

Forest Certification UPDATE



NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources has broad responsibilities for the management of Nova Scotia's biodiversity, forest, geological, and provincial park resources, and the administration of the province's Crown land. These responsibilities include the development, conservation and protection of these resources.

In December 2012, the Province of Nova Scotia purchased the assets of Bowater Mersey Paper Company Ltd., which included 220,000 ha of woodlands that were certified to the SFIS 2010:2014. These lands were transferred from a fee simple (industrial freehold) to provincial public lands, and are considered Crown Lands of Nova Scotia. This purchase followed with the commitment to maintain the forest certification commitments associated with the woodlands. Responsibility of maintaining the forest management systems was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources. A scheduled surveillance audit was conducted by SAI Global in July 2014 on these woodlands.

The products produced from these woodlands vary from solid wood products such as lumber and round wood and pulp and paper products such as pulp sheets and paper to processing facilities across the Province.

BACKGROUND

On July 15, 2014, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources underwent a surveillance audit to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) Standard 2010-2014. The registration cycle is over 3 years with surveillance audits conducted annually. This report summarizes the audit process and results of the SAI Global surveillance audit.

SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

The scope of the Mersey Woodlands management system covers forest management activities on the Crown Land known as the Mersey Woodlands, which is comprised of the three districts: Medway, Rossignol and St. Margaret's Bay.

Scope: Forest management activities-planning, harvesting, transportation and silviculture on the Nova Scotia Mersey Woodlands.-Objectives 1-7 and 14-20.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SFI Program third-party surveillance 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 interviews with Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources staff and contractors. The audit also assessed the SFIS and supporting EMS documentation, records at the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources office. The audit used site visits and interviews with silvicultural contractors to assess the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources 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

- 19.2.1 – There is no evidence that the program participant has responded to the SFI annual progress report.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 14.1.1 – Consider comparing the list of applicable legislation in WI-system-03 to the list on the DNR document <http://www.novascotia.ca/treasuryboard/manuals/PDF/100/NatRes.pdf> management manual for the Department of Natural Resources.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources have developed corrective action plans to address the root cause of the non-conformity identified during the audit. The root cause analysis and proposed corrective actions have been reviewed by SAI Global to ensure that they are appropriate and fully address the identified deficiencies. At the next re-assessment audit, a follow up on the implemented corrective actions will be done to confirm that the corrective actions were appropriate and effective in ensuring the non-conforming situation has not reoccurred.

SFIS 2010-2014

Periodic Assessments

Major non-conformances: 0
Minor non-conformances: 1
Opportunities
for Improvement: 1
Positive Aspects: 3

Major Non-Conformances

Pervasive or critical to the achievement of the SFI objectives.

All major non-conformances require an action plan to be implemented by the auditee within 90 days of an initial audit and subsequently 60 days or registration cannot be achieved/maintained

Minor Non-Conformances

Isolated incidents that are non-critical but must be addressed before the next surveillance audit to maintain compliance to the SFI standard.

Opportunity for Improvement

Are not non-conformances but are comments on specific areas where improvements can be made.

Positive Aspects

Areas that are deemed to be of best practices

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- The extensive Contractor training sessions identifying Best Management Practices
- The continuing efforts to encourage partial harvesting
- The support for the Community Forest and the Mi'kmaq Initiative

EVIDENCE OF CONFORMITY

Evidence that was assessed to determine Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources conformity with the SFIS 2010-2014 standard appears below:

SFI-01 Forest Management Planning

Harvest trends monitored through Management Review and regularly through Forms of Returns submitted to the Resource Forester. Forest inventory data is maintained in the GIS (including soil classification). Woodstock Forest Development Model used to calculate forest growth. The wood supply analysis is based on a 100 year horizon. The forest management plan is for 25 years.

SFI-02 Forest Productivity

Harvested areas are assessed immediately following harvest to determine the potential for natural regeneration. Areas with low potential are assessed and planted within two growing seasons. Areas with high potential for natural regeneration are assessed within three years of the harvest and planted within 2 years if found to have less than adequate regeneration. Locally genetically improved seed are the primary source for seedlings on the Mersey Lands.

SFI-03 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

Not audited during the 2014 surveillance audit.

SFI-04 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Not audited during the 2014 surveillance audit.

SFI-05 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

Aesthetic issues are considered in the Pre-harvest assessment phase of the harvest planning. As a result, buffers are left on 10 series highways and above and designated tourist routes. As new areas are added to the plan the Mersey Woodlands Advisory Committee shall be consulted. The Advisory Committee will also contribute to maintaining viewscapes along canoe routes and buffer strips.

DNR maximum size of mosaic harvest is 50 hectares with 2012 average size of 25 hectares on the Mersey Woodlands. 2013 there was one harvest site and it was 45 hectares

Green up policy requires a minimum height of 1m and at least 3 years old before an adjacent stand can be harvested. This requirement is built into the Forest Development Model and checked through the pre-harvest assessment process.

SFI-06 Protection of Special Sites

Not audited during the 2014 surveillance audit.

SFI-07 Efficient Use of Forest Resources

Not audited during the 2014 surveillance audit.

SFI-08 Land Outreach

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

SFI-09 Use of Qualified Resource and Logging Professionals

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

SFI-10 Adherence to Best Management Practices

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

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

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

SFI-12 Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Illegal Logging

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

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

Not applicable as there are no wood procurement activities

SFI-14 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Conformance to Legal and Regulatory compliance was achieved through the following:

- Adherence to SOP –system-03 - Legal & Other Requirements
- R-legal-02 Municipal By-law Annual Review
- Monitoring of the Nova Scotia Royal Gazette and the Canada Gazette

A tracking system is implemented to manage non-conformances.

Mersey Woodlands Forestry Policy includes a commitment to comply with all applicable legislation.

The Government of Nova Scotia has a collective agreement with its employees.

SFI-15 Forestry Research & Technology

Nova Scotia DNR is an active member of the MSIC as a program participant. Forestry Division is doing nutrient cycling research and the impact Climate Change will have on this process. The Department of Natural Resources has published a document entitled 'Modelled Potential Species Distribution for Current and Projected Future Climates for the Acadian Forest Region of Nova Scotia, Canada'.

SFI-16 Training and Education

Not audited during the 2014 surveillance audit.

SFI-17 Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry

A review of the Maritimes SFI Implementation Committee included the following

- Meeting minutes/notes.
- SFI hot line
- Verified no Nova scotia complaints

Major public consultation efforts were implemented for the DNR Western Regions Crown Land Planning process. Ongoing consultation as part of the FSC® forest management certification is also implemented.

SFI-18 Public Land Management Responsibilities

NS DNR is responsible for the planning of the Mersey lands. Draft management Plans are in process of being evaluated by First Nations and local NGOs and the Mersey Woodlands Advisory Committee. An open house is planned for the fall of 2014. First Nations values are considered during the harvest planning process.

SFI-19 Communications and Public Reporting

The 2013 annual progress report has not been submitted to the SFI. A minor NCR was raised on this issue. Records of harvest and silviculture are available and used to develop the progress report.

SFI-20 Management Review and Continual Improvement

Management review was held on July 10, 2014.

Three levels of monitoring are being implemented:

- Level I – Supervision audits by the Crown Land Technicians.
- Level II – Internal audit and compliance audit. Committee has been put together. Implementation of Level II monitoring (internal audit) by an outside contractor was held on July 3,7,8,9 2014.
- Level III – External audit.

Monitoring measures are included in the management plans. Evidence of each level of monitoring was verified during the audit and found to be in compliance.

Shelterwood harvest



Riparian Special Management Zone flagging



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 for more information.

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