

Summary of Significant Revisions in the New SFI 2010-2014 Standard January 2010

Background

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard is a comprehensive system of values, objectives and performance measures developed by professional foresters, conservationists and scientists, and informed by a wide range of public and stakeholder views.

The standard is based on 14 core principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value. It has five more principles than the SFI 2005-2009 Standard, including separate principles for protection of special sites, biodiversity, aesthetics and recreation, and new principles for responsible procurement practices in North America, avoidance of controversial sources offshore, research, training and education, and public involvement.

The standard also has 20 objectives, 39 performance measures and 114 indicators – up from 13 objectives, 34 performance measures, and 102 indicators. To be certified, forest operations must be third-party audited to these requirements by independent, objective and accredited certification bodies. The SFI program is committed to continuously improve responsible forest management.

The SFI Standard is regularly reviewed through an open public process, and is subject to continuous improvement so it can incorporate the latest scientific information and respond to emerging issues.

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard review process was launched in June 2008. It included two public comment periods (60 days beginning in June 2008 and 30 days beginning in January 2009) and seven regional workshops in early 2010 (Sacramento, California; Vancouver, British Columbia; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Charleston, South Carolina; Little Rock, Arkansas; Portland, Maine; and Montreal, Quebec).

The 18-month process encouraged on-line comments, which were posted on the SFI website along with revised drafts of the standard. SFI Inc. publicized the process at every step, and during both review periods, it invited about 2,000 individuals and organizations to submit comments.

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard took effect on Jan. 1, 2010, and program participants have up to one year to implement these changes. (Further details about the standard development process are found in the SFI Requirements: Section 8 - SFI Standard Development and Interpretations Process 1.0.)

Detailed Summary of Significant Revisions in the SFI 2010-2014 Standard

Note: Additional information about each revision can be found in the section of the SFI Requirements document cited.

Illegal logging: The SFI program only certifies forests in North America, however its fiber sourcing and chain-of-custody standards apply to North America and offshore fiber sources. The new standard strengthens illegal logging provisions, which require program participants to perform risk assessments on offshore fiber supplies to avoid controversial sources such as illegal harvesting operations or areas of civil unrest. It includes a definition of illegal logging consistent with amendments to the Lacey Act in the United States. These requirements build on the foundation of responsible sourcing and legality throughout the SFI 2010-2014 Standard, and are supported by the SFI Inc. Policy on Illegal Logging.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objectives 12 and 13

Section 7 - SFI Legality Requirements and Policies for Avoidance of Illegal Logging

Section 13 – SFI Definitions.

Landowner outreach: The new SFI 2010-2014 Standard strengthens unique SFI fiber sourcing requirements, which address the fact that less than 10 percent of the world's forests are certified. SFI program participants must have programs for the use of trained loggers and resource professionals when fiber is sourced from lands in North America that are not certified and for harvesting on lands they own. Expanded landowner outreach requirements include biodiversity, utilization, afforestation, invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and encouragement to participate in forest management certification programs. The information can be delivered to landowners in many different ways, including websites, tours, information packets and newsletters.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objectives 8-10.

Fiber sourcing: To ensure there is a consistent use of terms and consistency with labeling requirements, the term "procurement" was replaced throughout the standard with "fiber sourcing". There is an added requirement that program participants must clearly define fiber sourcing policies in writing and make them available to their wood suppliers.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 10.1, Indicator 5.

Logger training: Since 1995, more than 117,000 loggers have received training through SFI-supported programs. In 2008, 93 percent of raw material used by those involved in the SFI fiber sourcing program was provided by trained loggers and resource professionals. The new standard has expanded logger training requirements to address invasive exotic plants and animals, special sites, and emerging technologies and markets such as carbon offsets and bioenergy. There are also stronger provisions to require the use of trained loggers in fiber sourcing, and a new indicator requiring the use of trained loggers on lands owned or controlled by program participants.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objectives 9 and 16.

Certified loggers: New provisions recognize the emergence of logger certification programs and require that, where possible, program participants promote and support these programs. SFI Implementation Committees, grassroots committees at state, provincial and regional levels, must establish basic criteria to recognize certified logger programs, which include verification of performance in the forest.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objectives 9 and 16 (Performance Measure 16.2, Indicator 2)
Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard 4.0.

Best Management Practices: To meet the SFI Standard, program participants must follow best management practices, to protect water quality and minimize soil disturbance. The new standard has added a provision that contracts for the purchase of raw material include requirements for the use of best management practices.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 10.1, Indicator 5
Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard 5.0.

International labor laws: Provisions were added to ensure activities in SFI-certified forests respect the rights of workers and labor representatives in a manner that encompasses the intent of International Labour Organization (ILO) core conventions on freedom of association, right to organization, collective bargaining and discrimination.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 14.2, Indicator 2
Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard 8.0.

Research: Since 1995, SFI program participants have invested more than \$1 billion (US) in research to improve the health, productivity and responsible management of forests in North America. The new standard supports these efforts by expanding the definition of relevant research to include environmental and social benefits, and environmental performance of forest products. There is also a performance measure for monitoring research on climate change.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objective 15.

Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value: Since 2002, the SFI Standard has required that participants protect lands with ecological, geological, historical or cultural significance. The new standard clarifies the term Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, and makes it clear they include areas with critically imperiled and imperiled species and communities. There is a new provision requiring program participants to have a program to address Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value when harvesting from landowners with whom they have a direct contractual relationship.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objective 4 and Performance Measure 8.1, Indicator 2
Section 13 – SFI Definitions.

Biodiversity: Program participants sourcing fiber outside of North America must continue to promote the conservation of biodiversity hotspots and high-biodiversity wilderness areas as defined by Conservation International. This has been expanded to include new sources of information for the conservation of biodiversity from organizations such as the Alliance for Zero Extinction, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute and International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objective 11

Section 6- Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard, 6.1

Emerging topics: The SFI 2010-2014 Standard addresses the fact that sustainable forestry makes an important contribution to addressing climate change and adapting to changing ecosystems. Provisions were added related to carbon management and bioenergy feedstock, tempered by the recognition that these are topics where both science and regulatory frameworks are still evolving. The same performance measures, objectives and indicators related to forest management must be met regardless of the final product, where it is solid wood, paper or bioenergy feedstocks.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Introduction, Performance Measure 15.3

Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard 7.0

Public reporting: Requirements for public reporting, currently part of audit procedures and qualifications, have become a new objective for greater emphasis and transparency, with added clarity that public audit summaries must be prepared by the independent certification body. In addition to including nonconformities, the public audit summary must also include evidence of conformity. In addition, SFI Implementation Committees are required to report annually to SFI Inc. on all inconsistent practices queries and their disposition.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Objective 19

Organization: Revisions and clarifications throughout the document align the standard's principles with the international Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators, and ensure it appropriately recognizes U.S. and Canadian interests, laws and regulations, social issues and terminology. Some performance measures became objectives, and some objectives were added to elevate important issues such as avoidance of controversial sources and illegal logging. There is an expanded preamble to provide background on markets, independence, governance, conservation support, global recognition, bioenergy, carbon and social context.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Introduction

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 harvest.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Performance Measure 1.1

Biotechnology: The new standard appropriately addresses the use of genetically modified trees under the research objective, because genetically modified trees are not commercially grown or available in North America. The SFI program only certifies lands in North America. The SFI program does not ban government-approved and controlled research on genetically modified trees because research may find ways to reduce pests, insects and disease, which can ravage forests and increase greenhouse gas emissions, or it may find ways to restore lost native species such as the American chestnut.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 15.1, Indicator 2

Afforestation: New indicators require that program participants consider ecological impacts when selecting and planting trees in non-forested landscapes.

Learn more:

Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 2.1, Indicator 7

Roads: A revised indicator calls for minimizing impacts from log skidding activities.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 2.3, Indicator 7

North American: Changes throughout ensure the standard appropriately recognizes U.S. and Canadian interests, laws and regulations, social issues and terminology.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Introduction

Vernal pools: The standard requires that vernal pools of ecological significance (versus significant size) are to be protected.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 3.2, Indicator 4

Landscape assessments: Enhanced language requires a program for reviewing landscape assessments, and a provision to take the findings into account in planning and management activities.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 4.1, Indicator 5

Average clearcut size: The new standard clarifies exceptions to average clearcut sizes to meet legal requirements.

Learn more: Section 2 – SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 5.1, Indicator 1

Utilization: Revisions were made to emphasize that the management of harvest residue should include economic, environmental and social factors.

Learn more: Section 2 – SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 7.1, Indicator 1

Verifiable monitoring system: The SFI Standard requires that program participants promptly reforest after harvesting and promote reforestation on other lands through their fiber sourcing programs. A requirement to evaluate the results of promoting reforestation was removed because it provided little or no conservation value and was difficult to achieve. Under the research objective, program participants must still report annually on reforestation and participate in regional regeneration assessments. There are also revised requirements on monitoring of best management practices to reflect current high rates of implementation, and to identify areas for improved performance.

Learn more: Section 2 - SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 10.2

SFI Implementation Committees: The new standard clarifies that SFI Implementation Committee outreach and education objectives should be focused on forest landowners and that broader public outreach is not a core objective. It also clarifies that support for SFI Implementation Committees by program participants includes financial support.

Learn more: Section 2 – SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 17.1 and 17.2
Section 6 – Guidance to SFI 2010-2014 Standard 9.0

Conservation planning: Program participants must have a program so their planning activities take into account findings from credible regional conservation planning efforts.

Learn more: Section 2 – SFI 2010-2014 Standard Performance Measure 17.1, Indicator 5.

Definitions: New definitions added include Alliance for Zero Extinction, bioenergy feedstock, certified logging professional, certified program participant, controversial sources, 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. There are modified definitions for controversial sources including illegal logging, qualified logging professional, best management practices, indicator, land classification, reforestation, fiber sourcing (procurement), purchased stumpage, sustainable forestry, wildlife, and verifiable monitoring system.

Learn more:
Section 13 – SFI Definitions

Changes to Audit Procedures and Qualifications

The following revisions were made to SFI Requirements: Section 9 - SFI 2010-2014 Audit Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation. The location of each revision is noted in brackets:

- Provisions setting out sampling procedures for multi-site certification. (5.1 and Appendix 1)
- Added provisions that the audit team has knowledge of a region's socio-demographics and cultural issues, and expertise in plant and wildlife ecology. (6.0)
- Clarification that required annual surveillance audits take place every 12 months. (As specified in ISO 17021:2006 which is normative for SFI certifications.)
- Full recertification cycle revised from five years to three to be consistent with the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) schemes and accreditation body standards (Note: SFI Inc. continues to discuss this change with accreditation bodies.) (5.5)
- Clarification that the certification body is responsible for preparing the public audit summary. (SFI Requirements: Section 10 – Communications and Public Reporting)
- Additional language from an existing interpretation noting that in the event of litigation between an external party and the program participant, the inconsistent practices and complaints processes are suspended pending resolution of the litigation. (SFI Requirements: Section 11 – Public Inquiries and Official Complaints, 2.1)

Optional Modules

The SFI program also adopted a new process to address emerging issues and new opportunities through optional modules developed by SFI Inc. and approved by the SFI Inc. Board of Directors. These modules may allow program participants to engage in new carbon or bioenergy markets, or they may provide guidance on topics such as conservation easements or the certification process. Any modules developed before the next standard review process will be located in the SFI Requirements: Section 12. They will use case studies or optional certification requirements to address issues of benefit to the SFI program in promoting responsible forestry.