### **8. Legal Compliance**

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.

### **9. Research**

To support advances in sustainable forest management through forestry research, science and technology.

### **10. Training and Education**

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To improve the practice of sustainable forestry through training and education programs.

**11. Community Involvement and Social Responsibility**

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry on all lands through community involvement, socially responsible practices, and through recognition and respect of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional forest-related knowledge.

**12. Transparency**

To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the SFI Standard by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.

**13. Continual Improvement**

To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

**14. Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Illegal Logging in Offshore Fiber Sourcing**

**(Applies only to the SFI 2015-2019 Fiber Sourcing Standard)**

To avoid wood fiber from illegally logged forests when procuring fiber outside of North America, and to avoid sourcing fiber from countries without effective social laws.

*Source: Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Standard, 2015–2019 Edition.*