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| **ADVICE-40-005-24** | **Landscape approach to implementation of the National Risk Assessment of the United States** |
| Normative reference | FSC-STD-20-011 V4-0 Clauses 6.2 and 6.17  FSC-STD-40-005 V3-1, Clause 4.14 |
| Effective date | 05 April 2019 |
| Approval | 05 April 2019 |
| Scope | This Advice Note applies to all certification bodies (CBs) with CoC/CW in their accreditation scope when auditing a certificate holder’s mitigation measures for sourcing controlled material from the United States. This Advice Note is intended to facilitate innovative approaches to address specified risks in the FSC National Risk Assessment for the Coterminous United States of America (FSC-NRA-US). These approaches aim to reduce the occurrence of undesirable activities at a landscape scale. |
| Background | FSC US has implemented several innovations in its NRA, which consists of the following:  • **Landscape approach to risk designation**: Fine-scale risk designations are considered impractical, due to the United States’ large land area and ecological diversity, as well as the availability of pertinent data on e.g., species range and individual occurrences. As such, roughly 80% of the ‘specified risk’ designations for threats to HCVs (Controlled Wood category 3) and for forest conversion (Controlled Wood category 4) in the NRA are at a landscape scale. These range in size from individual counties to portions of multiple states, to entire ecological regions.  • **Landscape approach to risk mitigation**: Information on origin of forest materials is confined to a landscape level for the US certificate holders due to legal constraints on information sharing and the complexity of supply chains. As such, it is impractical for companies to attempt risk mitigation at specific sites of origin. This led to development of landscape-level risk mitigation measures. The mandatory control measures in the NRA require that certificate holders implement one or more of a limited set of mitigation options within each specified risk area from which they source material. The |
|  | overall approach is based on the premise that concentrated effort by numerous certificate holders on a limited range of activities is more likely to result in positive change on the ground than certificate holders implementing disparate actions. A limited set of options also reduces conformance variability and uncertainty, so that certificate holders are better able to manage financial risk, and it creates a more level playing field.   * **Landscape approach to effectiveness verification**: Since it is infeasible for individual certificate holders to verify the effectiveness of their mitigation actions within a framework of landscape-level risk mitigation, FSC US will undertake the verification of mitigation effectiveness in lieu of individual verification. FSC US will monitor changes on the ground within the areas of specified risk, primarily through information sharing with expert stakeholder organizations active within these landscapes, and data collection from various sources.   **Intended benefits:**  • The landscape approach provides certificate holders with greater clarity and certainty of the requirements by: 1) providing a limited set of mitigation options for each specified risk, 2) creating a framework for determining what level of mitigation is required, and 3) developing a baseline of expectations for each kind of mitigation action allowed.  • The approach focuses mitigation efforts by certificate holders on a finite set of actions that will concentrate investment in accepted and centrally monitored conservation efforts, directly creating change on the ground.  • An opportunity to significantly influence forest conservation well beyond the boundaries of certified forests, while increasing the credibility of the controlled wood system. |
| Advice | 1. Certification bodies shall verify the implementation of the mandatory control measures specified in the US NRA for controlled wood categories 3 (Wood from forests in which HCVs are threatened by management activities) and 4 (Wood from forests being converted to plantations or non-forest use). However, they are not required to verify the effectiveness of the actions identified as part of the mandatory control measures.  NOTE: Certification bodies are required to fully conform to the Advice Note and will not receive any corrective action request (CAR) from Assurance Services International (ASI) for not verifying the effectiveness of the mitigation measures for Controlled Wood categories 3 and 4. However, if they do identify critical gaps in risk mitigation arising out of the landscape approach, they should report this to PSU and FSC-US. |