



2013 SFI Public Summary Report

Minnesota Counties Sustainable Forest Cooperative Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Standard [2010-2014]

Project Scope and Objectives

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) completed a SFI Re-registration Assessment of forestry lands in Beltrami, Carlton, Clearwater, Crow Wing, and Koochiching counties managed by Minnesota Counties Sustainable Forest Cooperative (“MCSFC” or “the Company”). The Lead Assessor was Bruce Eaket, EMS (LA).

The primary objective of the assessment was to assess MCSFC’s SFI management system and to evaluate the implementation of the SFI Standard in the field.

Indicators

All of the indicators in the SFI Standard were within the scope of the assessment, except for Objectives 8-13, since the Group does not procure fiber. There were no substitute indicators.

Assessment Process

The assessment team conducted interviews and reviewed appropriate documentation to assess policies and procedures, and tested implementation of SFI program requirements. The report was dated October 6, 2013.

Summary of Conformance and Good Management Practices

MCSFC has a Cooperative Agreement in place for the five counties: Carlton, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Beltrami and Koochiching. Although each County operates independently, common policies and procedures are followed. Ten year management plans are in place that are driven by forest inventory data and managed through their GIS.

During harvest planning, foresters consult resource information which is tracked in each County’s GIS. Wildlife areas, special sites and areas where water quality is at risk are included in the harvest plans and also confirmed on the ground during planning. Special sites, including visual management are also considered as part of a pre-work inspection. Recreation is one of the major elements of their management of the public lands and is addressed in each County’s Management Plan.

Each County reports to its own County Board who represent the people in those communities. The Counties meet with their County Board on a regular basis to review land use planning and management activities, and there is a process in place for the public to address concerns and have input to activities on the public lands.

MCSFC relies on both natural regeneration and planting for reforestation of harvest units. In some cases, retention patches are maintained in harvest units to promote natural regeneration. A mix of native species are sometimes planted to help re-establish native species assemblages. MCSFC manages and operates a seed orchard which provides seed for theirs and others operations.

Timber sale contracts require compliance to State BMPs and MCSFC foresters inspect sites during the course of the activities, with increased frequency of visits during wet weather. To protect sensitive soils, harvesting is restricted to winter conditions when the ground is frozen. Internal audits of BMP implementation and inspections are conducted annually for each forester.

Timber utilization specifications are included in the harvest plan and contracts. Utilization is reviewed through the course of operations and included in the inspection report. There is a very little opportunity for the removal of fiber as bio-mass.

In order to bid on and operate on a county timber sale, logging contractors are required to be "Responsible Contractors". Along with insurance requirements, contractors must have completed Minnesota Logger Education Program (or equivalent) approved training and be current with their training. These requirements are checked before the sale is awarded and the trained logger database is updated quarterly.

MCSFC are SIC members and support research through contributions to the SIC. Through the SIC, and other activities, each county is involved with public outreach and education activities related to sustainable forest management.

Specific Good management practices are noted below:

- Aspen dominated stands have been replanted to a mix of Jack Pine, White Pine and White Cedar based on evidence that these three species were found historically in these stands. The planting of these species will bring native assemblages back into the forest landscape, contributing to biodiversity.
- MCSFC maintains good relationships with adjacent property landowners by providing written and in-person notification of forest management activities, and also by assisting neighboring landowners coordinate harvesting on their lands.
- MCSFC performs annual BMP compliance audits of their harvest blocks. These audits enable a good discussion among those doing the job on the ground.
- MCSFC's harvest inspection is automated and where issues are identified, a corrective action request is generated. Corrective actions are tracked in the county's computer system and monitored weekly by the Land Commissioner. Harvest units cannot be closed out until corrective actions have been addressed.
- The effectiveness of MSCFC's logger training program was evidenced by a contract logger's awareness of a listed wildlife species.

Summary of Findings

No Nonconformities were identified during this assessment.

Opportunities for improvement were identified in the following areas:

- MSCFC may wish to review the age of their inventory to ensure data in the inventory related to harvest planning is not older than 20 years. They may want to consider using post-harvest cruise information to see if it could be used as a method of updating part of their inventory.
- MSCFC may want to review their current form and procedures for completing inspection forms to allow for comments to explain issues and concerns identified.

Conclusion

The Group has maintained conformance with the requirements of the SFI Standard. The Certificate can be can be obtained by contacting Gregory Bernu of MSCFC at 218-384-9179 or on forestmanagement.co.beltrami.mn.us.