

FSC US CONTROLLED WOOD REGIONAL MEETINGS CAPE FEAR ARCH CBA

FSC REGION Southeast

HCVS IN FSC A High Conservation Value (HCV) is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance. FSC is working to ensure that our system helps to maintain and enhance the special places that support these values. For more information on HCVs, see the Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values.¹

WHY IS CAPE FEAR ARCH CRITICAL BIODIVERSITY AREA (CBA) CONSIDERED AN HCV? This CBA is considered an HCV because it contains a high overall species richness, diversity, or uniqueness within a defined area compared to other sites within the same biogeographic area. The CBA was identified using a species richness index originally published by NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy that identifies areas with high concentrations of rare species. This index preferences species that have limited ranges by applying additional weighting. The results identify areas with concentrations of high biological diversity and spaces with an increased conservation significance.



SUMMARY OF CAPE FEAR ARCH CBA The geologic and hydrologic history of the Cape Fear Arch region have resulted in a diversity of wet and dry habitats. The region is considered to have the greatest biological diversity along the Atlantic Coast north of Florida and has been identified in North Carolina's Wildlife Action Plan, the Nature Conservancy's Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain Ecoregional Plan and One North Carolina Naturally as a high priority area for conservation. Important drivers of biodiversity in this region include longleaf pine forests and pocosins (coastal peatlands).

Pocosins typically occur within Carolina bays as a mosaic, along with Atlantic white cedar forests and nonriverine swamp forests. Most of the world's pocosins occur in North Carolina and the Cape Fear Arch region has some of the very best examples. Pocosins occur within nutrient-poor peatlands in shallow depressions on plateaus and are typically continuously saturated with water. They harbor rare species like the venus fly trap and Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The overstory is usually pine, often Pond pine. Higher, drier sites typically have a dense evergreen shrub

¹ Brown, E., N. Dudley, A. Lindhe, D.R. Muhtaman, C. Stewart, and T. Synnott (eds.). 2013 (October). Common guidance for the identification of High Conservation Values. HCV Resource Network.

layer, while the wettest may only have low shrubs, stunted pines and beds of sphagnum, pitcher plants and cranberry.

Longleaf pine forests once covered much of the Atlantic Coastal Plain, but the extent and condition of the system has been severely depleted due to habitat fragmentation, unsustainable harvest, conversion to other land uses and vegetative types, invasive species, and exclusion of natural fire regimes. There have been recent gains, but the forest type is still very rare. Upland, Flatwood and Savanna types of longleaf pine systems occur in the Cape Fear vicinity. The CBA includes a portion of the focal areas for the Cape Fear Arch Longleaf Initiative.

IDENTIFIED THREATS TO THE CAPE FEAR ARCH CBA HABITATS

Pocosins	Longleaf Pine
<p>When the canopy has been completely removed through timber harvest, pocosins often do not regenerate. An associated threat from forest management is the conversion of native pine to planted pine and resulting loss of biodiversity, particularly if associated with changes in hydrology due to ditching. Other threats include hydraulic alteration, conversion to agriculture, road construction, and sand quarrying, habitat fragmentation, introduction of non-native species, climate change and fire suppression.</p>	<p>Biodiversity values can be adversely affected by forest management activities via conversion of longleaf to other pine types, and the use management techniques, including herbicide application that have the potential to inhibit native understory communities. As the bulk of the biodiversity exists in the understory of a longleaf pine system, restoration or maintenance of understory species composition is an essential component of longleaf pine conservation. It is possible to harvest in and sustainably manage longleaf pine systems and therefore timber management by itself is not considered a threat. Other threats include fire-suppression, urban development, fragmentation, non-native species, intensive pine straw raking, and climate change.</p>

WHAT ARE MITIGATION ACTIONS AND WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ACHIEVE?

Companies that mix FSC-certified forest materials and non-certified materials to make products with an 'FSC Mix' claim/logo are required to address certain risks before using the non-certified forest materials. One of these is the risk that their forest materials come from areas where HCVs are threatened by forest management activities. FSC has completed a US National Risk Assessment to identify where this risk is greater than 'low' and the Cape Fear Arch CBA is one of these places. Companies that wish to use non-certified materials from the identified places (like this CBA) are required to either avoid sourcing from specific sites where the threats are occurring, or to implement mitigation actions that reduce the risk of sourcing from those sites. For this CBA, any mitigation actions will need to address the threats identified above in **bold**.

The FSC US National Risk Assessment also introduces the concept of holding regional meetings to bring stakeholders together to collaboratively identify effective and practical mitigation actions. We are asking participants to consider landscape-scale mitigation actions, that will help to reduce risks across the landscape in which the companies source forest materials. An effective way to do this may be to build on existing programs and projects that are already tackling these issues. The companies implementing

mitigation actions are required to select one or more from the options identified at the regional meetings.

Please help us to determine what these mitigation actions should be, by visiting engage.fsc.us.org and joining the virtual discussion, or attending a regional meeting.

INFORMATION SOURCES THAT MAY HELP GENERATE MITIGATION IDEAS

- [Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaboration](#)
- [North Carolina Wildlife Action Plan](#)
- [America's Longleaf Alliance](#)