2021 SFI CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM
SFI CERTIFICATION REFERENCES TO AID IN PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

BACKGROUND

Working together is critical to ensuring the sustainability of our planet. People and organizations are seeking solutions that go beyond limiting negative impacts to make positive contributions to the long-term health of the planet. Sustainable forests, and products sourced from those forests, are a great tool to move towards shared sustainability goals such as climate action, reduced waste, clean water, and economic development.

SFI standards, when leveraged with our three other pillars of SFI's work–conservation, community, and education– provide practical, scalable solutions for markets and communities working to pursue this growing commitment to a sustainable planet. When companies, consumers, educators, and community and sustainability leaders collaborate with SFI, they are making active, positive choices to achieve a sustainable future.

Through SFI standards, more forests are sustainably managed, which means more effort is put into conserving healthy wildlife, providing clean water, and making more sustainable wood, paper, and packaging products available for consumers and companies. Choosing SFI is a practical choice that helps combat climate change, conserve nature, and increase the number of products in the marketplace that have a positive impact on the planet.

A regular, transparent process for revision of the SFI standards is a critical part of SFI's commitment to continual improvement. By leveraging expertise across our network through focused engagement, and by including open comment periods, SFI creates standards that are grounded in science, include diverse perspectives, and benefit consumers, communities, and ultimately forests across the U.S. and Canada. This commitment to collaboration strengthens the positive impact of our standards in addressing sustainability challenges.

The most recent revision of the SFI standards was completed in April 2021, resulting in the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules. The process ensured strong participation from a diverse group of individuals representing forest sector, brand owners, conservation groups, resource professionals, landowners, educators, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and universities.

Relationship between the SFI standards and 2021 Conservation Grants RFP

The 2021 SFI Conservation Grants RFP seeks projects to address gaps in past Conservation Impact work, identify best management practices **toward attainment of existing and new requirements in the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules,** and find opportunities to expand or deepen understanding gained from past projects. For projects that examine historical performance of the SFI standards, potential applicants should also look at the SFI 2015-2019 Standards and Rules. This document is intended as a resource to better understand the SFI standards that apply most directly to the 2021 Conservation Grant RFP. The document cites relevant sections of both the SFI Forest Management Standard and SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard both of which can be found in the links provided above.

SFI 2022 Forest Management Standards (select sections only – please refer to the full standards for definitions and guidance):

Objective 3. *Protection* and Maintenance of Water Resources

To *protect* the water quality and water quantity of rivers, streams, lakes, *wetlands,* and other water bodies.

Performance Measure 3.1. *Certified Organizations* shall meet or exceed all applicable federal, provincial, state and local water quality laws and meet or exceed *best management practices.*
Indicators:
1. *Program* to implement federal, state, or provincial water quality *best management practices* during all phases of management activities.

2. Contract provisions that specify conformance to *best management practices*.

3. Monitoring of overall *best management practices* implementation.

Performance Measure 3.2. *Certified Organizations* shall implement water, *wetland,* and *riparian protection programs* based on climate, soil type, terrain, vegetation, ecological function, harvesting system, state *best management practices (BMPs)*, provincial guidelines and other applicable factors.
Indicators:
1. *Program* addressing management and *protection* of water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, *wetlands*, other water bodies and *riparian areas* during all phases of management.

2. *Program* to *protect* water quantity during all phases of management.

3. *Programs* that address wet-weather events in order to maintain water quality such as: *forest inventory* systems, identification of wet-weather tracts and definitions of acceptable operating conditions.

Objective 4. *Conservation* of *Biological Diversity*

To maintain or advance the *conservation* of *biological diversity* at the *stand-* and *landscape*-level and across a diversity of forest and vegetation cover types and successional stages including the *conservation* of forest plants and animals, *aquatic species, threatened and endangered* species, *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*, *old-growth forests,* and *ecologically important* sites.

Performance Measure 4.1. *Certified Organizations* shall conserve *biological diversity*.
Indicators:
1. *Program* to incorporate the *conservation* of *biological diversity*, including *native* species, *wildlife habitats* and ecological community types at *stand* and *landscape* levels, through the use of *best scientific information* including the incorporation of research results.

2. Development of criteria and implementation of practices, as guided by regionally based *best scientific information*, to retain *stand*-level *wildlife habitat* elements such as snags, stumps, mast trees, down woody debris, den trees and nest trees.

3. *Program* to individually and/or through cooperative efforts such as *SFI Implementation Committees*, support diversity of *native forest cover types* and age or size classes that enhance *biological diversity,* by incorporating the results of analysis of documented diversity at *landscape* and ownership/tenure levels, to ensure the contribution of the managed area to the diversity of conditions that promote *biodiversity*.

4. *Certified Organizations* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts such as *SFI Implementation Committees,* participate in or incorporate the results of credible, relevant state, provincial, or regional *conservation* planning and priority-setting efforts to conserve biological diversity and incorporate the results of these efforts in forest management planning. Credible priority-setting efforts include state and provincial *wildlife* action plans, state forest action plans, relevant *habitat conservation* plans, provincial *wildlife* recovery plans, Indigenous planning processes or ecoregional plans.

5. *Program* to address *conservation* of *ecologically important* species and *natural communities*.

6. Identification and *protection* of *non-forested wetlands*, including bogs, peatlands, fens and marshes, and *vernal pools* that are *ecologically important*.

7. Participation in *programs* and demonstration of activities as appropriate to limit the introduction, spread and impact of *invasive species* that directly threaten or are likely to threaten *native* plant and animal communities.

8. Consider the role of natural disturbances, including opening size, structural retention, the use of prescribed or natural fire where appropriate, and *forest health* threats in relation to biological diversity when developing forest management plans.

Performance Measure 4.2. *Certified Organizations* shall *protect threatened and endangered* species, *critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species, and *natural communities* (*Forests with Exceptional Conservation Values*), and *old-growth forests*.
Indicators:
1. *Program* to *protect threatened and endangered* species.

2. *Program* to locate and *protect* known sites flora and fauna associated with viable occurrences of *critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and ecological communities, defined as *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*. *Programs* for *protection* may be developed independently and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees* and may include *Certified Organization* managers of *Certified Organizations*, cooperation with other *stakeholders*, or use of easements, *conservation* land sales, exchanges, or other *conservation* strategies.

3. Support of and participation in *programs* for the *conservation* of *old-growth forests* in the region of ownership or forest tenure.

Performance Measure 4.3. *Certified Organizations* shall manage to *protect ecologically important* sites in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.
Indicators:
1. Use of information such as existing NatureServe or natural heritage data or expert advice in identifying or selecting *ecologically important* sites for *protection*.

2. Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified *ecologically important* sites.

Performance Measure 4.4. *Certified Organizations* shall apply knowledge gained through research, science, technology, field experience and the results of monitoring of the effectiveness of conservation-related programs to manage *wildlife habitat* and contribute to the *conservation* of *biological diversity*.
Indicators:
1. Collection of information on *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* and other *biodiversity-* related data through *forest inventory* processes, mapping, or participation in external *programs*, such as NatureServe, state or provincial heritage *programs*, or other reputable organizations. Such participation may include providing non-proprietary scientific information, time, and assistance by staff, or in-kind or direct financial support.

2. A *program to* incorporate data collected, research results and field applications of *biodiversity* and ecosystem research into forest management decisions.

3. Individually or collaboratively participate in or support research that demonstrates the *conservation* outcomes resulting from management strategies.

Objective 9. Climate Smart Forestry
To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Performance Measure 9.1 *Certified Organizations* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees* or other partners identify and address the climate change risks to forests and forest operations and develop appropriate adaptation objectives and strategies. Strategies are based on *best scientific information*.
Indicators:

1. Based on *best scientific information*, *Certified Organizations* shall identify climate change risks and prioritize them based on the likelihood, nature, severity of their expected impact to their forest lands or forest tenures.

2. *Certified Organizations* shall develop an adaptation plan to address priority climate change risks, via effective implementation of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* requirements for potential adaptive management including:
    * periodic updates of forest inventory and recalculation of planned harvests as appropriate to account for changes in growth due to productivity increases or decreases, including improved data, *long-term* drought, fertilization, climate change, or *forest health*;
    * access to *growth and yield modeling* capabilities;

- documented harvest trends within *long-term* sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan, and
- appropriate research, testing, evaluation, and deployment of *improved planting stock*, including *varietal seedlings*.

3. *Certified Organizations* shall document how their adaptation plan objectives and strategies fit within broader regional climate adaptation strategies and plans, where they exist.

4. *Certified Organizations* shall report annually to SFI Inc. their progress towards achieving climate change adaptation strategies and plans.

Performance Measure 9.2 *Certified Organizations* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees* or other partners identify and address opportunities to mitigate the effects associated with its forest operations on climate change.
Indicators:

1. Based on *best scientific information, Certified Organizations* shall identify and address opportunities to enhance the climate benefits associated with forest management operations on the forests they own or manage via effective implementation of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard* requirements such as:
   - Objective 2 – Forest Health and Productivity; Objective 10 – Fire Smart Forestry; and/or other silvicultural or operational *practices* to enhance the climate benefits associated with the forest operations.

2. Based on *best scientific information, Certified Organizations* shall identify and address opportunities to enhance ecosystem resilience for the forests they own or manage via effective implementation of the *SFI 2022 Forest Management* Standard requirements including:
   - prompt *reforestation* or planned *natural reforestation* as per Indicator 2.1.1;
   - adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas, and
   - evaluation for *afforestation* of areas that are not *ecologically important*, and
   - protection of desirable or planned advanced regeneration during harvest and the retention of vigorous trees during partial harvest.

3. Based on *best scientific information*, *Certified Organizations* shall develop a program to identify and address greenhouse gas emissions within their operational control.

4. *Certified Organizations* shall report annually to SFI Inc. their measures to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations.

Objective 10. Fire Resilience and Awareness

To limit susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of fire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.

Performance Measure 10.1 On the forests they own or manage, *Certified Organizations* shall limit susceptibility to undesirable impacts of wildfire, promote healthy and resilient forest conditions through

management techniques, actions and/or policies, and support restoration of forests following wildfire damage.
Indicators:
1. *Program* to evaluate the risk of undesirable impacts of wildfire and the role of fire on the forests they own or manage.

2. Use of *stand* and *landscape* level management techniques, actions and/or policies to promote *forest health* and resilience, and to mitigate the likelihood of undesirable impacts of wildfire, such as, prescribed fire, cultural burning, thinning, or hazardous fuel reduction where appropriate based on risk.

3. Use of management techniques to address wildfire damage, mitigate negative impacts to water and soils, and to promote forest restoration and future forest resilience.

Performance Measure 10.2 *Certified Organizations* shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving government agencies, *SFI Implementation Committees*, Project Learning Tree, or other partners, engage in efforts to raise awareness of and take action towards benefits of fire management and minimization of undesirable impacts of wildfire.
Indicators:
1. Participation in, or support of, local, state, provincial, federal, or Indigenous fire management and prevention programs.

2. Participation in, or support of, programs to promote benefits of fire management, and raise awareness about the environmental, economic, and social risks of undesirable impacts of wildfire to values such as carbon emissions, water quality and quantity, air, habitat, public safety, and human health.

SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standards (select sections only – please refer to the full standards for definitions and guidance):

Objective 1. Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing
To address the practice of *sustainable forestry* by conserving *biological diversity*.

Performance Measure 1.1. Promotion and *conservation* of *biological diversity*.
Indicators:
1. *Certified Organizations* shall address *conservation* of *biodiversity*, individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees*, through a *Program* that includes one or more of the following:
    • promotion of *biological diversity* concepts utilizing information from organizations such as the World Resources Institute, The Nature Conservancy, NatureServe, Conservation International, State Wildlife Action Plans, State Forest Action Plans and assessments;
    • conducting local and regional level *landscape* assessments;
    • involvement with local or regional *conservation* efforts;

- use of relevant information on *biological diversity* from credible sources (such as those noted above) in approved training and education programs; and
- other credible approaches.

Performance Measure 1.2. Promotion and *conservation* of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*.
Indicators:
1. *Certified Organizations* shall conduct an assessment, individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving *SFI Implementation Committees*, of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, defined as critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and ecological communities, within their *wood and fiber supply area(s)* and make the summary of the assessment available to *wood producers.*

2. Program to address *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and ecological communities) for all harvest operations through fiber sourcing activities such as:
    - use of *qualified logging professionals*, *certified logging companies* (where available), and *qualified resource professionals*; or
    - training *program* for *qualified logging professionals* on how to recognize and *protect Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*; or
    - through in-the-forest verification by *certified logging companies*; or
    - forest landowner outreach; or
    - *SFI Implementation Committee* involvement in the assessment of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*, and development of recommendations for *conservation*.

3. *Certified Organizations* shall conduct and incorporate the results of a *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* (*critically imperiled* and *imperiled* species and ecological communities) assessment to promote conservation of *Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value* for *purchased stumpage*.

Objective 2. Adherence to *Best Management Practices*

To broaden the practice of *sustainable forestry* through *best management practices* to *protect* water quality.

Performance Measure 2.1. *Certified Organizations* shall clearly define and implement *policies* to ensure that facility inventories and *fiber sourcing* activities do not compromise adherence to the *principles* of *sustainable forestry*.
Indicators:
1. Use of written agreements for the purchase of raw material sourced directly from the forest is required and must include provisions requiring the use of *best management practices.*

2. *Program* to address adverse weather conditions.

3. *Certified Organizations* shall clearly define their *fiber sourcing policies* in writing and make them available to *wood producers*.

Performance Measure 2.2. *Certified Organizations* shall, individually or through cooperative efforts monitor the use of *best management practices* relative to scale.

Indicators:

1. A *verifiable monitoring system* to:
   - confirm that harvests of *purchased stumpage* comply with *best management practices*;
   - monitor the use of *best management practices* by *wood producers* supplying the *Certified Organization*; and
   - evaluate use of *best management practices* across the *wood and fiber supply area*.

2. Use of information from the *verifiable monitoring system* to maintain rates of conformance to *best management practices* and to identify areas for improved performance.