

Forest Certification UPDATE



St. Louis County Land & Minerals Department SFI 2010-2014

Located in Northeastern Minnesota, St. Louis County, with total area of 7,092 square miles, is the largest county east of the Mississippi. St. Louis County, through its Land & Minerals Department manages State Tax Forfeited Trust Lands to provide an optimal combination of available resources for the sustained benefit of the people of St. Louis County by establishing practical resource management programs based on responsible stewardship and sustainability. St. Louis County Land and Mineral Department's central office is located in Duluth, MN. The County's EMS/SFI manager is Mr. Mark Reed, Deputy Land and Minerals Commissioner. The St. Louis County operations have been registered to the SFI Standard since 2004. This SFIS is supported by an ISO 14001 Environmental Management System also registered in 2004. The St. Louis County SFIS and EMS systems have undergone annual third party surveillance audits by SAI Global since the date of initial registration.

BACKGROUND

During the period of September 10-12, 2013, St. Louis County Land and Minerals Department underwent a Re-Assessment Audit to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) Standard 2010-2014. The registration cycle is over 3 years with surveillance audits conducted annually. This report summarizes the audit process and results of the SAI Global surveillance audit.

SCOPE OF CERTIFICATION

Forest management activities- planning, harvesting, transportation and silviculture on Brimson, Cook, Ely, Floodwood, Island Lake and Virginia Zones- Objectives 1-7 & 14-20.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The SFI Program third-party surveillance audit was undertaken by SAI Global. SAI Global is an independent third party registrar that is accredited by the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board (ANAB) for registrations to SFIS 2010-2014. This ensures the integrity and credibility of the audit process.

The audit assessed active and completed harvest operations through interviews with St. Louis Land and Minerals Department staff and timber sale harvest contractors. The audit also assessed the SFIS and supporting EMS documentation, records at the department's Duluth, MN office. The audit used 11 site visits and interviews with contractors logging St. Louis County Land and Minerals Department timber sales to assess the department's forest management system.

THE AUDITORS

The SAI Global audit team who performed the audit consisted of Jack Ward EMSLA, CF & Lynn Penniman EMSLA.



KEY AREAS OF NON-CONFORMANCE

- Performance Measure 2.2: Evidence of direct application of pesticides, not labeled for aquatic use, to waters of the state and to a trout stream riparian management zone was observed in the field.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Objective 3; PM 3.1; Indicator 1: Consider consultation with MN DNR and thorough Timber Sale Synopsis documentation when harvesting Basal Area minimums within state recognized riparian management protection zones.

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- Harvest boundary adjustments made to address visual concerns and protection of an old growth stand special site at the Black Cat harvest area are commendable.
- Continual improvement of the internal audit program including preparation of an internal audit update summary report is notable.

EVIDENCE OF CONFORMITY

Evidence that was assessed to determine St Louis County Land and Minerals Department's conformity with the SFIS 2010-2014 standard appears below:

Environmental Management System Documentation, Land and Resource Management Plans, Sustainable Resource Management Plans, Actual Cut vs Modeled Plan Summary

SFI-02 Forest Productivity

Standard Operating Procedures, field review, silviculture reports including planting, regeneration delay, planting program data and prescriptions, pesticide application records, silviculture survey records, pre-work and inspection records, Training records, Interviews and field inspections of the following Blocks: Lieung 1, Lieung 2, Lieung 4, Pot Shot, North Boulder Forest Management Road, Black Cat

SFI-03 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

Standard Operating Procedures, Timber Sale Operator Work Instructions, GIS, Site Plans, Harvest, pre-work and inspection records, Internal audit records, Training records, Timber Sale Agreements, Interviews and field inspections of the following blocks: CK2, Lieung 2, Green Eagle, Stone Domes South, Pot Shot, North Boulder, North Boulder Forest Management Road, Black Cat, Grassy Ponds.

SFI-04 Conservation of Biological Diversity

Standard Operating Procedures, Timber Sale Operator Work Instructions, GIS, Site Plans, Harvest and road pre-work and inspection records, Internal audit records, Training records, Timber Sale Agreements, Interviews and field inspections of the following blocks: CK2, Green Eagle, Stone Domes South, Pot Shot, North Boulder, North Boulder Forest Management Road, Black Cat, Grassy Ponds.

SFIS 2010-2014

Periodic Assessments

Major non-conformances: 0
Minor non-conformances: 1
Opportunities
for Improvement: 1
Positive Aspects: 2

Major Non-Conformances

Pervasive or critical to the achievement of the SFI objectives.

All major non-conformances require an action plan to be implemented by the auditee within 90 days of an initial audit and subsequently 60 days or registration cannot be achieved/maintained

Minor Non-Conformances

Isolated incidents that are non-critical but must be addressed before the next surveillance audit to maintain compliance to the SFI standard.

Opportunity for Improvement

Are not non-conformances but are comments on specific areas where improvements can be made.

Positive Aspects

Areas that are deemed to be of best practices

SFI-05 Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

Site Plans, Visual Quality Objectives, Visual Impact Assessments, GIS map layers, Reports generated from the Company's database specific to cut block size, silvicultural treatments, Interviews and Field inspections of the following blocks: Black Cat.

SFI-06 Protection of Special Sites

Site Plans, Visual Quality Objectives, Visual Impact Assessments, GIS map layers, Reports generated from the Company's database specific to cut block size, silvicultural treatments, Interviews and Field inspections of the following blocks: Black Cat

SFI-07 Efficient Use of Forest Resources

Standard Operating Procedures, Timber Sale Operator Work Instructions, GIS, Site Plans, Harvest and road pre-work and inspection records, Internal audit records, Training records, Timber Sale Agreements, Interviews and Field inspections of the following blocks: CK2, Green Eagle, Stone Domes South, Pot Shot, North Boulder, North Boulder Forest Management Road, Black Cat, Grassy Ponds.

SFI-14 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

EMS, Laws, Legislation, regulations, Management review meeting minutes, Inspection records, Internal audit records, Compliance tracking records, Corrective Action plans, Environmental and SFM Policy, Health and Safety Policy.

SFI-15 Forestry Research & Technology

Summary of group funded FIA projects, Sample of research reports, Regen survey records, Inspection records, Interviews.

SFI-16 Training and Education

St. Louis County training database, SFI training modules, Sustainable Forest Management & Environmental Policies, Health and Safety Policy, Staff and contractor MLEP training records, Interviews and field inspections of the following blocks: CK2, Green Eagle, Stone Domes South, Pot Shot, North Boulder, North Boulder Forest Management Road, Grassy Ponds.

SFI-17 Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry

SIC meeting minutes, St Louis County Land and Minerals Department website and public resources; SIC SFI Brochure, SFI Evidence Package, Site Plans, pre-works, Education/community involvement records, Interviews.

SFI-18 Public Land Management Responsibilities

St Louis County records and interviews

SFI-19 Communications and Public Reporting

Electronic files/records, meeting minutes, St. Louis county Land and Minerals Department website, SFI website, Interviews.

SFI-20 Management Review and Continual Improvement

Management review meeting agenda, minutes and associated input/output records, Internal audit records, Field inspection records, Corrective Action Plans, Field Inspections, Interviews.

SAI Global forestry specialist group registers/certifies forest companies to ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, CSA Z809 and CSA Z804 SFM, CERTFOR FM, CERTFOR CoC, SFIS, SFI CoC, PEFC CoC. QMI-SAI Global registers/certifies forest companies to FSC FM and CoC The group, led by Sylvain Frappier, Technical Manager - Forestry, consists of a highly qualified team of professional foresters, technical and industry experts. Contact certification.americas@saiglobal.com for more information.

Company Contact:

Mark Reed
320 West 2nd Street, Room 208 Duluth, MN 55802
218-726-2600

This report may only be reproduced by the intended client, with the express consent of SAI Global. Information in this issue is of a general nature with respect to audit findings and is not intended to be acted upon without appropriate professional advice.