



Public SFI Recertification Audit Report

The SFI Program of the Indiana Division of Forestry has achieved continuing conformance with the SFI Standard®, 2010-2014 Edition, according to the NSF-ISR SFIS Certification Audit Process. NSF-ISR initially certified Indiana Division of Forestry to the SFIS on November 3, 2006. This report describes the first Recertification Audit designed to focus on changes in the standard, changes in operations, the management review system, and efforts at continuous improvement. In addition, a subset of SFI requirements were selected for detailed review. The program is being audited under the standard audit approach. The next Surveillance Audit is scheduled for October 2012.

The Indiana Division of Forestry is responsible for management of the state forest system.

“The Indiana state forest system consists of about 156,000 acres in 10 administrative units, located in 23 different counties within the state. The administrative units range in size from 300 acres to 50,000 acres and are primarily located in the southern one half of Indiana. Indiana’s Division of Forestry Properties contain about 3% of the total forestland in Indiana; most of the remainder is in private ownership. Each Indiana Division of Forestry Property is managed as a multiple-use facility, providing numerous benefits including timber production, forest management demonstration areas, outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat and watershed protection through an integrated management program. The Indiana State Forest system was established in 1903 and has been actively managed to provide the above benefits continuously since that time.”

Source: The Indiana Division of Forestry and the Indiana Bat 2005 Status (White Paper draft 11-21-05)

SFIS Audit Process

The audit was performed by NSF-ISR on October 24-28, 2011 by an audit team headed by Norman Boatwright, SFI Lead Auditor, and including Kyle Meister, FSC Lead Auditor and JoAnn Hanoswki Team Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting SFIS Certification Audits contained in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Audit Procedures and Qualifications (SFI APQ) 2010-2014 Edition. The objective of the audit was to assess continuing conformance of the firm’s SFI Program to the requirements of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Standard, 2010-2014 SFI Edition. The scope of the SFIS Audit included the entire state forest system, but this review included field sites at four state forests: Martin, Ferdinand-Pike, Jackson-Washington and Selmier. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the past three years, in order to include planned, ongoing, and completed operations. Practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example).

Several of the SFI Performance Measures were outside of the scope of the Indiana Division of Forestry’s SFI program and were excluded from the scope of the SFI Certification Audit as follows:

- Indicator 2.1.5: Planting is not done to change forest composition but to maintain it.
- Objectives 8-13: Indiana Division of Forestry is not involved in forest procurement.
- Indicator 16.2.2: Indiana does not have a logger certification program.

No indicators were modified; the default indicators in the SFI Standard were utilized.

The review was governed by a detailed audit protocol designed to enable the audit team to determine conformance with the applicable SFI requirements. The process included the assembly and review of audit evidence consisting of documents, interviews, and on-site inspections of ongoing or completed forest practices. Documents describing these activities were provided to the auditor in advance, and a sample of the available audit evidence was designated by the auditor for review.

The possible findings of the audit include Full Conformance, Major Non-conformance, Minor Non-conformance, Opportunities for Improvement, and Practices that Exceeded the Basic Requirements of the SFIS.

Overview of Audit Findings

Indiana Division of Forestry's SFI Program was found to be in full conformance with the SFIS Standard. A minor non-conformance was identified:

1. SFIS Indicator 2.1.3 requires "Clear criteria to judge adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas and achieve acceptable species composition and stocking rates for both planting and natural regeneration". This is only applicable to the regeneration openings and agricultural fields which constitute less than 1% of the land base. Interviews with staff indicated they return to the regeneration openings 5-10 years after a harvest to visually observe stocking. Observed supplemental hardwood planting on Ferdinand SF in spring 2011 at Comp #211. DOF has not developed clear criteria to judge adequate regeneration for both planting and natural regeneration.

Three opportunities for improvement were also identified:

- 4.1.1: There is an opportunity to improve the program to promote the conservation of native biological diversity, including species, wildlife habitats and ecological community types. DOF does not have a process to identify areas that will be managed to promote the conservation of species/ecological community types of late seral stages.
- 4.1.7: There is an opportunity to improve the participation in programs and demonstration of activities as appropriate to limit the introduction, impact and spread of invasive exotic plants and animals that directly threaten or are likely to threaten native plant and animal communities. Site visits and interviews did not identify activities designed to prevent the spread of other invasives.
- 15.3.2: There is an opportunity to improve the program involving knowledge about climate change impacts on wildlife, wildlife habitats and conservation of biological diversity through international, national, regional or local programs. INDOF has gathered information about climate change impacts but has not communicated this information to staff.

Exceptional Practices:

NSF-ISR identified the following areas where forestry practices and operations on Indiana Division of Forestry's lands were found to exceed the basic requirements of the SFI Standard:

- Indicator 4.1.4: Stand level wildlife habitat retention is exemplary.

- Performance Measure 5.4: The support and promotion of recreational opportunities for the public is superb.
- Indicator 15.1.1: Financial and in-kind support to Purdue for its work on the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (HEW) and Indiana bat HCP exceed this requirement.
- Indicator 17.2.1: The program for providing educational opportunities promoting sustainable forestry is exemplary.

General Description of Evidence of Conformity

NSF's audit team used a variety of evidence to determine conformance. A general description of this evidence is provided below, organized by SFI Objective.

Objective 1. Forest Management Planning - To broaden the implementation of sustainable forestry by ensuring long-term forest productivity and yield based on the use of the best scientific information available.

Summary of Evidence – The Indiana Statewide Forest Strategy 2010 and the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan for INDNR and the associated inventory data and growth models were the key evidence of conformance.

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

Summary of Evidence –Field observations and associated records were used to confirm practices. INDNR has programs for reforestation, for protection against gypsy moth, emerald ash borer and wildfire, and for careful management of activities which could potentially impact soil and long-term productivity.

Objective 3. Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources - To protect water quality in streams, lakes and other water bodies.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of a range of sites were the key evidence. Auditors visited the portions of many field sites that were close to water resources.

Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity including Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value 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 species.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations, written plans and policies such as the 2010 Indiana Statewide Forest Assessment and 2010 Indiana Statewide Forest Strategy, use of college-trained field biologists, availability of specialists, and regular staff involvement in conferences and workshops that cover scientific advances were the evidence used to assess the requirements involved biodiversity conservation.

Objective 5. Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits - To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of completed operations and policies/procedures for visual quality were assessed during the evaluation. Further maps of recreation sites, combined with field visits, helped confirm a strong recreation program.

Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites - To manage lands that are ecologically, geologically, or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of completed operations, records of special sites, training records, and written protection plans were all assessed during the evaluation.

Objective 7. Efficient Use of Forest Resources - To promote the efficient use of forest resources.

Summary of Evidence – Field observations of completed operations, contract clauses, and discussions with supervising field foresters and with loggers provided the key evidence.

Objective 14. Legal and Regulatory Compliance - Compliance with applicable federal, provincial, state and local laws and regulations.

Summary of Evidence –Field reviews of ongoing and completed operations were the most critical evidence.

Objective 15. Forestry Research, Science, and Technology - To support forestry research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.

Summary of Evidence – INDNR supports a variety of forestry research initiatives, including the Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment conducted by Perdue University on the Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forests.

Objective 16. Training and Education -To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry practices through appropriate training and education programs.

Summary of Evidence – Training records of selected personnel, records associated with harvest sites audited, and stakeholder interviews were the key evidence for this objective.

Objective 17. Community Involvement in the Practice of Sustainable Forestry -

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.

Summary of Evidence – INDNR has an exemplary history of soliciting and incorporating public comment into its decision making and planning processes; including the Indiana Forest Stakeholder Summit.

Objective 18: Public Land Management Responsibilities -

To support and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Summary of Evidence – Interviews and review of correspondence were used to confirm the requirements.

Objective 19. Communications and Public Reporting - To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry by documenting progress and opportunities for improvement.

Summary of Evidence – Reports filed with SFI Inc. and the SFI Inc. website provided the key evidence.

Objective 20. Management Review and Continual Improvement - To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry, and to monitor, measure, and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

Summary of Evidence – Records of program reviews, agendas and notes from management review meetings, and interviews with personnel from all involved levels in the organization were assessed.

Relevance of Forestry Certification

Third-party certification provides assurance that forests are being managed under the principles of sustainable forestry, which are described in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard as:

1. Sustainable Forestry

To practice sustainable forestry to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation, and aesthetics.

2. Responsible Practices

To use and to promote among other forest landowners sustainable forestry practices that are both scientifically credible and economically, environmentally, and socially responsible.

3. Reforestation and Productive Capacity

To provide for regeneration after harvest and maintain the productive capacity of the forestland base.

4. Forest Health and Productivity

To protect forests from uncharacteristic and economically or environmentally undesirable wildfire, pests, diseases, and other damaging agents and thus maintain and improve long-term forest health and productivity.

5. Long-Term Forest and Soil Productivity

To protect and maintain long-term forest and soil productivity.

6. Protection of Water Resources

To protect water bodies and riparian zones.

7. Protection of Special Sites and Biological Diversity

To manage forests and lands of special significance (biologically, geologically, historically or culturally important) in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities and to promote a diversity of wildlife habitats, forest types, and ecological or natural community types.

8. Legal Compliance

To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.

9. Continual Improvement

To continually improve the practice of forest management and also to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

Source: Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) Standard, 2005–2009 Edition

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