

## The Facts on Responsible Forestry – Independent Third Party Certification

There is a perception in the marketplace that FSC certification guarantees that FSC requirements are being met by companies certified to a FSC endorsed standard, yet FSC auditors allow a significant number of non-conformities during the audit process and FSC certification is still achieved.

### FSC: A Disconnect between Standards and Practice

FSC has multiple, varied standards and allows certification of forests to draft standards or interim standards created by certification bodies.

FSC certificates can be awarded despite an organization being found to have numerous outstanding 'minor' non-conformities related to issues such as First Nations consent, chemical use, areas of special ecological value and rates of harvest; sometimes giving companies years to meet the requirements.

Kruger operations in Quebec were certified in 2010 despite 50 non-conformances related to things like First Nations consultation, retention, wildlife habitat, and high conservation value forests. The auditors found that harvesting was in a square block pattern, and not consistent with natural disturbance. They found there was excessive thinning and machinery used in riparian protection areas. Even the sustainable harvest was in question.<sup>1</sup> This certificate was valid for two years, allowing Kruger to sell FSC certified product. Just recently the certificate was suspended. That's two years with an "operational advantage" to sell and market product under the FSC brand.

Auditors of FSC forests have been known to approve an excision (removal) of land that was deforested after the FSC certificate was awarded.

- Forestland Group in North Carolina was issued a 'Major' non-compliance for selling forest products as FSC-certified that were salvaged as a result of proposed coal mining operations, and retained the lands under its FSC certificate. The corrective action request called for the company to excise the lands.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the evidence that shows FSC requirements are not being met, FSC continues to allow campaigning groups to claim that FSC has meaningful assurances while spreading misinformation regarding SFI.

- "Responsible forest managers produce paper and other forest products while maintaining a diversity of plant and wildlife species, minimizing use of chemicals and impacts to water quality, and protecting endangered areas....only the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) provides meaningful assurances that such practices are being used."<sup>3</sup>

- ForestEthics: "Well, here in the US for example, the SFI will actually certify the destruction of endangered forests through the logging of rare old growth and threatened species' habitats, replacement of natural forests by barren tree plantations, and excessive clearcutting and chemical applications. . . . The FSC is an entirely different story."<sup>4</sup>

### Bottom Line

In order to obtain a SFI certificate, an organization must meet the applicable requirements. While a small number of isolated minor non-conformances may be tolerated (with corrective actions identified), if the organization receives a single major non-conformance or many minor non-conformances, they do not get SFI certified, and no certificate is awarded.

SFI requires certification bodies to be accredited to conduct SFI certifications by independent accreditation bodies such as ANSI<sup>5</sup>, ANAB<sup>6</sup> and SCC<sup>7</sup>. These accreditation bodies must follow audit procedures and certification as required by the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).<sup>8</sup> Separation of the standard setting body (SFI) from certification and accreditation bodies helps prevent conflict of interest.

FSC chose to create their own accreditation body to accredit FSC auditors: Accreditation Services International (ASI).<sup>9</sup> FSC, in fact, touts this close linkage between standards setting and accreditation as being a strength: "FSC is the only global forest management [certification system](#) with an integrated [accreditation](#) program that systematically controls its *certification* bodies."<sup>10</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Rapport d'audit d'aménagement forestier: Enregistrement Kruger Inc. [http://www.fscanada.org/docs/kruger%20uaf%204151%20et%204351\\_100129fr.pdf](http://www.fscanada.org/docs/kruger%20uaf%204151%20et%204351_100129fr.pdf)
- <sup>2</sup> SmartWood auditors approved excision of a deforested area <http://rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/site-documents/forestry/documents/theforestlandgrouppubsum08.pdf> (page 5)
- <sup>3</sup> ForestEthics Green Grades 2009 <http://forestethics.org/downloads/Green-Grades-09.pdf>
- <sup>4</sup> Healthy Building News Care About Forests? Don't Use the Green Globes Building Rating Tool. 2006. <http://www.healthybuilding.net/news/060324forestethics.html>
- <sup>5</sup> American National Standards Institute <https://www.ansica.org/wwwversion2/outside/PROgeneral.asp?menuID=1>
- <sup>6</sup> ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board <http://www.anab.org/accreditation/forestry.asp>
- <sup>7</sup> Standards Council of Canada <http://www.scc.ca/en/accreditation/management-systems/environmental>
- <sup>8</sup> [www.iaf.nu](http://www.iaf.nu)
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.accreditation-services.com/>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.fsc.org/accreditation.html>

