

Indiana Division of Forestry

2015 SFI Forest Management Public Summary Report

NSF International

The SFI Program of the Indiana Division of Forestry has achieved conformance with the 2015-2019 SFI® Forest Management Standard according to the NSF SFIS Surveillance Audit Process.

NSF initially certified Indiana Division of Forestry to the SFIS in 2006 and recertified it in 2011 and in 2014. This report describes a surveillance audit which included an update to the SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard. 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 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 Surveillance Audit Process

The Surveillance audit was performed by NSF on October 19-21 by an audit team headed by Mike Ferrucci, Lead Auditor and Paul Pingrey, FSC Lead Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting SFIS Certification Audits contained in SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules, Section 9 - Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation.

The objective of the audit was to assess conformance of the firm’s SFI Program to the new requirements of the SFI 2015-2019 Standard, Section 2 – Forest Management and a sample of the other existing requirements. The scope of the SFIS Audit included the entire state forest system, but this review included field sites at two state forests: Clark State Forest and Harrison-Crawford 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).

The SFI Standard was used without modifying any requirements.

The following indicators are not applicable:

- Indicator 2.1.4: Indiana Division of Forestry doesn’t plant exotic trees.
- Indicator 2.1.6: Planting is not done to change forest composition but to maintain it.
- Indicator 15.2.2: Indiana does not have a logger certification program.

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 SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard. There was one Transitional Non-conformance to the new requirement that will be resolved prior to December 31, 2015. Other findings include "Opportunities for Improvement" and "Exceptional Practices" as shown below.

2015 Transitional Minor Non-conformance

8.1.1. Program Participants will provide a written policy acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. Transitional Minor Non-Conformance: The Indiana Division of Forestry does not include a policy statement acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

2015 Opportunities for Improvement

SFI Indicator 3.1.1 requires a "Program to implement federal, state or provincial water quality best management practices during all phases of management activities."

There is an Opportunity for Improvement in the maintenance of recreational trails which are placed on forest access roads or fire trails. Indiana BMP Guide, Closing Forest Roads, page 15: "Insure that all erosion control and water management measures (e.g. water bars, drainage dips, culverts and ditches) are working. See spacing recommendations in Table 1, page 12."

SFI Indicator 11.1.3 requires "Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities."

There is an Opportunity for Improvement in the challenges associated with frequent turnover of field forestry staff (resource managers).

No CARs were identified during the 2014 audit.

Update regarding 2014 Opportunities for Improvement

In 2014 three (3) opportunities for improvement were identified. These have been resolved or modified as follows:

1. 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..." The 2014 Opportunity for Improvement was resolved by the completion of the Indiana State Forest Strategic Plan 2015-2019. (There is an Opportunity for Improvement in the planning regarding the adoption of an updated strategic plan, currently under review.

2. SFI Indicator 2.3.6 requires “Criteria that address harvesting and site preparation to protect soil productivity.” Criteria for rutting/compaction have been revised and strengthened to assure adequate protection to soils.

3. 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. Logger training curriculum has been revised to include additional elements from the SFI module.

2015 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 3.1.3 requires “Monitoring of overall best management practices implementation. The BMP monitoring program is the most robust known to the audit team. Post-harvest BMP reviews are conducted by Indiana Division of Forestry Resource Foresters and by a comprehensive second-party process.

SFI Indicator 4.1.1 requires a “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 the Indiana bat and the Northern long-ear 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 the “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 the organization to “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 Performance Measure 6.1 requires that “Program Participants shall identify special sites and manage them in a manner appropriate for their unique features.” There is an exceptional program for identifying and managing culturally important sites.

SFI Indicator 10.1.1 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.

The next Surveillance Audit is scheduled for October 2016.

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 Indiana Statewide Forest Assessment 2010 and the Indiana State Forest Strategic Plan 2015-2019, state forest plans, tract plans, 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. 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 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 field sites that were close 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 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: Indiana Division of Forestry 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 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 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: Policies and systems for receiving and responding to requests were used to determine conformance.

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 and systems used to ensure conformance 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: 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 11 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 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: *Indiana Division of Forestry has annual state forest open houses that provide outreach, supplemented by the web site which has an on-line comment form. The Harrison-Crawford State Forest has a new, very high-quality Timber Harvest Interpretive Trail.*

Objective 13 Public Land Management Responsibilities

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Summary of Evidence: *Indiana Division of Forestry seeks input into management decisions including the comment period for the latest strategic plan. Each forest has annual state forest open houses that provide outreach.*

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 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 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 SFI 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

(Applies only to the SFI 2015-2019 Fiber Sourcing Standard)

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