

SFI Forest Management Standard

Water Quality, Quantity and Soil Health

July 1, 2022

Why It Matters

Forests play a central role in purifying the water we all rely on. Canada's boreal forest is the largest source of fresh water in the world. In the United States, over half of the surface water supply originates on forestland.

How The SFI Forest Management Standard Addresses Water Quality, Quantity and Soil Health

SFI mandates the use of best management practices (BMPs) to protect water quality in rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands and other water bodies and riparian areas during all phases of forest management. SFI-certified organizations must also implement water, wetland and riparian protection which includes protection of water quantity during management activities. Finally, SFI's forest management standard requires the use of practices that protect and maintain soil health in addition to soil productivity.

SFI Forest Management Standard Requirements

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 2 - Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure long-term forest productivity, forest health and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, deploying integrated pest management strategies, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.

Performance Measure 2.3. Certified Organizations shall implement practices that protect and maintain forest and soil productivity and soil health.

Indicators:

1. Process to identify soils vulnerable to compaction, and use of appropriate methods, including the use of soil maps where available, to avoid excessive soil disturbance.
2. Use of erosion control measures to minimize the loss of soil and impacts to site productivity.
3. Post-harvest conditions conducive to maintaining site productivity (such as: retained down woody debris and minimized skid trails).
4. Retention of vigorous trees during partial harvesting, consistent with scientific silvicultural standards for the area.
5. Practices that address harvesting and site preparation to protect soil productivity and soil health.
6. Road construction, skidding layout, and harvest plans designed to minimize impacts to soil productivity and soil 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.