



Ohio Division of Forestry - SFI Summary Surveillance Audit Report

The SFI Program of the Ohio Division of Forestry has achieved conformance with the SFI Standard®, 2010-2014 Edition, according to the NSF-ISR SFIS Certification Audit Process.

NSF-ISR initially certified the Ohio Division of Forestry to the SFIS on October 28, 2010. The first Surveillance audit was on September 21 – 23 2011. This report describes the second annual follow-up Surveillance 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.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry (ODNR-DOF) manages 21 state forests covering more than 200,000 acres in 21 Ohio counties mostly in Ohio's un-glaciated southeastern region. The Chief of the Division and State Forester of Ohio, is given statutory authority for multiple-use management of state forests through Ohio Revised Code (ORC), Section 1503. The following additional background on the certification goals and on the Ohio State Forests was excerpted from the Request for Proposals that initiated this project.

State forests are grouped into eight (8) administrative units; with each unit having a manager and associated support staff, as outlined in Appendix A. There are approximately 70 employees on state forests; approximately 20 professional foresters or administrators and 50 support staff. There are eleven (11) Division of Forestry field offices located throughout the State. Further, the ODNR-DOF is headquartered at 2045 Morse Road, Building H-1, Columbus, OH 43229-6693.

On October 25, 2007, Ohio Governor Ted Strickland issued a Directive to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry to obtain certification of Ohio's State forests in order to promote good forest management practices. To comply with the Governor's directive, maintain the market for forest products, and to continue sustainable, multiple-use management; ODNR-DOF desires services to conduct full assessments and ongoing surveillance audits of ODNR-DOF state forests relative to FSC and SFI certification.

In 1916, the state forest system in Ohio was born with the purchase of 1,721 acres to become the first two state forests. Most state forest land was acquired from the 1920's through the 1950's... Forest management occurs on state forests to promote forest health and sustainability, wood products that contribute to local communities, recreational opportunities that require a large land base, and outreach and education to private landowners.

State forests have four (4) active programs: a land management program, a prescribed fire program, a recreation and law enforcement program, and an infrastructure and maintenance program. Each program has a program administrator. Each program conducts a variety of activities each year. Timber sales average approximately 8 million board feet on approximately 25 different sales each year. Both even-aged and uneven-aged management occurs on state forests. State forest silviculture is actively focusing on the oak regeneration problem and developing even-aged harvesting coupled with prescribed fire silvicultural systems. Partial timber harvesting occurs on approximately 2,500 acres per year and regeneration harvesting occurs on approximately 400 acres per year. Revenue from state forest timber sales are distributed to local governments and ODNR. Prescribed fire activities average approximately 1500 acres each year on approximately eight (8) different units. Recreational opportunities exist and are managed in the form of 462 miles of bridle or hiking trails, and 40 miles of motorized trails...

Management of Ohio's state forest is being guided by a strategic plan implemented in 2008, as well as 5-year forest-specific management plans and annual work plans. Annual work plans have been completed for fiscal year 2010. Forest-specific management plans are in-progress at this time but are expected to be completed within the next ten (10) months. Further, all land management and prescribed fire activities follow the policies and procedures of an internal guidance manual that contains all aspects of operational, environmental, and governmental policies.

Ohio Division of Forestry is responsible for forest management and land administration for the Ohio State Forests. The organization's SFI Management Representative is Chad Sanders, Land Management Administrator.

The surveillance audit was performed by NSF-ISR on September 17-19, 2012 by an audit team headed by Gerald Grossman, 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 conformance of the Division of Forestry's SFI Program to the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014 Edition.

The scope of the SFIS Audit included forest management operations. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the planning period of the past two years. In addition 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 Performance Measures or Indicators were outside of the scope of Ohio Division of Forestry's SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the certification audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.4 involving planting exotic species
- Performance Measure 2.5 and Indicator 2.5.1 involving improved planting stock
- Indicator 3.2.5 involving situations where the state lacks BMPs
- Objectives 8 through 13 for procurement
- Indicators 19.2.1 and 19.2.3 involving past reporting under the SFI program

No indicators were modified.

SFIS Surveillance 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, 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

Ohio Division of Forestry's SFI Program was found to be in substantial conformance with the SFIS Standard. The NSF-ISR Audit team reviewed all previous minor non-conformances and corrective action plans implemented by Ohio Division of Forestry as follows:

CLOSED Minor Non-conformance: Internal auditing sufficient to assess overall conformance with the SFI 2010-2014 Standard was not demonstrated for issues managed centrally. Internal auditing is well defined and implemented.

CLOSED Minor Non-conformance: Evidence was not provided of a systematic approach to internally-generated findings. Evidence to support generation of internal findings and closing these findings was documented.

There are no new Minor Non-conformances regarding the ISO-requirements for eligibility for multi-site sampling

One opportunity for improvement was also identified, and included:

SFI Indicator 16.1.3 requires “Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.”

There is an opportunity to improve the system for ensuring that new employees receive needed training.

These findings do not indicate a current deficiency, but served to alert Ohio Division of Forestry to areas that could be strengthened or which could merit future attention.

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

Performance Measure 5.4: Program Participants shall support and promote recreational opportunities for the public. Ohio Division of Forestry exceeds the standard by providing exceptional recreational opportunities.

Performance Measure 15.3: Program Participants shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving SFI Implementation Committees, associations or other partners provide in-kind support or funding for forest research to improve forest health, productivity, and sustainable management of forest resources, and the environmental benefits and performance of forest products. Ohio Division of Forestry exceeds the standard by extensive, long-term support of research.

The next audit is a re-certification audit and is scheduled for September 16-18, 2013.



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 –Forest management plans for these lands consists of several interlocked documents:

- a. The Ohio Land Management Manual
- b. The Shawnee Wilderness Plan
- c. The 2008 Strategic Plan for State Forests
- d. Forest-Specific 5-year management plans
- e. Forest-Specific Annual Work Plans
- f. The Backcountry Area Management Plan
- g. Grouse and Turkey Area Management Plan, and

- h. The RSA and HCVF Assessments.
 - i. Desired Future Condition – May 2011
- Supporting documentation provided by the Ohio Division of Forestry also and the associated inventory data and growth models provided additional 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. Ohio Division of Forestry has programs for reforestation, for protection against insects, 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 field sites that were close 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 detailed in the Ohio Land Management Manual, 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. Further 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, 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 through 13. NA

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. No evidence of regulatory problems was found.

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 – Financial records were confirmed and some recipients of research support were interviewed.

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 – Mailing lists, agendas for meetings, and selected summaries of comments were sufficient to assess the requirements.

Objective 18: Public Land Management Responsibilities -

To support and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Summary of Evidence – Reviewed open house records and planning documents for selected State Forests.

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

Summary of Evidence –Interviews, copies of reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided 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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