

Forest Certification UPDATE



TIMISKAMING FOREST ALLIANCE INC.

Timiskaming Forest Alliance Inc. (TFAI) holds the Sustainable Forest License (SFL No. 542247) since 1998 and provides forest management services as a condition of the SFL on behalf of its shareholders. The shareholders consist of logging and forest products companies that have traditionally operated on the Timiskaming Forest public (Crown) lands. TFAI has contracted out the forest management services to First Resources Management Group (FRMG).

BACKGROUND

During the period of Nov 3-7, 2014; TFAI underwent an initial 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 initial audit.

SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Forest Management Operations on Timiskaming Forest public lands to the SFIS 2010-2014 standard.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SFI Program third-party initial 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 FRMG staff and contractors. The audit also assessed the SFIS and supporting EMS documentation, records at the FRMG office.

The audit determined that operations were consistent with SFIS 2010-2014 requirements. There was one minor non-conformance related to the wording of contracts that was cleared based upon an approved corrective action plan. There were two opportunities for improvement related to written policies supporting certification and culvert removal procedures to further protect against stream sedimentation. The first surveillance audit is scheduled for October 5, 2015.

THE AUDITORS

The SAI Global audit team who performed the audit consisted of Laird Van Damme. The auditor is a Professional Forester and certified lead auditor.



KEY AREAS OF NON-CONFORMANCE

As sample of contracts found some that failed to specify conformance to best management practices (SFIS indicator 3.1.2).

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

TFAI should consider:

- a review of policy statements to ensure they support and promote certification systems.
- a review of culvert removal practices to further ensure the prevention of stream sedimentation.

CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS

TFAI have developed corrective action plans to address the root causes 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 annual 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 forest management team (FRMG) has had responsibilities for managing these forest since 1998. All the operations sampled during the audit meet or exceed Ontario's stringent regulations. Roads and water crossings were built and maintained to a high standard ensuring protection to the environment, public safety and reducing delivered wood costs. Thoughtful prescriptions and careful monitoring takes advantage of natural regeneration to achieve cost effective forest renewal outcomes.

EVIDENCE OF CONFORMITY

Evidence that was assessed to determine TFAI conformity with the SFIS 2010-2014 standard appears below:

SFI-01 Forest Management Planning

The approved forest management plan (FMP 2011-2021) supplemental documents, annual plans and reports were reviewed. Ontario requires Independent Forest Audits as a condition of the SFL. The action plan and status report for this audit were also reviewed.

SFIS 2010-2014

Periodic Assessments

Major non-conformances: 0
Minor non-conformances: 1
Opportunities
for Improvement: 2
Positive Aspects: 2

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

SFI-02 Forest Productivity

Approved forest management plan (FMP 2011-2021) supplemental documents, annual plans and reports with specific reference to Silvicultural Ground Rules (SGRs) were reviewed. Interviews with FRMG staff were completed during aerial (helicopter) and ground inspections of reforestation projects. Maps and reports were also reviewed and verified against field observations. Field samples included aerial observations of 200 stands and 20 harvest blocks sampled on the ground. Forest renew and productivity standards are being met.

SFI-03 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

Approved forest management plan (FMP 2011-2021) supplemental documents, annual plans and reports with specific reference to the protection of water resources were reviewed. TFAI maintains a website featuring toolkits of training modules and handbooks used by operators as field references. Interviews with FRMG staff were completed during aerial (helicopter) and ground inspections of reforestation projects. Maps and reports were also reviewed and verified against field observations. Numerous water crossings were observed from the air and enroute to ground sampled harvest blocks. An interview of a site preparation operator showed a high level of awareness about best management practices to protect water resources (Block: Mickle 130). Interviews with several other harvest operators also demonstrated good awareness of best management practices supported by field observations where these practices are being implemented effectively.

SFI-04 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Ontario has regulated manuals aimed at conserving biological diversity at the landscape and stand levels of scale. Maps and reports were reviewed. Site inspections verified conformance to the regulations and the SFI standard (e.g. sang tree retention).

SFI-05 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

Approved forest management plan (FMP 2011-2021) supplemental documents, annual plans and reports were reviewed. The plan features 22 area of concern (AOC) prescriptions to manage visual quality and recreational benefits. The prescriptions and management control procedures were verified in the field to be effective.

SFI-06 Protection of Special Sites

Several Areas of Concern prescriptions are designed to ensure protection of special sites (e.g. heritage values). A review of maps and records followed by field inspections found operations were being conducted consistent with the prescriptions. Interview of FRMG staff along Cooke Lake Road (Upgrade) revealed expert advice from an archeologist is acquired as needed.

SFI-07 Efficient Use of Forest Resources

All air and ground field inspections showed efficient use of forest resources. Many stands featured biomass recovery for bio-energy plants by grinding slash piles that have been traditionally piled and burned.

SFI-08 Land Outreach

Not applicable for public lands.

SFI-09 Use of Qualified Resource and Logging Professionals

Not applicable for public lands.

SFI-10 Adherence to Best Management Practices

Not applicable for public lands.

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

TFAI does not source fiber from outside North America.

SFI-12 Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Illegal Logging

TFAI does not source fiber from outside North America.

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

TFAI does not source fiber from outside North America.

SFI-14 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

TFAI website for operators features access to regulations that is also summarized in handbooks featuring decision trees. Annual reports and compliance inspection reports of sample blocks were reviewed. An interview with the owner of one of the larger harvest operations demonstrated a strong commitment to regulatory compliance.

SFI-15 Forestry Research & Technology

TFAI and its shareholders provided evidence that demonstrated support of forestry research programs. In addition FRMG staff make use of this research and research provided by government agencies in their plans and procedures.

SFI-16 Training and Education

TFAI records, interviews with FRMG staff and operators show a strong commitment to education and training. Field inspections attest to the effectiveness of the training programs.

SFI-17 Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry

TFAI shareholders and FRMG staff are active on implementation committees. Ontario's forest management planning activities also engage community members in the planning process.

SFI-18 Public Land Management Responsibilities

TFAI is meeting its public management responsibilities as evidenced by a review of approved management plans, compliance reports and previous Independent Forest Audits.

SFI-19 Communications and Public Reporting

Systems are in place for communication and public reporting of conformance to the SFI Standard.

SFI-20 Management Review and Continual Improvement

The FRMG Environment Health Safety Management System (EHSMS) is the vehicle by which improvements to the delivery of forest management programs are made. The system includes a suite of Procedures (PRO), Forms (FOR) and Records (REC). The TFAI Board of Directors is updated on progress regularly by FRMG.



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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