



## Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

### 2022 SFI® Forest Management Public Summary Audit

#### Introduction

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has demonstrated conformance to SFI® 2022 Forest Management Standard in accordance with the NSF certification process.

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry is responsible for management of approximately 2.2 million acres of state forest lands. The Bureau of Forestry's mission is to ensure long-term health, viability and productivity of the commonwealth's forests and to conserve native wild plants. The bureau will accomplish this mission by:

- Managing state forests under sound ecosystem management, to retain their wild character and maintain biological diversity while providing pure water, opportunities for low-density recreation, habitats for forest plants and animals, sustained yields of quality timber, and environmentally sound utilization of mineral resources.
- Protecting forestlands, public and private, from damage and/or destruction by fires, insects, diseases, and other agents.
- Promoting forestry and the knowledge of forestry by advising and assisting other government agencies, communities, landowners, forest industry, and the general public in the wise stewardship and utilization of forest resources.
- Protecting and managing native wild flora resources by determining status, classifying, and conserving native wild plants.

The audit was performed by NSF on October 4-6, 2022, by an audit team headed by Tucker Watts, Lead Auditor. Audit team members fulfill the qualification criteria for conducting audits contained in SFI 2022 Procedures and Auditor Qualifications and Accreditation.

The objective of the audit was to assess conformance of the bureau's SFI Program to the requirements of the SFI Forest Management Standard.

The scope of the audit included forest management operations. Forest practices that were the focus of field inspections included those that have been under active management over the planning period of the past 3 years. In addition, practices conducted earlier were also reviewed as appropriate (regeneration and BMP issues, for example), SFI obligations to promote sustainable forestry practices, to seek legal compliance, and to incorporate continual improvement systems were also within the scope of the audit.

The SFI Standard was used without modifying any requirements.

#### Audit Process

The audit was governed by a detailed audit plan designed to enable the audit team to efficiently determine conformance with the applicable requirements. The plan provided for the assembly and review of audit evidence consisting of documents, interviews, and on-site inspections of ongoing or completed forest practices.

During the audit NSF reviewed a sample of the written documentation assembled to provide objective evidence of conformance. NSF also selected field sites for inspection based upon the risk of environmental impact, likelihood of occurrence, special features, and other criteria outlined in the NSF protocols. NSF selected and interviewed stakeholders such as contract loggers, landowners and other interested parties, and interviewed employees within the organization to confirm that the SFI Standard was understood and actively implemented.

The possible findings of the audit included conformance, major non-conformance, minor non-conformance, opportunities for improvement, and practices that exceeded the requirements of the standard.

#### Overview of Audit Findings

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources was found to be in conformance with the standard. NSF determined that there were no non-conformances or opportunities for improvement.

The next audit is tentatively scheduled for October 2023.



## General Description of Conformity to SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard Objectives

A summary of the evidence of the organization's conformance to the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard Objectives follows:

### Objective 1. Forest Management Planning

To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion or afforestation of ecologically important areas.

Why it Matters: Ensures that we grow more trees than we harvest, guaranteeing that forests will last for future generations.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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### Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity

To ensure long-term forest productivity 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.

Why it Matters: Ensures that forests remain healthy and resilient which means better forest productivity including providing a reliable and renewable source of sustainably managed fiber for consumer products.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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### 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.

Why it Matters: Protects water quality and quantity helps provide safe and abundant drinking water for all.

Notes: Observations of field sites confirm design, construction and maintenance of all public, temporary-access and seasonal harvesting roads. Main skid trails and harvest roads were maintained and water-bars, seeding, rock and wing ditches were observed to minimize soil erosion and protect water quality. Streamside Management Zones/Riparian Management Zones were utilized to create filter for additional protection of water and minimize soil disturbance.

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### Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity

To maintain or advance the conservation of biological diversity at the stand- and landscape-level and across a diversity of forest and vegetation cover types and successional stages including the conservation of forest plants and animals, aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.

Why it Matters: Ensures that forests are managed to protect wildlife habitat and conserve biological diversity.

Notes: A comprehensive Silviculture Manual, environmental assessment for harvest sales, collaboration with the Natural Heritage Program, State Wildlife Action Plan, District Management Plans, and development of a bat HCP were evidence used to assess the requirements involved in biodiversity conservation.

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### Objective 5. Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits

To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.

Why it Matters: Ensures that the public can continue to enjoy the aesthetic values and recreation opportunities of forests.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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### Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites

To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.

Why it Matters: Protects special sites that have important geological or cultural values.

Notes: Field observations of completed operations, records of special sites, and interviews were evidence for the protection of special sites.

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### Objective 7. Efficient Use of Fiber Resources

To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.

Why it Matters: Ensures the economic well-being of communities that live and work near forests.

Notes: Field observations of completed operations, contract clauses, and interviews with field foresters and wood suppliers provided evidence.



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## **Objective 8. Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights**

To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.

Why it Matters: Recognizing and respecting the Indigenous Peoples' rights supports relationship building and shared benefits from sustainably managed forests.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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## **Objective 9: Climate Smart Forestry**

To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

Why it Matters: Ensures that SFI-certified forests make an important contribution to addressing the effects of climate change.

Notes: Development and implementation of an adaptation and mitigation plan by the various bureaus in the PA DCNR provide the framework. Implementation was witnessed during field site visits.

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## **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.

Why It Matters: Ensures that forests are managed proactively relative to fire risk in the face of climate change, so that they can continue to store carbon, provide habitat for wildlife, and are a source of clean air and water while protecting public safety and human health.

Notes: PA DCNR has a legal mandate to mitigate wildfire. Interviews confirm PA DCNR is responsible for wildfire suppression and the training of volunteers. Documentation confirmed involvement and providing of equipment. Interviews also confirm involvement with awareness training in schools and in public venues.

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## **Objective 11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance**

To comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, international, federal, provincial, state, and local.

Why it Matters: Compliance with all laws ensures the protection of the environmental and social values of forests.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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## **Objective 12. Forestry Research, Science and Technology**

To invest in research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.

Why it Matters: Forest research means healthier, more productive forests.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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## **Objective 13. Training and Education**

To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry through appropriate training and education programs.

Why it Matters: Training and educating foresters means forest management plans are more accurately implemented, ensuring the well-being of our forests.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.

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## **Objective 14. Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach**

To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.

Why it Matters: Outreach and education improves the public's understanding of how important sustainable forestry is to local and global issues.

Notes: Not reviewed during 2022 audit.



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### **Objective 15. Public Land Management Responsibilities**

To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.

Why it Matters: Protects the environmental, social, and economic values of public forests.

Notes: State and District Forest Management Plans are publicly available on websites. Stakeholder input during development of management plans is documented and comments are reviewed and addressed. PA DCNR maintains exceptional resources for public involvement in all aspects of forest management confirmed during audit.

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### **Objective 16. Communications and Public Reporting**

To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.

Why it Matters: Reporting the results of third-party audits increases the public's understanding of forest certification.

Notes: Review of SFI website confirmed Public Summary Reports are available for public review. Annual Progress Report was submitted as required.

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### **Objective 17. Management Review and Continual Improvement**

To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.

Why it Matters: Encourages continual improvement of sustainable forestry practices, a cornerstone of sustainable forestry.

Notes: Internal Audit and Management Review were conducted utilizing virtual communication tools and field site visits. Evidence observed met requirements and items were identified for continual improvement.

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### **Contact Information**

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