



## Sonoco Products Company 2015 Public SFI Recertification Audit Report

The SFI Program of Sonoco Products Company of Hartsville, South Carolina has demonstrated continuing conformance with the SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules, Section 2 Forest Management (SFIS2), according to the NSF SFIS2 Recertification Audit Process.

NSF initially certified Sonoco Products Company to the SFIS in November, 2008 and recertified them in 2012. This report describes the next Recertification Audit designed to focus on changes in the standard, changes in operations, the management review system, and efforts at continuous improvement. This audit included a detailed review of all of the applicable SFI requirements.

Sonoco Products Company is a forest land management and wood procurement company with headquarters in Hartsville, South Carolina. The company controls forestry operations in South Carolina and currently owns and manages approximately 55,080 acres of forestland. Sonoco Products Company meets its SFI Standard responsibilities by improving and demonstrating sustainable forestry on its forestland.

The Recertification Audit was performed by NSF on May 4-6, 2015 by Tucker Watts, Lead Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting SFIS Certification Audits contained in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Audit Procedures and Qualifications (SFI SOP). The objective of the audit was to assess continuing conformance of the firm's SFI Program to the requirements of the SFIS2.

The scope of the SFIS Audit included procurement operations. Procurement operations occurring in the past 12 months were reviewed to ensure that SFI Procurement Standards were met. In addition, SFI obligations to promote sustainable forestry practices, to seek legal compliance, and to incorporate continual improvement systems were within the scope of the audit.

The SFIS2 Standard® was used without modifying any requirements. Several of the SFI Indicators were outside of the scope of the company's SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.3 – Does not plant exotic species.
- Indicator 2.1.5 – Does not conduct afforestation.
- Indicator 8.2.1 – Does not have forest management responsibilities on public land.
- Indicator 9.2.2 – Does not have hourly forestry workers.
- Indicator 10.1.2 – Does not conduct research on genetically engineered trees.
- Indicator 11.2.3 – South Carolina does not currently have a logger certification program.
- Objective 13 – Does not have public land management responsibilities.

No indicators were modified.

## **SFIS2 Recertification 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.

The possible findings for specific SFI requirements included Full Conformance, Major Nonconformance, Minor Nonconformance, Opportunities for Improvement, and Practices that exceeded the Basic Requirements of the SFIS.

## **Overview of Audit Findings**

Sonoco Products Company's SFI Program was found to be in full conformance with the SFIS Standard. One Minor nonconformance was identified.

CI 4.3.2      Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified ecologically important sites.

Pitcher Plant Flat has been identified on the Williams Plantation Tract. The Pitcher Plant Flat has not been identified in the GIS database (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Indicator 4.3.2).

One transitional nonconformance was identified.

Objective 8    To recognize and respect *Indigenous Peoples'* rights and traditional knowledge.

Program for the recognition and respect of Indigenous People' rights and traditional knowledge has not been developed and implemented. (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Objective 8 – Transitional CAR).

Two opportunities for improvement were identified:

CI 4.1.2      There is an opportunity for improvement to clearly define the criteria for retention of stand-level wildlife habitat elements (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Indicator 4.1.2).

CI 11.1.1     During recent organizational changes the manager signing the Sustainable Forestry Policy has been replaced. There is an opportunity to update the Sustainable Forestry Policy with the signature of the new top manager (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Indicator 11.1.1).

These findings do not indicate a current deficiency, but served to alert the Company to areas that could be strengthened or which could merit future attention

Sonoco Products Company exceeds the requirements of the standard in two ways.

CI 3.2.1      Sonoco Products Company exceeds the requirements for protection of rivers by involving the South Carolina BMP Foresters with buffer delineation along major water corridors (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Indicator 3.2.1).

- CI 4.1.1 Sonoco Products Company exceeds the requirements for incorporation of conservation of native biological diversity by creating a mosaic of cutting patterns, age class diversity, inclusion of wildlife food plots and day lighting of roads with wildlife plantings (SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, Indicator 4.1.1).

No nonconformances were issued in the 2014 audit. The next Surveillance audit is scheduled for *Date*.

### **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 ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion.

*Summary of Evidence: The forest management plan for Sonoco Products Company and supporting documentation and the associated inventory data and growth models were the key evidence of conformance.*

#### **Objective 2 Forest Health and Productivity**

To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

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

#### **Objective 3 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources**

To protect the water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies through meeting or exceeding best management practices.

*Summary of Evidence: Field observations of a range of sites were the key evidence. Auditors visited the portions of many field sites that were closest to water resources.*

#### **Objective 4 Conservation of Biological Diversity**

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 a diversity of types of habitat and successional stages, and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species, as well as threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.

*Summary of Evidence: Field observations, written plans and policies, use of college-trained field biologists, 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 5 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits**

To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

*Summary of Evidence: Field observations of completed operations and policies/procedures for visual quality were assessed during the evaluation. Further maps of recreation sites, combined with field visits, helped confirm a strong recreation program.*

#### **Objective 6 Protection of Special Sites**

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

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

#### **Objective 7 Efficient Use of Fiber Resources**

To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber 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:* Communication and response to affected Indigenous People were witnessed as evidence.

#### **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:* Financial records were confirmed by receipt from funded agency.

#### **Objective 11 Training and Education**

To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

*Summary of Evidence:* Training records of personnel, records associated with harvest sites audited, and review of the state training database provided confirmation of participation in training programs.

#### **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 were sufficient to assess the requirements.

#### **Objective 13 Public Land Management Responsibilities**

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

*Summary of Evidence:* N.A. The Company does not have management responsibilities for public lands.

#### **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 involved in management review 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**

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 *Fiber Sourcing* 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**

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*

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