



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

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The Facts on Responsible Forestry – Clearcutting

There is a perception in the marketplace that FSC does not allow clearcuts and yet all certification standards allow for the responsible use of clearcuts.

FSC Standards Allow Clearcutting

FSC has multiple, varied standards. Many FSC Standards do not specify a limit on clearcut size – including FSC standards in nations where clearcutting is prevalent.

- FSC Canada's National Boreal Standard, which represents nearly 25% of FSC-certified lands globally and over 50% of FSC-certified lands in Canada and the US has no maximum clearcut size restrictions.
- FSC Russia's (20% of FSC's certified lands) standard has no maximum clearcut size restrictions.
- FSC standards in Sweden and Brazil have no maximum clearcut size restrictions.

The Southeastern US standard recommends a nonbinding 80-acre limit on clearcuts, but auditors routinely approve much larger openings - most recently a 100-acre average, little different from SFI's 120-acre average¹

You can see photos of FSC clearcuts at <http://www.fsc-watch.org/>

Despite these facts that clearly show FSC standards around the globe allow for large- scale, industrial clearcutting, FSC continues to allow companies to claim that FSC products are “clearcut-free:”

The following two quotes are on websites offering advice to consumers on green products:

- “[I]f your counters are made from wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), you can rest assured it was not the product of clear cutting.”² [Home Renovations]
- “Paper that is FSC certified means...that there's no clear cutting...”³ [InfoBarrel]

Greenpeace Kleercut campaign (2009): “Much of the virgin tree fibre Kimberly-Clark uses for its tissue products come from unsustainably managed forests. These forests are predominantly logged in clearcuts — a devastating form of logging where most if not all trees are removed from an area of forest.”⁴ The solution it presented included buying fiber from FSC-certified forests.⁵ (SFI Note: Unfortunately for many SFI program participants, Kimberly-Clark asked that they get FSC certified or risk contract loss as a result of this Greenpeace

campaign that focused on Canada's boreal forest. Recall FSC Canada's Boreal Standard has no maximum clearcut size restriction yet it was sold as the solution to GreenPeace's anti “Kleercut” campaign.)

Bottom Line

Forestry experts the world over consider clearcutting an appropriate harvesting method because it supports sustainable forest management.

- All forest certification standards allow the use of clearcutting where appropriate and when all other requirements (e.g. wildlife habitat, site productivity, biodiversity, size restrictions, green-up, buffer zones) are met. The SFI is transparent about its forest management standard and the use of management activities such as clearcutting. The SFI Standard has seven auditable indicators that place specific requirements on the use of clearcutting, including visual quality management, size, shape and placement, documentation and record keeping and green-up.
- The Society of American Foresters “supports the use of well proven silvicultural methods, including clearcutting, to meet diverse forest management objectives, such as efficient utilization of commercial timber and assurance of prompt (or successful) regeneration following timber harvest or natural disturbances.”⁶
- The Forest Stewardship Council, Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) all allow clearcutting as a scientifically accepted forest management practice.
- The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers notes: “CSA, FSC and SFI all allow clearcutting as an acceptable harvesting method when used appropriately.”⁷

¹ <http://info.fsc.org/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?retURL=%2Fapex%2FPublicCertificateDetails%3Fid%3Da0240000006wvFrAAI&file=00P40000008hAdCEAU> (page 27)

² <http://homerenovations.about.com/od/kitchen/tp/GreenCountertops.htm>

³ http://www.infobarrel.com/How_to_Purchase_Biodegradable_Coffee_Cups_-_4_Things_You_Have_to_Know

⁴ <http://kleercut.net/en/theproblem>

⁵ <http://kleercut.net/en/thesolution>

⁶ A position of the Society of American Foresters Clearcutting as a Silvicultural Practice. Renewed 2008. www.eforester.org/fp/documents/clearct_position_final.pdf

⁷ Canadian Council of Forest Ministers <http://www.sfmcanada.org/english/topics-harvesting.asp>

