

# FSC® US FSS – KEY ELEMENTS OF EACH PRINCIPLE



The purpose of this document is to provide the key elements for conformance with each Principle of the FSC US Forest Stewardship Standard (US FSS). This document is provided to communicate a summary of requirements and can be used as guidance for those interested in seeking FSC Forest Management Certification, but it is not part of the FSC normative framework. Importantly, all auditing is completed using the Indicators in the approved US FSS published by FSC at FSC.org.

## **PRINCIPLE 1: COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS**

*The Organization shall comply with all applicable laws, regulations and nationally-ratified international treaties, conventions and agreements.*

- Demonstrate the right to operate, full legal compliance, and that actions have been taken to prevent illegal activity.
- Identify, prevent, and resolve disputes regarding legal issues through an accessible dispute resolution process.
- Publicize a commitment to not receive bribes, and a commitment to abide by the FSC Principles and Criteria.

## **PRINCIPLE 2: WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS**

*The Organization shall maintain or enhance the social and economic wellbeing of workers.*

- Uphold the ILO-defined fundamental principles and rights at work (all covered by U.S. federal legislation).
- Promote gender equity, implement health and safety practices, pay equitable wages, and demonstrate adequate training for workers implementing management activities within the management unit.
- Engage with workers to develop mechanisms for solving grievances and for providing fair compensation.

## **PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

*The Organization shall identify and uphold Indigenous Peoples' legal and customary rights of ownership, use and management of land, territories and resources affected by management activities.*

- Identify and engage with Indigenous Peoples (IP) to determine whether there are any legal or customary rights held by them that might be affected by management activities, including any rights associated with sites of special significance, and then agree on how identified rights will be upheld and sites protected. This includes engaging in FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) processes before implementing management activities that might affect IP rights
- Uphold rights, customs, and cultures of IPs, including inviting input into management activities that may affect resources and lands that are important to IP but for which they do not hold any rights.
- Respect IP traditional knowledge and intellectual property, including by implementing FPIC when such knowledge is used to ensure the knowledge is protected and fair compensation is provided for its use.

#### **PRINCIPLE 4: COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

*The Organization shall contribute to maintaining or enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of local communities.*

- Identify and engage with local communities to determine whether there are any legal or customary rights held by the community as a whole that might be affected by management activities, including any rights associated with sites of special significance to the community, and then agree on how identified rights will be upheld and sites protected.
- Provide reasonable opportunities for employment, training, and other services to local communities, contractors, and suppliers, and contribute to social and economic development in these communities in other ways.
- Take action to avoid and/or mitigate negative social, environmental, and economic impacts of management activities on local communities.
- Engage with local communities and other affected stakeholders to develop mechanisms for solving grievances related to impacts from management activities and for providing fair compensation.
- Respect traditional peoples' traditional knowledge and intellectual property, including by implementing FPIC when such knowledge is used to ensure the knowledge is protected and fair compensation is provided for its use.

#### **PRINCIPLE 5: BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST**

*The Organization shall efficiently manage the range of multiple products and services of the Management Unit to maintain or enhance long-term economic viability and the range of social and environmental benefits.*

- Support local economies and economic development, including by managing the forest for diverse products and benefits and by using local harvesters, facilities, and other services when available at competitive rates.
- Harvest at or below a rate which can be permanently sustained.
- Incorporate the long-term positive and negative environmental and social impacts of management activities into management planning.
- Demonstrate the long-term economic and operational capacity of the organization to meet the goals of the standard.

#### **PRINCIPLE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES AND IMPACTS**

*The Organization shall maintain, conserve and/or restore ecosystem services and environmental values of the Management Unit, and shall avoid, repair or mitigate negative environmental impacts.*

- Identify and assess environmental values potentially affected by management activities, implement actions to prevent negative impacts on such values, and mitigate and repair any negative impacts that occur due to management activities.
- Identify and protect rare, threatened, or endangered species and their habitats when present in management unit.
- Identify and conserve native ecosystems that would typically occur within management unit if there is not adequate representation and protection of these ecosystems in the landscape that includes the management unit.
- Demonstrate that 10% of the management unit is being managed with a primary purpose to conserve environmental and/or cultural values.
- Ensure management activities maintain, enhance, or restore native ecological communities and habitat conditions, including those associated with stand structure, to prevent losses of biological diversity.
- Protect or restore water bodies, riparian areas, water courses, and their connectivity, and mitigate and remedy any negative impacts to water quality or quantity.
- Ensure management and harvesting maintain, enhance, or restore a diversity of forest types, sizes and ages/successional stages across the landscape.

- Avoid conversion of natural forests (including semi-natural forests) within the management unit to any other land use, except under very specific circumstances.

#### **PRINCIPLE 7: MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

*The Organization shall have a management plan consistent with its policies and objectives and proportionate to scale, intensity and risks of its management activities. The management plan shall be implemented and kept up to date based on monitoring information in order to promote adaptive management. The associated planning and procedural documentation shall be sufficient to guide staff, inform affected stakeholders and interested stakeholders and to justify management decisions.*

- Ensure organizational policies are in place that support the management plan and align with the requirements of this standard, and provide a summary of these policies in the management plan.
- Establish and implement a management plan with measurable management objectives that will meet the FSC certification requirements, and make a summary of the plan available to the public.
- Update the management plan periodically, based on monitoring and evaluation, achievement of management objectives, stakeholder input and other new or changed information.
- Proactively and transparently engage affected stakeholders in management planning and monitoring processes.

#### **PRINCIPLE 8: MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT**

*The Organization shall demonstrate that, progress towards achieving the management objectives, the impacts of management activities and the condition of the Management Unit, are monitored and evaluated proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities, in order to implement adaptive management.*

- Monitor implementation of the management plan and progress toward achieving management objectives.
- Monitor and evaluate environmental and social impacts of management activities and changes in environmental conditions; feed outcomes of this assessment back into the planning process.
- Provide a public summary of monitoring results.
- Establish and document a tracking and tracing system for all forest products sold with a FSC claim.

#### **PRINCIPLE 9: HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES**

*The Organization shall maintain and/or enhance the High Conservation Values in the Management Unit through applying the precautionary approach.*

- Assess and record the presence and status of High Conservation Values within the management unit. Engage with stakeholders in this assessment process.
- Develop and implement strategies to maintain or enhance these values. Engage with stakeholders and experts in this development process.
- Monitor these values and adapt management strategies to ensure their ongoing protection.

#### **PRINCIPLE 10: IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

*Management activities conducted by or for The Organization for the Management Unit shall be selected and implemented consistent with The Organization's economic, environmental and social policies and objectives and in compliance with the Principles and Criteria collectively.*

- After harvesting, regenerate to pre-harvesting or more natural conditions using native or otherwise ecologically well-adapted and appropriate species while avoiding genetically modified trees.
- If using non-native species in management activities, ensure mitigation measures are in place to control any invasive impacts.

- Ensure silvicultural activities are ecologically appropriate for the site and management objectives, including protecting environmental values during harvesting activities and optimizing the use of harvested materials.
- Keep use of fertilizers, pesticides and biological control agents to the lowest level possible (or avoid them all together) and prevent or mitigate any negative environmental impacts from their use.
- If pesticides are used, implement Integrated Pest Management and conduct assessments to ensure that pesticides are selected and applied in a manner that limits risks to environmental and social values to the extent possible while maintaining effectiveness.
- Conduct an assessment of the risk of natural hazards and implement activities to reduce potential impacts of such hazards.
- Manage and design infrastructure and transportation systems to reduce and minimize impacts on environmental values. Mitigate and/or repair impacts that occur.
- Dispose of hazardous and other waste materials in an environmentally appropriate manner.