

# A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council Certification for Private Woodlots in Ontario



EASTERN ONTARIO  
MODEL FOREST

[www.eomf.on.ca/certification](http://www.eomf.on.ca/certification)



## Forest Certification

The concept of forest certification arose in response to the growing concern surrounding forest sustainability. The idea was to develop a process for certifying forest management practices to a pre-determined set of standards which define responsible forest management. Independent third party auditors evaluate forest operations to determine whether owners and/or managers meet the required standards. Forest certification ensures that forest owners, practitioners, and operators comply with established and accepted management standards. Certification provides assurance to the local community that the production of wood products from a certified land-base does not damage the overall health of the forest, the stability of the ecosystems, or the livelihoods of local communities. Forest certification is a voluntary, market-based concept.

There are several third party certification systems for forestry in Canada, they are: Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC), Canadian Standards Association (CSA), and Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI).

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) chose the FSC® system as the most appropriate system for small-scale, forest certification. The FSC has developed regional standards specific to the **Great Lakes-St. Lawrence** forest region in which we are located and has stipulations specific to smaller-scale forest operations. When the EOMF began to pursue forest certification, the FSC indicated an interest in working with the EOMF to make the system realistic for small scale operations in Ontario. And finally, because the FSC is an international organization, their labeling scheme is recognized worldwide and the FSC system is recognized by environmental and social groups throughout the world.



Diagram 1: Sustainable Forest Management

## The Benefits of Forest Certification

Within a forestry context, the balance of environmental, social, and economic values is challenging. There are many competing values as is seen in *Diagram 1: Sustainable Forest Management*. There is also growing public interest in the environment and in the responsible use of our natural resources.

Certification works to ensure that management practices are consistently applied across the forest landscape assuring everyone, from woodlot owners to community members to wood product consumers, that the forest and all its dependents and values have been considered and are being responsibly managed. Forest certification provides:

- A framework to implement responsible forest management
- Assurance of a forest well-managed for all values
- Credibility and accountability for forest management practices
- Access to unique markets and potential for increased revenues from the sale of certified wood products

### The EOMF Forest Certification Program

The EOMF Forest Certification Program provides an opportunity for private woodlot owners to become certified to the internationally recognized standards for forest management developed by the FSC. The EOMF has become a leader in small scale forest certification in Canada and is willing to transfer its model to others.

The EOMF manages a FSC certificate (SW-FM/COC 000-232) on behalf of private woodlot owners in eastern Ontario and has developed a process for private woodlots to become certified. The EOMF Forest Certification Program allows for numerous landowners to share the benefits and costs of FSC certification by certifying their lands, under one certificate.

Interested landowners will sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the EOMF that indicates their commitment to managing their forest within the Principles and Criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council and within the guidelines laid out in the *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual*. In turn, the EOMF will assist forest owners with the implementation of their forest management plan.

### The Forest Stewardship Council

FSC is an international, independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization formed to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable forest management around the world through the certification of forest management practices.

There are two types of FSC certification which are interdependent in producing certified forest products: forest certification and product certification.

**Forest certification** is directed towards on-the-ground forest management practices and related procedures. Those obtaining forest management certification are responsible for ensuring compliance with the FSC's principles and criteria.



For private woodlot owners in eastern Ontario, the EOMF program provides an opportunity to join a group of certified woodlot owners. Certified woodlot owner groups, in partnership with the EOMF, support their members by:

- Coordinating workshops and other educational activities
- Distributing knowledge and information on best management practices
- Exploring market opportunities for FSC certified products



*“Forest certification has provided forest owners with a sound framework to implement sustainable forestry, from formulating their objectives to carrying out on the ground activities all the while considering a wide range of forest values and setting a high standard for others to follow.” ~ Mark Richardson, GENERAL MANAGER, EOMF*





**Product Certification** is directed at those producing timber and non-timber products (e.g., sawmills, pulp mills, printers and maple syrup producers) and is referred to as “*chain of custody*”. The FSC has introduced an international labeling scheme for forest products which provides a credible guarantee that a given product comes from a well-managed forest by ensuring full chain of custody for the materials used in its production. For a wood product to be labeled and sold as “certified” it must originate from a certified forest management operation and be produced in a facility that holds chain of custody certification.

### **FSC Principles & Criteria**

The FSC has developed a set of 10 principles and related criteria to define responsible forest management. These principles and criteria apply to all tropical, temperate, and boreal forests around the world. They use a consultative process to develop regionally specific standards that can be used to implement sustainable forest management within a more local context. The regional standards include operational specifications unique to the given forest type, protective devices unique to local conservation challenges and, in some cases, other details depending on scale and intensity of forest operations. In Ontario there are regional standards developed specifically for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region and the Boreal forest region.

The 10 FSC principles of forest stewardship are:

1. Compliance with Local Laws & FSC Principles
2. Tenure & Use Rights & Responsibilities
3. Indigenous People’s Rights
4. Community Relations, Worker’s Rights & Human Resources
5. Benefits from the Forest
6. Environmental Impact
7. Management Plan
8. Monitoring & Assessment
9. Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests
10. Plantations

Throughout the principles and related criteria there is a focus on community forest management, on local benefits from the forest and on operating within local objectives while considering landscape level effects. From a planning perspective, the emphasis is on adaptive management and using the precautionary approach.



Currently there are more than 100 million hectares of FSC-certified forest in over 81 countries. Canada represents the largest area of FSC-certified forest in the world. FSC is the fastest growing forest certification system in the world (UN FAO 2007).

Visit: [www.fscCanada.org](http://www.fscCanada.org)



## Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Region Certification Standard

The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence (GLSL) Standard describes indicators of compliance with FSC's principles and criteria to be applied in the mixed wood forests of Ontario and Québec and provide guidance to managers and certifiers when implementing and auditing the standard.

The GLSL Standard apply to the full range of facilities (e.g., size, products) and ownership/tenure systems in use in Ontario and Québec, including large public area-based licenses, public Sustainable Forestry Licenses involving multiple share-holders, public community forests and privately owned forests of all sizes.

The GLSL Standard can be downloaded from [www.fscanada.org](http://www.fscanada.org)

## Forest Certification Tools Developed by the EOMF

The EOMF has developed a suite of publications and tools for forest certification that are directly applicable across the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region and beyond:

- EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual
- EOMF Forest Certification Program Information Brochures
  - *Managing Private and Community Forests Today, for Tomorrow*
  - *Chain of Custody Certification for Forest Product Producers*
- *A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification for Community Forests in Ontario*
- *A Guide to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification for Private Woodlots in Ontario*
- *A Guide to Chain of Custody Certification for Forest Product Producers*
- *Certification Tool Kit for Private Woodlot Owner Groups*

Please visit [www.eomf.on.ca/publications](http://www.eomf.on.ca/publications) or contact the EOMF if you are interested in obtaining any of these documents.

## Steps to Achieving FSC Certification for Your Private Woodlot

The certification process has traditionally been an onerous and expensive undertaking for individual landowners to pursue alone. As an alternative, there are several forestry consultants and forest-based organizations throughout the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region that hold Resource Manager certificates, including the EOMF. The EOMF manages an FSC certificate on behalf of private woodlot owners in eastern Ontario allowing

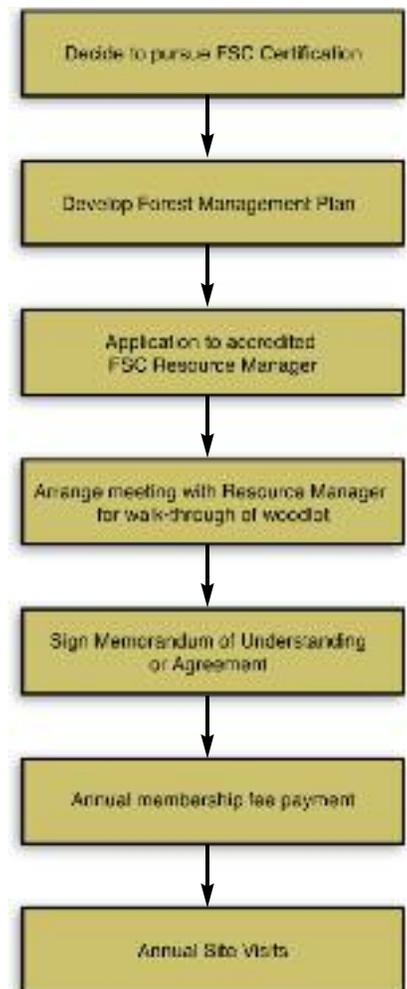


Diagram 2: The FSC Forest Certification Process





*“The key benefit is in working with dedicated, like-minded people—sharing experiences, approaches, markets, and knowledge.”*

~ Ray Fortune,  
EASTERN ONTARIO CERTIFIED  
FOREST OWNER  
FORTUNE FARMS SUGAR BUSH LTD.

for numerous landowners to share the benefits and costs of FSC certification by certifying their lands as one unit, under one certificate.

### ***Pursuing FSC certification with an existing Resource Manager***

Depending on the location of your woodlot, you may want to pursue certification with a Resource Manager in your area. For a current list of Resource Managers, please contact the EOMF Forest Certification staff. While working with local Resource Managers, you can take advantage of the tools available through the EOMF towards your certification process.

If you decide to pursue forest certification with the EOMF’s Forest Certification Program, the steps involved are likely similar to the steps that would be taken by any Resource Manager in the region. The EOMF steps are as follows:

- **Decide** that you want to have your woodlot FSC certified.
- **Obtain** a copy of the *EOMF Forest Certification Program Policies & Procedures Manual*.
- **Review** the **Checklist for Private Woodlot FSC Certification** in the GLSL region of Ontario included within this document to assess current woodlot status.
- **Develop** a forest management plan. Landowners may prepare a forest management plan for their own property, however, it will be approved by either the EOMF Certification Program staff, a member of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association or an Ontario Managed Forest Plan Approver.
- **Schedule** a site visit and field tour with Forest Certification staff. This visit will explore your compatibility with the FSC standards, and will review your plan. Certification staff will discuss the following information:
  - o Management plan with your objectives
  - o Contact information for those involved in forest management
  - o Total area to be certified
  - o Estimated average annual harvest
  - o A document list outlining where all relevant documents can be found
- **Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with the EOMF. See sample MOU included within the *Policies & Procedures Manual*.
- **Pay** annual certification fee.
- **Coordinate** and host annual visits with EOMF staff.
- **Participate** in forestry-focused educational workshops.



## Checklist for Private Woodlot FSC Certification in Ontario

### Key Examples of Forest Management Requirements

- Ability to comply with and meet FSC principles and criteria
- Sign Memorandum of Understanding with the EOMF or existing Resource Manager
- Pay annual certification fee
- Prepare forest management plan
- Identify and determine strategy for cultural heritage value features
- Take measures to prevent invasive plant introduction
- Harvest prescription approved and signed by Registered Professional Forester or Associate (if commercial harvesting to take place)
- Contracts in place with all forest workers
- Use certified tree markers
- Use local workers where possible
- Ensure all forest workers have WSIB coverage and liability insurance
- Boundary lines are well established and are not in contention with your neighbours
- Use a bill of lading process for wood tracking
- Efforts made to send wood to a chain of custody mill
- Be aware of areas of concern – some examples include:
  - Hawk nests
  - Deer wintering yards
  - Cavity trees
  - Supercanopy trees



## The Eastern Ontario Model Forest

The EOMF is a not-for-profit, charitable organization. As one of fifteen large-scale working model forests in Canada's Model Forest Network, the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) works with government, NGOs, landowners, industry, First Nations, and other stakeholders in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence forest region to develop new ways to sustain and manage our forest resources.

The EOMF champions the belief that we all have a stake in ensuring that the environmental, economic, cultural and social values of Eastern Ontario's forests are maintained for the benefit of all, now and in the future. The model forest provides a unique forum where forest users, many of whom may never have met before, can forge partnerships and gain a greater understanding of conflicting views, share their knowledge, and combine their expertise and resources.

The principle behind the model forest program is simple: demonstrate how partners, representing a diversity of forest values, can work together to achieve sustainable forest management using innovative, region-specific approaches.

The Forest Certification Program is just one of many EOMF projects. For more information on EOMF projects and activity areas, please visit [www.eomf.on.ca](http://www.eomf.on.ca).

### For More Information on the EOMF Forest Certification Program

Visit our website at:  
[www.eomf.on.ca/certification](http://www.eomf.on.ca/certification)



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*The FSC® is the only forest certification system recognized by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building program, and supported by the World Wildlife Fund Canada, Sierra Club of Canada, and the National Aboriginal Forestry Association.*

*All products that are FSC-certified contain wood or wood fibre from forests certified to the FSC's standards or material that is 100% and post-consumer reclaimed/recycled material.*

