

Hilton Timberlands

SFI Summary Surveillance Audit Report, 2015

The SFI Program of the Hilton Timberlands of Jackman, Maine has achieved continuing conformance with the SFI Standard®, 2010-2014 and, according to the NSF-ISR SFIS Certification Audit Process. NSF-ISR initially certified Hilton to the SFIS on November 22, 2011 and reviewed the program during surveillance audits in 2012 and 2013 with a recertification audit in 2014. This report describes the results of the 2015 Surveillance Audit.

Hilton Timberlands is a long-time Maine family ownership located in northwest Maine, primarily in Somerset County. The property consists of 45,368 acres of which 43,760 acres are commercial forest land. The primary timber types managed include sugar maple, yellow birch, and associated hardwoods, although there are areas of mixed wood and softwood-dominated types. Most of the lands are managed for commercial crops of timber, although there are several sugar bush areas and this use is expanding. The lands are open to walking and other forms of non-motorized recreation, with hunting being the primary recreational use. Hilton Timberlands' SFI Program is managed by Bill Jarvis of Jarvis Forest Management.

The surveillance audit was performed by NSF-ISR on July 28, 2015 by Keri Yankus, NSF Lead Auditor who meets 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. All relevant SFI Requirements in the Objectives 1-7, 14-17, 19, and 20 were included.

The objective of the audit was to assess continuing conformance of the firm's SFI program to the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014 and the transition to the 2015-2019 Edition. The scope of the audit included fee timberland operations. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the past 12 months. Practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example). In addition, SFI obligations to promote sustainable forestry practices, to seek legal compliance, and to incorporate continual improvement systems were within the scope of the audit.

Several of the SFI requirements were outside of the scope of Hilton Timberlands' SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Surveillance Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.4 involving planting exotic species
- Indicator 2.1.7 involving afforestation
- Performance Measure 2.2 for chemical use
- Performance Measure 2.5 and Indicator 2.5.1 involving improved planting stock
- Indicator 3.2.5 involving situations where the state lacks BMPs
- Indicator 4.1.8 involving use of prescribed fire
- Performance Measures 5.2 and 5.3 involving clearcutting
- Objectives 8 through 13 for procurement
- Objective 18 for public land management
- Indicators 19.2.1 and 19.2.3 involving past reporting under the SFI program

None of the SFI indicators were modified.

SFIS Surveillance Audit Process

The objective of the audit was to assess continuing conformance of the firm's SFI Program to the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014 Edition and to assess readiness to meet the a subset of requirements of the SFI 2015-2019 Standards. 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, landowners 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. Surveillance Audits generally focus on conformance issues and do not generally address exceptional practices.

Overview of Audit Findings

Hilton Timberlands' SFI Program was found to be in overall conformance with the SFIS Standard. There were no new Non-conformances and one "Opportunities for Improvement".

The program was also found to meet all of the new indicators of the new SFI 2015-2019 Standards except one. Details for the evaluation against both versions of the SFI Standard are provided below.

2010-2014 SFI Standard

One opportunities for improvement (OFIs) was identified in the 2015 audit:

Indicator 20.1 requires a "System to review commitments, programs and procedures to evaluate effectiveness." There is an Opportunity for Improvement in the consistency and clarity of legal language in logging/road/lease contract.

Transitional Non-conformances against SFI 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard

Transitional Minor Non-conformance: There is not a written policy acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples. This is a new requirement, and as such the Hilton Timberlands LLC has until December 31, 2015 to address this gap. Indicator 8.1.1 requires organizations that "Program Participants will provide a written policy acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples."

NSF-ISR also identified the following area where forestry practices and operations exceed the basic requirements of the SFI Standard:

- SFI Performance Measure 5.4 requires "Program Participants shall support and promote recreational opportunities for the public."
Hilton Timberlands exceeds the standard by providing recreational access including snowmobile trails, ATV trails, and hiking trails.

* * * * *

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 Hilton Timberlands and the associated inventory data and harvest levels 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. Hilton Timberlands 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. Close working relationships with E.J. Carrier, Inc. of Jackman, Maine for timber harvesting and road construction help ensure quality work.

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 field sites that were closest to water resources. LUPC and Maine Forest Service regulations and enforcement contributed to the auditor’s findings.

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, the long tenure of the management forester and his 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. Further no clearcutting is done on this ownership. Maps of recreation sites, combined with field visits, helped confirm a strong recreation program.

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 and visits to special sites, during the evaluation helped assure that special sites are protected.

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 loggers provided the key evidence.

Objectives 8 through 13 and 18 are not applicable to this operation.

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. Regulatory organizations contacted included the Maine LUPC and Maine’s Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife.

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 – Research support was assessed by review of memberships in organizations that support research and through a contribution to the Maine CFRU.

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 – Evidence of support for the Maine SFI Implementation Committee and long-time involvement in the Maine Forest Products Council and the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine were sufficient to assess conformance with the requirements. Further, work with Road Scholars (www.roadscholar.org) formerly known as Elder Hostel helps to promote sustainable forestry practices.

Objective 19. Communications and Public Reporting - To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry by documenting progress and opportunities for improvement.

Summary of Evidence – These requirements mostly involve future reports to be filed with SFI Inc. Jarvis Forest Management was determined to be collecting the appropriate information and is otherwise prepared to complete these reports as required.

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 were assessed.

For Additional Information Contact:

<p>Norman Boatwright Forestry Program Manager, NSF-ISR P.O. Box 4021 Florence, SC 29502 843-229-1851 nboatwright12@gmail.com</p>	<p>Bill Jarvis Forest Land Manager - Jarvis Forest Management P.O. Box 563 Jackman, ME 04945 Phone/FAX: 207-668-9516 thetreeguy@myfairpoint.net</p>
---	---