

### Comments on the Governance Benchmarks

General Concept/Policy Criteria	Existing Benchmark	Comments
Openness; organizational type	Membership organizations (i.e. organizations governed by members) are open to all major interest groups, organizations and individuals.	These benchmarks are not adequate. It is not clear that the organizational type must actually be a membership organization in the first place. In addition to their existing requirements, the benchmarks should require that organizations be membership based—otherwise, the benchmarks regarding the make-up of membership-based organizations will not be consistently applied. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Balance; governing board structure	1) Forest owners, producers and all entities participating in the forest product supply chain limited to economic chamber/sector; 2) Economic chamber/sector afforded no more than 1/3 vote.	These benchmarks are not adequate. There is no clear requirement that governing boards be comprised of an equal balance of economic, environmental, and social interests. The influence of each of these three sectors should also be more clearly limited to 1/3 vote. In addition, the certification systems’ governing boards should be elected by a membership that is balanced among economic, social, and environmental interests. Otherwise, the benchmarks can permit certification systems whose boardmembers may be affiliated with different stakeholder sectors, but who do not actually represent the views of the persons and organizations comprising those stakeholder sectors. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Balance; governing board decision-making	Balloted decisions require approval from at least 1/3 of each interest-based chamber/sector and/or each	Balance requirements should not be limited to “balloted” decisions. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>

	environmental, social, and economic interest category.	
Balance; funding	Sources of funding made publicly available.	The existing benchmark is not adequate. The requirement for transparency is good, but does not preclude economic interests or other interests from dominating the organization or creating other conflicts of interest through financing. In other words, there is no preclusion on the organization receiving the majority of its funding from the entities it certifies, or from any other one stakeholder group. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>

**Additional Governance Benchmarks Needed**

- An additional category and concept is needed in the Governance benchmarks: that of independence. In other words, at all levels of governance and standards development and implementation, certification systems must be independent of undue and unbalanced influence by any one stakeholder sector. This concept is partially but not sufficiently represented in the current draft benchmarks.
- An additional benchmark is also needed, to ensure that the certification standards development process occurs through open and transparent processes, whose participants comprise a balance of social, economic, and environmental stakeholders and interests, and which uses consensus based decision-making, to ensure that the views of all three stakeholder sectors are equally and consistently addressed. This should be a mandatory benchmark.

**Comments on Benchmarks for Standards Substance, Sustainable Forest Management**

General Concept/Policy Criteria	Existing Benchmark	Comments
Forest extent	No specific benchmark - Not considered an issue that certification can effectively address.	This is one of the most critical issues for “sustainable forest management,” and a strong benchmark needs to be included. The conversion of forest to non-forest land uses and conditions is one of the most unsustainable things that can happen to forest resources. This is an issue that can be addressed by certification systems, as evidenced by the existing requirements of leading systems. <i>This is also a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Biodiversity; landscape; forests of special conservation value	Manage lands that are geologically, historically, or culturally important to protect special qualities. Include regionally and locally significant attributes, socio-economic attributes, in definition of forests of special conservation value. Provide public summary of the management program for forests of special conservation value.	This benchmark is too vague to be meaningful. Moreover, the benchmark also does not actually include any language pertaining to biodiversity and ecological values, but instead focuses solely on geological, historical, and cultural sites, which are an entirely different issue. The benchmark needs to be rewritten to require protection for all forest areas that serve as biodiversity refugia, that have particularly high biodiversity values, that are habitats for threatened or endangered species, that contain rare or threatened ecosystem types (whether naturally rare or rare as a result of human activity), that comprise larger intact wilderness (or “intact forest”) areas, and/or that have other priority or outstanding conservation values. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Biodiversity; ecosystem diversity;	Maintain natural ecosystem structure and function.	This language is good as far as it goes, but is far too vague, and does not provide a sufficient basis for evaluating certification systems. Among other things, certification systems need to require

ecosystem structure, function, etc		management for a natural diversity and distribution of tree and other plant species, management for a natural diversity and distribution of wildlife habitats, and management for a natural diversity and distribution of forest structures and composition. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Biodiversity; ecosystem diversity; old growth	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established.	An explicit benchmark needs to be adopted here, and it should also be considered a mandatory benchmark. The other benchmarks, as currently worded, are too vague to ensure that old growth forests will be protected by certification systems. The “forests of special conservation value” benchmark, for example, does not address old growth or other areas that are ecologically a priority for protection. The benchmarks should require that certification systems require forest managers to consistently protect old growth forests, stands, and trees on the properties being certified, at least in countries and regions where old growth forests have been drastically reduced in their extent, e.g., in the U.S. Remaining historically-developed old growth should be distinguished from older trees produced as part of intensive commercial forestry operations, since landowners should be encouraged to use longer timber rotations.
Biodiversity; ecosystem diversity; clearcutting	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established.	An explicit benchmark needs to be adopted here, and it should also be considered a mandatory benchmark. The other benchmarks, as currently worded, are too vague to ensure that certification systems adopt needed limits on clearcutting and other high-impact silvicultural practices. The benchmarks need to require the retention of both live and dead trees within and across even-aged logging units at levels that correspond to natural, non-catastrophic disturbance patterns for the specific forest type in question. Equally important, the benchmarks need to limit the cumulative extent and rate of clearcutting and other even-aged silvicultural practices.
Biodiversity;	Retention of stand-level	This language is good as far as it goes, but is far too vague, and does

ecosystem diversity; tree/snag/woody debris retention	wildlife habitat elements (e.g. snags, nest trees, etc.)	not provide a sufficient basis for evaluating certification systems. The question is, does a given certification system require sufficient retention of the right type in the right circumstances. Some certification systems pay lip service to retention, but do not require ecologically meaningful amounts or types of retention.
Biodiversity; ecosystem diversity; plantations	No certification of plantations converted after 2007 unless change in ownership or program to convert back to natural forest beginning in advance of the next harvest cycle. For this purpose, the definition of plantations is consistent with the FAO definition.	The cut-off date for plantation conversion should be earlier, e.g., 1994 or a comparable date. Moving the cut-off to 2007 would reward substantial amounts of conversion that has been ongoing since the development of leading forest certification systems, which have already established 1994 as an internationally recognized cut-off date. Otherwise, this is a good benchmark. This is also a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory. Also, we are not sure which FAO plantation definition the benchmarks are referring to. This definition may or may not be adequate. <i>We recommend that any definitions used by the benchmarks be explicitly included in the document.</i>
Biodiversity; species, genetic diversity; species diversity	Promote habitat diversity.	This benchmark is too vague to be meaningful. Among other things, certification systems need to require management for a natural diversity and distribution of tree and other plant species, management for a natural diversity and distribution of wildlife habitats, and management for a natural diversity and distribution of forest structures and composition. <i>This is a crucial benchmark and should be mandatory.</i>
Biodiversity; species, genetic diversity; species at risk	Develop and implement program to protect threatened and endangered species and their habitats.	This benchmark is inadequate, given that it appears to closely reflect the SFI standard's language, and given that the SFI has been certifying companies whose plans and programs allow for the substantial and sometimes complete elimination of important threatened and endangered species' habitats and populations across

		<p>large forest properties. The benchmarks need to very clearly require that all existing habitat and population levels of threatened and endangered species on certified properties be fully protected and maintained, with no exceptions, including through the establishment of protected area zones where appropriate. Equally important, protection must also be extended to species that are de facto threatened and endangered, but that have not yet been officially listed as “threatened” or “endangered” by government agencies, which have a history of failing to make such listings due to politics and budgetary constraints. For example, in the U.S., protection should be extended to species listed by NatureServe as S1 and S2, as well as other species that are considered “candidates” for government listing status, or whose listing by agencies has been deemed “warranted but precluded.” <i>This should also be a mandatory indicator.</i></p>
Forest health; forest restoration	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established.	<p>We strongly disagree with the claim that the other benchmarks adequately address the need for managed forests to be restored to more natural conditions. The other benchmarks are currently far too vague to achieve this outcome. A separate benchmark should also be included that clearly requires substantial portions of existing plantations to be restored to natural conditions, where those plantations were established on natural forest sites. <i>These should also be mandatory indicators.</i></p>
Productive functions; sustainable production	Long term harvest levels are sustainable.	<p>This benchmark is inadequate to achieve one of the most fundamental tenets of sustainable resource management: that resource harvest rates not exceed the rate at which the resource is being replenished in the same sites. The term “sustainable” has no commonly agreed upon definition in this context and is not sufficient by itself. Thus the benchmark needs to be explicitly rewritten to require that the volume of timber harvest does not</p>

		exceed the volume of timber growth, at the watershed scale or within smaller planning units, within a given planning period, e.g., 5 or 10 year intervals. <i>This should also be a mandatory indicator.</i>
Productive functions; non-timber forest products	No specific measureable benchmark exists.	At the very least, a benchmark is needed to require that harvest of NTFPs does not exceed production rates for NTFPs, as per the sustainable production benchmark for timber. NTFPs are being addressed by some of the leading certification systems.
Protective functions; soil and water resources; riparian protection	Follow state-recognized Best Management Practices where they exist. In areas without Best Management Practices, develop guidelines for the protection of riparian areas and wetlands.	This benchmark is not adequate. BMPs in more than a few states in the U.S. are known to be quite inadequate for protecting and restoring water quality, and for protecting and restoring habitat conditions for salmon, amphibians, and other aquatic life. Oregon's BMPs are a good example; the state's BMPs have still not been significantly improved after being found years ago by the National Marine Fisheries Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and many independent scientists to be inadequate for the needs of imperiled salmon and amphibians. Thus certification systems must be expected to provide adequate protection measures for riparian and aquatic function regardless of the existence of BMPs, including by providing numeric stream buffer standards and other objective and verifiable standards. <i>This should also be a mandatory indicator.</i>
Protective functions; soil and water resources; soil protection	Develop and implement a program to minimize and mitigate soil disturbance.	This benchmark is not adequate. It essentially allows forest managers to decide for themselves what the standard for protection should be. LEED needs to focus on performance-based certification systems, and a performance-based system would provide more definitive guidance for how to protect and restore soil productivity, minimize disturbance, and avoid erosion.
Legal, institutional, policy frameworks;	Comply with forest-related laws and policies.	This benchmark is important but inadequate in two crucial regards. First, compliance needs to be more explicitly required for all laws relating to forest management, including wildlife laws, water quality laws, labor laws, treaties with indigenous peoples, etc. The phrasing

<p>legal compliance; forest law</p>		<p>“forest-related laws and policies” could be interpreted as only those laws governing tree management per se. Second, certification systems need to expressly require their auditors to independently verify forest managers’ compliance with all applicable laws—rather than relying on landowner statements or data about regional compliance trends, for example. <i>Equally important, this should be a mandatory benchmark.</i></p>
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**Additional Standards Substance Benchmarks Needed**

- Within **Legal, institutional, policy frameworks** section and **Monitoring** subsection, the benchmarks are missing a key component: a requirement for adaptive management. In other words, when monitoring shows that forest management is not meeting the requirements of the management plan and/or the certification system, the forest managers adapt and improve their management to meet those requirements.
- The benchmarks also need to require certification systems to ensure that certified forest management identify and contribute to the forests’ needed role within landscape-level forest ecosystem conservation plans, such as by establishing connectivity corridors and/or protection of representative sample forest areas.

**Comments on Benchmarks for Accreditation and Auditing**

<b>General Concept/Policy Criteria</b>	<b>Existing Benchmark</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Accreditation process; public input	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met.	We disagree with the draft benchmark's assertion here. Public consultation during certifier accreditation audits is a key requirement for credible certification systems. It is an essential part of the information gathering process needed to ensure that all relevant issues and information is addressed during accreditation audits. <i>There should be a mandatory benchmark.</i>
Certification process; public input; consultation of stakeholders	There is written policy that consultation with external stakeholders is sufficient to ensure compliance with standards.	This is an important but highly insufficient benchmark. The scope and quality of a certification system's consultation process is just as important as whether the process exists. Consultation needs to be required for all certification audits, and needs to be broadly accessible to all knowledgeable and interested stakeholders, not just those directly affected by the forest management in question. <i>This should be a mandatory benchmark.</i>
Certification process; quality control; peer review	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met.	We disagree. A benchmark is needed here. Peer review of certification audits and certification reports is an important part of ensuring their quality, and is required by the world's more credible certification systems.

### Comments on Benchmarks for Chain of Custody and Labeling

General Concept/Policy Criteria	Existing Benchmark	Comments
Transparency, types of product labels	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met.	Given that some certification systems allow products to be labeled as though they come from forests certified by those systems, when in fact the forests of origin have not been certified by those systems, we believe that the benchmarks must distinguish credible labeling approaches from those that are not credible. <i>This should be a mandatory benchmark.</i>
Transparency, minimum certified material	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met.	We disagree with the benchmark's assertion. A benchmark is needed here, and it should be a mandatory requirement. The benchmark needs to include a requirement that the extent and nature of all label usage and all label claims are directly proportionate to the extent to which labeled product lines contain wood from forests fully certified to the substantive standards of the certification system in question. Currently, some certification systems allow their labels to be used on product lines whose "certified" content is not from forests certified to those certification systems' forest management standards. Likewise, some systems allow their labels to be used more extensively than warranted by the amount of certified wood actually used as an input to the product lines in question. Both problems call the credibility of label-based market claims into serious question. <i>This should be a mandatory benchmark.</i>
Restrictions on non-certified material; acceptable non-	No virgin or pre-consumer recycled wood from: 1) non-certified forests of special social and	This benchmark is seriously inadequate for two reasons. First, it does not apply to all types of certification labels, but only those involving "percent-based" claims. Second, it does not adequately exclude wood from forests with high conservation values. In other

certified sources for percent-based claims	environmental conservation value, 2) genetically-modified organisms, and 3) harvesting that converts natural forest to plantations/ nonforest.	words, “special social and environmental conservation value” is too vague and too low a threshold. The benchmark needs to be rewritten to require protection for all forest areas that serve as biodiversity refugia, that have particularly high biodiversity values, that are habitats for threatened or endangered species, that contain rare or threatened ecosystem types (whether naturally rare or rare as a result of human activity), that comprise larger intact wilderness (or “intact forest”) areas, and/or that have other priority or outstanding conservation values. <i>This should also be a mandatory benchmark.</i> We also note that the subsequent benchmark regarding CITES compliance does not provide an adequate substitute for improved language here, as only a small portion of the world’s imperiled plant and animal species have attained CITES listing, and CITES listings generally are not designed to protect ecosystems as a whole.
Restrictions on non-certified material; definition of legality	1) No wood from illegal harvest in protected areas. 2) Compliance w/ CITES.	This benchmark is also seriously deficient. The definition of legality needs to include violations of all relevant international, national, and local laws, treaties, and policies, not just illegal harvest from protected areas and CITES violations. Some of the most egregious forms of illegal logging, both in the U.S. and abroad, do not involve either of these two narrow types of illegality. <i>This should also be a mandatory benchmark.</i>
Restrictions on non-certified material; verification of acceptable sources	1) Conduct risk assessment to determine prevalence of illegal logging. 2) Wood sourced from low-risk countries are acceptable sources. 3) 2nd or 3rd party verification of legality required for wood sourced from high-risk countries.	This benchmark is flawed and needs improvement. Risk assessments, for example, need to be conducted at scales that provide meaningful results. Country-level assessments will not be meaningful in larger nations, and may overlook serious problems with illegality in certain sub-regions or with regard to certain specific types of resources. Quite often, assessments will need to be conducted as much smaller scales; generally, the scale at which assessments are conducted must be small enough to detect any significant variation in legal compliance patterns. In addition,

		verification should always be by third-parties, not second-parties. Equally important, the certification system must establish more specific indicators and data sources to guide risk assessments, and those indicators and data sources must provide opportunities for, and utilize the results of public consultation, to ensure their accuracy and completeness.
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**Additional Chain of Custody and Labeling Benchmarks Needed**

- The benchmarks currently lack any substantive requirement for the content and substantive requirements of chain of custody systems, e.g., requirements for tracking the origin of wood products, to ensure they come from the specific forests they are attributed to, to ensure those forests have been fully certified by the certification system in question, and to ensure that those forests are managed in the manner being claimed. This deficiency needs to be corrected.