



Maryland DNR Forest Service

2022 SFI® Forest Management Summary Report

Introduction

The SFI Program of the Maryland DNR Forest Service of Annapolis, Maryland has achieved continuing conformance with the SFI® 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard, including the sustainable harvest level requirement (Performance Measure 1.1), according to the NSF SFI-FS Certification Audit Process.

The Maryland DNR Forest Service initially obtained SFI Certification from NSF on July 24, 2003, and the program was re-certified in July 2006. Initially only the Chesapeake Forest Lands were certified, with the Pocomoke State Forest added in 2009 as part of an expansion of scope that included other recently acquired lands. In 2011 the organization sought and was granted recertification to the current scope based on an audit of the six largest state forests against the SFI 2010-2014 Standard. The state forests included in the current scope were re-certified to the SFI 2015-2019 Standards in April of 2014 and again in April 2019. The most recent audit was a partial surveillance audit conducted April 2022.

The multi-site certificate covers 6 different State Forests (Chesapeake Forest, Pocomoke State Forest, Green Ridge State Forest, Garrett State Forest, Potomac State Forest, and Savage River State Forests) also including the central office located in Annapolis MD. The 2022 audit included office reviews in the following Chesapeake Forest, Pocomoke State Forest, and the central office located in Annapolis, MD. Field visits were conducted in 2 out of a total of 6 State Forests. This sample size was determined using the guidelines set forth in IAF-MD1. The State Foresters were selected based on a date rotation of total 6 different Forests. Within the 2 selected forests, NSF's lead auditor selected field sites for inspection based upon the risk of environmental impact, likelihood of occurrence, special features, and other criteria outlined in NSF's protocols and procedures. 1 field office, 1 central office and 12 field sites were visited.

The 14 field sites consisting of 7 thinning), 4 harvests, 2 herbicide applications, 5 special sites, 3 planting sites, 2 recreation sites, and 3 prescribed burn sites. Both thinnings and final harvests were viewed for multiple sites. There were also several roads, several smaller road-trail/stream crossings with cross drains and BMPs being applied. Harvest levels are documented in Annual Work Plans and have been at or below levels identified in plans for MD DNR associated inventory and growth data as well as harvest-related planning documents are used to ensure that plans include long term harvest level and consistent with the growth and yield model generated by the PGSF and SRSF. Data from the 5-year stand-level inventory project was used to develop a volume-control target based allowable harvest levels for western forests.

Maryland DNR Forest Service has an extensive program for harvest planning and approval. A Sustainable Forest Management Plan has been developed for each forest, and these plans are regularly updated. Harvests levels have been modeled by forest type for sustainability by area control for a 10-year planning horizon. Based on the Sustainable Forest Management Plan an Annual Work Plan is developed for each forest including planned harvests and other management activities. The Annual Work Plan is reviewed by various agencies in the Maryland DNR, and a Citizen's Advisory Team. It is also posted on the Maryland DNR Forest Service website for public comment for a period of 30 days. Following review of comments, the finalized plan is approved and posted on the Maryland DNR Forest Service website.

This report describes the results of the 2022 Surveillance Audit which considered changes in operations, the management review system, and efforts at continuous improvement. A sample of the SFI requirements were selected for detailed review.

Maryland's State Forests

Maryland DNR Forest Service is responsible for the management of the 209,207 acres of Maryland State Forests through a variety of designations. The Forest Service is supported by other agencies within the Department of Natural Resources including Wildlife, Fisheries, Heritage, and the Natural Resources Police. Management plans provide a useful summary of the importance of these forestlands and the broad policy goals. The Department recognizes the many benefits provided by state forests and has established a corresponding management policy in regulations.

Audit Process

The 2022 Surveillance Audit was performed by NSF on April 19-21, 2022, by an audit team headed by Tucker Watts, Lead Auditor. Beth Jacquain was the FSC Lead Auditor and supported the NSF lead auditor for SFI. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting audits contained in SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules, Section 9 - Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation.

The objective of the audit was to assess conformance of the firm's SFI Program to the requirements of the SFI 2015-2019 Standard and Rules, Section 2 – Forest Management.



The scope of the 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 2 years. In addition, practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example); SFI obligations to promote sustainable forestry practices, to seek legal compliance, and to incorporate continual improvement systems were also within the scope of the audit.

The SFI Standard was used without modifying any requirements. SFI requirements that are outside of the scope of Maryland's SFI program were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 10.1.2. Research on genetically engineered trees via forest tree biotechnology shall adhere to all applicable federal, state, and provincial regulations and international protocols ratified by the United States and/or Canada depending on jurisdiction of management. Maryland DNR Forest Service does not participate in research on genetically engineered trees.

Audit Process

NSF initiated the SFI audit process with a series of planning phone calls and emails to reconfirm the scope of the audit, review the SFI Indicators and evidence to be used to assess conformance, verify that Maryland DNR Forest Service was prepared to proceed to the SFI Audit, and to prepare a detailed audit plan.

The audit was governed by a detailed audit plan designed to enable the audit team to efficiently determine conformance with the applicable requirements. The plan provided for the assembly and review of audit evidence consisting of documents, interviews, and on-site inspections of ongoing or completed forest practices.

During the audit NSF reviewed a sample of the written documentation assembled to provide objective evidence of conformance. NSF 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 protocols. NSF 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 activities of the central office were reviewed against the multi-site requirements as well.

The possible findings of the audit included conformance, major non-conformance, minor non-conformance, opportunities for improvement, and practices that exceeded the requirements of the standard.

A report was prepared, and final approval was done by an independent Certification Board Member assigned by NSF. Follow-up or Surveillance Audits are required by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard[®]. The next Surveillance Audit is scheduled for the week of April 10, 2023.

Overview of Audit Findings

Maryland's SFI Program demonstrated conformance against the SFI 2015-2019 Standard. There was one non-conformance in 2022, and no "Opportunities for Improvement". As such, the program has earned continuing certification with the minor non-conformance. The minor non-conformance was closed during the audit.

One Major CAR and two Minor CARs were identified in the 2021 audit have been resolved:

- **SFI Multi-site Standard, Sec. 4.1.1: MAJOR CAR, repeated issue**
Templates used for Harvests are maintained by the Central Office – multiple templates available for download contained errors or omissions.
Closed: The timber sale contract documents identified in the audit report have been revised, removed, or explained. **CAR Closed.**
- **SFI FM Std, Section 1.1.1: MINOR CAR**
For the Pocomoke-Garrett SF (PGSF) and Savage River SF (SRSF) Forest Management Plans (FMP), the sections that describe forest modeling are not consistent with descriptions by field staff on how those are being implemented in operational planning. See SRSF – Section 5.12 - Forest Modeling, pg. 70, and PGSF – Section 5.12 - Forest Modeling, pg. 70.
Closed: Principles for the Silvah-Oak protocol have been contacted to learn if that inventory and analysis can provide modeling capabilities and harvest unit prescriptions. Maryland State Forest Silvah-Oak data has been provided and communication has been maintained with that team. They are evaluating the data. If their opinion is that Silvah will not provide the results needed, alternatives will be considered such as rerunning the Woodstock analysis to that the State Forest manager are more trusting of the results or revising that section in the Sustainable Forest Management Plan that describes the forest modeling and our process for selecting harvest levels and units scheduled for prescriptive management. Determination of Annual Incremental Forest Growth and Sustainable Harvest Volume on Harvestable Acreage in Potomac-Garrett State Forest details how the allowable harvest has been calculated. Pocomoke-Garrett SF (PGSF) and Savage River SF (SRSF) Forest Management Plans (FMP) has been updated with the process for selecting harvest



levels and units scheduled for prescriptive management. Workshops teaching SILV AH 8 have been scheduled for June, 2022. **CAR Closed.**

- **SFI FM Std, Section 11.1.3: MINOR CAR**

Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities. Staff have continued to use outdated templates for the harvest contracts and addendums.

Closed: State Forest manager's meetings are held twice a year to discuss forest management, administration, and forest certification issues. Use of the proper documentation is continually emphasized. As timber sale contracts and other documents are revised, this will be communicated to the State Forest staff by email. A process has been established to prevent such occurrences. The policy is being emphasized. **CAR Closed.**

One Minor CAR was identified in the 2022 audit.

- **SFI FM Std, Section 14.1.1: MINOR CAR**

The 2021 Surveillance Audit Report is not present on the SFI website, no confirmation that it has been submitted to SFI, Inc. was witnessed by the auditor.

General Description of Evidence of Conformity

NSF's audit team used a variety of evidence to determine conformance. The 2020 audit included State Forest reviews in the following by the NSF audit team, Chesapeake Forest, Pocomoke State Forest, and the central office located in Annapolis, MD. Field visits were conducted in 2 out of a total of 6 State Forests. 1 field office, 1 central office and 14 field sites were visited. The 14 field sites consisted of the 8 thinning harvests, 4 final harvests, 3 chemical applications, 2 plantings, 3 prescribed burns, 3 special sites, and 1 recreation site. There were also several roads, several smaller road-trail/stream crossings with cross drains and BMPs being applied. A further description of the audit evidence is provided below, organized by SFI Objective. NSF's audit team used a variety of evidence to determine conformance.

Objective 1 Forest Management Planning

To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion.

Summary of Evidence: *The forest management plans for both the Chesapeake and Pocomoke State Forests and supporting documentation and the associated inventory data and growth analyses were the key evidence of conformance for eastern forests.*

Objective 2 Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure long-term forest productivity, carbon storage and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

Summary of Evidence: Not evaluated this audit year.

Objective 3 Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources

To protect the water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies through meeting or exceeding best management practices.

Summary of Evidence: *Not evaluated this audit year.*

Objective 4 Conservation of Biological Diversity

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 a diversity of types of habitat and successional stages, and the conservation of forest plants and animals, including aquatic species, as well as threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.

Summary of Evidence: *Not evaluated this audit year.*

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: *While this Objective was not audited in 2020, in the past evidence included field observations of active and completed harvesting operations and policies/procedures for visual quality. Visits to recreation sites and contacting various stakeholder seeking input and obtaining feedback on how the DNR balances public interests while providing various recreational opportunities.*



Objective 6 Protection of Special Sites

To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

Summary of Evidence: While this Objective was not audited in 2020, in the past evidence included field observations of completed operations, assessments of GIS maps and other records of special sites, training records, and written protection plans. Partners within the DNR and outside stakeholders participate in identification of special sites and participate during audits.

Objective 7 Efficient Use of Fiber Resources

To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.

Summary of Evidence: While this Objective was not audited in 2020, in the past evidence included field observations of recently completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising field foresters and interviews with loggers.

Objective 8 Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights

To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.

Summary of Evidence: Not evaluated this audit year.

Objective 9 Legal and Regulatory Compliance

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

Summary of Evidence: Not evaluated this audit year.

Objective 10 Forestry Research, Science and Technology

To invest in forestry research, science and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based and broaden the awareness of climate change impacts on forests, wildlife and biological diversity.

Summary of Evidence: While this Objective was not audited in 2020, in the past evidence included discussions with stakeholders and support for research on state forest lands. Forests are used for several ongoing research projects such as research projects involving, pollinators and prescribed burning, which are visited.

Objective 11 Training and Education

To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

Summary of Evidence: Review of training records, and the records of support for the Maryland Master Logger Program. Further all harvests are conducted by logging crews with one or more Maryland Master Loggers. Training was check for licensed foresters and also for applicators applying chemicals on the forests.

Objective 12 Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.

Summary of Evidence: Records provided by the audited organization and interviews were used to confirm the requirements.

Objective 13 Public Land Management Responsibilities

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Summary of Evidence: The Citizen Advisory Committee confirms the involvement with the public inputs does occur.

Objective 14 Communications and Public Reporting

To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.

Summary of Evidence: Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided the key evidence. The state forests web site includes the complete certification reports from the past years.

Objective 15 Management Review and Continual Improvement

To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

Summary of Evidence: The state forests web site includes the organization's Sustainable Forestry Initiative Management Reviews for the past 10 years. The most recent of these program reviews, agendas and notes from field reviews, 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 areas, and to conform with forestry 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 lands that are ecologically, geologically or culturally important in a manner that 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. Legal Compliance

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.

9. Research

To support advances in sustainable forest management through forestry research, science and technology.

10. Training and Education

To improve the practice of sustainable forestry through training and education programs.

11. Community Involvement and Social Responsibility

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry on all lands through community involvement, socially responsible practices, and through recognition and respect of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional forest-related knowledge.

12. Transparency

To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the SFI Standard by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.

13. Continual Improvement

To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

14. Avoidance of Controversial Sources including Illegal Logging in Offshore Fiber Sourcing

(Applies only to the SFI 2015-2019 Fiber Sourcing Standard)

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.

Source: Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Standard, 2015–2019 Edition



For Additional Information Contact

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