



## **FIA SFI Summary Re-Certification Audit Report**

The SFI Program of Forest Investment Associates (FIA) of Atlanta, GA has again achieved conformance with the SFI Standard®, 2010-2014 Edition, according to the NSF-ISR SFIS Certification Audit Process.

NSF-ISR initially certified FIA to the SFIS in 2007. Follow-up surveillance audits have been conducted each year. This report describes the three-year Re-Certification Audit designed to focus on changes in the standard, changes in operations, the management review system, and efforts at continuous improvement. In addition, a subset of SFI requirements were selected for detailed review.

Forest Investment Associates (FIA) is an employee-owned timberland investment manager. It provides its services to corporate pension plans, state and municipal retirement systems, endowments, foundations, and family offices. FIA was founded in 1986 and is based in Atlanta, GA. The firm manages separate client focused timberland accounts. It invests only in timberland properties. Activities include establishing and maintaining forest access, soil conservation, planning and implementing reforestation, chemical control of weeds/invasive species for control of young plantations, thinning young pine stands to optimize growth, harvest of mature timber stands, establishing streamside management zones and cultural practices to protect soil and water quality, and maintaining forest biodiversity, protecting federal threatened and endangered species, NatureServe G1 and G2 species, special sites, and forest recreational pursuits. FIA's central office analyzes existing and new accounts in coordination with client goals and with Operations Managers and Regional Investment Foresters to determine budget financials and human resource needs regarding client objectives. FIA's central office and field office sites coordinate to achieve forestry that is both profitable and environmentally sustainable for their clients.

FIA's SFI Program is managed by Thomas (Tom) N. Trembath, FIA's Southern Operations Manager. Tom is responsible for all facets of support for ensuring adherence to the SFIS 2010-2014 Standard requirements on client lands.

The Re-Certification audit was performed by NSF-ISR on February 2-6, 2015 by an audit team headed by Tucker Watts, Lead 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 ongoing conformance of the firm's SFI Program to all of the relevant requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014 Edition. The scope of the SFIS Audit included fee timberland. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been conducted since the previous field audit conducted March 10-12, 18-19, 2014. In addition, practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example). In addition, a subset of SFI obligations to promote sustainable forestry practices, to seek legal compliance, and to incorporate continual improvement systems were reexamined during the audit. Use of the SFI logo and the requirement to provide a public summary of audit reports were also reviewed.

As with the initial certification, several of the SFI Performance Measures were outside of the scope of FIA's SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.4 involving planting in exotic tree species
- Indicator 2.1.7 involving planting in non-forested landscapes

- Indicator 3.2.5 involving situations where the state lacks BMPs
- Indicator 4.1.8 involving use of prescribed fire
- Objectives 8-13 for wood procurement were not applicable because FIA does not procure wood for a mill
- Indicator 15.1.2 involving research on genetically engineered trees
- Indicator 16.2.2 involving recognition of logger certification programs
- Objective 18 is not applicable because FIA does not manage public land

None of the indicators were modified.

### **SFIS Re-Certification Audit Process**

The review was governed by a detailed audit protocol designed to enable the audit team 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.

During the audit NSF-ISR reviewed a sample of the written documentation assembled to provide objective evidence of SFIS Conformance. NSF-ISR also selected field sites for inspection based upon the risk of environmental impact, likelihood of occurrence, special features, and other criteria outlined in the NSF-ISR SFI-SOP. NSF-ISR also selected and interviewed stakeholders such as contract loggers, and other interested parties, and interviewed employees within the organization to confirm that the SFI Standard was understood and actively implemented.

The possible findings for specific SFI requirements included 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**

FIA's SFI Program was found to be in full conformance with the SFIS Standard. There were no previous minor non-conformances to be review.

The NSF-ISR SFI Certification Audit Process determined that there were no new minor non-conformances

The next surveillance audit is scheduled for March, 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 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 forest management plan for FIA and supporting documentation 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. FIA has programs for reforestation, for protection against insects and diseases 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 many field sites that were closest 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, use of college-trained field biologists, availability of specialists, and regular staff involvement in conferences and workshops that cover scientific advances 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** –Field observations of completed operations and policies/procedures for visual quality were assessed during the evaluation.

**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, training records, and written protection plans were all assessed during the evaluation.

**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 and with loggers provided the key evidence.

**Objectives 8 – 13 do not apply.**

**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** – Membership in organizations supporting research was confirmed.

**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** – Membership in trade groups and forestry associations was sufficient to assess the requirements.

**Objective 18: Public Land Management Responsibilities – Not Applicable**

**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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