



Management System Certification Audit Summary Report

Organization:	National Forests of Florida		
Address:	325 John Knox Road Tallahassee, Florida 32303		
Standard(s):	Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard (SFIS) – 2005-2009 Standard		
Representative:	Carl Petrick, Ecosystem Staff Officer		
Site(s) audited:	Apalachicola, Osceola and Ocala National Forests - 1,179,041 acres	Date(s) of audit(s):	February 12-16, 2007
EAC Code:	n/a	NACE Code:	n/a
Lead auditor:	Daniel Simonds, lead auditor	Additional team member(s):	Joe McGlincy Michael Dooner Steven Grado Rick Larkin David Govatski Charles Levesque
This report is confidential and distribution is limited to the audit team, client representative and the SGS office.			

1. Audit objectives

The objectives of this audit were:

- to confirm that the management system conforms with all the requirements of the audit standard;
- to confirm that the organization has effectively implemented the planned management system;
- to confirm that the management system is capable of achieving the organization's policy objectives.

2. Scope of certification

Forest Management of forests & plantations in the state of Florida USA for the production of softwood/hardwood timber and other resource values:

Apalachicola National Forest

Osceola National Forest

Ocala National Forest

This is a multi-site audit and an Appendix listing all relevant sites and/or remote locations has been established (attached) and agreed with the client

Yes No

Job n°:	600320	Report date:	March 16, 2007	Visit Type:	MA	Visit n°:	1
CONFIDENTIAL	Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	1 of 9	

3. Current audit findings and conclusions

The audit team conducted a process-based audit focusing on significant aspects/risks/objectives required by the standard(s). The audit methods used were interviews, observation of activities and review of documentation and records.

The structure of the audit was in accordance with the audit plan and SFI conformance checklist included as annexes to this summary report.

The audit team concludes that the organization has has not established and maintained its management system in line with the requirements of the standard and demonstrated the ability of the system to systematically achieve agreed requirements for products or services within the scope and the organization's policy and objectives.

Number of nonconformities identified: 6 Major 3 Minor

Therefore the audit team recommends that, based on the results of this audit and the system's demonstrated state of development and maturity, management system certification be:

Granted / Continued / Withheld / Suspended until satisfactory corrective action is completed.

Job n°:	600320	Report date:	March 16, 2007	Visit Type:	MA	Visit n°:	1
CONFIDENTIAL	Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	2 of 9	



4. Previous Audit Results

Not applicable

5. Audit Findings

The audit team conducted a process-based audit focusing on significant aspects/risks/objectives. The audit methods used were interviews, observation of activities and review of documentation and records.

The management system documentation demonstrated conformity with the requirements of the audit standard and provided sufficient structure to support implementation and maintenance of the management system. Yes No

The organization has demonstrated effective implementation and maintenance / improvement of its management system. Yes No

The organization has demonstrated the establishment and tracking of appropriate key performance objectives and targets and monitored progress towards their achievement. Yes No

The internal audit program has been fully implemented and demonstrates effectiveness as a tool for maintaining and improving the management system. Yes No

The management review process demonstrated capability to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the management system. Yes No

Throughout the audit process, the management system demonstrated overall conformance with the requirements of the audit standard. Yes No

Certification claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance N/A Yes No

6. Significant Audit Trails Followed

The specific processes, activities and functions reviewed are detailed in the Audit Planning Matrix and the Audit Plan. In performing the audit, various audit trails and linkages were developed, including the following primary audit trails, followed throughout:

The field audit was conducted by a team of 6 auditors and technical experts over the course of 5 days from February 12-16. Following an opening meeting at the NFF Supervisor's office in Tallahassee, 2-3 audit teams spent approximately 4 ½ days in the field visiting sites, interviewing staff and stakeholders and reviewing records. 2 days were spent on the Appalachian NF, one day on the Osceola NF, and 1 ½ days on the Ocala NF. A closing meeting was held on February 16 at the Seminole Ranger district office in Umatilla, FL.

During the field audit, 61 scheduled sites were visited along with approximately 8 additional unscheduled stops. Field visits included a full variety of NFF management activities including active, scheduled and completed timber harvests (all timber operations, active during the audit, were visited); prescribed burning; Invasive plant control; planting; site preparation; recreational and interpretive sites; natural and artificial regeneration; OHV use areas (authorized and closed); and wildlife management areas. The entire geographic scope of the three national forests was covered.

See attached field audit summary.

7. Nonconformities

Job n°:		Report date:		Visit Type:		Visit n°:	
CONFIDENTIAL	Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	3 of 9	

NonConformity N° 1 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / National Forests of Florida Standard 10.1.1; 10.1.2
 Function: Ref.:
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Issue / Rev. Status:
 Management Plan for NFF

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires a written statement of commitment to the SFI standard, communication of this commitment within the organization, assignment of roles and responsibilities for achieving SFI objectives.

The NFF organization has made no specific policy decision or management directive requiring conformance to the SFI standard. No written statement of commitment is prepared. Interviews with a significant sample of NFF staff indicate a low general awareness of the content of the SFI standard. Roles and responsibility for achieving SFI objectives have not been assigned.

NonConformity N° 2 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / National Forests of Florida Standard 10.2.1
 Function: Ref.:
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Issue / Rev. Status:
 Management Plan for NFF

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires participation in or support of SFI implementation Committees to establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for wood producers' training.

The NFF organization has made no specific policy decision or management directive requiring conformance to the SFI standard. No evidence is available to indicate participation in wood producer training mechanisms, as required.

NonConformity N° 3 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / National Forests of Florida Standard 11.1.2
 Function: Ref.:
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Issue / Rev. Status:
 Management Plan for NFF

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
 2003. Recovery plan for the red-cockaded woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*): second revision. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Atlanta GA 296 pp.

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires a system to achieve compliance with applicable federal, provincial, state or local laws and regulations.

Significant and consistent shortfalls in achieving key objectives of the management plan (e.g. thinning acres) are inhibiting the ability of the organization to meet its obligations to maintain open stands with basal area between 40-60 sq. ft. acre under the terms of the Red Cockaded Woodpecker recovery plan.

NonConformity N° 4 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / National Forests of Florida Standard 10.1.4
 Function: Ref.:
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Issue / Rev. Status:
 Management Plan for NFF

Job n°:		Report date:		Visit Type:		Visit n°:	
CONFIDENTIAL	Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	4 of 9	

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires that the organization require contractor education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities. While interviews with available contractor personnel indicated appropriate competency, the NFF organization lacks a mechanism for evaluating or ensuring contractor training and education.

NonConformity N° 5 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / Function: National Forests of Florida Standard 1.1.1
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for NFF Issue / Rev. n/a
 Status: 2005 Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report – NFF

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires written plans which ensure long-term harvest levels are sustainable and consistent; and that these plans are effectively implemented. Evidence indicates that the organization has significant and persistent administrative and management constraints that inhibit its ability to achieve key objectives in its management plan. In particular, the demonstrated inability to meet timber harvest objectives – particularly on the ANF and OscNF – is delaying progress toward management plan and recovery plan goals for threatened and endangered species recovery.

NonConformity N° 6 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / Function: National Forests of Florida Standard 2.4.2
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for NFF Issue / Rev. Status:
 2005 Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report – NFF

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires management to promote healthy and productive forest conditions to minimize susceptibility to damaging agents. The NFF Land and Resource Management Plan has a schedule of cultural treatments whose goals include large-scale thinning and use of prescribed fire to improve and maintain forest vigor and health. Consistent sustained shortfalls in reaching plan objectives for harvest and other cultural treatments (e.g. stand regeneration) creates a significant risk to the organizations ability to promote healthy and productive forest conditions as required.

NonConformity N° 7 of 9 Major Minor
 Department / Function: Ocala National Forest Standard 3.1.1: 3.2.1
 Document Ref.: Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for NFF Issue / Rev. Status:
 Florida's Silviculture Best Management Practices (FL DoF 2003)

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires a program to implement state BMPs during all phases of management activities. Standards for harvesting Sand Pine stands on the Ocala NF – in particular, clear cutting to the water's edge on some sites - may not be consistent with FL BMP standards.

Job n°:	Report date:	Visit Type:	Visit n°:
CONFIDENTIAL	Document: GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°: 7	Page n°: 5 of 9



Evidence provided during the review of draft reports supports modifying this finding. In particular, page 16 of the FL Silviculture BMPs includes language allowing specific exceptions to BMP for public land managers. Standards for Scrub Habitat, as detailed in the LRMP, are an appropriate implementation of this language.

This Non Conformity is closed.

NonConformity	N° 8 of 9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor
Department / Function:	National Forests of Florida	Standard Ref.:	12.1.1; 12.2.1; 12.5.1; 12.6
Document Ref.:	Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for NFF	Issue / Rev. Status:	

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires support for SFI Implementation Committee activities, including programs addressing outreach, education and technical assistance; efforts to address concerns about nonconforming practices; and requirements for reporting. The NFF organization has not yet made any provision for conforming to these standard requirements.

NonConformity	N° 9 of 9	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major	<input type="checkbox"/> Minor
Department / Function:	National Forests of Florida	Standard Ref.:	13.1.2; 13.1.3
Document Ref.:	Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for NFF	Issue / Rev. Status:	

Details of Nonconformity: The standard requires a system for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information regarding progress in achieving SFI objectives and performance measures; as well as an annual review designed to improve SFI conformance. The NFF organization has not yet made any provision for conforming to these standard requirements.

8. General Observations & Opportunities for Improvement

Land Management

Objective 1 – To broaden the implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term harvest levels based on the use of the best scientific information available.

The National Forests of Florida (NFF) have an extensively detailed and comprehensive set of management documentation guiding resource analysis, planning, and decision-making. Key documents include *the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for National Forests in Florida (1999)* (RLRMP) and the *Record of Decision for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for National Forests in Florida (1999)*. These and other related documents and records are available for review at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/florida/projects/>. Appropriately scales resources for GIS, growth and yield modelling, soil inventory, and land classification were all demonstrated to the audit team.

While plans for sustainable harvest levels are well developed and suitably monitored, these plans are not fully or effectively implemented. Sixth year monitoring results of the implementation of the 10-15 year plan indicate that treated acres consistently fall far below plan targets. Implications of these shortfalls include: failure to meet major habitat management goals for endangered species and potential broad-scale forest health issues. See Non-Conformity No. 5 and 6.

Objective 2 – To ensure long-term forest productivity and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, soil conservation, afforestation, and other measures.

Systems are in place and fully implemented to plan and manage reforestation following harvests on the NFF. Numerous examples were reviewed showing consistent and effective application of

Job n°:	Report date:	Visit Type:	Visit n°:
CONFIDENTIAL	Document: GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°: 7	Page n°: 6 of 9

criteria and implementation of programs. Chemical use is quite minor in scale and narrowly focused on key management objectives. Use of highly selective and targeted application techniques is consistent. Programs to monitor and protect soil and site productivity were readily demonstrated, including close supervision of contractors and a largely complete road system. Sustained shortfalls in meeting harvest objectives raise concerns about maintenance of health and productivity in some major forest types. See Non-Conformity No. 6.

Observation (2.3.5): An example was noted during field observations, that administrative constraints related to contract logging accountability had encouraged substitution of 2nd row thinning techniques in place of 5th row/selection techniques. Practitioners on site agreed that this practice results in unnecessary retention of poorly formed and potential diseased trees being left in the stand; and noticeably poorer results.

Objective 3 – To protect water quality in streams, lakes, and other water bodies.

The applicable state best management practices; *Florida’s Silviculture Best Management Practices (FL DoF 2003)* are specifically referenced as operating criteria in the RLRMP. Overall implementation of these guidelines is effective, although an isolated potential gap was identified relative to Sand Pine regeneration criteria on the Ocala NF (see Non-Conformity No. 7). NFF programs to ensure riparian protection were similarly well-developed. Good and consistently utilized information is available to practitioners and evidence was readily available of measure to minimize disturbance to streams, water bodies and wetlands.

Observation (3.2.3): Observations in portions of the Ocala NF included some shoreland areas which had significant negative impacts from unauthorized Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. Active measures to control and manage this challenging problem were evident.

Objective 4 – 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 *habitat* diversity and the *conservation* of forest plants and animals, including *aquatic fauna*.

The promotion and conservation of biodiversity is clearly a central objective of the NFF management systems. The goals and objectives of the RLRMP contain a notable and unusual emphasis key habitat management values; most notably the management and recovery of the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker and Scrub Jay and their associated natural communities. Also of note are the aggressive programs for prescribed burning and the control of invasive exotic plants. The audit team consistently found a remarkably high level of conformance to all aspects of this SFI objective.

Objective 5 – To manage the visual impact of harvesting and other forest operations.

Criteria for addressing visual impacts of forest management are addressed adequately in the RLRMP. Field observations supported evidence that these criteria are effectively implemented to ensure that visual and scenic values are appropriately incorporated into NFF activities. Green-up and adjacently issues associated with clearcut harvests appeared minor.

Objective 6 – To manage Program Participant lands that are ecologically, geologically, historically, or culturally important in a manner that recognizes their special qualities.

The NFF have extensive and unusually comprehensive systems for identifying and managing the unique features of special sites on the forests. Impressive staff expertise, among both specialists and field practitioners, ensure close attention to the requirements of this SFI Objective. Mapping and data management systems were found to be highly detailed.

Objective 7 – To promote the efficient use of forest resources.

The NFF harvest contracting system is designed appropriately to ensure efficient use of forest resources. Field observations notes consistently high standards of recovery on all recent and active harvest sites.

Procurement

Objective 8 – To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through procurement programs.

This objective is not applicable.

Forestry Research, Science, and Technology

Objective 9 – To improve forestry research, science, and technology, upon which sound forest management decisions are based.

While research is not included in the primary missions of the NFF, conformance to this SFI Objective, was nonetheless clearly demonstrated. A review of publications of the USDA/FS

Job n°:		Report date:		Visit Type:		Visit n°:	
CONFIDENTIAL		Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	7 of 9



Southern Forest Experiment Station indicates a long history of research relating to a variety of topics relating to forestry in Florida.

Training and Education

Objective 10 – To improve the practice of sustainable forest management by resource professionals, logging professionals, and contractors through appropriate training and education programs.

The NFF organization has made no specific policy decision or management directive requiring conformance to the SFI standard. No written statement of commitment is prepared. Interviews with a significant sample of NFF staff indicate a low general awareness of the content of the SFI standard. Roles and responsibility for achieving SFI objectives have not been assigned, and mechanisms for training of wood producers are not developed. See Non-Conformity No. 01, 02 and 04.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Objective 11 - Commitment to comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, or local laws and regulations.

A detailed and highly structured system for legal compliance was found. This system is designed to track and ensure conformance to the wide array of legal and regulatory requirements that apply to the activities of the NFF. This included both generally applicable environmental and social law; as well as the complex body of regulation governing operations of the USDA-FS. Evidence of legal compliance is generally strong.

The audit team is concerned that shortfalls in implementing timber harvest objectives of the RLRMP may inhibit the NFF from achieving the requirements of the Endangered Species Act Recovery Plan for Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. See Non-Conformity No 3.

Public and Landowner Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry

Objective 12 – To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry by encouraging the public and forestry community to participate in the commitment to sustainable forestry and publicly report progress.

The central mission of the USDA-FS for public education and outreach is clearly integrated into the operations of the NFF. Conformance to the outreach and promotional requirements of the Performance Measures in this SFI Objective were clearly demonstrated. Programs for communicating and collaborating with indigenous peoples fully conform to the intent of the standard. Standard requirements for participation and support of the SFI Program have not yet been specifically addressed by the NFF. See Non-Conformity No. 8.

Management Review and Continual Improvement

Objective 13 – To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry and monitor, measure, and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

The NFF organization maintains a comprehensive and detailed system for monitoring performance relative to plans, and to report and evaluate this performance on a regular basis. All monitoring reports are available to the public. This system does not specifically address conformance to the SFI Objectives and Performance Measures. See Non-Conformity No. 9.

9. Attachments

- SFI Conformance Checklist
- Stage 2 Assessment Itinerary (AD-20-01)

Job n°:		Report date:		Visit Type:		Visit n°:	
CONFIDENTIAL		Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	8 of 9



Job n°:		Report date:		Visit Type:		Visit n°:	
CONFIDENTIAL		Document:	GS0304 – Stage 2 Audit Report	Issue n°:	7	Page n°:	9 of 9