

U.S. Green Building Council's Forest Certification System
 DRAFT Benchmark for Public Comment, 8/7/08

Perkins+Will Review 09/02/2008

Prepared using the USGBC DRAFT Benchmark of 8/7/08

Based upon "Comparison of Forest Certification Systems" by the Yale Program on Forest Policy and Governance

			Key to USGBC Criteria Level																
			Stronger than FSC (+)																
			Equivalent to FSC-US (=)																
			Weaker than FSC (-)																
			*** Too Subjective																

Criteria Level Compared to FSC-US	Substantive Change (S)	Proposed Revision	General Concept	Policy Criteria	Benchmark (Proposed Revision)	Compliance				
						Benchmark (Revised)				
						FSC-US	ATFS	CSA	SFI	PEFC
=			Compliance with international norms	Compliance with international normative institutions	Scheme is consistent with ISO and/or ISEAL codes of good governance, or their equivalent.	y	n	y	y	y
-	y		Openness	Organizational type	Membership organizations (i.e. organizations governed by members) are open to all major interest groups, organizations and individuals. Proposed Revision: <i>Membership organizations (i.e. organizations governed by members) open to all major interest groups, organizations and individuals</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			Openness	Establishment of governing body	Other benchmarks contained in the criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established.	y	n	y	y	y
-	y		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. Proposed Revision: <i>Add 3) Board Elections are an open process</i>	y(y)	n(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			Balance	Governing board decision-making	Balloted decisions require approval from at least 1/3 of each interest-based chamber/sector and/or each environmental, social, and economic interest category.	y	n	n	n	n
=			Balance	Funding	Sources of funding made publicly available.	y	n	y	y	n
=			Public input ***	Level of standard-setting	1) International or national-level standards provide a performance baseline. 2) There are opportunities for development of sub-national indicators in larger federated countries.	y	n	n	n	y
=			Public input	Consultation	Draft standards available for public comment.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Transparency	Communication	1) Participation accessible to directly interested persons. 2) Interested parties invited to comment on process, standards, and standards revision. 3) For membership organizations, criteria and application for membership transparent and non-discriminatory.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Dispute resolution	Dispute resolution for standards-writing	There is a formal appeals process for standards-writing.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Continual improvement	Continual improvement of standards	Standards reviewed and revised, as needed, every five years or less	y	y	y	y	y
=			Openness***	Accessibility to diverse ownership types	Processes and standards are accessible to all ownership sizes and types.	?	y	?	?	?

Criteria Level Compared to FSC-US	Substantive Change (S)	Proposed Revision	7 Sustainable Forest Management Themes	Criteria	Key issues	Benchmark (Proposed Revision)	Compliance				
							Benchmark (Revised)				
							FSC-US	ATFS	CSA	SFI	PEFC
-	S	y			Forest extent***	No specific benchmark - Not considered an issue that certification can effectively address. Proposed Revision: <i>Forest conversion to plantations or non-forest shall not occur except: limited areas, not High Conservation Value Forest and leads to long-term conservation benefits. Consider conversion of abandoned agriculture and treeless lands into forest with proven long term conservation benefits only</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)
-	S	y			Carbon storage***	No specific benchmark - No measurable requirements found in existing schemes. Proposed Revision: <i>Maintain and appropriately enhance forest resources and their contribution to global carbon cycles according to the best available science and emerging research. (ie. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Pew Center on Global Climate Change.)</i>	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)
			Landscape								
-		y			Forests of special conservation value : Proposed Revision: <i>Change to Forests of High Conservation Value</i>	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. Proposed Revision: <i>(Use FSC criteria.)</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(?)
-		y			Protected areas (non-special value forests)	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: <i>(Use FSC-US Criteria)</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(?)
			Ecosystem diversity								
-		y			Ecosystem structure, function and forest successional stages ***	Maintain natural ecosystem structure and function. Proposed Revision: <i>(Use FSC-US Criteria: Consider landscape, species' requirements, natural disturbance patterns. Restore portions to natural range and distribution of age classes. Generate successional phases that would naturally occur. Clearcutting retains trees consistent to patterns of natural disturbance. Maintain diverse habitats. For planting, use seed of local provenance.)</i>	y(y)	n(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(?)
-	S	y			Old growth	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: <i>(Use FSC-US Criteria: Define old growth in regional standards. In old growth that is not HCVF, maintain or recruit old-growth trees. Limited harvest permissible. No active management of intact and un-entered old growth stands (defined at regional level) unless for ecological enhancement of HCVF features, except tribal lands.)</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)
-	S	y			Clearcutting	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: <i>(Use FSC-US Criteria: Clearcutting retains trees consistent with patterns of natural disturbance. Plantations: Clearcuts without tree retention limited to 40 acres unless justified by scientifically credible analysis. Regeneration reaches at least 10 feet or canopy closure before adjacent harvest. Buffers with native species maintained between units.)</i>	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)

Criteria Level Compared to FSC-US	Substantive Change (S)	Proposed Revision	7 Sustainable Forest Management Themes	Criteria	Key issues	Benchmark (Proposed Revision)	Compliance				
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-	s	y			Tree/snag/woody debris retention ***	Retention of stand-level wildlife habitat elements (e.g. snags, nest trees, etc.) Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria: Clearcutting retains trees and native veg. consistent with patterns of natural disturbance. Select trees for retention that maintain/enhance productive capacity. Maintain coarse woody debris in the form of large fallen trees, large logs and snags of various sizes. Salvage harvest balances ecological and economic considerations. Plantations: Buffers with native species maintained between units.)	y(y)	n(n)	n(n)	n(n)	y(y)
-	s	y			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. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria: In plantations, clrcuts w/out tree retention ltd to 40 acres unless sci justified. Regen reaches 10 ft or canopy closure before adjacent harvest. Buffers w/ native species. Structure, species div, distrib maintains habitat, soil fertility. Mgmt. generates long-term employment. Exotic use based on sci, monitored. Document rovidence, location. Only non-invasive exotics. Nat/plantation ratio maintain strucure, function similar to nat forests. Nat/semi-nat forest: Min 10% for 100 ac or less; 15% 101-1,000 ac; 20% 1,001-10,000 ac; 25% > 10,000 acres. Landscape analysis for restoration to nat forest. Note: forests converted 1994 - 2001 may be certified if restoration plan.)	y(y)	n(n)	n(n)	n(n)	n(n)

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-		y			Species diversity***	Promote habitat diversity. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria: Select trees for harvest/ retention/ planting to maintain/ enhance species diversity of residual stand. Protect/ maintain/ enhance diversity of habitats for native species. Forests containing plantations managed for structural and species diversity.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)	y(y)
-		y			Species at risk***	Develop and implement program to protect threatened and endangered species and their habitats. Proposed Revision: Develop and implement program to protect globally and locally threatened, endangered, and rare species and their habitats.	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(?)
-		y			Exotics	Control and monitor the use of exotics to avoid adverse ecological effects. Use only species known to be non-invasive. Proposed Revision: Use FSC Criteria: 6.9 and 10.4 Control and monitor use of exotics to avoid adverse ecological effects. 6.9.a, 10.4.a Use of exotics contingent on peer reviewed scientific evidence that species is non-invasive. Document provenance and location of exotics and monitor. 6.9.b Develop and implement control measures for invasive exotics. 10.4.b Invasive exotics not used. On agricultural lands, use of exotics based on evidence that they are not invasive and do not diminish off-site biodiversity. Provenance and location documented and effects monitored. Use of exotics prohibited on land capable of supporting natural forest.	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(?)
=					Genetically-modified organisms (GMOs)	Prohibit the use of genetically modified organisms.	y	n	n	n	n
-		y			Biotechnology***	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: Prohibit the use of bio-technology.	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
			Forest restoration								
-		y			Forest restoration***	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: (1. Forest owners or managers maintain, enhance, or restore portions of the forest to the range and distribution plant communities and age or development classes of trees that result from processes (e.g., natural disturbance and succession) that would naturally occur on the site. 2. Management in all stands maintains, enhances, or restores habitat components associated stand structures, including a) large live trees (including old growth legacy trees where present), live trees with decay or declining health, snags, and well-distributed coarse down and dead woody material, and b) vertical and horizontal complexity, as appropriate to the forest ecosystem. Trees selected for retention are generally representative of the dominant species found on the site.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
			Natural disturbance (ex. pests, diseases, fire)								
=					Management of Natural Disturbance***	Monitor and maintain the health and vitality of forest ecosystems, with consideration for the naturally-occurring role of fire, pests and other natural disturbances.	y	y	y	y	y
=					Chemical use	Prefer natural methods, such as integrated pest management, to control plant and animal pests and diseases. The following chemicals are prohibited: chlorinated hydrocarbon pesticides, pesticides banned by international agreement. Also prohibited: chemicals deemed to be acutely toxic to terrestrial or aquatic organisms, or highly persistent (including dioxins) according to WHO, the US EPA, or the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pesticides (POP). If temporary exemptions are allowed, there is a formal, transparent process for obtaining them.	y	n	y	n	n
			Sustainable production								
-		y			Timber production***	Long term harvest levels are sustainable. Proposed Revision: (Growth and Harvest models show growth exceeds harvest over a rolling ten year time frame with the only exception in restoration areas. Documentation and measurement are required.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)	y(y)

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-		y			Non-timber forest products ***	No specific measureable benchmark exists. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria: Mgmt. plan for harvest and regeneration of non-timber forest products; Record yield of non-timber resources. Significant unanticipated removal monitored, recorded. Monitor abundance, regeneration and habitat conditions of non-timber forest products.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-		y			Environmental services ***	No specific measureable benchmark exists. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-Canada Criteria: protection of non-timber forest values assessed on on-going basis by knowledgeable parties, such as; specialists, local community members, stakeholders, and other interested parties.)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-		y			Reforestation ***	Reforest in a timely manner. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria: Maintain successional phases that would naturally occur. Select trees for harvest, retention and planting to maintain productive capacity. For artificial regeneration, use locally adapted seeds of known provenance.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
+		y			Soil productivity ***	Maintain or enhance soil productivity. Proposed Revisions: (Delete)	n	n	n	y	n
			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.	y	y	y	y	y
-		y			Soil protection (productivity)** *	Develop and implement a program to minimize and mitigate soil disturbance. Proposed Revisions: (1. Harvest and post-harvest management activities maintain or restore soil productivity, structure, and ecological functions (e.g., nutrient cycling and providing invertebrate habitat) through methods that include at minimum: a) minimizing soil disturbance and conservation of soil organic matter and the leaf litter layer to the extent necessary to achieve regeneration objectives, b) minimizing rutting, and compaction, c) providing soil habitat and structural diversity across the harvest unit through retention and distribution of tops of harvested trees, small trees, and other fine woody material not addressed by Indicator 6.3.j., and d) minimizing the removal of woody material on low productivity sites.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-		y			Residual tree protection	Other benchmarks contained in the ecosystem-based criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: (Use PEFC Criteria: Tending, harvesting, transport minimize tree damages. Spillage of oil or indiscriminate disposal of waste strictly avoided. Tending and harvesting does not cause lasting damage to ecosystems.)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)
=					Physical infrastructure (roads, skid trails, etc.)	Develop and implement a program to minimize damage to forest ecosystem resulting from construction of roads, skid trails and other physical infrastructures.	y	n	n	n	y
			Indigenous rights								
-	s	y			Aboriginal land and tenure rights ***	Respect the traditional and legal rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and resources. Free and informed consent of the indigenous peoples is required for other parties to manage or use such lands and resources. Proposed Revision (Use FSC Criteria: Indigenous peoples control forest management on their lands and territories unless they delegate control with free and informed consent to other agencies. 3.2 forest management doesn't threaten or diminish indigenous rights and resources. ...)	y(y)	n(n)	n(n)	n(n)	n(n)
=					Special aboriginal sites	Identify and protect (with participation of tribes) special aboriginal sites.	y	n	n	n	n

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-	S	y			Traditional knowledge	No specific measureable benchmark exists. Proposed Revision: (use FSC International Criteria: Indigenous peoples shall be compensated for use of their traditional knowledge as formally agreed upon with their free and informed consent before such knowledge is granted)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
			Local communities								
=					Community benefit	Respect the traditional and legal rights of local communities. Promote the long-term health and well-being of communities within or adjacent to the forest management area.	y	n	n	n	y
			Labor								
-	S	y			Right to organize	Observe fair labor practices across all operations Proposed Revision: (Add: and legal right to organize)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)
=					Wages	Comply with all applicable wage laws.	y	n	n	n	y
=					Compensation	Mechanisms are in place to address grievances and provide compensation for loss of, or damage to legal and customary rights property resources or livelihoods of local peoples damage to, legal and customary rights, property, resources, or livelihoods of local peoples.	y	n	n	n	y
-		y			Health and Safety	Meet or exceed all health and safety laws. Proposed Revision: Meet or exceed all applicable laws/ regulations covering health and safety of employees and their families.	y	n	y	y	y
			Public								
-		y			Public Consultation	Maintain consultation w/ people and groups directly affected by mgmt. operations. Provide a public summary of forest management plan. Proposed Revision: Public consultation should be central to the processes of assessment for cultural, social, and environmental values associated with the property and in management in cases where public values are present. Public consultation should be required for determination/verification of environmental components (e.g. forests of special conservation value) and social components (e.g. cultural values and community impacts) of forest management.	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-		y			Recreation, public access	Other benchmarks contained in the criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-Canada: Size and configuration of harvest blocks, considering concerns of recreationalists. Mgmt plan identifies and maintains remoteness based on social and economic importance of remoteness and the recreational and operational desire for motorized access. Additional riparian reserves to maintain recreational values. Mgmt. plan addresses recreational benefits. Monitor impacts on recreational use)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-		y			Aesthetics	Other benchmarks contained in the criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: (Use PEFC criteria: Forest management takes aesthetics into account "by maintaining for example forest structures, encouraging attractive trees, groves, and other features such as colours, flowers and fruits.)	y(y)	y(?)	y(n)	y(?)	y(y)
-		y			Public lands ***	More extensive consultation is required to respect public interests on public lands.	y	n	y	y	y
			Forest operation								
-		y			Economic viability	No measureable benchmark exists. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US criteria: Sufficient financial resources to ensure long-term mgmt. Responses to short-term finances limited to levels consistent w/ mgmt. plan. Sufficient investment in forest mgmt. to maintain/restore forest health and productivity)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)	y(y)
-		y			Utilization	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US Criteria)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)	y(y)

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			Legal compliance											
=					Forest law	Comply with forest-related laws and policies.	y	y	y	y	y			
=					Land tenure	Property rights and land tenure are clearly defined.	y	n	y	n	y			
			Planning											
=					Management plan	Management plan covers all 7 Sustainable Forest Management themes.	y	n	n	n	n			
			Monitoring											
=					Impact assessment	Monitor impacts of forest management activities.	y	n	n	n	n			
=					Monitoring	Monitoring covers all 7 Sustainable Forest Management themes.	y	n	y	y	y			
-		y			Continual improvement	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US criteria: Modify plan in response to detrimental environ effects, illegal/unauthorized activity every five years at a minimum. Address discrepancies between outcomes and expectations.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(y)	y(y)	y(y)			
			Training and research											
=					Training	Provide adequate training of workers to implement certification standards.	y	n	y	y	y			
-		y			Education and Outreach	Other benchmarks contained in the criteria address this issue - no specific benchmark has been established. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC-US criteria: orest owners or managers contribute to public education about forestry practices in conjunction with schools, community colleges, and/or other providers of training and education.)	y	n	?	y	n			
+					Research ***	Conduct research and data collection as needed for Sustainable Forest Management.	n	?	y	y	n			
			Infrastructure and Process											
+					Infrastructure and process	1) Responsibility for Sustainable Forest Management compliance is clearly assigned. 2) There is a mechanism for employee and public input on Sustainable Forestry Management compliance.	n	n	n	y	n			
			Wood sourcing											
=		y			Procurement	No specific benchmark - not considered practical for all forest operations to achieve. Proposed Revision: (Support efforts to thwart illegal logging and promote biodiversity conservation)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(y)	y(n)			

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=			Quality control	Accreditation system	Accreditation systems are specifically designed for forest m chain of custody.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Quality control	Surveillance of auditors	Desk audits and field audits of each certifier are conducted annually.	y	?	y	y	y
=			Transparency	Reporting	Accreditation reports are made publicly available.	y	?	y	y	y
-		y	Public input	Public input	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC: Consultation with range of stakeholders regarding environmental and socio-economic aspects of the standards. Notification of assessment 1 month in advance. List of interest groups that must be consulted in the case of larger operations. (FSC-STD-20-006))	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			International consistency	International codes of practice	Schemes are compliant with ISO Guides 62, 65, 66 or equivalent	n	n	n	n	y
=			Third party	Third party	Third party auditing is required.	y	n	?	?	?
-		y	Public input	Notification (of stakeholders by certifier)	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC criteria: Certifier provides publicly available summaries of audits. Corrective Action Requests included.)	y	n	?	y	?
=			Public input	Consultation (of stakeholders by certifier)	There is written policy that consultation with external stakeholders is sufficient to ensure compliance with standards.	y	n	y	y	y
=			Transparency	Public reporting	Summaries of certification results are made publicly	y	n	y	y	y
=			Dispute resolution	Dispute resolution	There is a formal dispute resolution process for certification for decisions	y	n	y	y	y
-		y	Quality control	Peer review	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Provided for larger operations***)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			Quality control	Audit frequency	Audits are conducted annually.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Quality control	Field inspection	Certification assessments include field audits.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Quality control	Certificate duration	The duration of certification contracts is 5 years or less.	y	y	y	y	y

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=			Compliance with international normative institutions	Compliance with international normative institutions	Claims comply with ISO 14020 and 14021 or equivalent.	?	?	?	?	?
=			Third party	Chain of Custody system	Only third party claims accepted by LEED. If other claims (e.g. 1st, 2nd party) are allowed, labels are designed to avoid possibility of confusion.	y	y	y	y	y
=			Transparency	Chain of Custody procedures	Written procedures made publicly available.					
-	S	y	Transparency	Types of product labels	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Require labeling system based upon FSC)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
-	S	y	Transparency	Minimum certified material	No specific benchmark - not considered a core issue, as long as other benchmarks are met. Proposed Revision: (Require labeling system based upon FSC)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			Restrictions on non-certified material	Acceptable non-certified sources for percent-based claims	No virgin or pre-consumer recycled wood from: 1) non-certified forests of special social and environmental conservation value, 2) genetically-modified organisms, and 3) harvesting that converts natural forest to plantations/ non-forest.	y	n	n	n	n
-		y	Restrictions on non-certified material	Definition of legality*	1) No wood from illegal harvest in protected areas. 2) Compliance w/ CITES. Proposed Revision: (Use FSC Criteria: Compliance w/ tenure and use rights, planning, royalties, transportation requirements. Low risk of systematic legal violations. Compliance w/ CITES.)	y(y)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)	y(n)
=			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.	y	y	y	y	y
				*Requirements in box may be used as screen for all wood used in green building.						