



Forest Certification For Private Woodlot Owners in Ontario



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FSC® C018800

Forest Certification

The concept of forest certification arose in early 1990's in response to the growing concern surrounding forest sustainability. The idea was to develop a process for certifying forest management practices to a set of standards that define sustainable forest management. Independent third-party auditors would then evaluate forest operations to determine whether they meet the standards. Forest certification ensures that forest owners, practitioners, and operators comply with established and accepted forest management standards. Certification provides assurance to forest owners, managers, operators, consumers, and the local community that the management, recreational use, and production of wood products from a certified forest maintains the health of the forest, the stability of the ecosystems, and the livelihoods of local communities. In many cases, certification can help improve or restore forest values. Certification applies to forested landscapes, including wetlands, natural meadows, old fields, and natural, non-treed areas. It is a voluntary, market-based system.

The two dominant forest certification systems in Canada are the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI). The Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) chose the FSC system as the most appropriate system for small-scale, group forest certification. FSC has standards specific to local and small-scale forests. FSC is an international organization with a brand and certification system that is recognized by consumers and environmental and social groups throughout the world.

Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) (fsc.org) was founded in 1994 by a group of concerned people from environmental non-governmental organizations, timber and wood products companies, and human rights organizations. They had the common goal of maintaining, improving, and protecting the world's forests. Together they developed a forest management standard based on 10 core principles (see page 10). FSC has since grown their standard into the world's largest and most recognized forest management standard. The Canadian arm of FSC, FSC Canada (ca.fsc.org), oversees the adoption and implementation of FSC standards in Canada. Canada currently has the largest area of certified forest in the world at 164 million hectares. The countries with the next most certified area, Russia and the United States, have only 68 and 40 million hectares of certified forest respectively.

FSC uses a consultative and transparent process to develop regionally specific standards that can be used to implement sustainable forest management. The standard applicable to the EOMF focuses on local forest types, community forest management, Indigenous Rights, and intrinsic and monetary benefits to local communities.



Benefits of Certification

Many woodlot owners are proud to be good stewards of their forests and want to ensure their practices protect or enhance their woodlots. Many want to be leaders in sustainable forest management in their area and set an example for their neighbours and peers. FSC is the best way to achieve these goals. Following FSC principles provides an iron clad testament of good forest management, ensuring benefits to the local community, ecosystems, and the reputation of the FSC certificate holder. FSC certification, guarantees that a forest has worldwide recognition as to the quality of forest management activities and the owner can be assured they are doing the right things for their land, the local community, and Indigenous Peoples. In communications with stakeholders, private woodlot owners can use this to enrich the great story they have to tell. It is a reputation enhancer. For landowners who run businesses out of their woodlots, it enhances the product they sell and makes it easier to withstand challenges from concerned customers about management activities. Customers supporting local forest-based businesses expect them to be sustainably managed.

Furthermore, forest certification provides:

- A framework to implement sustainable forest management that provides confidence to the landowner
- Opportunities to learn about and implement best practises in forest management
- Assurance that the forest is well-managed and all values are being maintained or enhanced
- Enhanced product value
- Agreement on acceptable management activities for lands owned by groups such as hunting clubs, cottage associations, and community organizations

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest Certification Program

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) manages an FSC Group Forest Management Certificate (FSC C018800) on behalf of private woodlot owners and community forests in Ontario. The EOMF Forest Certification Program provides an opportunity for community forests and private woodlot owners to become certified to FSC standards. Group certification allows for numerous private woodlot owners and community forests to come together to share the benefits and costs of FSC certification by certifying their lands under one certificate. Group certification significantly reduces the time and costs of certification.

There are three fees private woodlot owners pay to participate in the EOMF Certification Program. First, there is a one-time on-boarding fee to cover the time and effort of the EOMF Program Coordinator to bring the forest into the Certification Program (approximately \$200 including tax). Second, is an annual \$75 (including tax) fee paid by each woodlot owner to support the operation of the program. The third fee is a 4% fee on the profit from all timber sales. The EOMF Program Coordinator can provide information on all fees.

Benefits of Joining the EOMF Certification Program

The EOMF has almost 20 years of experience in forest certification in Southern Ontario. The program provides all the administrative support and coaching needed for a forest owner to achieve and maintain FSC certification. A suite of tools for forest certification has been developed including a Policy and Procedures Manual, and relevant templates such as forest operations prescriptions, pesticide application documentation, and timber sale contracts. The EOMF group format allows private woodlot owners to become FSC Certified that otherwise could not. The EOMF hosts two Certification Working Group meetings annually that provide an opportunity to learn about best practices, network, and participate in field tours. The Program Coordinator also develops opportunities to benefit the group including training, marketing, pursuing funding, and building partnerships.



Registered Professional Foresters, like Eleanor Reed, posing here at an OWA Coopeative Harvest in 2022, are consulted in the Certification Program to ensure that forests are sustainably managed

Steps to Certification with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest

The process to certification with the EOMF is relatively simple, but requires an upfront commitment of time, energy, and some modest funds. After certification is achieved and management systems are in place, the cost and effort diminish significantly. The EOMF Program Coordinator will coach all interested forest owners through the whole process and provide all the administrative support needed after a forest achieves certification.

The steps to certification:

1. Review the Requirements for Private Woodlot Owners on Page 8.
2. Assess current forest management practices against the general requirements for FSC certification.
3. Review the Memorandum of Understanding, provided by the Program Coordinator, that you would be required to sign to participate in the program.
4. Contact the Program Coordinator to express interest, get a copy of additional documents, and resolve any initial questions about FSC Certification and your woodlot
5. If certification will be pursued, pay the on-boarding fee and annual fee.
6. Prepare a forest management plan that is compliant with the program requirements (see Requirements on Page 8).
7. Complete an on-boarding process with the Program Coordinator to review all the requirements of certification. This requires a phone call interview, checklist review, and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. The Program Coordinator will require a call of approximately 30 minutes with the person who prepared your management plan. This may result in an additional cost for their time. Some forests with complicated or higher-risk management activities may require a site visit by the Program Coordinator as part of the on-boarding process.
8. Complete the relevant FSC sections of your online Ontario Woodlot Association account.

Following Certification, forests owners are required to:

- Commit to managing to FSC standards
- Pay annual fee to EOMF
- Host visits with EOMF for internal auditing, as needed
- Be available for participation in the EOMF's annual surveillance audit, as needed
- Participate in EOMF Certification Working Groups to stay current on certification requirements and participate in field tours and networking events (optional)



Photo taken during 2021 FSC Audit at Quinte Conservation FSC Certified Forest

Requirements For FSC Certification for Private Woodlot Owners

All items required for certification are listed within the EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual and the gap analysis template. Both can be provided by the Program Coordinator. The following list includes the key requirements for certification. This is not an exhaustive list but covers the primary items woodlot owners should be aware of:

- Commit to FSC Principles and Sustainable Forest Management
- Prepare a Forest Management Plan with appropriate detail. The plan must:
 - Be compliant with Ontario's Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program requirements for management plans
 - Include additional information on Species at Risk, High Conservation Values, and Indigenous Rights (templates provided by Program Coordinator)
 - Be prepared by a Registered Professional Forester or Managed Forest Plan Approver under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program
- All harvests require:
 - A prescription signed by Registered Professional Forester or Associate Member of the Ontario Professional Foresters' Association (templates provided)
 - Use of an Ontario Certified Tree Marker
 - Notification of neighbours about operations
 - Monitoring of harvests (templates provided)
 - The use local workers where possible
 - Contracts with all forest workers
 - The use a wood tracking process (templates provided)
 - *Note that personal firewood harvests of less than 10 bush cords annually are exempt from the above requirement*
- Pesticides must be used judiciously and properly documented (templates provided)
- Property lines must be well established and not in contention with neighbours

FSC Standard Principles

Each principle has a list of criteria that certified landowners must adhere to. The Program Coordinator will review these criteria with interested landowners.

PRINCIPLE 1	COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND FSC PRINCIPLES
PRINCIPLE 2	TENURE AND USE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
PRINCIPLE 3	INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS
PRINCIPLE 4	COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND WORKERS' RIGHTS
PRINCIPLE 5	BENEFITS FROM THE FOREST
PRINCIPLE 6	ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
PRINCIPLE 7	MANAGEMENT PLAN
PRINCIPLE 8	MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT
PRINCIPLE 9	HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS
PRINCIPLE 10	PLANTATIONS

For more information see: <https://www.ontariowoodlot.com/join> or contact Glen Prevost, OWA Program Coordinator at 705-358-7913 or glen.prevost@ontariowoodlot.com



FSC Certification ensures that forests provide habitat for the wildlife we value, like Pileated Woodpeckers