

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 Sustainable Forestry Initiative standard. 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 re-certification audit was conducted by SAI Global in June 2015 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 June 9-12, 2015, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources underwent a re-certification audit to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI[®]) Standard 2015-2019. 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 - SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard (Section 2).

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 2015-2019. This ensures the integrity and credibility of the audit process.

The audit assessed active, ongoing, and completed land management 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 licensees, contractors, and staff 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 Simonds, CF (lead auditor). The auditor is a Certified Forester, Licensed Professional Forester (Maine), and certified FM lead auditor.

KEY AREAS OF NON-CONFORMANCE

- 15.1.2 – The organization’s system for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information is not fully effective.
- 11.1.5 – The organization lacks written agreements concerning the use of wood producers that have completed training programs and are recognized as qualified logging professionals.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 1.1.1 – Consider more regularly and systematically evaluating the effectiveness of the site-level operational prescription system in relation to long-term forest management planning.
- 1.1.1 - Consider evaluating the manner and consistency of communicating harvest prescriptions to operators and field supervisors.
- 3.1.3 – Consider evaluating and possibly consolidating procedures, forms, and record keeping related to performance monitoring of harvest operations.
- 11.1.4 – Consider re-evaluating the practice of tracking the training status of individual contractor and licensee employees.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources have developed corrective action plans to address the root cause of the non-

SFIS 2015-2019

Periodic Assessments

Major non-conformances:	0
Minor non-conformances:	2
Opportunities for Improvement:	4
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

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 surveillance 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.

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- The extent and quality of communications with representatives of local Indigenous Peoples
- The positive and collaborative integration of legacy (Bowater) management protocols with public lands programs and requirements.
- The evident and positive support, by DNR and other staff, for maintenance of this certification contract during the transition in land management tenure.

EVIDENCE OF CONFORMITY

Evidence that was assessed to determine Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources conformity with the SFIS 2015-2019 standard appears below:

SFI-01 Forest Management Planning

Principal Forest Management Planning (FMP) documents are in place and available for public review. FMP's for the Medway and the South Shore Rossignol, St. Margaret's Bay, North Mountain Districts address all requirements of the SFI program, including long-term resource analysis, updated inventory and GIS systems, and quantitative yield assessment using modern modeling tools.

SFI-02 Forest Health & Productivity

Programs are in place for assessing and assuring regeneration on harvest sites, including programs for tree-planting and young stand treatments. Soils and site impact mitigation is centrally addressed in operating plans, and field observations verify application of criteria to minimize ground disturbance and protect natural regeneration.

SFI-03 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

Operating criteria for land management activities incorporate regional and guidance and regulations for the protection of water quality and riparian habitat. Regular inspection systems are in place to monitor implementation. GIS tools are used to predict and evaluate critical habitat elements.

SFI-04 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Established and detailed guidelines for management of Crown Lands (Report FOR 2012-3) are incorporated into management planning at multiple scales. Extensive, multi-level review of harvest plans ensures that conservation elements are identified and accommodated. Communication materials are prepared to brief field operators on the presence and characteristics of species of concern. GIS tools are used to predict and evaluate critical habitat elements.

SFI-05 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

Specific protocols are prepared and implemented for identifying visually sensitive sites and modifying operational plans. Mosaic harvest is limited by policy and reported averages conform to SFI standards. Green up criteria are built into the allowable cut modeling system and verified by the pre-harvest assessment process.

SFI-06 Protection of Special Sites

Regional databases for natural heritage information are incorporated into GIS systems and feature prominently in pre-treatment review procedures.

SFI-07 Efficient Use of Fiber Resources

Criteria for efficient utilization are incorporated into operational procedures, and demonstrated during field visits. Standards of practice conform to local conditions.

SFI-08 Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Policies and programs for consulting and interacting with local Indigenous Peoples are guided by: *"Made in Nova Scotia Process" – Mi'kmaq – Nova Scotia – Canada, Framework Agreement*, and the *Mersey Woodlands Forestry Policy (re. May 13, 2015)*.

SFI-09 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Mersey Woodlands Forestry Policy includes a commitment to comply with all applicable legislation. Conformance to Legal and Regulatory compliance is ensured through procedures, updated regularly: SOP –system-03 - Legal & Other Requirements; R-legal-02 Municipal By-law Annual Review. A tracking system is in place to manage non-conformances.

SFI-10 Forestry Research, Science, & Technology

Nova Scotia DNR is an active member of the Maritime SFI Implementation Committee (MSIC). Forestry Division is doing nutrient cycling research and the impact Climate Change will have on this process. The Department of Natural Resources has provided financial and logistical support to the publication of a document entitled 'Modeled Potential Species Distribution for Current and Projected Future Climates for the Acadian Forest Region of Nova Scotia, Canada'.

SFI-11 Training and Education

Ongoing training and education programs are managed locally for contractors, licensees, and DNR staff. Training status is tracked at the individual level, and regular face-to-face sessions provided for operators involved in forest management activities. Programs are recognized by and coordinate with the MSIC.

One program requirement for written agreements related to trained loggers is not fully met, leading to a minor finding of non-conformity.

SFI-12 Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach

Nova Scotia DNR is an active member of the Maritime SFI Implementation Committee (MSIC), directly and indirectly supporting regional activities. Protocols for Crown Land management include additional and extensive opportunities for public involvement.

SFI-13 Public Land Management Responsibilities

Protocols for Crown Land management include additional and extensive opportunities for public involvement. Management planning and operations on the Mersey Woodlands is guided by a multi-disciplinary Advisory Board, ensuring broad and diverse perspectives.

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 Communications and Public Reporting

The 2014 annual progress report was submitted to SFI, as required. Records of activities used to develop this report were reviewed during the audit.

SFI-15 Management Review and Continual Improvement

Records associated with monitoring, assessing, reviewing, and reporting information related to land management activities and other functions of the organization were reviewed. This included activity inspections conducted by Licencees, DNR staff inspections, a formal, internal audit program, and annual review by senior management.

Some discontinuity was observed in the processing of operational quality control information, leading to a minor finding of non-conformity.

interviewing a licensee on an active harvest site



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@saiqglobal.com for more information.

Company Contact:

Ms. Jillian Weldon-Genge
3120 Green Street Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada E0J 2C0
902-634-7526

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