

SFI Forest Management Standard

Climate and Fire Resiliency

July 1, 2022

Why It Matters

Climate change is our leading global sustainability challenge and forests play a vital role in capturing atmospheric carbon, making sustainably managed forests the most effective, and often overlooked, nature-based solutions to the climate crisis.

The link between wildfires and climate is also well-documented. The planet is warming with many regions in the United States and Canada experiencing increased incidence of wildfire and the undesirable impacts that result. Undesirable impacts are those which threaten public safety, human health, property, water quality and quantity, air quality, species habitat, or those which increase atmospheric carbon or have the capacity to destroy forests on a scale that significantly diminishes their inherent values. Sustainable forest management can reduce risk of these undesirable impacts of wildfire.

How The SFI Forest Management Standard Addresses Climate and Fire Resiliency

Climate Resiliency

The SFI Forest Management Standard has a climate-smart forestry objective that has the potential to transform best practices to make our forests more effective in mitigating the impacts of climate change across SFI's 350 million acre/140 million hectare footprint. The climate smart forestry objective requires SFI-certified organizations to identify and address climate change risks, develop adaptation objectives and strategies to address those risks, and identify and address mitigation opportunities in forest operations.

Fire Resiliency

Sustainable forest management has the potential to reduce the risk of wildfire. The SFI Forest Management Standard now includes a new Fire Resilience and Awareness objective to elevate efforts to address undesirable wildfire, reduce long-term wildfire risks, and educate the public about wildfire management.

SFI Forest Management Standard Requirements

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:
 - a. 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;
 - b. access to growth and yield modeling capabilities;
 - c. documented harvest trends within long-term sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan, and
 - d. 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:
 - a. Objective 2 – Forest Health and Productivity; Objective 10 – Fire Resilience and Awareness; and/or other silvicultural or operational practices to enhance the climate benefits associated with their 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:
 - a. prompt reforestation or planned natural reforestation as per Indicator 2.1.1;
 - b. adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas, and
 - c. evaluation for afforestation of areas that are not ecologically important, and
 - d. 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 quality, species habitat, public safety, and human health.

SFI's Standard Development Process

As part of SFI's commitment to continual improvement, we revise the SFI standards every 5 years. This last revision process included two public comment periods, a dozen webinars, and nearly 2,300 individuals and organizations commenting on the 2022 Standards. This ensures everyone has a voice in shaping the SFI Standards.

Independent Third-Party Certification

Organizations certified to the SFI Standards are also required to undergo annual audits by independent and accredited certification bodies to deliver ongoing conformance. Third-party independent certification is critical to verify that requirements set out in the SFI standards and supporting documents are met.