



SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE PLAYBOOK: BIODIVERSITY IN FIBER SOURCING

Including FORESTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL CONSERVATION VALUE (FECVs)
Updated July 7, 2022

INTRODUCTION TO SIC PLAYBOOKS

The requirements of the [2022 SFI Standards](#) for Forest Management and Fiber Sourcing introduce new opportunities for engagement and collaboration via the SFI Implementation Committees (SICs). These opportunities focus on new or enhanced elements of the SFI 2022 Standards including Climate Smart Forestry, Fire Resilience and Awareness, and Conservation of Biodiversity (Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value - FECVs). In a recent survey conducted by SFI, an overwhelming majority of SFI-certified organizations indicated interest in collaboration via the SICs on these requirements.

In response, SFI is developing a set of *SIC Playbooks* that provide resources and actionable tips for SICs. The SIC Playbooks draw from and build on the resources and information provided in the [SFI Standard Guidance](#) but go further in outlining specific steps and resources that could be mobilized by SICs. In addition to this Playbook on Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing (2022 SFI Fiber Sourcing, Objective 1), Playbooks are also available for Climate Smart Forestry (2022 Forest Management, Objective 9) and in development for Fire Resilience and Awareness (2022 Forest Management Objective 10). Others may also be developed in response to needs and requests of SICs.

An Iterative Tool: Please Send Us Your Feedback + Suggestions

In response to growing interest, this SIC Playbook is released as a resource that SICs can begin using immediately. However, it is a tool that will be refined over time as it gets utilized. SICs and SFI-certified organizations are encouraged to let the SFI team know what is working and what could be improved. We are also seeking suggestions for the best regional and state/provincial resources, as well as ideas and best practices that your SIC has identified in implementing this SIC Playbook in your region, state or province. Please provide feedback and suggestions to Nadine Block, SFI Senior VP, Community and Government Relations, at nadine.block@forests.org.

SICs offer a venue in which SFI-certified organizations can collaboratively undertake high leverage activities to meet SFI certification requirements in a cost efficient, expeditious and mutually beneficial way.

Activities conducive to such collaboration constitute focal areas within the SIC Playbooks and tend to focus on shared resources, tools and services that can be modified and/or deployed in the context of an SFI-certified organization's specific operations. Activities that lend themselves to such collaboration may include but are not limited to:

- Gathering and analyzing best scientific information: Includes biological and other datasets; legislation, policy, and planning documents; academic research; etc.
- Engagement in or support of research: Research can have benefit for the collaborating SFI-certified organizations in a "pre-competitive" fashion.
- Identifying best practices: SICs can draw on the experiences and knowledge of SFI-certified organizations to identify and mutually share best practices that can be implemented in the context of SIF certified operations.
- Development and presentation of educational and informational materials: Audiences may include wood producers, loggers, foresters and others.

ASSESSING THE TRADEOFFS: WHERE SHOULD AN SIC FOCUS?

Many SICs support a range of important ongoing functions. With the introduction of the SFI 2022 Standards and new opportunities for collaboration on Climate Smart Forestry, Biodiversity/FECVs, and Fire Resilience/Awareness, SICs are encouraged to review their existing activities, along with new opportunities for collaboration, to assess tradeoffs and identify priorities for the SIC over a given timeframe.

Often, relatively modest investments by individual SFI-certified organizations to SIC-coordinated activities can yield outsized, high yield returns. This may be especially true for biodiversity related activities. SICs are encouraged to consider in their decision-making where, through their collaborative efforts, greatest impact can be achieved.

BIODIVERSITY IN FIBER SOURCING: SIC PLAYBOOK

SFI-certified organizations have been supporting the conservation of biodiversity since their initial certification to the Fiber Sourcing standard. While some of the FECV-related requirements in the SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard have not changed, the 2022 SFI Fiber Sourcing standard introduces new requirements and approaches to promote and conserve Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (FECVs). This playbook focuses on the new or changed requirements and seeks to provide actionable advice to help SICs in implementing the new elements, and particularly on high leverage activities that are required for all Fiber Sourcing certificate holders, but which can be achieved or supported efficiently through collaboration at the SIC level.



Ultimately, SFI-certified organizations are responsible for demonstrating conformance. However, SICs are positioned to support coordinated, strategic, and streamlined implementation of these requirements, which will lead to greater impact. This SIC Playbook is designed to give SICs a

set of resources and functional steps to operationalize the new FECV related requirements in the 2022 SFI Fiber Sourcing Standards in their states and provinces.

WHO CAN USE THE SIC PLAYBOOK?

The playbook was developed with an aim of identifying the steps that could be implemented through coordinated engagement within the SIC. However, these guidelines may also provide insights to SFI-certified organizations. Because G1 and G2 data tend to be available at the state and provincial level, coordination at that level may be most efficient. Multilateral cooperation may also be possible amongst SFI-certified organizations operating in similar geographies, which could be subsets of members within an SIC as well. Similarly, sharing of best practices amongst SICs in a region may also add value.

IS USING THE SIC PLAYBOOK REQUIRED?

No. The SIC Playbook draws from and builds on the resources and information provided for Fiber Sourcing, Objective 1 in the [SFI Standard Guidance](#) to provide a system for practical and collaborative implementation. As such it is important to note:

- Use of the SIC Playbook is NOT required by SFI or by certification bodies and their auditors
- The SIC Playbook is NOT considered normative

HOW DOES THE BIODIVERSITY IN FIBER SOURCING SIC PLAYBOOK WORK?

The SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard has long included requirements to promote and conserve FECVs. However, the SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard incorporates new requirements or refines the approach to FECVs. The playbook is focused on the new or refined requirements.

The biodiversity related requirements in Fiber Sourcing tend to be mutually supportive. Often, steps taken to achieve one requirement complement or inform another. While responsibility for demonstrating conformance lies with individual SFI-certified organizations, SICs can play an instrumental, supportive role in various areas to support cost-efficient and coordinated action on some of the requirements. Other requirements must be implemented by the individual SFI-certified organization, specific to their supply basin and procurement practices. For instance, gathering and analysis of data related to the location of known imperiled (G2) and critically imperiled (G1) species and ecological communities, which define FECVs, and coarse level analysis, lend well to collaboration. Likewise, SICs have long provided focused logger (wood producer) training and landowner outreach materials. In some cases, these SIC coordinated tools and services can be tweaked and enhanced to form core elements of the response on the new or changed requirements, which can be mobilized by SFI-certified organizations. In other areas, certified organizations will act in the context of their operations.

1. GETTING ORGANIZED	
To promote efficiency, review the SIC Playbook steps in advance, get organized and develop a plan for how to tackle it.	
	Big picture: Review the SIC's existing activities, as well as emerging opportunities associated with the 2022 SFI requirements related to Climate Smart Forestry, Fire Resilience, and Conservation of Biodiversity/FECVs. Identify top priorities and an overall timeline to address them. Calendar + teams: Review your SIC's calendar for critical dates and your existing schedule of meetings. This will help the SIC and subcommittees create a timeline for each step. Some of the steps may be best suited to a smaller group that brings back information for consideration and decisions at the larger group level. Determine which activities may need a subcommittee and which are full SIC activities. Tips and facilitating questions: - Hold an initial SIC call/meeting to review the Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing SIC Playbook as a group to plan out the timing and dependencies of each step. - Ask: Will additional meetings or calls be needed? When should we hold them? - Should the SIC need to recruit a consultant or technical expert to help the SIC? - Are there subsets of SIC members with similar geographies that should form subgroups? Support: Utilize national SFI staff for help as you develop your plan.
2. REVIEW THE 2022 STANDARDS	
Orient to the biodiversity and FECV related requirements in the SFI 2022 Fiber Sourcing Standard (see Appendix A).	
	Review: Requirements under Fiber Sourcing Objective 1, Biodiversity in Fiber Sourcing and guidance. Note the requirements related to FECVs that are new (note that some references to FECVs are covered in objectives other than objective 1): - 1.2.1 Note those that have changed: - 1.2.2 – new emphasis on FECV - 1.2.3 – new emphasis/approach on FECV assessment - 5.1.1, c – new emphasis on FECV specifically Note those that have not changed or changed significantly:

	- 1.1.1 - 6.2.1, c – no change - 7.1.2, d – no change Tip: The guidance is useful for understanding the scale of efforts under various requirements.
3. GATHER DATA ON CRITICALLY IMPERILED (G1) AND IMPERILED (G2) SPECIES. Collect information on the species associated with FECVs. The definition of Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value is: <i>Critically imperiled (G1) and imperiled (G2) species and ecological communities.</i> Because all SFI-certified organizations must start with data about geographies of G1 and G2 species, this is a place of leverage in coordinated action at the SIC level, enabling streamlining, efficiencies and potentially economies of scale.	
	Data Access: Data on the known and likely ranges or geographies of G1 and G2 species are available at various scales and from various sources, at varying costs and relative ease of access. - State Natural Heritage Programs (US) conduct ongoing biological surveys to collect data on species within their states. The administrative home, methods/levels of funding and ways of work for the programs varies by state. Often, these programs are under resourced and lack capacity. Because of these considerations, access to and the scale and format of G1 and G2 data via Natural Heritage programs is also highly varied. Similarly, the costs for obtaining this data can range from free to very expensive. In some cases, data via State Natural Heritage Programs may simply be unavailable. - Provincial Conservation Data Centres (Canada) compile and provide objective data about biological diversity, conduct biological inventories, and undertake fieldwork to further knowledge of the distribution and status of species and ecological communities of conservation concern. Like the situation in the US, described above, the Data Centres also vary in their approaches, accessibility and resource needs. - NatureServe coordinates with Natural Heritage Programs and compiles their data, providing customized data products relative to G1 and G2 species locations, including element occurrences (individual points of known siting) and compiled lists/layers for various scales at various prices for both the US and Canada. - o NatureServe Explorer Pro is a new and free resource that enables users to draw polygons on the map and generate exportable reports of G1 and G2 species within a given geography. Links to information about species and their habitat requirements are also available. In addition, this application enables for the import of users' layers as well. The application is free but requires registration. - National Council for Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI) has developed a partnership with NatureServe to make available to its members tailored access to the NatureServe Explorer Pro tool, which provides element occurrence polygons for each species with G1, G2, S1, S2, ESA threatened endangered or of concern status.

	Currently the tool is available at the state level for 20 states in South, Lake States, Northeast and Pacific Northwest. It is anticipated that NCASI members can renew or join access (for additional payment, beyond membership dues) in Q3 2022. - <u>State and Provincial Agencies</u>: In some states and provinces, forest, wildlife and environmental agencies also maintain lists of G1 and G2 species and make them available for free or a charge. Some states have a subscription service to access the data for a fee, for example. - <u>Universities and research institutions</u> may also have and make available data on G1 and G2 species, along with research results and other materials for industry and other partners. - <u>SIC Member Companies</u> may have access to G1 and G2 species data through partnerships or other means and are not restricted by data use agreements, enabling them to share with the wider SIC for conservation action purposes.
	Compare Options: Because there are several potential sources of data on G1 and G2 species, SICs are encouraged to explore all available options, evaluating the following factors to help support data acquisition: - Cost: In many cases, G1 and G2 data access will have a cost (one-time or annual). - Scale of data availability + applicability: Consider the scale of data application and use for landscape scale analysis, as well as potentially at a finer scale (see discussion below and its guidance). - Ease of access: Different sources of data may make the data more accessible than others. - Time considerations: How quickly a source can respond may affect the timeline set out by the SIC in Step 1. - Data age: How old is this data? Can it be refreshed? - Use and shareability: License agreements may limit the ability to share amongst companies or use for certain purposes.
	Data scale: In gathering data, it is important to note the scale of data availability and needs required by the various standard indicators. The guidance clarifies that the analyses (in Step 4 below) of FECVs required under PM 1.2 are not necessarily stand level but should be meaningful relative to sourcing activities. - Indicator 1.2.1 requires analysis at the wood and fiber supply area level. - Indicator 1.2.3 requires the most specific application of the analyses (Step 4 below) in stumpage purchasing. Tip: Review the SFI Guidance: Objective 1 SFI Standard Guidance in detail.

4. CONDUCT AN ANALYSIS + ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

SICs can conduct various analyses of gathered G1 and G2 data at various levels. (1.2.1)

Using the gathered species data, conduct a high level “triage” approach:

- a. Filter out species associated with cave/cliff/rock, prairie, aquatic and other habitats unaffected or minimally affected by wood and fiber sourcing activities (whales, mussels, etc.)
- b. Identify species that could potentially encountered and impacted (forest habitats, edges)
- c. Identify species most likely to impacted by sourcing activities (forest habitats, edges)

Understand habitat requirements:

For species in categories b and c above, research their habitat specifications to understand techniques to avoid or minimize impacts or promote habitat needs

Tip:

- This research can inform the development of analysis summary and training materials for wood producers and landowners in Playbook Steps below.
- Document any additional sources of information.

Create subgroupings:

For species in categories b and c above, develop groupings of species by:

- Habitat types such as upland or lowland and hardwood or conifer forests
- Geography or region within the state
 - o Consider ecoregions or any aggregations of SFI certified organizations, where multiple wood and fiber supply areas overlap, or regions of the state largely excluded from sourcing.
 - o Often, many of the G1 and G2 species are concentrated in or occupy the same habitats. Take note of these habitats or geographies as focal areas for conservation.
- Species associated with a theme of relevance in the region (5.1.1, c)

Tip:

- This research can inform the development of summary and training materials for wood producers and landowners in Playbook Steps below.

Enlist support: Because the datasets and considerations required to analyze and summarize FECV are complex, SICs are encouraged to seek support including from internally with member companies or externally with paid consultants and experts.

5. SUMMARIZE ASSESSMENT RESULTS SICs can summarize results of analysis for distribution by SFI-certified organizations and via coordinated training and outreach efforts. (1.2.1)	
	Develop summaries of the analysis conducted in Step 4 above: - Describe the purpose of the analysis and the role of wood producers in achieving the intent of the requirements. - Provide lists of species, using the subregions and groupings identified in Step 4 above. - Outline common themes of species/ecological communities and corresponding management considerations. - Note the habitats or geographies associated with species aggregations identified in Step 4 as focal areas to enhance conservation impact. - Highlight the opportunities, where they exist, for SFI-certified organizations to incorporate assessment results into promotion of conservation of FECVs in purchase stumpage programs (1.2.3). Tip: - Ensure the summaries are in a format that will be readily understood and accessible to wood suppliers and field foresters. Engage help: As with the analysis in Step 5 above, SICs may consider support options within the or via contracting with a consultant to summarize the analysis.
6. DEVELOP OR REVISE CURRENT BIODIVERSITY OR FECV RELATED PROGRAMMING Where SICs play a role in implementing “programs to address FECVs,” they can infuse the assessment results and summaries from step 5 above into their programs. (1.2.1)	
	Review and modify current FECV related program offerings including - Training program for qualified logging professionals on how to recognize and protect Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (1.2.2, b). - Development of in-the-forest verification materials for use by SFI-certified organizations (1.2.2, c). - Recommendations for conservation including incorporation of assessment results into promotion of conservation of FECVs in purchase stumpage programs (1.2.3). - Financial support of research, collaboratives or knowledge transfer related to FECVs, especially if identified FECVs are associated with a key issue in the region (5.1.1, c). Tips: - In cases of financial support for research, collaboratives or knowledge transfer, ensure that focus on FECVs specifically identified. - Use the habitats or geographies associated with species aggregations identified in Step 4 as focal areas to enhance conservation impact of the FECV programming components.

APPENDIX A – BIODIVERSITY IN FIBER SOURCING, SFI FIBER SOURCING STANDARD OBJECTIVE 1

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:
 - a. 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;
 - b. conducting local and regional level *landscape* assessments;
 - c. involvement with local or regional *conservation* efforts;
 - d. use of relevant information on *biological diversity* from credible sources (such as those noted above) in approved training and education *programs*; and
 - e. 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:
 - a. use of *qualified logging professionals*, *certified logging companies* (where available), and *qualified resource professionals*; or
 - b. training *program* for *qualified logging professionals* on how to recognize and *protect Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*; or
 - c. through in-the-forest verification by *certified logging companies*; or
 - d. forest landowner outreach; or
 - e. *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*.