2014 SFI Summary Re-Certification Audit Report
Indiana Division of Forestry

The SFI Program of the Indiana Division of Forestry has achieved conformance with the SFI Standard®, 2010-2014 Edition, according to the NSF-ISR SFIS Re-Certification Audit Process.

NSF-ISR initially certified Indiana Division of Forestry to the SFIS in 2006 and recertified it in 2011. This report describes the second Re-Certification Audit based on the current 3-year certificate span. The audit was designed to focus on changes in operations, the management review system, and efforts at continuous improvement. In addition, a subset of SFI requirements were selected for detailed review. The program is being audited under the standard audit approach. The next Surveillance Audit is scheduled for October 2015.

The Indiana Division of Forestry is responsible for management of the state forest system.

Forest Management on Indiana State Forests

Source: http://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-Management_on_SF.pdf

"The State Forest system began with the establishment of Clark State Forest in 1903. Since then, the State Forest system has evolved into 13 State Forests containing more than 150,000 acres. State Forests have been managed for the many forest benefits that these lands are capable of providing. When the state acquired what is now State Forest property, almost every acre was comprised of eroding farm fields, pasture, or cutover timberland considered to have very little value to anyone. Most of the existing woodland had been high-graded, with the residual trees often exhibiting defects from forest fires and livestock grazing.

Many early management activities were aimed at stopping erosion and restoring the productive potential of the land. Tree planting to control erosion and reforest worn out fields was a primary management activity for many years. Early timber harvesting on state forests provided raw materials for projects of the Civilian Conservation Corps and utility poles for rural electrification projects. World War II saw the sustained use of timber sales from State Forests to provide needed wood materials for the war effort. Techniques used to manage the forests evolved as the forests grew. Less emphasis was needed on tree planting and more emphasis was placed on managing new stands of trees. Management activities, such as timber stand improvement and selective harvesting, were used to upgrade the quality of the stands and increase tree growth. This emphasis on stand improvement techniques continues today, with the goal of improving not only timber production but also all of the various forest resource benefits. Increasing emphasis is being placed on creating early successional habitat, common in the early history of State Forests, but uncommon today.

Because the stands of trees on State Forests all began at about the same time, and because of the conservative nature of their management, most of the State Forests have matured at about the same rate, with little diversity among age classes and habitat types. Based on current forest inventory data the State Forest system contains 1.379 billion board feet of standing sawtimber volume, and is growing 40.4 million board feet of volume per year. Because of the need to increase forest habitat diversity (increase young forest), reduce dependence on general fund allocations, and the desire to demonstrate a working forest concept, the annual harvest target for Indiana State Forests is set at removing 14 million board feet—less than half the annual growth. This rate ensures the sustainability of the forest resource while providing a steady, stable source of certified-sustainable wood for the forest products industry and workers here in Indiana.
State Forests are being managed by professional foresters and resource specialists to demonstrate a working forest concept. A working forest is actively managed under a stewardship plan that guides its activities to accomplish the desired goals. The working forest can provide a variety of goods and services such as watershed protection, recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty and wood products."

SFIS Re-Certification Audit Process

The Re-Certification audit was performed by NSF-ISR on October 14-17 by an audit team headed by Mike Ferrucci, Lead Auditor and Dave Wagner, FSC Lead Auditor supported by Tucker Watts, SFI and FSC Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting SFIS Certification Audits of "Section 9. SFI 2010-2014 Audit Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation" contained in Requirements for the SFI 2010-2014 Program: Standards, Rules for Label Use, Procedures, and Guidance.

The objective of the audit was to assess conformance of the firm's SFI Program to the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014. The scope of the SFIS Audit included the entire state forest system, but this review included field sites at three state forests: Jackson-Washington State Forest, Ferdinand-Pike State Forest, and Martin State Forest. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the past three years, in order to include planned, ongoing, and completed operations. Practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example).

Several of the SFI Performance Measures were outside of the scope of the Indiana Division of Forestry's SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- 2.1.4: INDOF doesn't plant exotic trees.
- Indicator 2.1.6: Planting is not done to change forest composition but to maintain it.
- Objectives 8-13: Indiana Division of Forestry is not involved in forest procurement.
- Indicator 16.2.2: Indiana does not have a logger certification program.

No indicators were modified; the default indicators in the SFI Standard were utilized.

The review was governed by a detailed audit protocol designed to enable the audit team to 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 of the audit include Full Conformance, Major Non-conformance, Minor Non-conformance, Opportunities for Improvement, and Practices that Exceeded the Basic Requirements of the SFIS.

Overview of Audit Findings

Indiana Division of Forestry's SFI Program was found to be in full conformance with the SFIS Standard. There were no non-conformances. Other findings include "Opportunities for Improvement" and "Exceptional Practices" as shown below.

2014 Opportunities for Improvement

SFI Indicator 1.1.1 requires "Forest management planning at a level appropriate to the size and scale of the operation, including: a. a long-term resources analysis…" There is an Opportunity for Improvement in the planning regarding the adoption of an updated strategic plan, currently under review.

SFI Indicator 2.3.6 requires "Criteria that address harvesting and site preparation to protect soil productivity." Criteria for rutting/compaction exist, but do not assure adequate protection to soils.

SFI Indicator 16.1.4 requires "Contractor education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities."

SFI Indicator 16.2.1 requires "Participation in or support of SFI Implementation Committees to establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for wood producers' training courses that address:
a. awareness of sustainable forestry principles and the SFI program; b. best management practices, including streamside management and road construction, maintenance and retirement; c. reforestation, invasive exotic plants and animals, forest resource conservation, aesthetics, and special sites; d. awareness of responsibilities under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Canadian Species at Risk Act, and other measures to protect wildlife habitat (e.g. Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value); e. logging safety;
f. U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (COHS) regulations, wage and hour rules, and other provincial, state and local employment laws; g. transportation issues; h. business management; i. public policy and outreach; and
j. awareness of emerging technologies.
There is an Opportunity for Improvement to more broadly include the SFI training module in the requirements for working on state lands.

Update regarding 2013 Opportunities for Improvement

In 2013 three (3) opportunities for improvement were identified. These have been resolved or modified as follows:

1. 2014 Update: Some sites visited during the 2013 audit had areas with rutting sufficient for localized impact on the roots of trees and soil properties. Rutting was observed in several locations, but is generally within acceptable limits; OFI resolved.
   2013 finding: SFI Indicator 2.3.4 requires "Post-harvest conditions conducive to maintaining site productivity (e.g. limited rutting, retained down woody debris, minimized skid trails)." There had been an opportunity to improve practices in the area of limited rutting.

2. 2014 Update: No issues observed in 2014 audit, resolved:
   2013 finding: SFI Indicator 2.3.5 requires "Retention of vigorous trees during partial harvesting, consistent with scientific silvicultural standards for the area." There had been an opportunity to improve protection of residual trees during harvesting.

3. 2014 Update: Continued, modified slightly; See Opportunities for Improvement listed under SFI Indicator 2.3.4 above.
   2013 finding: SFI Indicator 2.3.6 requires "Criteria that address harvesting and site preparation to protect soil productivity." Criteria for rutting/compaction exist, but may not be providing adequate protection to soils.

Exceptional Practices

The Indiana Division of Forestry's SFI Program was found to exceed the standard in several areas.

SFI Indicator 1.1.3 requires "A forest inventory system and a method to calculate growth and yield.
The Indiana Division of Forestry has developed an exemplary forest inventory system.

SFI Indicator 3.1.4 requires "Monitoring of overall best management practices implementation. The BMP monitoring program is the most robust known to the audit team. Post-harvest reviews conducted by Indiana Division of Forestry Resource Foresters are checked by a central-office staff specialist and checked again by a comprehensive second-party process.

SFI Indicator 4.1.1 requires "Program to promote the conservation of native biological diversity, including species, wildlife habitats and ecological community types.
Indiana Division of Forestry employs a full-time wildlife biologist, Scott Haulton. His time is focused on special situations and on the HCP effort for Indiana bat, but he also provides support for regular work activities. The Indiana Division of Forestry has dedicated considerable resources to developing state-of-the-art bat conservation practices.

SFI Indicator 4.1.4 requires "Development and implementation of criteria, as guided by regionally appropriate best scientific information, to retain stand-level wildlife habitat elements

such as snags, stumps, mast trees, down woody debris, den trees and nest trees.
The Indiana Division of Forestry has an exceptional program to retain stand-level wildlife habitat elements in accordance with scientific information.

SFI Indicator 5.4.1 requires "Provide recreational opportunities for the public, where consistent with forest management objectives.
Indiana Division of Forestry provides excellent recreational opportunities for the public including walking and horse trails, camping and access to lakes and ponds.

SFI Indicator 15.1.1 requires "Financial or in-kind support of research to address questions of relevance in the region of operations. The Indiana Division of Forestry has an exemplary program for research, particularly for issues related to management of forests to conserve ecological values and threatened or endangered species, notably bats.

SFI Indicator 18.1 requires that "Program Participants with forest management responsibilities on public lands shall participate in the development of public land planning and management processes.
Annual "State Forest Open Houses" and a very comprehensive and well-organized web site contribute to an exceptional program for public involvement in public land management and planning.

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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 broaden the implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on the use of the best scientific information available.
Summary of Evidence – The Indiana Statewide Forest Assessment 2010 and the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan for INDNR, tract plans, and the associated inventory data and growth models were the key evidence of conformance.

Objective 2. Forest Productivity - To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation and other measures.
Summary of Evidence –Field observations and associated records were used to confirm practices. INDNR has programs for reforestation, for protection against gypsy moth, emerald ash borer, other pests, 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 water quality in streams, lakes and other water bodies.
Summary of Evidence – Field observations of a range of sites were the key evidence. Auditors visited the portions of field sites that were close to water resources.

Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity including Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value 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 habitat diversity and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations, written plans and policies for the conservation of the Indiana bat, employment of an experienced wildlife biologist, and use of heritage databases 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 – DOF provides excellent recreational opportunities for the public including walking and horse trails, camping and access to lakes and ponds. Records and field sites were reviewed to assess methods and results in visual management.

Objective 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.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of completed operations, records of special sites and visits to special sites were all factors in the strong finding for protection of special sites.

Objective 7. Efficient Use of Forest Resources - To promote the efficient use of forest resources.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising field foresters provided the key evidence.

Objective 14. Legal and Regulatory Compliance - Compliance 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 15. Forestry Research, Science, and Technology - To support forestry research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.

Summary of Evidence –DOF supports a variety of forestry research initiatives, including the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (a collaborative research project that currently includes 13 partnering organizations and agencies including researchers from six regional universities) on the Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests.

Objective 16. Training and Education -To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

Summary of Evidence – Training records of selected personnel, records associated with harvest sites audited, and stakeholder interviews were the key evidence for this objective.

Objective 17. Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry -

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry by encouraging the public and forestry community to participate in the commitment to sustainable forestry, and publicly report progress.

Summary of Evidence – INDNR has an exemplary history of soliciting and incorporating public comment into its decision making and planning processes; including the Indiana Forest Stakeholder Summit.

Objective 18: Public Land Management Responsibilities -

To support and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Summary of Evidence – Interviews and review of correspondence were used to confirm the requirements.

Objective 19. Communications and Public Reporting - To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry by documenting progress and opportunities for improvement.

Summary of Evidence – Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided the key evidence.

Objective 20. Management Review and Continual Improvement - To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry, and to monitor, measure, and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

Summary of Evidence – Records of program reviews, agendas and notes from management review meetings, and interviews with personnel from all involved levels in the organization 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 zones, and to conform with 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 forests and lands of special significance (ecologically, geologically or culturally important) in a manner that protects their integrity and 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. 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.

9. Legal Compliance
To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.

10. Research
To support advances in sustainable forest management through forestry research, science and technology.

11. Training and Education
To improve the practice of sustainable forestry through training and education programs.

12. Public Involvement
To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry on public lands through community involvement.

13. Transparency
To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.

14. Continual Improvement
To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

Source: Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Standard, 2010-2014 Edition

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