

Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Forest Management Audit Report

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Certificate # SCS-SFI-FM-00088N

*SFI 2022 Standards and Rules®, Forest Management
3rd Surveillance Audit*

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Public Summary Report

SFI® Forest Management Standard

SECTION A – PUBLIC SUMMARY

Foreword

Organization of the Report

This report of the results of your audit assessment is divided into two sections. Section A provides the public summary and background information that is required by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®. Section A is made available to the public and is intended to provide an overview of the audit process, the management programs and policies applied to the forest, and the results of the audit. Section A will be posted on the SFI website and Section B contains more detailed results and information for required SFI record-keeping or for use by the Certified Organization.

Principles of SFI Forest Management

The SFI 2022 Standards and Rules® for Forest Management promotes sustainable forestry and includes measures to *protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value*.

The 13 *SFI Principles* for Forest Management are:

1. **Sustainable Forestry:** To practice sustainable forestry to meet the needs of the present while promoting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, climate change mitigation, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation and aesthetics.
2. **Forest Productivity and Health:** To provide for regeneration after harvest and maintain the productive capacity of the forest land base, and to protect and maintain long-term forest and soil productivity. In addition, to protect forests from economically or environmentally undesirable levels of wildfire, pests, diseases, invasive species and other damaging agents and thus maintain and improve long-term forest health and productivity.
3. **Protection of Water Resources:** To protect water bodies and riparian areas, and to conform with forestry best management practices to protect water quality, to meet the needs of both human communities and ecological systems.
4. **Protection of Biological Diversity:** To manage forests in ways that protect and promote biological diversity, including animal and plant species, wildlife habitats, ecologically important species and native forest cover types.

5. **Aesthetics and Recreation:** To manage the visual impacts of forest operations, and to provide recreational opportunities for the public.
6. **Protection of Special Sites:** To manage lands that are ecologically important, geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.
7. **Responsible Fiber Sourcing in North America:** To use and promote among other forest landowners sustainable forestry that is both scientifically credible and economically, environmentally and socially responsible.
8. **Legal Compliance:** To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.
9. **Research:** To support advances in sustainable forest management through forestry research, science and technology.
10. **Training and Education:** To improve the practice of sustainable forestry through training and education programs.
11. **Community Involvement and Social Responsibility:** To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry on all lands through community involvement, socially responsible practices, and through recognition and respect of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional forest-related knowledge.
12. **Transparency:** To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the Forest Management Standard by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.
13. **Continual Improvement:** To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

1. General Information

1.1 Name, Contact, and Certificate Information

Organization Name	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Certification Representative	Adam James Forest Certification Consultant
Phone Number	651-259-5256 Adam.james@state.mn.us
Address	500 Lafayette Road St. Paul, MN 55155-4040
Audit Dates	24-27 September 2024
SFI Certificate Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-site. This Audit covered the requirements of the central organization and a subset of sites. These sites were selected based on proximity and length of time since previous audits. See Summary of Audit Itinerary for details of sampling.

2. Summary Description of the Management Unit(s)

Description of Ownership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: List of all sites/FMUs under scope of the certificate, including certified acres. The scope of the certificate includes forest management on Minnesota DNR managed forestry lands, fisheries lands in Lake County, Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands, and wildlife lands except for the Prairie Province, including SFI 2022 Rules and Standards, Section 2- Forest Management Standard Objectives 1-17. Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs) and State Parks are excluded. The SFI Forest Management number is SCS-SFI-FM-00088N. <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: List of all sites/FMUs under scope of the certificate, including certified acres. If a Group certificate provide a description of the group structure.
Total Forest Area (Acres)	4,997,383 Acres
Description of Sites and Group Membership under Scope	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single site description Refer to description within the ownership section. <input type="checkbox"/> SFI: List of all sites/FMUs under scope of the certificate, including certified acres. <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: Summary of Sites/FMUs under scope of certificate, including acres. <input type="checkbox"/> Group: Description of group structure.
Management Unit Maps	Provide a link to any public maps. https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/subsection/update.html
Forest Types and Key Ecological Features	General description of major timber types with a general characterization of management approaches used (natural regeneration vs. planting, thinning regimes, even-aged vs. uneven-aged silvicultural). Forest Management Planning in Minnesota is based upon the seven (7) forested ecological sections of the state. Landscape level guidance is provided within each of the plans. Detailed information is contained within the link provided within the Management Unit Maps section.
Forest Management Planning	The management plan outlining forest management policies and objectives: Section Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMP) for each forested ecological region within the state of Minnesota are utilized as the basis for planning and guidance.

Sustainable Harvest Level Assessment	Public Summary of how long-term harvest levels are determined, maintained, and monitored. <i>Note: Details supporting this description are provided with evidence under Performance Measure 1.1, when evaluated.</i> Sustainable Timber Harvest (STH) Analysis utilizes parameters developed at the ecological section scale to evaluate the effects of various harvest levels on natural resources statewide over the long term (100 years). The Section Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMPs) provide management guidance for many resource values at the ecological section scale, based on an assessment of the resources in the ecological section.
Monitoring Program Description	The DNR updates its forest inventory continuously, and that dataset is the basis for sustainable timber harvest level and stand exam list modeling at the statewide and ecological section scales. The DNR is revising inventory procedures to utilize the latest technologies and techniques. Inventory accomplishments are tracked as part of the DNR's work planning process. The Midpoint Assessment of Forest Management Strategic Direction: Sustainable Timber Harvest Implementation (PDF) report is an analysis of the DNR's implementation of its forest resource management strategic direction to date.

3. Audit Process

3.1 Applicable Standards and Audit Objectives

Certificate Code	SCS-SFI-FM-00088N		
Audit Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 1, Preliminary Review Audit		<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 2, Certification Audit
	<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Certification		<input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Additional Surveillance
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st , <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd , <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 rd or <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Surveillance		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer		<input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of Scope
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe):		
Applicable Standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: 2022 Forest Management. <i>Objectives 1-17. Exclusions, if applicable:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks <input type="checkbox"/> SFI: Audits of Multi-Sites <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: Forest Management, 2021. Standards 1-8 <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: AFF 2021 Standards for Independently Managed Groups. Sections 1-4 <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: ATFS 2021 Logo Use Guidelines		
Multiple Standards	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A, this is not a multi-standard nor a multi-CB audit.		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Combined	<input type="checkbox"/> Joint	<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated
	A combined audit is when a client is being audited against the requirements of two or more	A joint audit is when two or more auditing organizations cooperate to audit a single client.	An integrated audit is when a client has integrated the application of requirements of two or more management systems standards into a single management system and is being audited against more than one standard.
SFI Substitute or Modified Indicators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None, <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Substitute or Modified Indicators used and justification:		
Certificate Scope/ Statement	The scope of the certificate includes forest management on Minnesota DNR managed forestry lands, fisheries lands in Lake County, Land Utilization Project (LUP) lands, and wildlife lands except for the Prairie Province, including SFI 2022 Rules and Standards, Section 2- Forest Management Standard Objectives 1-17. Scientific and Natural Areas (SNAs)		

	and State Parks are excluded. The SFI Forest Management number is SCS-SFI-FM-00088N.
Description of Sampling Approach	Three of the Forestry areas were selected for the 3 rd surveillance audit. The Warroad, Baudette and Littlefork areas were audited in 2024.
Deviations from the Audit Plan	Were there any significant deviations from the Audit Plan? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. If yes, provide a description and explanation.

3.2 Audit Team

Auditor name:	Shannon Wilks	Auditor role:	SFI Lead Auditor/FSC Team Auditor
Qualifications:	Shannon Wilks has over 32 years of professional experience in the forest industry. Roles have included procurement, supply chain management, contract negotiations and environmental management/certification compliance. Experience includes 20 years with a global forest products company, 4 years of industrial site management and 8 years as a forest certification auditor. Mr. Wilks is a Controlled Wood Senior Lead Auditor for FSC® Chain of Custody, FSC Forest Management, FSC Controlled Wood, Lead auditor for Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Chain of Custody, SFI Fiber Sourcing, SFI Forest Management, SFI Certified Sourcing, American Tree Farm System®-Georgia Tree Farm Inspector #165961, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) Chain of Custody Standard and a Lead Auditor for ©Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP). Forest certification audit experience includes all major forested regions of the US and Canada. Mr. Wilks is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University with a Bachelor of Science-Forest Management degree. He is also a member of the Texas Forestry Association and holds a Texas Accredited Forester certification #158.		
Auditor name:	Sterling Griffin	Auditor role:	FSC Lead Auditor/SFI Team Auditor
Qualifications:	Sterling Griffin, Technical Specialist, Forest Certification – Sterling is a California Registered Professional Forester #2805 living in southern Oregon. He is a graduate of Purdue University with a degree in Forest Management. His career began with the U.S. Forest Service where he participated in long-term ecosystem productivity research in the Pacific Northwest. He later founded a consulting firm serving private landowners managing timber, water, recreation, fuels, and biodiversity. In 2007, he helped SCS establish its GHG verification program and later founded one of the largest U.S. developers of forest carbon credits. He is a FSC FM Lead Auditor, SFI FM auditor, and has evaluated over 20 million hectares of forestland around the world.		

3.3 Total Time Spent on Audit

A. Number of days spent on-site for the Audit	3.0
B. Number of auditors participating in on-site audit	2
C. Number of days spent by any technical experts (in addition to amount in line A)	0
D. Additional days spent on preparation, stakeholder consultation, and follow-up	1.75
E. Total number of person days used in audit	7.75

3.4 Summary of Audit Itinerary and Site Visits

Location(s) sampled	9/24/2004: Warroad Area; 9/25/24: Baudette Area; 9/26/24: Littlefork Area
Number of field sites	17

Summary of Cover Types visited	<p>Approximately seven (7) cover types were observed in 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •White Pine Plantation •Norway Pine •Rare/Endangered Plant Area •White Spruce •Jack Pine •Site Preparation Research Project •Open Lands
Summary Description /Number of Silviculture Activities inspected	<p>Approximately thirteen (13) different silviculture activities were observed in 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Thinning/Clear-Cut/Site Preparation/Planting •Thinning •Thinning •Variable Thinning with Gap Openings •Old Growth Forest •Clear-Cut •Natural Regeneration •Reforestation Project With Planting •Open Lands Management •Forest Roads and Infrastructure
Summary Description /Number of Harvest Areas inspected	Refer to details within the Site Notes.
Summary Description of Road infrastructure inspections	Refer to details within the Site Notes.

3.5 Evaluation of Management Systems

SCS deploys teams with expertise in forestry and other relevant fields to assess the certified organization's conformance to SFI standards and policies. Audit methods include reviewing documents and records, interviewing personnel and contractors, implementing sampling strategies to visit a broad number of forest cover and harvest prescription types, observing implementation of management plans and policies in the field, and collecting and analyzing relevant stakeholder input. When there is more than one team member, each member may review parts of the standards based on their background and expertise. Applicable aspects of the Management System under evaluation, such as Management System Review and other relevant Objectives, Performance Measures, and Indicators will also inform the audit team. On the final day of an evaluation, team members convene to deliberate the findings of the audit jointly. This involves an analysis of all relevant field observations, interviews, reviewed documents and records, and relevant stakeholder input. Where consensus among team members cannot be achieved due to lack of evidence, conflicting evidence or differences of interpretation of the standards, the team is instructed to report these in the certification decision section and/or in observations.

3.6. Changes to Management System

- ☒ There were no significant changes in the management and/or harvesting methods that affect the FME's conformance to the SFI standards, rules, and policies.

- ☐ Significant changes that affect the management system occurred since the last audit described as follows (describe):

3.7 Confirmation of Meeting Audit Objectives

The objectives for this audit included:

- Determination of the conformity of the client's management system, or parts of it, with audit criteria (Selected Objectives, Performance Measures, and/or Indicators).
- Determination of the ability of the management system to ensure the client meets applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements.
- Determination of the effectiveness of the management system to ensure the client can reasonably expect to achieve specified objectives.
- As applicable, identification of areas for potential improvement of the management system.

Audit Objectives were met	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If no, provide an explanation:
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4. Results of Audit

4.1 Grading of Possible Findings

Once a consensus is reached by the audit team, determinations of grading are made as to the level of findings. Grading of findings may occur as follows:

- *Major CARs:* Major Corrective Action Requests (CARs) occur when one or more of the SFI 2022 Standard(s) performance measures or indicators has not been addressed or has not been implemented to the extent that a systematic failure of a Certified Organization's SFI system to meet an SFI objective, performance measure or indicator occurs.
- *Minor CARs:* An isolated lapse in SFI 2022 Standard(s) implementation which does not indicate a systematic failure to consistently meet an SFI objective, performance measure or indicator.
- *Opportunities for Improvement:* Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs) are identified by audit team members where the client is in conformance, but there is a risk to conformance in the future. Nonconformance with the standard requirements cannot be recorded as OFIs.
- *Exceeds:* Practices that exceed the basic requirements of the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules for Forest Management or Fiber Sourcing.

4.2 Table of Audit Results and History of Findings for Certificate Period

This table lists Findings to the Performance Measure and/or Indicator level for each year of the certificate period and is updated annually.

SFI Objective	3 rd Annual Evaluation	4 th Annual Evaluation
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	(2024)	(year)
No findings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13	Minor NC: 2024.1	
14		
15		
16		
17		
COC		
Trademark		
Group		
Other		

4.3 General Description of Evidence of Conformity

This section summarizes the general evidence found to verify conformity that is detailed in Appendix 5.

SFI Objective	Summary of Evidence
Objective 1. Forest Management Planning. To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion or afforestation of ecologically important areas.	Not Evaluated in 2024.
Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity. To ensure long-term forest productivity and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, deploying integrated pest management strategies, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.	Not Evaluated in 2024.
Objective 3. Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources. To protect the water quality and water quantity of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies.	Review of all field sites confirmed accurate maps identifying rivers, streams and other riparian features. Buffers and protection areas were identified on ground with monitoring during harvesting operations confirmed. No evidence of BMP violations was observed on field sites. Qualified Logger Training requirements are

SFI Objective	Summary of Evidence
	documented within all written contracts and harvest permits.
<p>Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity To maintain or advance the conservation of biological diversity at the stand- and landscape- level and across a diversity of forest and vegetation cover types and successional stages including the conservation of forest plants and animals, aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.</p>	<p>Review of field sites included well defined buffers along water features, irregular shaped harvest areas, retention of snags and tree-islands for diversity, use of downed woody debris and seeding of roads/decks for wildlife. Various ages of stands were observed across the landscape creating diversity and habitat for multiple wildlife species. Certificate Holder's personnel were professional foresters, technicians, ecologists and biologist. Organization utilizes credible resources to identify sensitive species of flora or fauna prior to implementing forest management activities. GIS layers are available to identify occurrences for protection.</p>
<p>Objective 5. Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits. To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites. To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 7. Efficient Use of Fiber Resources. To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 8. Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights. To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.</p>	<p>Minnesota has statutes mandated within their regulations for the protection, recognition, contact and training requirements for recognized Tribes within the state. Personnel, contact processes and training have been implemented to ensure compliance.</p>
<p>Objective 9: Climate Smart Forestry To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 10. Fire Resilience and Awareness To limit susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of fire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance To comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, international, federal, provincial, state, and local.</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.
<p>Objective 12. Forestry Research, Science and Technology. To invest in research, science, and</p>	Not Evaluated in 2024.

SFI Objective	Summary of Evidence
technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.	
Objective 13. Training and Education. To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry through appropriate training and education programs.	Minnesota DNR supports the Minnesota SIC Committee financially and with in-kind support for the development of education programs and logger training requirements. All forest management operations were conducted by trained and qualified personnel. One non-conformance was identified for not meeting the organization's interdisciplinary structure of forest management.
Objective 14. Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach. To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.	Minnesota DNR maintains membership within the MN SIC Committee which provides educational outreach materials for private landowners and training for harvesting permittees. The organization also has detailed and significant resources published on their public website supporting forestry, recreation, research and various other nature focused resources.
Objective 15. Public Land Management Responsibilities. To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources maintains significant opportunities for public input during all phases of forest management activities. Additional avenues are available to solicit complaints or concerns.
Objective 16. Communications and Public Reporting To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.	Review of SFI website confirms previous audit's Public Summary Report is available. Evidence reviewed during audit confirms Annual Progress Report was submitted prior to deadline.
Objective 17. Management Review and Continual Improvement: To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.	Review of Annual Management Review conducted by senior management in August 2024 confirms compliance to requirements.

4.4 Existing Corrective Action Requests, OFIs, and Exceeds

Finding Number: 2023.1	
Finding and Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):
SFI Indicator:	11.1.3: Demonstration of commitment to legal compliance through available regulatory action information.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Conformity <input type="checkbox"/> Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds	
Finding 2023.1	

Finding Number: 2023.1		
<p>Funding to MN DNR provided by the US Fish and Wildlife service under the Pittman-Robertson act has been suspended in August, based on FWS identifying non-compliances with the terms of the grant program. The specific non-compliances are related to the ability of the DNR to provide documentation to demonstrate the wildlife purposes of timber sales on projects or properties that have received funding under this program. Pre-sale documentation is essential for the service to ensure compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), National Historic Preservation Act and other grant requirements.</p> <p>Auditors observed that MN DNR and FWS are actively working on resolving the issue, but at the time of the audit the DNR was in non-compliance with the grant program.</p>		
Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be prepared by Organization)	<p><i>FME should describe actions to be taken to prevent <u>reoccurrence of the non-conformity</u>. This is due to the lead auditor within 5 days of closing meeting</i></p> <p>Procedures for Forest Habitat Management on Lands administered by the Fish & Wildlife Division and letter from US Fish & Wildlife Service was submitted confirming the actions were addressed.</p>	
SCS Review of Action Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected (explain):
	SCS representative: Shannon Wilks	Date: 10/3/2023
Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization	<p>Auditor review of the Procedures for Forest Habitat Management on Lands administered by the Fish & Wildlife Division and letter from US Fish & Wildlife Service confirmed the MNDNR had corrected the non-conformance to a satisfactory level. Additional implementation work was being conducted and documented within the letter from USFWS.</p>	
SCS Review of Implemented Actions	<p>Review of corrective actions documented within the Management Review conducted by MNDNR on 13 August 2024. Closed by auditor on 26 September 2024-SW.</p>	
Status of Finding:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> Other decision (refer to description above)	

Finding Number: OFI 2023.1		
Finding and Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):	
SFI Indicator:	<p>4.3.1. Use of information such as existing NatureServe or natural heritage data or expert advice in identifying or selecting <i>ecologically important</i> sites for protection.</p>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Conformity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds		
<p>Finding OFI 2023.1</p> <p>Recommendation to identify occurrences of RTE species within Permit Supervision Record, or other documentation that is maintained at a stand level detail before any ground disturbing operations are conducted. Records observed did not clearly identify occurrences or non-occurrences of protected</p>		

Finding Number: OFI 2023.1		
species of flora and fauna during audit. Specific examples were observed Site #B015319.		
Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be prepared by Organization)	N/A-OFI	
SCS Review of Action Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected (<i>explain</i>):
	SCS representative:	Date:
Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization	The Department has several current locations to indicate that a check of appropriate databases has been completed. These do not currently include detailed records of findings or lack of findings. To address this issue both the Division of Forestry and the Division of Fish and Wildlife reviewed their record keeping systems. Both divisions have new record management systems or applications in development. These systems were reviewed to ensure that they will have the ability and requirement to document needed items. While waiting on the long-term correction, the programs are directing staff to make notes to these effects in comment sections of current databases.	
SCS Review of Implemented Actions	Review of corrective actions documented within the Management Review conducted by MNDNR on 13 August 2024. Closed by auditor on 26 September 2024-SW.	
Status of Finding:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> Other decision (<i>refer to description above</i>)	

Finding Number: OFI 2023.2		
Finding and Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):	
SFI Indicator:	15.1.2. Appropriate contact with local <i>stakeholders</i> over forest management issues through state, provincial, federal, or independent collaboration.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Conformity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds Finding OFI 2023.2 Recommendation to improve communication for specific invasive species, educational resources and mitigation efforts needed to prevent spread for public stakeholders. Specific example observed on Silviculture Treatment Site for Japanese Knotweed on Premier Trout Stream-Garvin Brook.		
Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be prepared by Organization)	N/A-OFI	

Finding Number: OFI 2023.2		
SCS Review of Action Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected (<i>explain</i>):
	SCS representative: Shannon Wilks	Date: 26 September 2024
Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization	The Department has an extensive program for the identification and control of invasive species. While this OFI did not require formal response or action meetings and discussions were held with leaders in this program. In these meetings it was determined that we do share significant information on invasive species but attention and effort would be given to sharing information where control actions are being taken and/or in high public use area. No formal direction was developed, but increased awareness within the appropriate programs should raise the level of compliance with this indicator.	
SCS Review of Implemented Actions	Review of corrective actions documented within the Management Review conducted by MNDNR on 13 August 2024. Closed by auditor on 26 September 2024-SW.	
Status of Finding:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> Other decision (<i>refer to description above</i>)	

4.5 New Corrective Action Requests, OFIs, and Exceeds

Finding Number: 2024.1		
Finding and Deadline	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):	
SFI Indicator:	13.1.3: Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Conformity <input type="checkbox"/> Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds Minor NC 2024.1: Procedures were not properly implemented for Permit #X018268 based on interviews with personnel and review of Direction Memo #2022-1. Contact request from Ecological and Water Resources were documented on the SEL. Interviews confirmed a discussion was conducted between the groups but not closed by Forestry personnel as directed within the Direction Memo Section C. The sale prescription was implemented which resulted in an unexpected result by EWR personnel.		
Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be prepared by Organization)	1) Immediate Action Taken The Direction Memo 2022-1 was distributed initially in 2021, updated, and redistributed recently (September 16, 2024). Staff involved with forest management were asked to review the direction in upcoming meetings, training events, and discussions and implement. This audit finding will be communicated to staff. 2) Root Cause Analysis The Direction Memo was originally sent on March 22, 2021. Staff did not fulfill the	

Finding Number: 2024.1		
	<p>requirements of this direction on the site in question by documenting the outcome of the contact request. Coordinating staff expected different outcomes after the contact. The forester received the recommendations but after reviewing the recommendation, and relying on their experience and training, developed a silviculture prescription that they believed was best for the site. The forester considered the matter closed. The staff person who shared the input expected their recommendation to be implemented. This misunderstanding between staff may have been prevented if the procedures in Direction Memo 2022-1 had been followed.</p> <p>3) Person/People Responsible</p> <p>Adam James—Forest Certification Program Consultant will work with a variety of DNR staff at multiple levels across the divisions to address this finding.</p> <p>4) Proposed Timeline</p> <p>By year's end, Adam, program staff, and each divisions' leadership will evaluate training opportunities and communication strategies to ensure compliance with Direction Memo 2022-1. Possible options include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating elements of DM 2022-1 into existing procedure documents. • Reviewing the direction at applicable training events. • Reminders at program, region, or local area meetings. <p>The Department continues to develop the planning and appraisals modules of the 4Trees software package. The design includes an automatic generation of an "activity" when a contact or joint site visit is requested. This activity will need to be completed, i.e., closed out, to complete the planning activity. Production release of the module is scheduled for spring/summer of 2025 with internal communication and training as part of the plan.</p>	
SCS Review of Action Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected (<i>explain</i>):
	SCS representative: Shannon Wilks	Date: 10/1/24
Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization		
SCS Review of Implemented Actions	Completion of corrective actions need to be validated at the next audit or 12 months from closing meeting date of 9/27/2024.	
Status of Finding:	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> Other decision (<i>refer to description above</i>)	

5. Certification Decision

The certificate holder has demonstrated continued overall conformance to the applicable Sustainable Forestry Initiative standards. The SCS annual audit team recommends that the certificate be sustained, subject to subsequent annual audits and the Certified Organization's response to any open CARs.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:	

SECTION B – CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

Appendix 1 –Site Notes, and Interviewees

Below are audit team notes of sites visited, audit activities completed during the audit, locations visited, and names and titles of staff and stakeholders interviewed particularly *government agencies, community groups, affected Indigenous Peoples or conservation organizations*.

SCS notes that auditing is based on a sampling process of available information.

2024 MN DNR SFI FM Audit-Day 1

9/24/2024-Shannon Wilks

Attendees:

Sterling Griffin, FSC Lead Auditor
 Adam Jones, Certification Manager
 Ted Dick, MN DNR Wildlife Biologist
 Charlie Tucker, Red Lake WMA Manager
 Katie Gray, Timber, Utilization and Marketing Supervisor
 Rebecca Rickaby, Assistant Supervisor Warroad Area
 Trevor Olsen, Forestry Technician
 Anna Heinrich, Forestry Technician
 Adam Fisher, Warroad Area Supervisor

Theresa Ebbenga, Regional Director NW
 Adam Munstenteiger, Region Forestry Manager
 Nathan Kestner, Region EWR Manager
 Adam Maleski, Regional Non Game Specialist
 Nick Jensen, EWR Regional Ecologist
 Shane Delaney, Forester
 John Stelter, Forester Timber Program Lead
 Brilyn Brecka, AST Wildlife Area Manager

All sites observed had completed Stand Exam List (SEL) process 2021-2030, Appraisal documents, public bid notices and permits for sold stands. Surveys are conducted during SEL process for rare/threatened/endangered species of plants and animals. SEL list reviewed by DNR Fish and Forestry Archaeologist for cultural, historical and archaeological features.

Warroad Area: NW area of state. Administrative requirements over six counties. Large state land area. Three main offices; six WMA Areas; Eco and Waters Area; 3 State Parks. Largest State Forest-Beltrami 703k acres. 7 vacancies in area currently. Average 84 fires per year. Cooperation with 22 volunteer fire departments. 48 fire wardens, heli-base and tanker base. Average 71,871 cords per yr/5 yr average. Primary species are aspen and red pine. Silviculture-3.3 million seedlings in last 10 years. Aerial seeding of 3900 acres, TSI on 2000 acres, site preparation on 4000 acres. 210 miles of roads/125 miles of MMR (minimum maintenance roads). Annual kindergarten field visits for fire prevention. Stakeholders include Indigenous people, fire departments, ohv and snowmobiles and soil/watershed districts. Tablet reporting of invasive species occurrences-Ed Maps. Integration within mapping system is conducted. Forestry-Application on mobile devices for invasive species reporting-MORE. Average of 60% from Stand Exam List to Appraisals. EWR reviews for RTE, historical and cultural occurrences during appraisals. Foresters check NHI checks prior to harvesting. Guidance documents include Timber Sales Manual and SFRMP. SRM-Silviculture and Roads Module. All timber sales are maintained within Timber sale platform. Checklist verified prior to stands being approved for auction. 2 auctions are conducted each year-public notification. Inter-Disciplinary framework established to provide guidance for Forestry, Wildlife and Ecological Resource Divisions for coordination. No major complaints or regulatory issues were confirmed with personnel. No tribal issues were known. Current audit by USFWS to document wildlife values on WMA/AMA lands. Form for approval has been submitted (Habitat Value Forms) submitted for approval from Federal OIC. Initial approval of form and grant funding released. Cultural occurrences are documented within the state list; reviewed on annual basis during ASEL (annual stand exam list) process.

Red Lake WMA: Largest in state-325,000 acres. Multiple SNA and peatland. Administrator of 90k acres of LUP lands. Belong to USFWS as National Refuge but leased to state for management. Resource Management Plan-Executed by Commissioner in Summer

2023. Increase habitat and conservation. Primary goal is wildlife habitat. System plans are in progress for smaller WMAs. SFRMP applies to WMAs.

1. FAW-Site Preparation and Seeding-Permit X017359: Approximately 40 acres- thinning and clear cut. Species is Norway pine and mixed spruce. Annual Stand review, tagged for joint visit. Scarification methods were reviewed. Increase diversity within the white pine plantation. Seeding with herbaceous seeding with some long-lived conifer species. Maps and notes documented on maps. DNR performed the scarification with internal crew. Overall goal to improve the diversity and improve wildlife habitat. Chopped with dozer in 2022; seeding occurred in Fall 2022. No RTE occurrences on site. Cultural resources (old homesite) identified from old fence posts-area protected with no activity within area. No water on site. Over story of white spruce with goal to add diversity of species. Road is mowed and part of hunter walking trail. Goal to maintain larger White Spruce (83 yr old) for conifer canopy. Acreage goals by cover types are established within Red Lake Management Plan. Forest health concerns from budworm. Dead stems of spruce within stand. Habitat is conducive for raptors-goshawks, bears and rough grouse. Firewood removal was restricted to maintain downed woody debris.
2. Forestry-Marked Thinning: Permit #X018269-27-acre pine marked with yellow paint. Beltrami Island State Forest-Northern Fire dependent habitat identified. State imperiled natural community identified by EWR. Maintain the species composition during harvesting operation noted within comment field of SEL. Prescription to harvest larger mature trees. No additional comments noted for occurrences of RTE, cultural or historical identification on site. Maps with old landings documented. Harvest operations were completed in Q4-2022. E H MLEP qualified logging permittee purchased and harvested the timber sale. No water or crossings on site-area consisted of 4 parcels identified with blue painted boundaries. Red boundary established for border with Tribal lands. Annual stand exam list sent to all Tribal representatives for 60 day period or longer if needed. Period is usually mid-January to mid-March; comments are requested and additional 30 days extended during the public comment period. Local communication is conducted with tribal foresters. Red boundary confirmed. No damages to retained stand, snags retained. Cavities observed within snags. Low stumps and utilization of fiber.
3. FAW-Moonworts (fern) Survey Project-Winner Day Use Silo: Due to their small size and cryptic nature, many plant species in the genus Botrychium, commonly known as moonworts, are considered rare and have been included in the Minnesota list of endangered, threatened and special concern species (ETS). Northern Minnesota, specifically the Beltrami Island State Forest and Red Lake Wildlife Management Area, has become renowned as a regional hot spot of moonwort activity after initial survey efforts in the late 2000's revealed established populations in some unusual locations, including abandoned 1930's-era homestead sites. Long lived perennial plant-up to 20 years. Majority of life is spent below ground. Above ground is to release spores and reproduce. Experts identified occurrences based on training and experience with identification in other areas of state. External rare plant practicum is required by outside contractors. Site has been surveyed multiple times. Management within forested stands contain a 250 foot buffer. Guidance for opening/homesite management includes: apply an approximately 50' buffer around the NHIS occurrence during management activities; avoid equipment travel, slash piling and landing placement within this buffer area; preferably conduct operations during frozen conditions, or at least outside of the main growing season for these species: early June-July.
4. Forestry-Permit #X019041: 49 acre Norway Pine yellow pine marked thinning and all Jack Pine. Leave reserved unmarked Norway Pine completed in Q4-2023. Conventional equipment utilized with forwarder. Harvested during extreme wet conditions. Removal of snags within 100 feet of public road. Permit purchased by E H MLEP qualified logging permittee. EWR comments to maintain species and forest cover type after harvesting. Jack pine suppression in understory of Norway pine and reaching end of life stage. Ability to increase species diversity will most likely be accomplished during next re-entry in 10+ years. Comments documented during SEL. Confirmed additional check of NHI prior to harvesting operations. No water on stand; natural boundaries utilized. Paint added to western boundary to assist operator on harvesting machine. Minimal damages to retained stand. No soil compaction issues. Contact gap on SEL-EWR noted contact; no record of contact from Forestry.
5. Jack Pine brush saw study: Approximately 152 acres started in 2023 and completed in spring 2024. -Paulsburg Wildfire in 2015. Salvage operations commenced. Some sites planted, aerial seeding and natural regeneration. Jack Pine/ Norway Pine planted at 800 trees per acre. Natural regeneration from wildfire impacts facilitated Jack Pine regeneration. Surveys

confirmed 11k Jack pine seedlings/acre. Pre commercial thinning with brush-saw contractors. Goal to leave quality Jack Pine, all red pine and remove other competition in 7 foot spacing. Sites have been thinned to 945 JP and 151 NP per acre.

6. Permit #X018607: Active 58 acre Aspen clear-cut (summer ground harvested; winter ground not completed). Purchased by C Logging MLEP qualified logging permittee and began operations in Q1-2022. Northern block (A53) and western block (A45) have been harvested. Approximately 14 acres have been completed. Reserves are protected as island/clump. Scattered aspens and conifers retained within the clear-cut areas. Scattered logging debris required within stand. Guidelines and policies are a factor in determining operability of sites. (BMP, Rutting AOSMCR). Sale boundaries are painted blue. Additional stand of Tamarack identified if available for harvest. No water or crossings on harvest blocks. Last activity was Q3-2022 due to lack of frozen ground conditions in 2023. Permit expires in May 2025. Aspen coppice regeneration observed in the clear-cut operations. No occurrences of RTE, historical or archaeological identified.

2024 MN DNR SFI FM Audit-Day 2

9/25/2024-Shannon Wilks

Attendees:

Sterling Griffin, FSC Lead Auditor
 Adam Jones, Forest Certification Program Consultant
 Ted Dick, MN DNR Wildlife Biologist
 Nick Jensen, , EWR Regional Ecologist
 Katie Gray, Timber, Utilization and Marketing Supervisor
 Charlie Tucker, Red Lake WMA Manager
 Adam Munstenteiger, Region Forestry Manager
 Kevin Dorow, Forest Technician
 David Dragon, Area Forestry Supervisor
 Blane Klemek, NW Regional Wildlife Manager
 Talesha Karish, Asst. Wildlife Manager Baudette
 Ethan Erdmann, Forester (9 yrs)
 Kristen Cook, Forester (1.5 yrs)
 Brandon Quern, Forest Tech Baudette (2 yrs)
 Becky Lein, Forester
 Nick Abel, Silviculture Forester
 Brady Hasbargen, Whitfish Creek Enterprises
 Daren Becklund, Skidder/Delimiter Operator
 Luke Courchaine, Operator

Baudette Area: Glacial soils with European settlements

beginning in early 1909s. main cover types Aspen, Spruce and

other lowland conifers. 80% of land base is publicly owned. Historical fire in 1910 impacting over 360k acres.

Agassiz Lowlands Subsection Ecological classification category. Forestry owns 437k lands, Wildlife 156k acres and

2.6k acres by Parks. 90+% of sales sold each year, majority pulpwood market. 10.5k acres designated as old

growth. Annual offered volume is 70-80k cords (2021 and up) compared to historical average of 116.5k acres.

Accelerated harvest of older aspen stands to diversify species composition. Increased conflict from recreational users of public roads with logging. Forests are open with ability to utilize roads for off road vehicles. Some roads are closed to recreational user vehicles. Forest Officers with law enforcement authority are able to enforce forestry regulations.

All sites observed had completed Stand Exam List (SEL) process 2021-2030, Appraisal documents, public bid notices and permits for sold stands. Surveys are conducted during SEL process for rare/threatened/endangered species of plants and animals. SEL list reviewed by DNR Fish and Forestry Archaeologist for cultural, historical and archaeological features.

1. Forestry-B015659: 23 acre Norway Pine Thinning harvested by E H MLEP qualified logging permittee completed in summer 2024. Prescription of harvesting every third tree or as directed. Age of stand is approximately 43 years old. Left side of public road is managed by wildlife and thinned heavier. Heavier thinning utilized to promote natural regeneration on WMA area. Harvesting was conducted with processor and forwarder. SEL completed in 2022. NHI reviewed in July 2024 prior to harvesting operations. Natural boundary with age class variation for adjoins stands. Land classification system reviewed. Sharp-tail grouse habitat management within the Red Lake WMA. Sale closed and escrow released. Site level guidelines are utilized to establish and review considerations of appraisals. Deviations from the guidelines require input. The data is stored within management system for each stand listed on the SEL. Harvest operations were conducted in professional manner, minimal damage to residual stand. Contract provisions were met.
2. WMA-Pine Thinning/Clearcut: Permit X018392: 67 acres harvested by E H MLEP qualified logging permittee. Joint visit with forestry and wildlife to adjust thinning operations and create additional openings for wildlife benefits. Multiple cutting blocks with primary being 56 acres. Some stands are thinned with one block containing a clear-cut. Variability with multiple openings. Harvesting began in June 2023 and completed in April 2024. Blue painted boundary on part of stand. Imperiled plant community adjacent to harvest area identified by EWR and noted within SEL. Protection was recommended and documented for occurrence. Reserve area retained due to clear-cut stand. Reserve of 5% of area and 10% reserved on WMA land. No water or crossings within stand. Target of 90 basal area on retained stands. Reserve area painted in blue paint and confirmed with no equipment incursion observed.
3. FAW Habitat Project: Conducted on site #2. Changes to harvesting method, utilizing scarification and piling of debris. Seeding planned of Jack pine, white pine and spruce to facilitate diversification of future cover type. Agriculture disc utilized for additional help in breaking the soil layer. Northern 1/3 stand completed. Mulching head utilized on southern part of stand, less seeding occurred due to availability. Goal to increase diversity for habitat into the future.
4. Red Lake WMA: Added Stop-Variable Thinning Operation. Unscheduled stop to observe thinning prescription with gap openings and additional openings created for wildlife habitat.
5. EWR-Norris Camp South Old Forest Management Complex (OFMC): Old growth forest-Old homestead site, picnic and public use. Site is surrounded by 40 acre designated Old Growth. Stand is approximately 137 years old; areas of mature with minimal amount of human disturbance. 330 foot buffer management zone established around Old Growth stands; limitations of only 25% of area can be harvested based on

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certain parameters. 340 acres surround designated old growth stand. Management Opportunity Area (MOA) identified within surrounding 340 acres. Template created with description and future direction documented. (Policy updated in May 2024 -consolidated series of historical amendments. Old growth stands are identified and documented within GIS system. Natural origin red pine-originated from natural fire event in 1800s. Old growth guidelines are documented within Old Growth Forest Policy.

6. Forestry-Spruce Clear-Cut partially harvested: Permit #X018268-125.5 acres Timber sale conducted by E H MLEP qualified logging permittee -Clear cut with reserves, painted and natural boundaries. White spruce and cedar retention maintained in reserves. Contact by EWR with forestry to retain old growth characteristics of cedar. Long lived conifers were a focus for retention. Rare plants mentioned that live in Spruce /Cedar- information. Multiple blocks with one located within OFMC area. No wildlife issues confirmed. Strip harvesting not conducted as recommended by EWR. Forestry indicated recommendation was varied due to species and historical blowdown risk-Balsam Fir. Harvesting completed in Q2-2023.
Minor NC 2024.1: Procedures were not properly implemented for Permit #X018268 based on interviews with personnel and review of Direction Memo #2022-1. Contact request from Ecological and Water Resources were documented on the SEL. Interviews confirmed a discussion was conducted between the groups but not closed by Forestry personnel as directed within the Direction Memo Section C. The sale prescription was implemented which resulted in an unexpected result by EWR personnel.
7. Forestry-Natural regeneration Jack Pine: Non-serotinous cones opened with sun exposure. Multiple harvested blocks with aspen and other species. Harvest operations were conducted in 2007/2008. Adequate regeneration with mixture of aspen, Jack pine and herbaceous/woody understory. Prime habitat for spruce grouse. Monitoring was conducted in 2012 with 400 trees per acre minimum free to grow stems established to ensure proper regeneration.

Interview:

Brady Hasbargen, Whitefish Creek Enterprises , Board Member of MN Timber Producers:- on site visit, prescription reviewed, boundaries defined, Avenza maps and hard copy maps utilized. Routine weekly or more inspections confirmed from MN DNR. No RTE, Historical or cultural sites. Crew has attended QLP safety training. Board member of MN Loggers Education Program. Coordinates with SFI SIC. All machines with fire equipment, ppe equipment, spill kits and first aid kits. Crew meetings are conducted informally and reviewed on a frequent basis. Check in process utilized if working alone. Cell phones and 2-way radios are utilized for communication. WMA-Red Lakes WMA no timber harvesting. Big impacts to logging force. Sales are offered with restrictions that prevent harvesting. Not financially feasible based on prescriptions. High turnover of personnel is frustrating for permittee. Sale preparation inexperience is causing problems with harvesting. Log a Load for Kids load was delivered from MN DNR site currently working.

2024 MN DNR SFI FM Audit-Day 3

9/26/2024-Shannon Wilks

Attendees: Sterling Griffin, FSC Lead Auditor
Adam Jones, Forest Certification Program Consultant
Ted Dick, MN DNR Wildlife Biologist-Forest Habitat Supervision
Katie Gray, Timber, Utilization and Marketing Supervisor
Brittany King, Silviculture Forester
Austin Fischer, Asst.. Wildlife Manager
Ben West, Area Forest Supervisor
Perry Bovitz, Field Forester

Kirby Readman, Senior Forester
 Amanda West, Timber Program Forester
 Jim Hansen, Ast. Wildlife Manager
 John McDonald, Ast. Forest Supervisor
 Gaea Crozier, Regional Ecological and Water Resources Manager

All sites observed had completed Stand Exam List (SEL) process 2021-2030, Appraisal documents, public bid notices and permits for sold stands. Surveys are conducted during SEL process for rare/threatened/endangered species of plants and animals. SEL list reviewed by DNR Fish and Forestry Archaeologist for cultural, historical and archaeological features.

Littlefork Area-15 person staff, Historical 99% glacial coverage. Heavy peat component. Approximately 608k managed land. 352k acres productive timberland. 89% of lands are School Trust. Heavy timber harvesting within area. Approximately 96k cords annual target. Spruce top market. Challenges-warming climate with access to summer ground is limited. Heavy historical extensions required in timber sales. Contractor and personnel shortages. High demand and low supply. Heavy mortality impacts on Tamarack due to beetle kill. Positive cooperative agreements with other agencies and companies. Heavy dependence on forestry and logging in the area. Approximately 40 sales on auction per year. Positive relationships with other agencies, external partners and 2 Tribes confirmed by Assistant Wildlife Manager. No lands inter mixed within Tribal land but bordering property. Notification required for use of infrastructure on tribal land. Permits are issued for special products required-no tribal requests in past year.

1. Forestry: Permit #B015338-53 acre Norway Pine thinning and clear cut. Harvesting operations conducted by 2 organization working under FSC & SFI Certified Company-PCA. Reserves of white pine, maples and elms. Cavity trees retained. Ground sprayed with Round-up Pro, disc trenched for reforestation. Planting of Norway, Jack and White Pine. Goal is a mixed stand in the future. NHI for plant identification near harvest site. Coordination with EWR confirmed no occurrences on site. Harvesting operations completed in Q4-2022. Permit executed for contractor to work in wetlands. No water or crossings was confirmed on site. Retention confirmed and protected-5% of sale area. Boundaries defined, good utilization and clean harvest operation. Review of Contractor-Future Forests for site preparation:
2. Forestry-Permit #X018299: 41 acre Jack Pine clear-cut with reserves harvested by D Logging MLEP qualified logging permittee. Reserve of snags, den trees and white pines. NHI occurrence for plant community identified by EWR. Avoidance of slash piles on landings was noted. Observation confirmed slash piles were retained within harvested areas. Operations began in Q4-2022 and completed in Q4-2022. Jack pine has been aerial seeded in Spring 2024. Monitoring will be conducted in year 4 to ensure adequate survival and free to grow threshold achieved. Approximately 700 Jack pines per acre. Other mixed conifer species will regenerated naturally. Regeneration checks are scheduled within SRM (Silviculture and Roads Model) until the new 4Trees system becomes operational. Forest Management Guidelines and Forest Management Wildlife Guidelines.
3. Forestry-Anchor chain Site Preparation: multiple blocks to assess regeneration of Jack pine. Observed site with anchor chain and barrel (most aggressive). Variety of chains were utilized with baseline of no chain to study the rates. Project began in 2018; hand seeded in Fall 2018. Designated plots established and first check done in 2020. Monitoring will conducted until free to grow is reached. Case studies are published within Great Lakes Silviculture Library (Created by University of Minnesota)cooperative with members able to provide comments. No chemicals were utilized on site.

4. WMA: Littlefork River WMA-640 acres managed as open lands. Wild parsnip and Meadow knapweed treated as invasive by chemical herbicide (Escort XP). Records confirmed proper use. Primary management is grouse habitat. Public hunting is available. Site is permanently managed as open land due to deed restriction from donated land. No NHS occurrences were identified. Checks are conducted on annual basis. Perpetual Conservation Agreement administered by USFWS. Prescribed burning is scheduled but no recent activity in previous 10 years. WMA will be divided into 4 burn units. Goal to maintain early successional habitat. Heavier use during g upland bird and deer season.

Appendix 2 – Meeting Attendance and Stakeholder Consultations

Meeting Attendance for Opening and Closing Meetings

Copies of sign-in sheets are required records for Opening and Closing Meetings.

1. Summary						
Meeting title	2024 Forest Certification Audit – Opening Meeting					
Attended participants	26					
Start time	9/20/24					
End time	9/20/24					
Meeting duration	1h 52m					
Average attendance time	1h 31m 27s					
2. Participants						
Name	First Join	Last Leave	In-Meeting Duration	Email	Participant ID (UPN)	Role
James						
Lilly						
Levine						
Schindler						
Westreich						
Strommen						
Harrington						
Dubuque						
Rivers						
Jensen						
Tillma						

1. Summary					
Smith					
Wolf					
Thielen					
Sterling Griffin 9/20/24					
Richards					
Dick					
Kestner					
Naramore					
Drimel					
Klemek					
Gray					
Munstenteiger					
Arends					
VandeLinde					
Quincer					
3. In-Meeting Activities					
Name	Join Time	Leave Time	Duration	Email	Role
James					
Lilly					
Levine					
Schindler					
Westreich					
Strommen					
Harrington					
Dubuque					
Rivers					
Jensen					
Tillma					
Tillma					
Smith					

1. Summary
Wolf
Thielen
Sterling Griffin 9/20/24
Richards
Dick
Kestner
Naramore
Drimel
Klemek
Gray
Munstenteiger
Arends
Arends
VandeLinde
Quincer

Audit Attendance Sheet

Company Name Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Location Baudette, MN

Type of Audit SFI FM/FSC FM 3rd Surveillance Audit (Closing Meeting) ; Note Names with * attended in person, others attended via virtual platform.

Opening Meeting Date _____ Closing Meeting Date 9/27/2024

Name	Position	Attended Opening Meeting?	Attended Closing Meeting?
Shannon Wilks*	SFI Lead Auditor		Y
Sterling Griffin*	FSC Lead Auditor		Y
Adam James*	MN DNR Forest Certification Consultant		Y
Katie Gray*	Timber Utilization and Marketing Supervisor		Y

Name	Position	Attended Opening Meeting?	Attended Closing Meeting?
Sarah Strommen	MN DNR Commissioner		Y
Barb Naramore	MN DNR Deputy Commissioner		Y
Shannon Lottammer	MN DNR Assistant Commissioner		Y
Katie Smith	MN DNR EWR Director		Y
Grant Wilson	MN DNR Central Region Director		Y
Andrew Arends	MN DNR Forest Operations and Management Section Manager		Y
Jon Drimmel	MN DNR Forest Operations Section Manager		Y
Paul Dubuque	MN DNR Silviculturist		Y
Ted Dick	MN DNR Region Wildlife Biologist		Y
Nick Jensen	Regional EWR Ecologist		Y
Nathan Kestner	Region EWR Manager		Y
Blane Klemek	MN DNR NW Region Wildlife Manager		Y
Lacy Levine	MN DNR Conservation Management and Rare Resources		Y
Lonnie Lilly	MN DNR Region Forestry Manager		Y
Adam Munstenteiger	Region Forestry Manager		Y
Tim Quincer	MN DNR NE Region Forestry/Wildlife Coordinator		Y
Name	Position	Attended Opening Meeting?	Attended Closing Meeting?
Jess Richards	MN DNR Assistant Commissioner		Y
Pat Rivers	MN DNR Deputy Director Fish and Wildlife		Y
Darrell Schindler	MN DNR Region Wildlife Manager		Y
Lindsey Shartell	MN DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife		Y
Patty Thielen	MN DNR Division of Forestry Director		Y
Aaron Vandelinde	MN DNR Director School Trust Lands		Y
Lila Westreich	MN DNR Guideline Monitoring Program Consultant		Y

Appendix 3 – Required Tracking

Additional techniques employed:

☒ None.

Appendix 4 – Forest Management Standard Conformance Table

The table below provides the schedule for surveillance and recertification audits and tracking of Objectives, Performance Measures, and/or Indicators assessed each year.

Evaluation Year	Requirements Reviewed (Objectives & Performance Measures)
2021	All – (Re)certification Evaluation
2022	Objectives: 1, 3, 6, 9, 15, 16, 17
2023	Objectives: 2, 4, 5, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17
2024	Objectives: 3, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17

C= Conformance with Criterion or Indicator

NC= Nonconformance with Criterion or Indicator

NA = Not Applicable

NE = Not Evaluated

SFI Principles Checklist

SFI 2022 Standards and Rules®, Section 2 – Forest Management

C= Conformance with Performance Measure or Indicator

NC= Nonconformance with Performance Measure or Indicator

EXC = Exceeds the Performance Measure or Indicator

OFI = Opportunity for Improvement with Performance Measure or Indicator

NA = Not Applicable

NE = Not Evaluated

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 1. Forest Management Planning To ensure forest management plans include <i>long-term</i> sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion or <i>afforestation</i> of <i>ecologically important</i> areas.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 1.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall ensure that forest management plans include <i>long-term</i> harvest levels that are sustainable and consistent with appropriate <i>growth-and-yield models</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>1.1.1. Forest management planning at a level appropriate to the size and scale of the operation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a <i>long-term</i> resources analysis; b. a periodic or ongoing <i>forest inventory</i>; c. a <i>land classification</i> system; d. <i>biodiversity</i> at <i>landscape</i> scales; e. soils inventory and maps, where available; f. access to and use of <i>growth-and-yield modeling</i> capabilities; g. up-to-date maps or a <i>geographic information system (GIS)</i>; h. recommended sustainable harvest levels for areas available for harvest; and i. consideration of non-timber issues such as recreation, tourism, pilot projects and economic incentive <i>programs</i> to promote water <i>protection</i>, carbon storage, <i>bioenergy feedstock</i> production, or <i>biological diversity conservation</i>, or to address climate-induced ecosystem change. 		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.1.2. Documented current harvest trends fall within <i>long-term</i> sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.1.3. A <i>forest inventory</i> system and a method to calculate growth and yield is used to determine annual and/or periodic harvest levels.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.1.4. Periodic updates of <i>forest inventory</i> and recalculation of planned harvests to account for changes in growth due to <i>productivity</i> increases or decreases, including but not limited to: improved data, <i>long-term</i> drought, fertilization, <i>climate change</i> , changes in forest land ownership and tenure, or <i>forest health</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.1.5. Documentation of forest management (such as: <i>planting</i> , fertilization, and thinning) consistent with assumptions in harvest plans.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.1.6. Assessment of the local or regional social, environmental, and economic effects of forest management operations contained in the forest management plan.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 1.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall not convert one <i>forest cover type</i> to another <i>forest cover type</i> unless an assessment has been conducted to determine ecological impacts and provide appropriate justification.	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
1.2.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall not convert one <i>forest cover type</i> to another <i>forest cover type</i> , unless the conversion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. does not convert <i>native forest cover types</i> that are rare, <i>ecologically important</i>, or that put any <i>native forest cover types</i> at risk of becoming rare; b. does not create significant adverse impacts on <i>Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value</i>, <i>old growth forests</i>, forest critical to <i>threatened and endangered species</i>, or <i>special sites</i> or <i>ecologically important</i> non-forest ecosystems; and c. includes objectives for <i>long-term</i> outcomes that support maintaining <i>native forest cover types</i> and ecological function; and d. is in compliance with relevant national and regional policy and legislation related to land use and forest management. 		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
1.2.2. A proposed conversion deemed appropriate per 1.2.1, and which has considered impacts relative to scale, may be implemented subject to a landscape assessment that considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a response to address <i>forest health</i> issues such as pests or pathogens, or proactive consideration of anticipated impacts of fire or climate change, reforestation challenges, or riparian <i>protection</i> needs, provided that such justification is supported by the <i>best scientific information</i>. b. site <i>productivity</i>, economics, and/or stand quality. c. ecological impacts of the conversion at the site and <i>landscape</i> scale, as well as consideration for any appropriate mitigation measures; and d. appropriate consultation with local communities, <i>Indigenous Peoples</i>, and other <i>stakeholders</i> who could be affected by such activities. 		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, does not intend to convert

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 1.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall not have within the scope of their certification to this <i>SFI Standard</i> , forest lands that have been converted to non-forest land use.	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no conversion of forest to non-forest use. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
1.3.1. Forest lands converted to other land uses shall not be certified to this <i>SFI standard</i> . This does not apply to forest lands used for forest and <i>wildlife</i> management such as <i>wildlife</i> food plots or infrastructure such as forest roads, log processing areas, trails, etc.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no conversion of forest to non-forest use.
Performance Measure 1.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall not afforest in locations which negatively impact <i>ecologically important natural communities, threatened and endangered species, or native natural communities</i> which could be at risk of becoming rare. <i>Definition: afforestation: Establishment of forest through planting and/or deliberate seeding on land that, until then, was under a different land use, implies a transformation of land use from non-forest to forest (source: FAO 2018).</i>	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no afforestation activities.
1.4.1. Any <i>afforestation</i> activity must include an evaluation of the proposed site to determine the presence of: a. <i>ecologically important natural communities</i> , or b. <i>threatened and endangered species</i> , or c. <i>native natural communities</i> that could be at risk of becoming rare.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no afforestation activities.
1.4.2. <i>Afforestation</i> shall not occur on that location if the evaluation determines a negative impact to: a. <i>ecologically important natural communities</i> , or b. <i>threatened and endangered species</i> , or c. <i>native natural communities</i> which could be at risk of becoming rare.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no afforestation activities.

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity To ensure <i>long-term</i> forest <i>productivity</i> , <i>forest health</i> and <i>conservation</i> of forest resources through prompt <i>reforestation</i> , <i>afforestation</i> , deploying <i>integrated pest management</i> strategies, <i>minimized</i> chemical use, soil <i>conservation</i> , and protecting forests from damaging agents.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 2.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall promptly reforest after final harvest.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
2.1.1. Documented <i>reforestation</i> plans, including designation of all harvest areas for either natural, planted, or direct seeded regeneration and prompt <i>reforestation</i> , unless delayed for site- specific environmental or <i>forest health</i> considerations or legal requirements, through <i>planting</i> within two years or two <i>planting</i> seasons, or by planned <i>natural regeneration</i> methods within five years.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
2.1.2. Clear criteria to judge adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas and achieve acceptable species composition and stocking rates for <i>planting</i> , <i>direct seeding</i> , and <i>natural regeneration</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.1.3. <i>Plantings</i> of <i>native</i> or non-invasive naturalized <i>tree species</i> are preferred. In exceptional circumstances where <i>exotic tree species</i> are being planted, they should not increase risk to <i>native</i> ecosystems.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.1.4. <i>Protection</i> of desirable or planned advanced <i>natural regeneration</i> during harvest.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 2.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall have a <i>program</i> to <i>minimize</i> chemical use required to achieve management <i>objectives</i> while protecting employees, neighbors, the public and the environment, including <i>wildlife</i> and <i>aquatic habitats</i> .	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, no use of chemicals

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
2.2.1. Pest management shall be implemented through the use of <i>integrated pest management</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.2.2. <i>Minimized</i> chemical use required to achieve management <i>objectives</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.2.3. Use of <i>least-toxic and narrowest-spectrum pesticides</i> necessary to achieve management objectives.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.2.4. Use of pesticides registered for the intended use and applied in accordance with label requirements.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.2.5. The World Health Organization (WHO) type 1A and 1B pesticides shall be prohibited, except where no other viable alternative is available.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.2.6. Use of pesticides banned under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) shall be prohibited.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>2.2.7. Supervision of forest chemical applications by state- or provincially trained or certified applicators.</p> <p>8. Use of management practices appropriate to the situation, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. notification of adjoining landowners or nearby residents concerning applications and chemicals used; b. appropriate multilingual signs or oral warnings; c. control of public road access during and immediately after applications; d. designation of streamside and other needed buffer strips; e. use of positive shutoff and minimal-drift spray valves; f. aerial application of forest chemicals parallel to buffer zones to limit drift; g. monitoring of water quality or safeguards to ensure proper equipment use and <i>protection</i> of streams, lakes, and other water bodies; h. appropriate transportation and storage of chemicals; i. use of spill response plans and chemical spill kits; j. filing of required state or provincial reports; and/or k. use of methods to ensure <i>protection of threatened and endangered species</i>. 		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>Performance Measure 2.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall implement practices that <i>protect</i> and maintain forest and soil <i>productivity</i> and <i>soil health</i>.</p>	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
<p>2.3.1. Process to identify soils vulnerable to compaction, and use of appropriate methods, including the use of soil maps where available, to avoid excessive soil disturbance.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>2.3.2. Use of erosion control measures to <i>minimize</i> the loss of soil and impacts to site <i>productivity</i>.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>2.3.3. Post-harvest conditions conducive to maintaining site <i>productivity</i> (such as: retained down woody debris and <i>minimized skid trails</i>).</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
2.3.4. Retention of vigorous trees during partial harvesting, consistent with scientific silvicultural standards for the area.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.3.5. <i>Practices</i> that address harvesting and site preparation to <i>protect</i> soil <i>productivity</i> and <i>soil health</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.3.6. Road construction, skidding layout, and harvest plans designed to <i>minimize</i> impacts to soil <i>productivity</i> and <i>soil health</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 2.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall manage to <i>protect</i> forests from damaging agents, such as environmentally or economically undesirable levels of wildfire, pests, diseases, and <i>invasive species</i> , to maintain and improve <i>long-term forest health</i> , <i>productivity</i> , and <i>economic viability</i> .	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
2.4.1. <i>Program</i> to <i>protect</i> forests from damaging agents.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.4.2. Management to promote healthy and productive forest conditions to reduce susceptibility to damaging agents.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
2.4.3. Participation in, and support of, fire and pest prevention and control <i>programs</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 2.5. <i>Certified Organizations</i> that deploy <i>improved planting stock</i> , including <i>varietal seedlings</i> , shall use best scientific methods.	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NA, does not plant (natural regeneration only) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
2.5.1. <i>Program</i> for appropriate research, testing, evaluation, and deployment of <i>improved planting stock</i> , including <i>varietal seedlings</i> .		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 3. Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources To <i>protect</i> the water quality and water quantity of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies.		
Performance Measure 3.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall meet or exceed all applicable federal, provincial, state, and local water quality laws and meet or exceed <i>best management practices</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
3.1.1. <i>Program</i> to implement federal, state, or provincial water quality <i>best management practices</i> during all phases of management activities.	<p>a. DNR has been committed to implementing the “Forestry Water Quality BMPs in Minnesota” since 1987, which are currently included with the MFRC Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines. DNR commitment to implementing these guidelines is summarized in the memo from Brad Moore titled “Direction on Application of Statewide Guidelines in Forest Management Planning” for DNR’s Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines.</p> <p>b. DNR commitment to implementing water quality BMPs is identified in the excerpt from Minnesota Supreme Court rules on the DNR’s commitment to use FRC site-level guidelines as minimum standards.</p> <p>c. The Division of Forestry maintains a BMP/Guideline Implementation Monitoring program which monitors and reports on the level of implementation of water quality BMPs as well as the MFRC Site-Level Forest Management guidelines.</p> <p>All field sites with harvesting activity observed in 2024 contained monitoring records.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>3.1.2. Contract provisions that specify conformance to <i>best management practices</i>.</p>	<p>Auditor confirmation of reference documented within the Permit Condition #20 on DNR permit documents. The reference is stated as:</p> <p>#20. SITE-LEVEL FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES - The persons affected by this permit shall comply with specific site-level forest management guidelines, biomass harvest guidelines and invasive species guidelines, as indicated on the permit form under special conditions, as indicated on supplemental page(s) titled Permit To Cut Timber Supplemental Terms and Conditions, if any, and as indicated on the attached Timber Appraisal Report. [M.S. § 89A.05, 103G.2212, 103G.2241(7)]</p> <p>Auditor observation of permits for all harvest field sites observed in 2024 contained requirements.</p> <p>Review of Contract for Mechanical site preparation confirmed language requiring conformance to Best Management Practices, as defined within Voluntary Site-level Forest Management Guidelines must be followed. Documented within Section V paragraph A.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
3.1.3. Monitoring of overall <i>best management practices</i> implementation.	<p>The Sustainable Forest Resources Act requires the DNR to monitor the implementation of the site-level forest management guidelines (which include water quality BMPs) on all forest ownerships in Minnesota. MN DNR has a Site Level Guidance Monitoring representative that conducts reviews of the BMP's based on a systematic approach. Three WSUs are monitored each year with the sample distributed approximately according to timber harvest ownership. Over the course of a monitoring cycle, each major watershed (HUC8) in the state with greater than 20% forest cover (NLCD) is assessed for BMP implementation. The results of this monitoring are reported to the MFRC and the legislature on a biennial basis. Copies of past monitoring reports are available on the MFRC Website. Interim Final MFRC Forest Management Guidelines Updates for Public Comments are listed on public website.</p> <p>Additionally, DNR's timber sale program uses an inspection form to evaluate application of guidelines. Individual areas are responsible for inspecting 10% of sales per year or one inspection for each appraiser (whichever is higher), regions are to inspect two sales per area per year, and St. Paul is to inspect two sites (different areas) per region per year. The "Permit Supervision Record" (NA-02136C) form allows a forester to track activities and communication with the operator on the timber sale site. The forester can document conditions and conversation with the operator about activities that would cause the timber sale to fail a BMP inspection. Review of inspection reports for permit #X017359, #X018269, #B015659, #X018392 and #B015338 confirmed BMP monitoring was conducted.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 3.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall implement water, wetland, and riparian protection programs based on climate, soil type, terrain, vegetation, ecological function, harvesting system, state <i>best management practices (BMPs)</i> , provincial guidelines and other applicable factors.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
3.2.1. <i>Program</i> addressing management and <i>protection</i> of water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, other water bodies and <i>riparian areas</i> during all phases of management.	<p>a. The DNR is committed to the implementation of MFRC site-level forest management guidelines as the basis for protecting wetlands, lakes, streams and other water bodies as well as riparian areas during all phases of management.</p> <p>b. The DNR is required to comply with all state, federal and local water quality regulations including but not limited to: MN DNR Protected Waters program, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit program, MN Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), and MN PCA Storm Water Permit program. These regulations are implemented through any program that is sponsoring an activity potentially affecting these wetlands or waterbodies.</p> <p>c. For each timber permit a form called the Landowner Statement and Contractor Responsibility for Work in Wetlands or Public Waters is completed. This outlines who to contact and what is expected for work in wetlands. No wetland work was observed during the 2024 audit. No issues were identified during 2024 site visits.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

<p>3.2.2. <i>Program to protect water quantity during all phases of management.</i></p>	<p>The Site –Level Forest Management Guidelines (FMGs) outline best management practices to maintain water quality and what to do during wet weather events. Examples include maintenance of vegetated filter strips around wetlands, avoidance of wetlands and filter strips with regards to roads, landings, and skid trails, use of erosion control practices where needed (e.g., steep slopes and approaches to waterbody crossings), and cessation of operations when weather and site conditions become problematic. The FMGs recommend including the guidelines appropriate for each site as the operating standards for each project. The ECS program produced a chart outlining acceptable operating seasons to minimize compaction and rutting that is found online.</p> <p>The Forest Information System (FORIST) program includes a menu of standardized statements that can be inserted in timber permits or project contracts. The project manager can also enter statements to address unique site-specific situations the standardized items do not fit. Ultimately, it's up to the forester to determine when and where harvesting can take place so as to remain within the forest management guidelines.</p> <p>The Timber Appraisal Report form is where foresters are allowed to add harvesting restrictions relating to wetness, steep slopes, and a host of other topics.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of timber sale administrator to monitor site conditions on timber sales. Ongoing, frequent sale supervision is a key requirement for all DNR timber sales..</p> <p>If conditions occur during the course of the sale that result, or may result, in damage to the site that exceeds guidelines, the appraiser has the authority to shut down all activity on the sale until conditions improve.</p> <p>To minimize possible economic hardship to loggers as a result of enforcing these regulations, provisions exist within state statutes 90.041 and 90.193 to extend the length of the timber sale to</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
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REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
	accommodate such weather events.	

<p>3.2.3. <i>Programs</i> that address wet-weather events in order to maintain water quality such as: <i>forest inventory</i> systems, identification of wet-weather tracts and definitions of acceptable operating conditions.</p>	<p>The Site –Level Forest Management Guideline outline what to do during wet weather events. It does recommend including the guidelines appropriate for each site as the operating standards for each project.</p> <p>The Forest Information System (FORIST) program includes a menu of standardized statements that can be inserted in timber permits or project contracts. The project manager can also enter statements to address unique site-specific situations the standardized items do not fit. Ultimately, it's up to the forester to determine when and where harvesting can take place so as to remain within the forest management guidelines.</p> <p>Timber Appraisal Report form is where foresters are allowed to add harvesting restrictions relating to wetness, steep slopes, and a host of other topics.</p> <p>Review of Appraisal Reports for all field sites in 2024 confirmed the requirements are detailed within the Marketing and Special Conditions; Season of Operations sections.</p> <p>Timber sale administrator has responsibility to monitor site conditions on timber sales. Ongoing, periodic sale supervision is a key requirement for all DNR timber sales. If conditions occur during the course of the sale that result, or may result, in damage to the site that exceeds guidelines, the appraiser has the authority to shut down all activity on the sale until conditions improve. Interview with DNR personnel confirms use and knowledge of requirements.</p> <p>To minimize possible economic hardship to loggers as a result of enforcing these regulations, provisions exist within state statutes 90.041 and 90.193 to extend the length of the timber sale to accommodate such weather events.</p> <p>Timber Permits also include language related to a rutting policy to protect soil and water quality. #21. RUTTING METRIC - All harvest operations, including skidding and forwarding trails, will comply with the DNR Forest Land Rutting Guidelines.</p> <p>No issues were observed at any field sites audited in 2024.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
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REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity To maintain or advance the <i>conservation of biological diversity</i> at the <i>stand-</i> and <i>landscape-level</i> and across a diversity of forest and vegetation cover types and successional stages including the <i>conservation of forest plants and animals, aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests, and ecologically important sites.</i>		
Performance Measure 4.1. Certified Organizations shall conserve biological diversity.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
4.1.1. <i>Program</i> to incorporate the <i>conservation of biological diversity</i> , including <i>native species, wildlife habitats</i> and ecological community types at <i>stand</i> and <i>landscape</i> levels, through the use of <i>best scientific information</i> including the incorporation of research results.	Biodiversity is reviewed within various requirements and documented within the Sustainable Timber Harvest Stand Exam List (SEL). The elements are also included within the GIS system on a landscape and stand level platform. MN DNR utilizes many platforms such as the Native Plant Community Guidelines, Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) identification of sites with high biodiversity and the utilization of Natural Heritage database. Biodiversity is reviewed during planning and monitored during implementation of silviculture activities. Comments (if applicable) are made by the Fish and Wildlife or Ecological and Water Resources personnel within the Stand Exam List. Different categories are utilized with increasing level of communication. Info/Contact/JSV (Joint Site Visit).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
4.1.2. Development of criteria and implementation of practices, as guided by regionally based <i>best scientific information</i> , to retain <i>stand-level wildlife habitat</i> elements such as snags, stumps, mast trees, down woody debris, den trees and nest trees.	Criteria are defined within the documents and platforms identified within Indicator 4.1.1. Implementation is monitored during harvesting prescriptions and activities. Snags, den trees, green tree retention and reserves or islands were observed on final harvest (clear-cut) sites. Review of monitoring documents for sites observed in 2024 confirmed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
4.1.3. <i>Program</i> to individually and/or through cooperative efforts such as <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , support diversity of <i>native forest cover types</i> and age or size classes that enhance <i>biological diversity</i> , by incorporating the results of analysis of documented diversity at <i>landscape</i> and ownership/tenure levels, to ensure the contribution of the managed area to the diversity of conditions that promote <i>biodiversity</i> .	Forest cover types are documented within the GIS system. Native forest cover types are reviewed during the Sustainable Timber Harvest and Stand Exam List (SEL). Habitats are described and management plans are implemented to enhance wildlife habitat.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
4.1.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts such as <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , participate in or incorporate the results of credible, relevant state, provincial, or regional <i>conservation</i> planning and priority-setting efforts to conserve biological diversity and incorporate the results of these efforts in forest management planning. Credible priority-setting efforts include state and provincial <i>wildlife</i> action plans, state forest action plans, relevant <i>habitat conservation</i> plans, provincial <i>wildlife</i> recovery plans, Indigenous planning processes or ecoregional plans.	Minnesota DNR has led the development of the Forest Action Plan and Wildlife Action Plans. Input was received from division and external stakeholders. Approval was received from the USFS and US Fish and Wildlife Service on the Minnesota Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
4.1.5. <i>Program to address conservation of ecologically important species and natural communities.</i>	The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) conducts surveys, county-by-county, to search for rare plants, animals, and communities. Natural Heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments. The GIS system contains a layer of the Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS). The TSM (Timber Sales Module) is utilized by field foresters to begin the process for timber harvesting activity. Multiple tabs are utilized for detailed information. The cutting block tab establishes the foundation with names, dates, field notes, locations, accessibility, type of harvest, legal descriptions and GPS coordinates. Stand management tab contains the inventory of stands and the amount of acres with harvest prescriptions. Forty/Lots tab contains the ownership (LUP, School Trust, Consolidated Conservation, etc.) and certification status of the properties. The ownership information is tied to the LRS (Land Records System). Species/Products tab contains the volumes and if the stand is salvage. FRC Guidelines tab contains elements for each of the requirements within the MN Forest Resources Guidelines (BMPs). Specifications tab contains. Auditor confirmation during interviews, site visits, and review of TSM and GIS.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>4.1.6. Identification and <i>protection</i> of <i>non-forested wetlands</i>, including bogs, peatlands, fens and marshes, and <i>vernal pools</i> that are <i>ecologically important</i>.</p>	<p>Minnesota DNR has a detailed program for the protection of wetlands and watercourses. Foresters plan all harvests and treatments. These plans are reviewed by various specialists. Protections are a priority during planning and implementation of operations. All foresters are trained to follow Minnesota's Site Level Guidelines. Specialists are available for consultation as needed. All activities are subject to interdisciplinary review. The DNR is committed to the implementation of MFRC site-level forest management guidelines as the basis for protecting wetlands, lakes, streams and other water bodies as well as riparian areas during all phases of management. The DNR is required to comply with all state, federal and local water quality regulations including but not limited to: MN DNR Protected Waters program, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit program, MN Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA), and MN PCA Storm Water Permit program. These regulations are implemented through any program that is sponsoring an activity potentially affecting these wetlands or waterbodies. Identification of the non-forested wetlands, bogs, ferns and other riparian features are detailed within the GIS system and documented on maps as applicable. No issues were identified during site visits.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>4.1.7. Participation in <i>programs</i> and demonstration of activities as appropriate to limit the introduction, spread and impact of <i>invasive species</i> that directly threaten or are likely to threaten <i>native</i> plant and animal communities.</p>	<p>DNR has a well-developed program for identifying, controlling, and monitoring invasive species. Public information is available on the DNR website and categorized into Aquatic and Terrestrial. Responsibility is shared with the state Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service. DOA's Plant Protection Division is responsible for risk assessments related to invasive plants. The department has an Invasive Species Control Program. Operational Order 113 outlines invasive species control and prevention measures that occur on an annual basis.</p> <p>The MNDNR program includes four Regional Forest Health Specialists. Area foresters call on health specialists as needed. The program conducts training and outreach in part through Forest Health Newsletters issued 4-6 times per year. Forest health issues of current concern include emerald ash bore, spongy moth, eastern larch beetle, spruce budworm, oak wilt, Heterobasidium Root Disease and Diplodia in red pine.</p> <p>Site visits included examples of invasive plant control. "Op. Order 113 [Invasive Species] is applicable to timber sales planning and management activities. Indeed, during the audit, the daily safety briefing in Area offices included special precautions about inadvertent transfer of seeds from one site to another. Auditor reviewed information regarding invasive species with boot cleaning station at Littlefork River WMA during the 2024 audit. Ecological and Water Resources (EWR) and Forestry personnel utilize electronics to identify Invasive Species within the forest. The coordinates are identified and uploaded to coordinate with the GIS system. Observation during the 2024 audit confirmed use.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
4.1.8. Consider the role of natural disturbances, including opening size, structural retention, the use of prescribed or natural fire where appropriate, and <i>forest health</i> threats in relation to <i>biological diversity</i> when developing forest management plans.	Site Level Forest Management Guidelines, Native Plant Community Classifications, Section Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMP), Sustainable Timber Harvest Plans (STH) and other resources are utilized by field personnel to guide the planning of forest management activities. No prescribed burning sites were observed during the 2024 field audit. Regeneration was observed from a wildfire that impacted the area in 2015. No adverse conditions were observed in 2024.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 4.2. <i>Certified Organizations shall protect threatened and endangered species, critically imperiled and imperiled species, and natural communities (Forests with Exceptional Conservation Values), and old-growth forests.</i>	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
4.2.1. <i>Program to protect threatened and endangered species.</i>	<p>Ecosystem Management and Protection Services Section within Ecological and Water Resources Division (EWR) includes the Endangered Species Coordinator, Nongame Wildlife Program, Regional Ecologists (guidance), and statewide Forest Ecologist.</p> <p>EWR Strategic Information Service Section maintains the Natural Heritage Information System, with significant guidance from supervisors of the Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) Program and Conservation Management and Rare Resources Unit. Natural Heritage information is available to all DNR staff involved in forest management who receive and maintain training. Layers are incorporated into the GIS and mapping systems to provide information regarding the occurrences of threatened and endangered species. All field staff who appraise and administer timber sales and who submit silvicultural projects for contract work receive training.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

<p>4.2.2. <i>Program to locate and protect known sites flora and fauna associated with viable occurrences of critically imperiled and imperiled species and ecological communities, defined as Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value. Programs for protection may be developed independently and/or through cooperative efforts involving SFI Implementation Committees and may include Certified Organization managers of SFI-certified organizations, cooperation with other stakeholders, or use of easements, conservation land sales, exchanges, or other conservation strategies.</i></p>	<p>MN DNR has a detailed process and system to locate and protect known sites of flora and fauna that are critically imperiled communities. Some of the programs are described below.</p> <p>During the Stand Exam List planning process, the NHIS database is reviewed and occurrences are identified by Ecological and Water Resources personnel. Habitat management recommendations may be added for the modification of the plan. Communication with Forestry personnel can be added during the Stand Exam List-Information/Contact/Joint Site Visit (JSV). The function is designed to provide another layer of resources for the protection and management around known sites of flora and fauna. Pre-Sale meetings with permittees are also utilized by forestry personnel to identify and communicate requirements if applicable.</p> <p>Minnesota Biological Survey locates sites of biological significance, rare species, and rare native plant communities. It is the responsibility of any staff who encounter a potential old growth forest occurrence to nominate it for designation consideration.</p> <p>Regional Old Growth Teams evaluate and manage adjustments to the Old Growth Forest network. Evaluation processes for Old Growth nominations on Trust lands are currently being reviewed by department leadership.</p> <p>Department-wide mapping efforts to identify native plant communities (MBS Program, ECS Program and field foresters, Fish & Wildlife division, Parks and Trails division)</p> <p>Protection of rare species and rare native plant communities are a primary objective of SNAs, State Parks, High Conservation Value Forests, Representative Sample Areas, and Old Growth Forest sites. Examples were reviewed during the 2024 field site audit. Refer to field site notes for additional</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
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REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
	evidence.	
4.2.3. Support of and participation in <i>programs</i> for the <i>conservation of old-growth forests</i> in the region of ownership or forest tenure.	<p>Old Growth Forest Policy, including a network of OG sites, Special Management Zones and Old Forest Management Complexes around OG site are utilized for the protection and conservation of old growth forests within the landscape.</p> <p>Regional Old Growth Teams manage adjustments to the OG network. A previous process identified Ecologically Important Lowland Conifers (EILC) stands, which have now been replaced Lowland Conifer Old Growth candidates that will go through further evaluation and stakeholder input prior to a designation decision.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 4.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall manage to <i>protect ecologically important</i> sites in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
4.3.1. Use of information such as existing NatureServe or natural heritage data or expert advice in identifying or selecting <i>ecologically important</i> sites for <i>protection</i> .	Interviews confirm that natural heritage databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments. Review of TMS module confirms Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) is utilized during the planning process. Personnel are not able to move the stand(s) to active status without verification. The NHIS is a layer within the GIS system. When there are identified occurrences, foresters check with the Regional Forest Ecologist who often provides advice or obtains information from expert specialists and then helps foresters determine appropriate protection or management prescriptions if applicable.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
4.3.2. Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified <i>ecologically important</i> sites.	The Minnesota Biological Survey program within the Ecological and Water Resources Division conducts surveys across the entire state. The Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) is a layer within the GIS system. MN DNR also utilizes a Scientific and Natural Areas (SNA) for the strategic protection of ecological and geological sensitive areas. Personnel have been trained on the use of the system. Auditor confirmed that special sites are located on maps, listed in databases available to all staff involved in planning and implementation of harvests, vegetation treatments, projects, etc., and when they are close to harvests, they are shown on the harvest plan maps provided to the buyers. Auditor review of sale documents, field observations and interview with permittee that special sites marked off (buffered out) of nearby timber harvests.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 4.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall apply knowledge gained through research, science, technology, field experience and the results of monitoring of the effectiveness of conservation-related programs to manage <i>wildlife habitat</i> and contribute to the <i>conservation of biological diversity</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
4.4.1. Collection of information on <i>Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value</i> and other <i>biodiversity</i> -related data through <i>forest inventory</i> processes, mapping, or participation in external <i>programs</i> , such as NatureServe, state or provincial heritage <i>programs</i> , or other reputable organizations. Such participation may include providing non-proprietary scientific information, time, and assistance by staff, or in-kind or direct financial support.	The Minnesota Biological Survey (MBS) conducts surveys, county-by-county, to search for rare plants, animals, and communities. Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) databases are checked prior to harvests and land altering treatments. Review of process during the audit within the TMS platform confirms. Interview with personnel confirms knowledge and awareness of process.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
4.4.2. A <i>program</i> to incorporate data collected, research results and field applications of <i>biodiversity</i> and ecosystem research into forest management decisions.	Methodology is included in operational planning. Plans are reviewed internally and externally. Refer to additional evidence within Indicator 4.3.1.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
4.4.3. Individually or collaboratively participate in or support research that demonstrates the <i>conservation</i> outcomes resulting from management strategies.	MN DNR utilizes Ecological Classification System based on Ecological Regions within the state. There are 4 Provinces, 10 Sections and 26 subsections identified. Classifications of land types are documented and enable resource professionals to manage based on the ecological patterns. Elements include Landform, Bedrock geology, Soils, Climate, Hydrology, Pre-settlement vegetation, Present vegetation and land use, Natural disturbance and Conservation concerns.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 5. Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 5.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall manage the impact of harvesting on <i>visual quality</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
5.1.1. <i>Program</i> to address <i>visual quality management</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
5.1.2. Incorporation of aesthetic considerations in harvesting, road, landing design and management, and other management activities where visual impacts are a concern.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 5.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall manage the size, shape, and placement of clearcut harvests.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
5.2.1. Average size of clearcut harvest areas does not exceed 120 acres (50 hectares), except when necessary to meet regulatory requirements, achieve ecological <i>objectives</i> or to respond to <i>forest health</i> emergencies or other natural catastrophes.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
5.2.2. Documentation through internal records of clearcut size and the process for calculating average size.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 5.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall adopt a <i>green-up requirement</i> or alternative methods that provide for <i>visual quality</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
5.3.1. <i>Program</i> implementing the <i>green-up requirement</i> or alternative methods.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
5.3.2. Harvest area tracking system to demonstrate conformance with the <i>green-up requirement</i> or alternative methods.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
5.3.3. Trees in clearcut harvest areas are at least three years old or five feet (1.5 meters) high at the desired level of stocking before adjacent areas are clearcut, or as appropriate to address operational and economic considerations, alternative methods to reach the <i>performance measure</i> are utilized by the <i>Certified Organization</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 5.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall support and promote recreational opportunities for the public.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
5.4.1. Provide recreational opportunities for the public, where consistent with forest management objectives.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites To manage lands that are geologically or <i>culturally important</i> in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 6.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall have a <i>program</i> to identify <i>special sites</i> and manage and protect them in a manner appropriate for their unique features.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
6.1.1. Use of information such as existing natural heritage data, expert advice or <i>stakeholder</i> consultation, or consultation with <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> in identifying or selecting <i>special sites</i> for protection.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
6.1.2. Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified <i>special sites</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 7. Efficient Use of Fiber Resources To <i>minimize</i> waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.		
Performance Measure 7.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall employ appropriate forest harvesting technology and in-woods manufacturing processes to <i>minimize</i> waste and ensure efficient utilization of forest resources where consistent with other <i>SFI Standard objectives</i> .	Not Audited in 2024.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
7.1.1. <i>Program</i> or monitoring system to ensure efficient utilization, using provisions such as: a. management of harvest residue (such as slash, limbs, tops) considers economic, social and environmental factors (such as organic and nutrient value to future forests and the potential of increased fuels build-up) and other utilization needs; b. training or incentives to encourage loggers to enhance utilization; c. exploration of markets for underutilized species and low-grade wood and alternative markets (such as bioenergy markets); or d. periodic inspections and reports noting utilization and product separation.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 8. Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights To recognize and respect <i>Indigenous Peoples'</i> rights and traditional knowledge.		
Performance Measure 8.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall recognize and respect <i>Indigenous Peoples'</i> rights.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>8.1.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall develop and implement a written <i>policy</i> acknowledging a commitment to recognize and respect the rights of <i>Indigenous Peoples</i>. This <i>policy</i> shall provide reference to a <i>program</i> that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. use of available resources and information to identify the <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> whose rights may be affected by the <i>Certified Organization's</i> forest management activities. b. recognition of the established framework of legal, customary, and traditional rights such as outlined in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; ii. federal, provincial, and state laws and regulations; iii. treaties, agreements or other constructive arrangements among governments and <i>Indigenous Peoples</i>. c. appropriate training of personnel and contractors so that the <i>Certified Organization</i> is competent to fulfill their responsibilities under Objective 8 of the Forest Management Standard. 	<p>Minnesota Statute 2021 10.65 contains Government to Government Relationship with Tribal Governments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Federal Recognized Tribes b. Recognizes rights formed by Constitution of the United States, Treaties, statutes, case law and agreements. c. Training is documented within section (j) of the statute. <p>The Department has one written policy to fulfill the requirements within the Statute 10.65 that recognizes and respects the rights of Indigenous Peoples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DNR Operational Order 129 Tribal Nations, provides for procedures for communication, coordination, and documentation of work between the DNR and Minnesota's 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations on coordinated conservation, resource protection, and land management activities. Operational order was written to document the implementation of the statute. <p>Policies are discussed during Tribal Cultural Landscape & Natural Resource Management Training.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>8.1.2. The written <i>policy</i> shall be publicly available.</p>	<p>Policy is documented within the statute of the State of Minnesota and publicly available. Refer to indicator 8.1.1.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>Performance Measure 8.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> with forest management responsibilities on public lands shall confer with <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> whose rights may be affected by the <i>Certified Organization's</i> forest management practices.</p>	<p>Refer to Indicators for Evidence.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE <input type="checkbox"/> NA, private lands

<p>8.2. 1. <i>Program</i> that includes communicating with affected <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> to enable <i>Certified Organizations</i> to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. understand and respect <i>traditional forest-related knowledge</i>; b. identify and <i>protect</i> spiritually, historically, or <i>culturally important</i> sites; c. address the use of <i>non-timber forest products</i> of value; d. communicate through processes that respect their representative institutions, using appropriate protocols; e. provide opportunities to review forest management plans and forest management practices; and f. respond to inquiries and concerns received. 	<p>DNR strategic plan includes working with tribes.</p> <p>Tribal outreach goes outside of existing stakeholder contact. A specific program has been developed that exceeds stakeholders and public comments.</p> <p>DNR began involving the tribes with planning in 1980 by state statute. Tribal relations staff was created from government staff down to state agencies. DNR has a tribal relations team composed of members from all divisions. Liaisons are required by statute. During 2020 the position of Tribal Liaison was created, and the Tribal Resource Team formed. Annual meetings are conducted.</p> <p>Four Regional Directors and Tribal Liaison work with tribes.</p> <p>Local contacts have been provided to tribes to work on local issues. DNR staff works with tribal staff on local issues. Interviews with personnel during the 2024 audit confirmed direct communication was conducted on use of roads and timber harvests that border tribal lands.</p> <p>The Department, through Operational Order 129, sets forth annual coordination frameworks for the various divisions that identifies the action or product, the expected meeting participants, and who the primary contacts are for both the state and the tribes.</p> <p>The Department has required all program managers to attend Tribal State Relations Training which is developed by Minnesota Indian Affairs Council.</p> <p>The Divisions of Forestry and Fish and Wildlife contracts with the Minnesota Historical Society for one FTE archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior's professional qualification standards. The DNR archaeologist ensures that the DNR is in compliance with the Minnesota Statute 138.40, which requires state agencies to consider cultural resources in their operations and</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
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REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
	<p>development planning.</p> <p>The Department works with tribes on a local level for the permitting of collection of non-timber products such as ash and birch bark and lodge poles.</p> <p>The Department employs a Tribal Contact Tracking system to record contacts with tribes and to document emerging tribal issues, questions, or concerns. The system is maintained within internal network platform controlled by permissions for access.</p>	
Performance Measure 8.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> are encouraged to communicate with and shall respond to <i>Indigenous Peoples</i> whose rights may be affected by forest management practices on the <i>Certified Organization's</i> private lands.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
8.3.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> are aware of <i>traditional forest-related knowledge</i> , such as known cultural heritage sites, the use of wood in traditional buildings and crafts, and flora that may be used in cultural practices for food, ceremonies, or medicine.	Regional ecologist for rare resources works with tribes on small projects. Identification of sites is proprietary information. If sites are identified during the planning of silviculture activities, the location is identified but the type of site is not shared. Confirmed during interviews.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
8.3.2. Respond to <i>Indigenous Peoples'</i> inquiries and concerns received.	Informal working relationship is maintained with tribes. Most inquiries are around silviculture, access, and ecological work. There is a strong relationship for fire protection confirmed by personnel within the Baudette, Warroad and Littlefork areas during the 2024 audit. No formal requests were received from Tribal personnel for permits for special products-birch bark, etc. in previous 12 months.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 9. Climate Smart Forestry To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.	Not Audited in 2024.	

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 9.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> or other partners identify and address the climate change risks to forests and forest operations and develop appropriate adaptation objectives and strategies. Strategies are based on <i>best scientific information</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
9.1.1. Based on <i>best scientific information</i> , <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall identify climate change risks and prioritize them based on the likelihood, nature, severity of their expected impact to their forest lands or forest tenures.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.1.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall develop an adaptation plan to address priority climate change risks, via effective implementation of the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> requirements for potential adaptive management including: a. periodic updates of forest inventory and recalculation of planned harvests as appropriate to account for changes in growth due to productivity increases or decreases, including improved data, <i>long-term</i> drought, fertilization, climate change, or <i>forest health</i> ; b. access to <i>growth and yield modeling</i> capabilities; c. documented harvest trends within <i>long-term</i> sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan, and d. appropriate research, testing, evaluation, and deployment of <i>improved planting stock</i> , including <i>varietal seedlings</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.1.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall document how their adaptation plan objectives and strategies fit within broader regional climate adaptation strategies and plans, where they exist.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.1.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall report annually to SFI Inc. their progress towards achieving climate change adaptation strategies and plans.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 9.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> or other partners identify and address opportunities to mitigate the effects associated with its forest operations on climate change.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
9.2.1. Based on <i>best scientific information</i> , <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall identify and address opportunities to enhance the climate benefits associated with forest management operations on the forests they own or manage via effective implementation of the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> requirements such as: a. Objective 2 – Forest Health and Productivity; Objective 10 – Fire Smart Forestry; and/or other silvicultural or operational <i>practices</i> to enhance the climate benefits associated with the forest operations.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.2.2. Based on <i>best scientific information</i> , <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall identify and address opportunities to enhance ecosystem resilience for the forests they own or manage via effective implementation of the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> requirements including: a. prompt <i>reforestation</i> or planned <i>natural reforestation</i> as per Indicator 2.2.1; b. adequate regeneration and appropriate actions to correct understocked areas, and c. evaluation for <i>afforestation</i> of areas that are not <i>ecologically important</i> , and d. protection of desirable or planned advanced regeneration during harvest and the retention of vigorous trees during partial harvest.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.2.3. Based on <i>best scientific information</i> , <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall develop a program to identify and address greenhouse gas emissions within their operational control.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
9.2.4. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall report annually to SFI Inc. their measures to mitigate climate change associated with forest operations.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 10. Fire Resilience and Awareness To limit susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of fire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 10.1. On the forests they own or manage, <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall limit susceptibility to undesirable impacts of wildfire, promote healthy and resilient forest conditions through management techniques, actions and/or policies, and support restoration of forests following wildfire damage.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
10.1.1. <i>Program</i> to evaluate the risk of undesirable impacts of wildfire and the role of fire on the forests they own or manage.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
10.1.2. Use of <i>stand</i> and <i>landscape</i> level management techniques, actions and/or policies to promote <i>forest health</i> and resilience, and to mitigate the likelihood of undesirable impacts of wildfire, such as, prescribed fire, cultural burning, thinning, or hazardous fuel reduction where appropriate based on risk.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
10.1.3. Use of management techniques to address wildfire damage, mitigate negative impacts to water and soils, and to promote forest restoration and future forest resilience.		
Performance Measure 10.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving government agencies, <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , Project Learning Tree, or other partners, engage in efforts to raise awareness of and take action towards benefits of fire management and minimization of undesirable impacts of wildfire.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
10.2.1. Participation in, or support of, local, state, provincial, federal, or Indigenous fire management and prevention programs.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
10.2.2. Participation in, or support of, programs to promote benefits of fire management, and raise awareness about the environmental, economic, and social risks of undesirable impacts of wildfire to values such as carbon emissions, water quality and quantity, air quality, species <i>habitat</i> , public safety, and human health.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance To comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, international, federal, provincial, state, and <i>local</i> .	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 11.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local <i>forestry</i> and environmental laws and regulations.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
11.1.1. Access to relevant laws and regulations.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
11.1.2. System to achieve compliance with applicable federal, provincial, state, or local laws, and regulations.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
11.1.3. Demonstration of commitment to legal compliance through <i>available regulatory action information</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 11.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall comply with all applicable social laws at the federal, provincial, state, and local levels in the country in which the <i>Certified Organization</i> operates.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE
11.2.1. Written <i>policy</i> demonstrating commitment to comply with social laws, such as those covering civil rights, equal employment opportunities, gender equality, diversity inclusion, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment measures, workers' compensation, <i>Indigenous Peoples'</i> rights, workers', and communities' right to know, prevailing wages, workers' right to organize, and occupational health and safety.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
11.2.2. <i>Forestry enterprises</i> will respect the rights of workers and labor representatives in a manner that encompasses the intent of the International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 12. Forestry Research, Science and Technology To invest in research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.	Not Audited in 2024.	
Performance Measure 12.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , associations or other partners provide in-kind support or funding for forest research to improve sustainable management of forest resources, and the environmental benefits and performance of forest products.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>12.1.1. Financial or in-kind support of research, collaboratives, or knowledge transfer to address key themes of relevance in the region of operations as identified by <i>Certified Organizations</i>, local <i>stakeholders</i>, communities and/or <i>Indigenous Peoples</i>. Examples could include, but are not limited to, the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. climate change adaptation and mitigation; b. water quality and quantity; c. biodiversity, <i>Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value</i>, and species maintenance and recovery; d. <i>landscape</i> ecology; e. <i>Indigenous traditional forest-related knowledge</i>; f. <i>ecosystem services</i> or <i>non-timber forest products</i>; g. community engagement; h. <i>forest health</i> and <i>productivity</i>; i. support for Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA); j. SFI sponsored conservation research; k. the role of forests in the bioeconomy, and l. or similar themes which build broader understanding of the benefits and effects of sustainable forest management or sustainable supply chains. 		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>12.1.2. Ensure that knowledge gained through research is shared, to the extent possible, to positively influence sustainable forest management.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
<p>Performance Measure 12.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i>, associations or other partners develop, contribute to, or use national, state, provincial or regional analyses in support of their <i>sustainable forestry programs</i>.</p>		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
12.2.1. Participation, individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> and/or associations at the national, state, provincial or regional level, in the development of information such as: a. regeneration assessments; b. <i>growth and drain</i> assessments; c. <i>best management practices</i> implementation and conformance; d. <i>biodiversity conservation</i> information for family forest owners; e. social, cultural, or economic benefit assessments; and f. <i>landscape-scale biodiversity</i> assessments which clarify the contributory role of sustainable forest management.		<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 13. Training and Education To improve the implementation of <i>sustainable forestry</i> through appropriate training and education programs.		
Performance Measure 13.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall require appropriate training of personnel and contractors so that they are competent to fulfill their responsibilities under the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/>
13.1.1. Written statement of commitment to the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> communicated throughout the organization, particularly to facility and woodland managers, and field foresters.	Statement of commitment is posted on Minnesota DNR website.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
13.1.2. Assignment and understanding of roles and responsibilities for achieving <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard objectives</i> .	Interviews and site visits confirm employees are very knowledgeable and understand roles and responsibilities for silviculture operations and SFI requirements.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
13.1.3. Staff education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.	<p>Auditor review and interviews confirmed various trainings for certification, silviculture, and other forest related topics. Topics included Appraisal and Design School; Scaling; Forest Management Guidelines, Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS); Legacy/Leave Tree; 4 Trees Inventory and MOR; FORIST-TSM Application; Stand Reviews/Stand Exam Layers; Review stands for concerns (NHIS, MOA, HVCF databases) and appraiser joint site visit. Auditor reviewed training records of selected personnel with 1.5, 7 and 17 years of experience levels. Interviews and site visits confirm staff is knowledgeable for roles and responsibilities, excepted as indicated within the non-conformance indicated below.</p> <p>Minor NC 2024.1: Procedures were not properly implemented for Permit #X018268 based on interviews with personnel and review of Direction Memo #2022-1. Contact request from Ecological and Water Resources were documented on the SEL. Interviews confirmed a discussion was conducted between the groups but not closed by Forestry personnel as directed within the Direction Memo Section C. The sale prescription was implemented which resulted in an unexpected result by EWR.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
13.1.4. Contractor education and training sufficient to their roles and responsibilities.	<p>Review of all harvest sites observed in 2024 confirmed verification on the Minnesota Logger Education Program (MLEP) website. Observation during field sites confirmed professional harvest operations and monitoring records from DNR personnel.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
13.1.5. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall have written agreements for the use of <i>qualified logging professionals</i> , or <i>wood producers</i> that have completed training programs and are recognized as <i>qualified logging professionals and/or certified logging companies</i> .	Loggers must be registered with the DNR to purchase timber. Registration is verified prior to buying timber. Interviews with logging permittee during field site audit confirmed training from MLEP program. Interviews with personnel confirm harvest contractors must submit evidence of training and qualification meeting the Qualified Logger Professional requirements utilizing an online system. Verification of trainings, insurance, and other required records are conducted before harvest operations can commence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 13.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall work individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , logging or <i>forestry</i> associations, or appropriate agencies or others in the <i>forestry</i> community to foster improvement in the professionalism of <i>wood producers</i> specific to <i>qualified logging professionals</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>13.1.1. Participation in or support of <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> to establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for <i>wood producer</i> core training courses that allow individuals to attain <i>qualified logging professional status</i>. These criteria shall address at least the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. awareness of <i>sustainable forestry principles</i> and SFI's work across four pillars: standards, conservation, community, and education; b. <i>best management practices</i>, including streamside management and road construction, maintenance, and retirement; c. awareness of responsibilities under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, the Canadian Species at Risk Act, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (critically imperiled and imperiled species and ecological communities), and other measures to protect biodiversity and wildlife habitat; d. logging safety; e. U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) regulations, wage and hour rules, and other provincial, state, and local employment laws, and f. other topics identified by <i>Certified Organizations</i> and/or <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> that improve their responsibilities in meeting the SFI 2022 standards. 	<p>Review of Minnesota SIC website confirms membership by Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. MN SIC provides guidance for qualified logger training requirements.</p> <p>Review of MLEP website confirms requirements a-f are met.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>13.1.2. Participation in or support of <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> to establish criteria and identify delivery mechanisms for <i>wood producer</i> continuing education training courses that shall be taken by <i>qualified logging professionals</i> at least once every two years to maintain their status. The continuing education training course(s) shall address one or more of the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. awareness of <i>sustainable forestry principles</i> and SFI's work across four pillars: standards, conservation, community, and education; b. <i>best management practices</i>, including streamside management and road construction, maintenance, and retirement; c. <i>reforestation, invasive species management, forest resource conservation, aesthetics and special sites</i>; d. awareness of rare forested <i>natural communities</i> as identified by provincial or state agencies, or by credible organizations such as NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy; e. transportation issues; f. business management; g. public policy and outreach; h. awareness of emerging technologies; i. logging safety; or j. other topics identified by Certified Organization and/or SFI Implementation Committees that improve their responsibilities in meeting the SFI 2022 Standards. 	<p>Review of MLEP confirms continuing education requirements meeting a-j. Refer to the website listed within indicator 13.1.1.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
<p>Objective 14. Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach To broaden the practice of <i>sustainable forestry</i> through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i>.</p>		

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Performance Measure 14.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall support and promote efforts by consulting foresters, state, provincial and federal agencies, state or local groups, professional societies, <i>conservation organizations, Indigenous Peoples</i> and governments, community groups, sporting organizations, labor, universities, extension agencies, the <i>American Tree Farm System®</i> and/or other landowner cooperative <i>programs</i> to apply <i>principles</i> of sustainable forest management.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
14.1.1. Support, including financial, for efforts of <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> .	Review of Minnesota SIC Committee website confirms MN DNR is a participant. Review of financial payment for Invoice #291 on 4/7/24 confirms.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
14.1.2. Support, individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , education and outreach to forest landowners describing the importance and providing implementation guidance on: a. <i>best management practices</i> ; b. <i>reforestation and afforestation</i> ; c. <i>visual quality management</i> ; d. <i>conservation objectives</i> , such as critical <i>wildlife habitat</i> elements, <i>biodiversity</i> , <i>threatened and endangered</i> species, and <i>Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value</i> ; e. management of harvest residue (e.g., slash, limbs, tops) considers economic, social, environmental factors (e.g., organic, and nutrient value to future forests) and other utilization needs; f. control of <i>invasive species</i> ; g. characteristics of <i>special sites</i> ; and h. reduction of wildfire risk; i. use of <i>qualified logging professionals, qualified resource professionals</i> and/or <i>certified logging companies</i> ; j. awareness of SFI, and k. reporting of inconsistent practices.	Review of Minnesota SIC Committee website confirms Landowner Resource Manual is publicly available for educational resources documented within a-k.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
3. Participation in efforts to support or promote <i>conservation</i> of managed forests through voluntary market-based incentive <i>programs</i> such as current-use taxation <i>programs</i> , <i>Forest Legacy Program</i> , <i>conservation</i> easements federal, state, or provincial cost share programs, or SFI Conservation Grants.	Review of MN DNR website confirms support and administration for the Forest Legacy Program and Forests for the Future Program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 14.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall individually and/or through cooperative efforts involving <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> support and promote, at the state, provincial or other appropriate levels, mechanisms for public outreach, education and involvement related to sustainable forest management.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
14.2.1. Periodic educational opportunities for the public promoting <i>sustainable forestry</i> , such as a. field tours, seminars, websites, webinars or workshops; b. educational trips; c. self-guided forest management trails; d. publication of articles, educational pamphlets, or newsletters; or e. support for national, state, provincial, and local <i>forestry</i> organizations and soil and water <i>conservation</i> districts. f. engagement and support of teachers and/or students through programs such as Project Learning Tree.	Review of MN Department of Natural Resources website confirms significant resources for educational opportunities. Examples include the following: a. Website (link listed above) b. Educational Trips c. Nature Viewing d. Publications e. Conservation f. Project Learning Tree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 14.3. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall, individually and/or through cooperative efforts including <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> , establish, at the state, provincial, or other appropriate levels, procedures to address concerns raised by loggers, consulting foresters, employees, unions, <i>stakeholders</i> , the public or other <i>Certified Organizations</i> regarding management that appears inconsistent with the SFI standards principles and objectives.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
14.3.1. Support for <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> (e.g., toll-free numbers and other efforts) to address concerns about apparent nonconformance.	Review of Minnesota SIC website confirms process for receiving complaints or concerns regarding inconsistent practices.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
14.3.2. Process to receive and respond to public inquiries. <i>SFI Implementation Committees</i> shall submit data annually to <i>SFI Inc.</i> regarding concerns received and responses.	Minnesota SIC website contains a process for reporting inconsistent practices. The MN DNR website contains a process to report complaints or concerns. The SIC committees are responsible for submitting the data to SFI.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 15: Public Land Management Responsibilities To participate and implement sustainable forest management on <i>public lands</i> .		<input type="checkbox"/> N/A, private lands
Performance Measure 15.1. <i>Certified Organizations</i> with forest management responsibilities on <i>public lands</i> shall participate in the development of <i>public land</i> planning and management processes.	Refer to Indicators for evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE

<p>15.1.1. Involvement in <i>public land</i> planning and management activities with appropriate governmental entities and the public.</p>	<p>Minnesota DNR is a large public agency, and its mission, policies, and statutes require input from stakeholders, tribes, other agencies, and customers. The Department invites stakeholders and agencies to many of its planning and operational activities efforts, such as Section Forest Resource Management Planning. The Division of Forestry invites stakeholders and agencies to comment on pesticide application projects, forest road construction projects, and harvesting timber from state lands. The DNR also has multiple ways that the people can voice their concerns. Auditor observation confirmed significant opportunities for contact within DNR website.</p> <p>Interviews confirm roundtable sessions, public input sessions, surveys, and websites for stakeholder inputs are utilized.</p> <p>DNR website is used for receiving comments on various forest management plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Timber Harvest Plan receives many comments from public. Stakeholders have shown interest in the implementation. Plans are for review of accomplishments after year 5. • Annual harvest plans by stand (Stand Exam List) are posted on the DNR website for comments. Comments are forwarded to the Area to respond directly to the comments. • Annual Stand Exam portal is used for public to identify individual stands. • Major policy development has a 30-day stakeholder review period. Examples include HCVF guideline management and old growth designation and management. • The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) uses a variety of external advisory groups and 	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>
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REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
	<p>task forces as one way to work with Minnesotans for the department's mission. Some are open-ended and others are limited in duration. Membership design differs according to the purpose and sometimes provisions in an enabling authority. Participation in one of these appointed roles is one way that Minnesotans can contribute ideas and perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GovDelivery Platform is used for communication and stakeholder engagement. Communication is based on a list of subscribers. 	

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>15.1.2. Appropriate contact with local <i>stakeholders</i> over forest management issues through state, provincial, federal, or independent collaboration.</p>	<p>Interviews confirm that the DNR participates in a number of collaborative efforts such as the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, Great Lakes Fire Compact (which includes the Canadian Province of Ontario), National Association of State Foresters, Midwest-Northeastern Area Alliance of State Foresters, Minnesota Logger Education Program and Natural Resources Conservation Service State Technical Team.</p> <p>The DNR also meets with stakeholders and user groups like Minnesota Forest Industries, Minnesota Soil and Water Conservation District Forestry Association, Forest Stewardship Committee, Grand Rapids and Bemidji Forestry Affairs Councils, Minnesota Association of County Land Commissioners, Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee, environmental groups, and others.</p> <p>The DNR also works closely with the University of Minnesota and the Extension Service. DNR has also taken opportunities when available to provide technical review and input to County and USFS forest management plans.</p> <p>DNR also participates with a number of non-timber groups such as the National Wild Turkey Federation and Ruffed Grouse Society.</p> <p>Specific programs are in place for tribal outreach. Confirmed during interview with Forest Certification Program Consultant and review of selected Management Plans confirm Tribal inclusion.</p> <p>DNR has implemented a communication and educational plan for Invasive Species. The program is named Play Clean Go.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> NC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> EXC</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
Objective 16. Communications and Public Reporting To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.		
Performance Measure 16.1. A <i>Certified Organization</i> shall provide a summary audit report, prepared by the <i>certification body</i> , to <i>SFI Inc.</i> after the successful completion of a certification, recertification, or surveillance audit to the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE
16.1.1. The summary audit report submitted by the <i>Certified Organizations</i> (one copy must be in English), shall include, at a minimum, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. a description of the audit process, <i>objectives</i> and scope; b. a description of substitute <i>indicators</i>, if any, used in the audit and a rationale for each; c. the name of <i>Certified Organization</i> that was audited, including its SFI representative; d. a general description of the <i>Certified Organization's</i> forestland included in the audit; e. the name of the <i>certification body</i> and <i>lead auditor</i> (names of the <i>audit team</i> members, including <i>technical experts</i> may be included at the discretion of the <i>audit team</i> and <i>Certified Organization</i>); f. the dates the audit was conducted and completed; g. a summary of the findings, including general descriptions of evidence of conformity and any nonconformities and corrective action plans to address them, opportunities for improvement, and exceptional management; and h. the certification decision. The summary audit report will be posted on the SFI Inc. website for public review.	Review of SFI website confirms 2023 Public Summary Report has been posted and publicly available. All requirements of a-h are documented within report.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Performance Measure 16.2. <i>Certified Organizations</i> shall report annually to <i>SFI Inc.</i> on their conformance with the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> .	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
16.2.1. Prompt response to the SFI annual progress report survey.	SFI 2023 Annual Report Survey was submitted on 16 July 2024. Auditor confirmed the survey was submitted by SFI personnel on 17 July 2024 by review of email confirmation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
16.2.2. Record keeping for all the categories of information needed for SFI annual progress report surveys.	Auditor review of procedures, policies, technical infrastructure and trained/qualified certification administrative personnel confirms electronic and hardcopy records are maintained for compliance.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
16.2.3. Maintenance of copies of past survey reports to document progress and improvements to demonstrate conformance to the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> .	Interview with Certification Manager confirms hard copies of historical reports are maintained within office.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI
Objective 17. Management Review and Continual Improvement To promote continual improvement in the practice of <i>sustainable forestry</i> by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.		
Performance Measure 17.1. Certified Organizations shall establish a management review system to examine findings and progress in implementing the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> , to make appropriate improvements in <i>programs</i> , and to inform their employees of changes.	Refer to Indicators for Evidence.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI <input type="checkbox"/> NE

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
17.1.1. System to review commitments, <i>programs</i> , and procedures to evaluate effectiveness.	<p>Systems to review commitments, programs, and procedures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of a Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT) to review commitments to the SFI Standard and Department Policies and respond to audits. • An Internal Program Review team to assess conformance to the SFI and FSC Standards. • A Forest Resources Issues Team (FRIT). • Division Management Teams, including program, policy and procedure reviews. • DNR Conservation Agenda and Governor's Department Results Performance Indicators. • Annual or periodic program workshops (Timber Sales, Forest Development, Timber Appraisal, CFM, Wildlife Training Session and Meeting, etc.). • Area and regional field, and central office program reviews. • A DNR process (via Statewide Interdisciplinary Review Service) to review and update operational orders. • A Division of Forestry process to review and update division circular letters and manuals. • A Forestry/Wildlife/Ecological Services coordination policy. 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
<p>17.1.2. System for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information to management regarding progress in achieving <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard objectives and performance measures</i>, including measures to reduce the negative impacts from forest management operations.</p>	<p>Systems for collecting, reviewing, and reporting information include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Internal Program Review team annually presents findings from its internal audits to departments leadership. • Division of Forestry annual work planning and accomplishment reporting process • The monitoring program under M.S. §89A.07, subd.1. Forest resource trends and conditions (FIA, FIM, pest surveys, etc.) • The monitoring program under M.S. §89A.07, subd.2 and 3. Practices, compliance and effectiveness monitoring (i.e., FRC site-level guidelines implementation monitoring, including field audit reports) • FORIST development and implementation (FIM, SRM, site management documentation and objective reporting, forest development project tracking, forest inventory update tracking) • Monitoring SFRMP implementation (progress towards SFRMP goals/targets, using FORIST SRM objectives, SEL, and other means) • DNR timber sales reporting system • Timber sale inspections, regeneration survival checks, etc. • Electronic 121 checkoffs of FRC guideline application • Division training records (ECS training, FRC guidelines, timber sale design, etc.). • The Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT) maintains an annual process to evaluate conformance to the SFI Standard, to review commitments, identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps and to report findings to management. 	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI</p>

REQUIREMENT	Evidence/CAR	C/NC/EXC/OFI/NA/NE
17.1.3. Annual review of progress by management and determination of changes and improvements necessary to continually improve conformance to the <i>SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard</i> .	Review of 2024 Annual Management Review of SFI/FSC Forest Management Standards conducted on 8/13/2024. Forest Certification Implementation Team (FCIT) and Corrective Action sub-teams periodic meetings responding to corrective actions identified in 2023 external audits. Internal Assessment conducted by FCIT Team for three Forestry Administrative Field Areas- Warroad, Baudette and Littlefork in May 2024. Attendance included: Forestry Director, Fish and Wildlife Director, Ecological and Waters Resources Director and Forest Certification Program Consultant/Forest Certification Oversight Team.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> NC <input type="checkbox"/> EXC <input type="checkbox"/> OFI

Appendix 5 – Description of Chain of Custody Program

N/A

Appendix 6 – Schedule and Focus Areas for Next Audit

Proposed Audit Dates for Next Audit

Proposed Audit Dates	2025
Rationale for Dates (if applicable)	

Special Instructions or Scoping Notes for Next Regularly Scheduled Annual Audit

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable; no significant issues identified that may impact the next audit.
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**Note: information audit team leaders wish to remain confidential may be communicated directly to SCS.*

Appendix 7 – Copy of Audit Plan

Audit Plan: Forest Management Dual Audit

As a third-party certification body, SCS is permitted to explain its findings and clarify the requirements of standards. However, SCS is prohibited from providing prescriptive advice or consultancy as part of an evaluation in conjunction with certification services.

I.

Organization Name	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources		
Primary Contact	Adam James, Forest Certification Program Consultant Forestry		
Phone Number	(651) 259-5256		
Address	500 Lafayette Road, St. Paul, MN 55155-4040 USA		
Start Date, Duration	9/20/24 – 9/27/24, 4 days		
FSC Certificate Type	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Single FMU	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple FMU	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Group	<input type="checkbox"/> If SLIMF, list type: <input type="checkbox"/> Small, ore <input type="checkbox"/> Low Intensity	
FSC SLIMF if applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable		<input type="checkbox"/> Group SLIMF certificate
	<input type="checkbox"/> Small SLIMF certificate		<input type="checkbox"/> Low intensity SLIMF certificate
SFI Certificate Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Single Site		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multi-site: See Description of Ownership below

II.

FSC Lead Auditor, FSC Team	Sterling Griffin, FSC Lead Auditor; Shannon Wilks, Team Member
SFI Lead Auditor, SFI Team	Shannon Wilks, SFI Lead Auditor; Sterling Griffin, Team Member
Digital Document Sharing	Contact SCS Global Services IT

III.

Certificate Code	FSC: SCS-FM/COC-00088N SFI: SCS-SFI-FM-00088N		
FSC Audit Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation		<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Evaluation/ <input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Surv.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st , <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd , <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 rd or <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Surveillance		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer		<input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of Scope
SFI/RW Audit Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Certification		<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 1, Preliminary Review Audit
	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 2, Certification Audit		<input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Surv.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 st , <input type="checkbox"/> 2 nd , <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 rd or <input type="checkbox"/> 4 th Surveillance		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer		<input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of Scope
Applicable Standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FSC-STD Forest Management Standard(s) FSC-US Forest Management Standard, V1-0: Principle 3 (all criteria); Principle 4 (all criteria); mandatory criteria: 1.5, 2.3, 3.2, 4.2, 4.4, 5.6, 6.2, 6.3, 8.2, and 9.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FSC-STD-50-001 V2-0, Trademark Standard <input type="checkbox"/> SCS COC indicators for FMEs, V8-0 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: 2022 Standards and Rules® Forest Management. Objectives 3, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Audits of Multi-Site Organizations		

Certificate Scope/ Statement	The scope of the certificate includes all forest management activities associated with the Organization's sustainable forest management system with defined forest lands located on State lands in MN and including the harvest, transport, and sale or trade of forest products, and other forest management system activities for the Audit Objectives. The Organization has sufficient control over any contracting or outsourcing of forest management planning and activities to ensure conformance to applicable certification requirements.
Description of Ownership	MN DNR is considered a Multi-Site organization and qualifies for multi-site sampling as provided within the Requirements for the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules® Section 9 - Auditing Requirements. The central office has general control and authority over the separate state forests. As such the program is eligible for a sampling approach involving field reviews of a sample of the state forests that are organized into administrative units. The state forests were selected based on the time elapsed since previous audits, the level of activity at each forest, and the level of risk or complexity of the activities. A minimum of 25% of the field sites to be reviewed within each forest are selected randomly. Central office issues are reviewed primarily during the opening meeting and in scheduled follow up calls.
Surveillance Requirements	FSC PC&I: P3 (all); P4 (all); mandatory criteria below SFI Objectives: Objectives 3, 4, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17
FSC Mandatory Annual Requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural forests > 50,000 ha (123,553 ac): 1.5, 2.3, 3.2, 4.2, 4.4, 5.6, 6.2, 6.3, 8.2, and 9.4 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FMUs containing High Conservation Values: 6.2, 6.3, 6.9 and 9.4
Status of Certificate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FSC/ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI are valid.

IV.

Audit logistics	Lunch should be arranged each day to occur in the field for audit efficiency. Please advise audit team if they need to make their own lunch arrangements or if Organization can arrange/provide lunches. Lodging and vehicle travel during the audit as arranged in coordination with the certified organization.
Safety Considerations	Auditors shall follow all organization's Policies related to safety. Additional SCS policies and guidance shall also be followed.
Field Site Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The audit team leaders will have pre-selected field sites to meet sampling requirements of the Standards and have client approval prior at least 1 week before the opening meeting. ■ For a random selection, audit team requests all harvests over the past 12 months for the selected sample areas. Auditors randomly select about 1/3 of sites to audit from harvest sites (mandatory sites) and remainder selected using sampling criteria for route efficiency. Add-on sites may be requested or suggested to increase sampling along planned routes. ■ Sampling criteria for selected or add-on sites include active or inactive management related activities. Active generally includes any site disturbing activities and inactive generally includes monitoring activities. ■ Audit Team Leaders will make adjustments, as needed, while meeting sampling requirements to the extent possible. Deviations from the pre-approved Itinerary must be documented and explained in the audit report.
Examples of Active management:	Timber harvesting, energy wood and non-timber forest products harvesting (all commercial logging/extraction methods); soil preparation; planting or seeding; seedling stand management; fertilization; thinning; ditching; post-harvest remediation activities; infrastructure development (e.g. forestry road construction); road decommission (closure); fuel management (e.g. manual clearing); quarrying; chemical pesticides use; prescribed burning; pruning; harvest layout activities (e.g. tree marking, riparian buffer demarcation, identification of environmentally sensitive areas and cultural values).

Examples of Inactive management	Forest protection monitoring activities (e.g. fire patrols, surveillance for unauthorized activities); permanent sample plots establishment and/or monitoring; fire break maintenance; road side mowing; road grading (shaping); boundary line demarcation and maintenance; forest resource surveys/inventory; non-chemical invasive species management; developing/updating forest management plan; passive operational planning of a forest management activity (e.g. GIS activities, boundary demarcation, stand level reconnaissance).
List of Potential Interviewees	Stakeholders around controversial issues Key forestry staff relevant to conformance with standards and subject areas being audited.

V.

Audit Dates	9/20/24 – 9/27/24; Location: Baudette, Warroad (North), Little Fork—Tentative
Time/Duration	Activity / Forests Visited
Day 1, 9/20/24	Online – MS Teams Meeting
10:00 AM CDT	Opening Meeting: Introductions, client update, review audit scope, review and approve audit plan, intro/update to applicable Forest Management standards, SCS standards, confidentiality and public summary, conformance evaluation methods and tools, review of open CARs/OBS, emergency and security procedures for audit team, and final site selection adjustments. Review prior year findings. review any ongoing issues and/or stakeholder concerns.
Day 2, 9/24/24	Location: Warroad (North)
800 AM	Travel to State Forest; Conduct field visits. Evaluate FSC P&C and SFI Objectives FSC: Principle 3: The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected. Principle 4: Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities. <i>Mandatory criteria:</i> 1.5, 2.3, 3.2, 4.2, 4.4, 5.6, 6.2, 6.3, 8.2, and 9.4 SFI: Objective 3: Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources Objective 4: Conservation of Biological Diversity Objective 8: Recognize and Respect Indigenous People’s Rights Objective 13: Training and Education Objective 14: Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach Objective 15: Public Land Management Responsibilities Objective 16: Communications and Public Reporting Objective 17: Management Review and Continual Improvement
12:00 PM <i>Lunch</i>	Lunch should be arranged each day to occur in the field for audit efficiency.
4:30 PM	Daily debrief: Review daily activities, communicate lines of inquiry or open questions

Day 3, 9/25/24	Location: Baudette, MN
800 AM	Travel to State Forest; Conduct field visits. Evaluate FSC P&C and SFI Objectives
1200 – 100 PM <i>Lunch</i>	Lunch should be arranged each day to occur in the field for audit efficiency.
100 PM	Conduct field visits. Evaluate FSC P&C and SFI Objectives
4:30 PM	Daily debrief: Review daily activities, communicate lines of inquiry or open questions
Day 4, 9/26/24	Location: Littlefork
800 AM Little Fork, MN	Travel to State Forest; Conduct field visits. Evaluate FSC P&C and SFI Objectives
1200 – 100 PM <i>Lunch</i>	Lunch should be arranged each day to occur in the field for audit efficiency.
100 PM	Conduct field visits. Evaluate FSC P&C and SFI Objectives
4:30 PM	Daily debrief: Review daily activities, communicate lines of inquiry or open questions
Day 5, 9/27/24 Office	Location: DNR Office
900 AM	Closing meeting preparation. Audit team takes time to consolidate notes and review audit findings for presentation at closing meeting
1100 AM	Closing Meeting: Convene with all relevant staff to give a brief summary of audit activities, FSC present preliminary findings, SFI review identified nonconformities, confidentiality, SCS/FSC/SFI dispute policy, timeline for reports.
*Audits should be scheduled for regular work hours. Audits may be rescheduled or delayed due to unforeseen circumstances that arise onsite, including, but not limited to, significant changes to the scope, emergencies, extreme weather, unsafe work conditions, strikes, work stoppages, absent staff members, and detection of serious lapses in the forest management or OH&S systems, etc. In such cases, the auditor may recommend stopping and/or rescheduling the audit if the audit cannot be reasonably extended on a given day.	

VI.

Audit Preparation Checklist		
The following documents should be available during the audit and any indicated items highlight should be sent to the auditor at least 14 business days prior to the onsite audit.		
Item	Notes	SHAREFILE LOCATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2024 DAR reporting form (excel)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forest Management Plans for FMU(s)	Prior to audit, links to online docs are ok.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Relevant documented Forest Management procedure manuals, handbooks, and/or work instructions		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policies regarding certification, health, and safety		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Response to open findings		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupational Health and Safety procedures and records of training, or evidence of compliance with a third-party body such as government regulatory agency		

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Documentation for monitoring		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Records of approval for logo usage for RW or SFI and/or FSC (if used)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Management Review records for applicable standards		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Internal audit procedures and records, including training materials, if applicable		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Non-conformances identified, internal or external and corrective actions	Open NC response to be sent prior to audit	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Staff Training records, license, certifications. Records may include workshops, conferences, safety courses, etc. from the prior 2 years. For each unit visited training records for 2-3 staff including one person with 1 year and less than 5 years-experience and one person with 5-15 years' experience		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Trained Loggers List		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Contracts, legal documents related to harvesting and silvicultural activities. Required Contracts:	For pre-selected field sites	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recently complete or active timber harvest planning and monitoring documentation. Required field site documents	For pre-selected field sites	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Controversial issues (stakeholder input)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Accident records (serious injury and fatalities must be reported. Fatalities of employees or contractors must be reviewed).		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Operational plan(s) for the next 12 months		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Inventory records		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chemical use records in addition to annual reporting summaries.		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Records of sales of certified products; this includes copies of invoices, bills, shipping documents, as well as log load/trip tickets, timber sale contracts, and relevant bill payment documents		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Annual volume summary of certified purchases and sales over past year (per product group, unless products are custom manufactured)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outsourcing procedures and agreements (if applicable)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Documentation for operation of complaint procedure (where relevant) <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Multiple sites list and consent forms / contracts (where relevant) <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		

End Report