



## Summary of Significant Revisions to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard – September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### **Background:**

Broad public and stakeholder involvement is important to the SFI program. In June 2008, SFI Inc. launched an open review leading to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard. It began with SFI inviting 2,000 individuals and organizations to provide input during a 60-day public review period through an on-line survey, and continued into 2009 when a draft standard was posted on the SFI website and comments invited through a second 30-day review period and seven regional workshops. Combined, more than 300 individuals and organizations provided comments through the web-based reviews or the seven regional workshops. In addition, each opportunity for comments was promoted widely through news releases, the SFI website and the SFI newsletter. The SFI External Review Panel monitored the standard review process to ensure transparency and fair treatment of all comments received. Their letter in the 2008 SFI progress report notes:

“First, the External Review Panel is impressed with the commitment of SFI participants to continual improvement of the program. The lengthy review process that will result in the revised SFI 2010-2014 Standard this fall has made important changes and improvements in the Standard. That has been done in a process that has been a model of open, transparent, and responsible consideration of public input, scientific and economic factors, and conflicting demands.”

As in any review process, it is not necessary to agree to every suggestion, but it is important that they be given consideration. All of the comments received during the review and the SFI Standard Review Task Force responses will be posted to the SFI Inc. website for public review.

SFI Inc. completes a review of its standard and supporting documents every five years, which is consistent with international protocols for forest certification standard revision cycles. After approval by the SFI Board of Directors on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the SFI 2010-2014 Standard will be released at the SFI annual conference in September 2009. The SFI 2010-2014 Standard will be published and will become effective on January 1, 2010. SFI Inc. will also work with the Resources Committee to update the guidance document (by December 2009) to assist SFI program participants and certification bodies in interpreting and implementing new provisions in the standard such as programs requiring the use of trained loggers and giving preference to certified logging professionals where they are available and biological diversity in off-shore procurement.

SFI-certified companies have one year from the time the new standard takes effect to implement all the new requirements, and must demonstrate conformance to the new requirements at their first surveillance audit following the implementation period.

### **Summary of Significant Revisions Proposed:**

1. **Organizational.** Enhanced alignment of principles with objectives and noting consistency with the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. Also reorganized some performance measures into objectives and added new objectives to elevate important issues such as avoidance of controversial sources and illegal logging. Expanded preamble to provide appropriate market, independence, governance, conservation support, global recognition, bioenergy, carbon, and social context and background.
2. **Forest management planning.** New language clarifies that forest management plans are required and that recommended sustainable harvest levels are calculated using only areas available for harvests.

3. **Afforestation.** Added new indicator requiring consideration of ecological impacts for the selection and planting of trees in non-forested landscapes.
4. **Roads.** Revised indicator to also include minimizing impacts from log skidding activities.
5. **Bioenergy.** New language added in preamble and performance measures and indicators to better define bioenergy feedstock production in the context of the SFI Standard. The SFI Standard requires the same performance measures and objectives and indicators related to forest management regardless of the final product and these new provisions clearly indicate that bioenergy feedstock harvesting is no exception.
6. **Carbon, climate change and ecosystem services.** New language in principles, preamble and performance measures and indicators to recognize that sustainable forestry makes an important contribution to mitigating climate change and adapting to changing ecosystems. New provisions are tempered by the recognition that this is emerging science and regulatory frameworks for the role of managed forests for carbon management are evolving.
7. **North American.** Changes throughout to ensure the standard appropriately recognizes US and Canadian interests, laws and regulations, social issues and terminology.
8. **Biotechnology.** New definition to clarify what biotechnology encompasses and removed references to deployment of genetically engineered trees (GE) as no GE trees in North America that have been approved for commercial planting and commercial plantings are not anticipated for the next 3-5 years.
9. **Vernal pools.** Vernal pools of ecological significance (versus significant size) are to be protected.
10. **Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV).** It was not clear in the SFI 2005-2009 standard that FECV were defined as critically imperiled and imperiled species and communities. Use of the term throughout and a new definition to clarify this has been added.
11. **Landscape assessments.** Enhanced language requiring a program for reviewing landscape assessments and a provision to take the findings into account in planning and management activities.
12. **Average clearcut size.** Added language clarifying exception to conform to legal requirements.
13. **Utilization.** Revisions to emphasize management of harvest residue should include economic, environmental and social factors.
14. **ILO Core Conventions.** Revisions to address this important issue are not complete and SFI Inc. has requested assistance from PEFC in finding a consensus based solution to this issue. The SFI Inc. Board of Directors may adopt additional requirements to address this in the SFI 2010-2014 Standard before it is finalized.
15. **Landowner outreach.** Expanded landowner outreach requirements to include biodiversity, utilization, afforestation, invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and encouragement to participate in forest management certification programs. Clarified that information can be delivered to landowners in many different ways (websites, tours, information packets, newsletters, etc.).
16. **Fiber sourcing.** To ensure consistent use of terms and consistency with labeling requirements, "procurement" was replaced throughout the standard with "fiber sourcing".
17. **Fiber sourcing policies.** Added requirement for program participants to clearly define fiber sourcing policies in writing and make them available to wood producers.

18. **Purchased stumpage.** Added a new provision requiring program participants to have a program to address Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value in harvests of purchased stumpage.
19. **Certified loggers.** Added new provisions recognizing the emergence of logger certification programs and requiring program participants to have programs to promote these programs where they exist and to use them where available. The updated guidance document will further emphasize these new provisions detailing how program participants will give preference to certified logging professionals when other criteria used by the program participant to select contractors are equal. Added new indicator for SICs to establish criteria for recognition of certified logger programs, where they exist, which included basic criteria such as completion of training programs, independent in-the-forest verification of conformance, compliance with laws, etc.
20. **Trained loggers.** Strengthened provisions to require the use of trained loggers in fiber sourcing and added a new indicator requiring the use of trained loggers on lands owned or controlled by program participants.
21. **Best Management Practices (BMPs).** New requirement for BMP use provisions in contracts for the purchase of raw material.
22. **Verifiable monitoring system.** Program participants are required to promptly reforest following harvesting and to promote reforestation on other lands through their fiber sourcing programs. The verifiable monitoring system had a requirement for "evaluation of the results of promoting reforestation" which was removed. This was the single most commented on issue by program participants who noted the difficulties of meeting this requirement with little or no conservation value being provided. Annual reporting on reforestation is still required and participation in regional regeneration assessments is included in the research objective in the SFI Standard. Also revised requirements on BMP monitoring to reflect current high rates of BMP implementation and to identify areas for improved performance.
23. **Controversial sources in off-shore procurement.** This includes illegal logging and fiber sourced from areas without effective social laws. Added definition and provisions previously approved for the SFI fiber sourcing, chain of custody and labeling requirements; enhanced documentation requirements for direct suppliers.
24. **Biological diversity in off-shore procurement.** Included Conservation International, Alliance for Zero Extinction, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute and International Union for Conservation of Nature as sources of information for conservation of biological diversity for fiber sourcing from areas outside the U.S. and Canada.
25. **Research.** Revised performance measure to allow forest research funded via tax mechanisms such as severance taxes to count towards meeting obligations on research. Also expanded what qualifies as research support to include research on the environmental benefits and performance of forest products (e.g. life cycle analysis, energy efficiencies, etc.). Added new performance measure for monitoring research on climate change.
26. **Logger and forester training programs.** Expanded logger training requirements to include invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and emerging technologies.
27. **SFI Implementation Committees (SICs).** Clarified that SICs outreach and education objectives should be focused on forest landowners and that broader "public" outreach is not a core objective and clarified that SIC support by program participants includes financial support; added new indicator requiring SICs to report annually to SFI Inc. on public inquiries about apparent nonconforming practices.

28. **Conservation planning.** Enhanced language requiring program participants to have a program to take into account findings (from credible regional conservation planning efforts) in their planning activities.
29. **Public reporting.** Brought requirements for public reporting for certified program participants forward from the Audit Procedures and Qualifications document to become a new objective in the standard for added emphasis and transparency. In addition to including nonconformities, the public audit summary must now also include evidence of conformity. Clarified that the summary audit report is to be prepared by the certification body. Also added language that specifically requires SICs to report to SFI Inc. annually on all inconsistent practices queries and their disposition.
30. **Evidence of conformity.** Added language requiring general descriptions of evidence of conformity in summary audit reports.
31. **Definitions.** Added new definitions for the Alliance for Zero Extinction, bioenergy feedstock, certified logging professional, certified program participant, controversial sources, illegal logging, culturally important, ecosystem services, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, forest tree biotechnology, invasive exotic plants and animals, long-term, special sites, native, and varietal seedlings. Modified definitions for qualified logging professional, BMPs, indicator, land classification, reforestation, fiber sourcing (procurement), purchased stumpage, sustainable forestry, wildlife, and verifiable monitoring system. Deleted definitions for terms no longer used in the standard (e.g. first party verification and secondary education).
32. **Audit Procedures and Qualifications.**
  - **Certification of multiple sites:** added provisions for sampling procedures for multi-site certifications.
  - **Audit team expertise:** added provisions to ensure audit team has knowledge of socio-demographics and cultural issues in the regions and ecology.
  - **Re-certification cycle:** revised cycle to 3 years (versus 5) to be consistent with PEFC and accreditation body standards (Note: SFI Inc. is still in discussions with our accreditation bodies regarding this as we do not believe this change is warranted and will put SFI at a significant disadvantage as a competing program is on a 5 year recertification cycle).
  - **Annual surveillance audits:** clarified that annual surveillance audits are 12 months.
  - **Verification:** removed all language related to first or second party verification.
  - **Continuous certification:** removed this option from the APQ as it is not consistent with accreditation body standards.
  - **Public audit summary:** clarified that it is the responsibility of the certification body to prepare the public audit summary.
  - **Prior notification:** eliminated requirement of prior notification to SFI Inc. before beginning an audit.
  - **Litigation:** added language from an existing interpretation noting that in the event of litigation between the external party and the program participant, the inconsistent practices and complaints processes are suspended pending resolution of the litigation.

### **Next Steps in the Standard Revision Process**

Another editorial review of the draft SFI 2010-2014 Standard will be done before it is finalized and published in December. In addition, staff, the Resources Committee and Board of Directors will carefully review the soon-to-be released draft USGBC benchmarks for evaluating forest certification programs for recognition in their green building rating programs. PEFC is also considering changes to their requirements at this time. Additional changes to the draft SFI 2010-2014 Standard may be proposed, if needed, to meet any significant gaps that are identified.