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Ver 11 February 2022

FSC Forest Management Certification

Reassessment
Report for:

Eastern Ontario Forest Group (EOFG)

**Certified area: Community Forests, Large
Private Forests and SLIMFs**

in

Kemptville, Ontario, Canada

Report Finalized:	December 12, 2022
Audit Dates:	October 22 - 31, 2022
Audit Team:	James Hallworth; Lead Auditor
Type of certificate:	Group
Certificate code:	NC-FM/CoC- 000232
Certificate issue/expiry:	January 28, 2023 – January 27, 2028
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent certification audit conducted by a team of specialists representing Preferred by Nature. The purpose of the audit was to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of **Eastern Ontario Forest Group (EOFG)** forest management as defined by the Principles and Criteria established by the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC®).

This report contains various sections of information and findings and several annexes. Sections 1-4 of the report will become public information about the forest management operation and may be distributed by Preferred by Nature or the FSC to interested parties. The remainder of the annexes are confidential, to be reviewed only by authorized Preferred by Nature and FSC personnel bound by confidentiality agreements. A copy of the public summary of this report can be obtained on the FSC website at <http://info.fsc.org/>.

Dispute resolution: If Preferred by Nature clients encounter organisations or individuals having concerns or comments about Preferred by Nature and our services, these parties are strongly encouraged to contact relevant Preferred by Nature regional office. Formal complaints and concerns should be sent in writing.

Impartiality commitment: Preferred by Nature commits to using impartial auditors and our clients are encouraged to inform Preferred by Nature management if violations of this are noted. Please see our Impartiality Policy here: <https://preferredbynature.org/impartiality-policy>

Standard Conversions

1 mbf = 2.4 m³
1 cord = 3.6 m³
100 tons hardwood = 97 m³
100 tons = 101 m³
1 acre = 0.404687 hectares

1. AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

1.1 Audit Recommendation and certification decision

Based on Organisation's conformance with certification requirements, the following recommendation is made:

- Certification approved:
Upon acceptance of NCR(s) issued below
- Certification not approved:

Additional comments, including issues identified as controversial or hard to evaluate and explanation of the conclusion reached: None.

1.2 New Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

Note: NCRs describe evidences of Organisation non-conformities identified during audits. NCRs include defined timelines for the Organisation to demonstrate conformity. MAJOR NCRs issued during assessments/reassessments shall be closed prior to issuance of certificate. MAJOR NCRs issued during anual audits shall be closed within timeline or result in suspension.

Check if no NCR(s) have been issued

NCR: 4.2.1/23	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in the Great Lakes/Saint-Lawrence region (Canada) / Indicator 4.2.1
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<u>Requirement:</u> 4.2.1 All forest workers comply with all relevant provincial occupational health and safety requirements.	
<u>Finding:</u> Auditor observed first aid kits were missing from 2 forestry machines involved in active operations (processor-buncher & forwarder) involving one contractor at one site visited. EOFG policy and harvest contracts state workers need to abide by all occupational health	

and safety regulations and safe practices. This would include first aid kits being readily accessible.

Evidence:

- Interviews with forest workers (3) and Forest Manager
- Site observation at 2019-FP-03, Larose Forest
- Inspection reports 2019-FP-03 - July, August, September 2022
- Harvest Contract 2019-FP-03
- EOFG PP Manual 2022

Grading Justification:	Minor as a system is in place for health and safety and present protocols lower risks to a worker’s health. Previous start-up and site inspection records noted the presence of first aid kits onboard machinery The auditor alerted workers and the supervisor onsite to this non-conformity, and during the audit, the forest manager stated they had checked with the contractor and first aid kits had been supplied to those workers’ machines. Other health and safety equipment such as fire extinguishers were present and other safe working procedures were being followed such as PPE worn, spill kits on site, communication protocol followed and no workers conducting work alone onsite. All workers interviewed were certified first aiders. As the site was not very remote, the nearest medical facilities were within a 20-minute drive, the forest manager and contractor have a very low accident rate (none reported last 12 months) and considering the scale (one contractor at one site), the auditor deems this sufficient justification presently for a minor classification which includes taking into account the correction applied at time of audit.
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	<p>Within 12 months from report draft date</p> <p>Due date: yyyy-mm-dd</p>
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN

Comments (optional):	
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NCR: 2.1/23	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 / Requirement 2.1
Report Section:	Annex VII
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>2.1 A declaration of consent shall be signed by each member wishing to join a group. In the declaration, the member shall:</p> <p>a) commit to follow the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard and the Group Rules;</p> <p>b) declare that the management units they are bringing into the group are not included in another FSC certificate;</p> <p>c) agree to allow the Group Entity, the certification body, FSC and ASI to fulfil their responsibilities;</p> <p>d) agree that the Group Entity will be the main contact for certification.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) have been signed with all members however they do not fully encompass the requirements from subsections b and d, specifically there is no statement or consent declaring 'that the management units they are bringing into the group are not included in another FSC certificate' and though the MOUs refer to EOFG employees and contractors, explicit wording regarding the group member agreeing to allow 'the certification body, FSC and ASI to fulfil their responsibilities' is lacking. Forest owners/managers interviewed understood aspects a-d) and have given their consent.</p> <p><u>Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Program Coordinator • MOUs for 10 group members in audit scope • EOFG PP Manual 2022 	
Grading Justification:	Minor as subsection b represents a very low risk and regarding subsection c, group members understand through information communicated by the Program Coordinator that 3 rd party audits can be conducted on their site to evaluate conformance. MOUs have been signed by all members which encompass the remaining aspects.
Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.

	Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report draft date Due date: yyyy-mm-dd
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

1.3 Observations

Note: Observations are issued for the early stages of a problem which does not of itself constitute a non-conformance, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future non-conformance if not addressed by the organization; observations may lead to direct non-conformances if not addressed.

No observations

OBS: 6.2.1/23	Standard & Requirement:	NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in the Great Lakes/Saint-Lawrence region (Canada) / Indicator 6.2.1
	Report Section	Annex I
Description of findings leading to observation:	<u>Requirement:</u> The management plan – or related documents – has an updated list of species at risk (i.e. flora and fauna) that are presently or potentially found in the forest (i.e. the forest is located in their distribution area), as indicated in federal, provincial or regional government listings, as well as other species that have been identified as needing special protection. <u>Finding:</u>	

	<p>EOFG has SOP 1.1 – The Forest Management Plan Standard Operating Procedure and SOP 1.5.1 – Protection of Species at Risk Standard Operating Procedure which are presently being implemented by group members however members track and monitor SAR and rare/uncommon species slightly differently from one another, meaning that lists which meet this requirement can vary significantly from one member to the next in terms of where this information is located and how it is presented to the auditor to demonstrate conformance.</p> <p>This is classed as an observation only as all members within the audit scope demonstrated a list of updated SAR or rare/uncommon species which were present or potentially present, either in their FMP (e.g., SLIMF members) or supporting documentation such as inventory summaries/assessments, forest operation site prescriptions or SAR list document (e.g., County Forests).</p>
<p>Observation:</p>	<p>The Program Coordinator should look at revising related group policy/SOPs and/or database management to ensure consistency on how group members presently track and update SAR/rare species lists to ensure continued conformance with Indicator 6.2.1.</p> <p>Additional FSC guidance: All species that are listed as “at risk” (i.e., those which have some special designation related to concerns for their population or habitat status) by federal or provincial government agencies and that are present or believed to be present on the management unit must be included in the considerations related to species at risk in Criterion 6.2 and elsewhere in the standard where the term “species at risk” is used. Managers should also consider other vulnerable species as “at risk” (and therefore apply the measures identified by the relevant indicators of this standard), including species that are under consideration for listing as well as species that have been identified by non-government agencies or groups if the designation or concern is the result of efforts by a diversity of agencies or groups, considering a diversity of vulnerability factors; and which include consideration of the impact of forest management activities on relevant vulnerability factors for the species.</p>

<p>OBS: Group 8.1/23</p>	<p>Standard & Requirement:</p>	<p>FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 / Requirement 8.1</p>
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	Report Section	Annex VII
<p>Description of findings leading to observation:</p>	<p><u>Requirement:</u> 8.1 The Group Entity shall provide each member with information, or access to information, about how the group works. The information shall include: a) The Group Rules and the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard, and an explanation of how to conform with them. The Group Entity shall provide access to other applicable normative documents upon request; b) An explanation of the certification body’s evaluation process; c) An explanation that the certification body, FSC and ASI have the right to access the members' management unit(s) and documentation; d) An explanation that the certification body will publish a public summary of their evaluation report; ASI may publish a public summary of their evaluation; and FSC will include information about the group in its database; e) Explanation of any costs associated with joining the group.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u> EOFG has developed and uses a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which fulfills all the requirements in addition to Policy 1.4 – Entering, Exiting and Expulsion Policy, and pathway to forest certification documents listed on the EOFG website https://www.eomf.on.ca/programs/certification. However, reference to ASI is ambiguous. Related to subsections c and d: c) explanation that the ‘certification body, FSC and ASI have the right to access the members' management unit(s) and documentation’; d) explanation regarding the ‘certification body will publish a public summary of their evaluation report; ASI may publish a public summary of their evaluation; and FSC will include information about the group in its database’</p> <p><u>Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Program Coordinator and Group Members • MOUs / annual invoices for group members • EOFG PP Manual 2022 • EOFG website <p>https://www.eomf.on.ca/programs/certification</p> <p>Issued as an OBS as the MOU agreement and information communicated by the Program Coordinator references the property might need to be accessed for audit and compliance</p>	

	purposes. All other aspects are accessible through the relevant documents (FSC Standard, certification process etc.) which are available to all members through the database tool, EOFG PP Manual, website and direct communication with the Program Manager.
Observation:	The Program Coordinator should continue to ensure all information including the subrequirements c-d is clearly communicated or documented to group members.

Note: this section indicates the Organisation's actions to comply with NCRs that have been issued during or since the last audit. Failure to comply with a minor NCR results in the NCR being upgraded to major; the specified follow-up action is required by the Organization or involuntary suspension will take place.

1.4 Conformance with Applicable Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

Status Categories	Explanation
CLOSED	Operation has successfully met the NCR
OPEN	Operation has either not met or has partially met the NCR

Check if N/A (there are no open NCRs to review)

All previous open (7) NCRs closed.

NCR: 4.12.7/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	FSC Pesticide Policy FSC-POL-30-001 v3-0 / Requirement 4.12.7
Report Section:	Annex III
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u> Make the ESRAs and incorporation to the operational plans available to affected stakeholders upon request.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u> Through interviews with the Program Coordinator and forest managers, Environmental and Social Risk Assessments (ESRAs) and operational plans/maps may be available upon</p>	

request, however affected stakeholders are not currently aware of certain components of the ESRAs. An NCR has been issued regarding this lack of public accessibility/knowledge of the ESRAs. This is considered a minor non-conformance as the results of ESRAs have been incorporated into operational plans but some aspects (such as the ESRA documents) stakeholders are unaware of. This represents a low risk regarding any social or environmental impact as stakeholders are notified of operations occurring within community forests.

Evidence:

- Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator
- EOFG Policy and Procedures Manual (2014)
- Websites and social media sites of EOFG, Larose Forest, Quinte Conservation, South Nation Conservation and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	<p>Within 12 months from report finalization date</p> <p>Due date: 2023-02-10</p>
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator • NCR Explanations document • https://www.eomf.on.ca/programs/certification
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Root cause was determined to be misinterpretation of the new requirement. Through interview with the Program Coordinator and group members, the auditor deems sufficient understanding of this requirement has been gained through review of the pesticide policy requirements and NCR issuance. Corrective action was an update to the EOFG website. Auditor reviewed publicly accessible website and interviewed Program Coordinator. Environmental and Social Risk Assessments for all chemical pesticides used within the group can be found under the section titled 'Information on Forest Management', as a separate pdf file link. Auditor deems this sufficient to close NCR.</p>
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 4.12.12/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	FSC Pesticide Policy FSC-POL-30-001 v3-0 / Requirement 4.12.12
Report Section:	Annex III
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>Inform third-party processing plants located in the spatial area of the MU and third-party nursery suppliers of the list of FSC prohibited chemical pesticides, encouraging them to avoid these pesticides in their processes and in the production of seedlings and other materials entering the management unit.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>Third-party nursery suppliers have not currently been informed of the list of FSC prohibited chemical pesticides, nor have they been encouraged to avoid these pesticides in their processes and in the production of seedlings and other materials entering the management units. A minor non-conformance has been issued due to the indirect low environmental impact of this requirement on the certified area, in Canada it is rare that any nursery would be using any chemical on the FSC prohibited list.</p> <p><u>Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator 	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	<p>Within 12 months from report finalization date</p> <p>Due date: 2023-02-10</p>
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCR Explanations document NCR 4.12.12 - Letter to Nurseries FW_ Eastern Ontario Model Forest FSC Pesticides Notice email record Annual Report_Template - XX-XX-XX revision
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Program Coordinator explained to auditor that root cause was determined to be oversight of the new FSC pesticide policy requirement. Corrective action included creation of a letter to meet the intent of 4.12.12 including reference to FSC pesticide policy and FSC List of Highly Hazardous Pesticides. This letter was then emailed/mailed to all third-party suppliers used by group members, the auditor reviewing a sample record. In addition, the Program</p>

	Coordinator has updated the annual report template which is completed once a year by County forests for monitoring purposes. This new template includes a section to list any new nursery stock suppliers to be implemented from the 2022 reporting period onwards. Through interview with the Program Coordinator and group members, the auditor deems sufficient understanding of this requirement has now been demonstrated to close this NCR.
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 7.1.1a/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in the Great Lakes/Saint-Lawrence region (Canada) / Indicator 7.1.1a
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>7.1.1a Applicable to SLIMF FMEs only: A written management plan exists that includes at least the following:</p> <p>f) Conservation of rare species and any high conservation values</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>EOFG requires members to follow SOP 1.1 – The Forest Management Plan Standard Operating Procedure for planning, which covers the requirements under the FSC standard. While reviewing the Murray 2020 FMPs the auditor noted that there was no mention of Species at Risk (SAR) or rare species. The peer review noted this in 2018 regarding the old FMPs. A minor non-conformance has been issued regarding lack of rare species information in the three newly approved 2020 FMPs. It is considered minor as Murray properties have had no active operations for a number of years therefore impacts have been minimal, and all other group members sampled were in conformance with this requirement.</p> <p><u>Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOFG Forest certification Policies and Procedures Manual • FMPs for all sampled FMUs • High conservation value forest reports for all sampled community FMUs and Murray properties • Peer review of High conservation value forest reports • Forest manager and Program Coordinator interviews 	

Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	<p>Within 12 months from report finalization date</p> <p>Due date: 2023-02-10</p>
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator • HCVF_Murray_Forest_Setember_2022 • Murray Woodlots SAR Amendment_FINAL • FMPs classed as SLIMF in reassessment scope (Bruce, Grey, Halton, Oakville, 4 private landowners)
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Program Coordinator explained to auditor that root cause was determined to be miscommunication between the plan author and Program Coordinator which resulted in this connection/information being left out of the recent final FMPs for Murray properties. Corrective actions implemented include an FMP amendment to the Murray Properties FMPs to link the HCV analysis and SAR with the FMPs. The Program Coordinator will also monitor FMP renewal dates and improve the onboarding processes to ensure FMPs align with FSC Standards more completely. The auditor reviewed other FMPs in scope in addition to the supplied amendment and HCVF report and deems conformance. All FMPs and supporting documentation reviewed contain conservation measures for HCVs including identified SAR or rare species.</p>
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	N.b Program coordinator and group members should ensure SAR lists are kept updated including for all SLIMF members, refer to OBS 6.2.1.

NCR: 7.4.2/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in the Great Lakes/Saint-Lawrence region (Canada) / Indicator 7.4.2
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:

Applicable for SLIMF FMEs only: Upon request, FME shall make available relevant parts of the management plan to stakeholders who are directly affected by the forest management activities of FME (e.g. neighboring landowners).

Finding:

Through an online Database, all plans are on file with the Program Coordinator. Obviously for private lands, confidentiality concerns restrict the distribution of information, it was confirmed through interview with the Program Coordinator that upon request, relevant parts of the SLIMF management plan would be made available to stakeholders who are directly affected by the forest management activities of the FME, however there is no mention of this on the group's website which is publicly accessible. A minor non-conformance has been issued due to stakeholders potentially not being aware of who to contact to request this information. It is considered minor as impacts would be very limited due to the nature of the SLIMFS within the group certificate.

Evidence:

- Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator
- EOFG Policy and Procedures Manual (2014)
- Website of EOFG

Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization date Due date: 2023-02-10
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCR Explanations document• Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator• https://www.eomf.on.ca/programs/certification• Separate County websites:• Halton Region https://www.halton.ca/The-Region/Explore-and-Enjoy-Halton/Regional-Forests• Oakville Municipality https://www.oakville.ca/residents/urban-forest-strategic-management-plan.html• Grey County https://www.grey.ca/forests-trails• Bruce County https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/services/transportation-and-environmental-services/resource-management
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	Root cause was determined to be an oversight for the requirement. Through interview with the Program Coordinator and group members, the auditor deems

	sufficient understanding of this requirement has been gained through review of the NCR issued to the indicator. Corrective action was an update to the EOFG website. Auditor reviewed publicly accessible EOFG website and interviewed Program Coordinator. Under the section titled 'Information on Forest Management' it now clearly states that information such as management planning documents can be obtained by contacting the Program Coordinator. Community Forest websites either direct stakeholders to contact EOFG/the respective forest manager or have the FMP available online. Auditor deems these measures combined with SLIMF members following procedures to notify adjacent landowners if there is any harvest with contact details supplied is sufficient to close NCR.
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 9.1.3/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in the Great Lakes/Saint-Lawrence region (Canada) / Indicator 9.1.3
Report Section:	Annex I
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>The HCVF assessment shall be made publicly available, including associated maps (subject to confidentiality considerations) as well as a summary of how concerns raised during the consultation and review process have been addressed.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>EOFG has several procedures that outline their approach to HCV assessment within the PPM: HCV Policy 1.7, SOP 1.7, and SOP 5.0. For SLIMF members in the EOFG, assessment of such values occurs through management planning and review of available data through the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC). This approach continues to be an effective means of consulting with relevant sources to identify the presence of HCV or HCVF and to ensure that management protects such values. EOFG also uses their online data management tool to provide for an effective mechanism to report such values when they are present on an individual property. A peer review of the HCV assessment had been completed for all group members sampled.</p> <p>A minor non-conformance has been issued regarding HCV assessments being unavailable / unknown to the public, the auditor noting that for confidentiality considerations some values etc. cannot be disclosed, however presently there is no notification to the public that this information can be requested. It is considered minor as the environmental and</p>	

social impacts are limited, as HCVF assessments have been completed, peer-reviewed and are updated as required.

Evidence:

- EOFG Forest certification Policies and Procedures Manual
- FMPs for all sampled FMUs
- Websites and social media sites of EOFG, Larose Forest, Quinte Conservation, South Nation Conservation and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.
- High conservation value forest reports for all sampled community FMUs and Murray properties
- Peer review of High conservation value forest reports
- Forest manager and Program Coordinator interviews

Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	<p>Within 12 months from report finalization date Due date: 2023-02-10</p>
NCR Evaluation Type	<p>On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCR Explanations document • Interviews with forest managers / Program Coordinator • https://www.eomf.on.ca/programs/certification Separate County websites: • Halton Region https://www.halton.ca/The-Region/Explore-and-Enjoy-Halton/Regional-Forests • Oakville Municipality https://www.oakville.ca/residents/urban-forest-strategic-management-plan.html • Grey County https://www.grey.ca/forests-trails • Bruce County https://www.brucecounty.on.ca/services/transportation-and-environmental-services/resource-management • Quinte Conservation https://www.quinteconservation.ca/en/watershed-management/certification.aspx • La Rose Forest https://en.prescott-russell.on.ca/stay/planning_and_forestry/forest_management
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Root cause was determined to be an oversight for the requirement. Through interview with the Program Coordinator and group members, the auditor deems sufficient understanding of this requirement has been gained through review of the NCR issued to the indicator. Corrective action was an update to the EOFG website and County</p>

	websites. Auditor reviewed publicly accessible EOFG website and interviewed Program Coordinator. Under the section titled 'Information on Forest Management' it now clearly states that information such as HCV documents can be obtained by contacting the Program Coordinator. Community Forest websites direct stakeholders to contact EOFG or the respective forest manager related to any forest management document or concern. Auditor deems these measures to meet the definition of 'publicly available' and are sufficient to close NCR.
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 11.2/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 / Requirement 11.2
Report Section:	Annex VII
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>The Group Entity shall select the requirements from the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard to be monitored at each internal evaluation according to the scale, intensity, and risk.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>The Group Entity has not updated their procedures regarding the selection of specific requirements from the applicable Forest Stewardship Standard. A minor non-conformance has been issued and is considered minor as the groups internal monitoring procedure considers scale, intensity, and risk presently.</p> <p><u>Evidence:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Coordinator interview • EOFG Forest certification Policies and Procedures Manual • Inspection reports 	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization date Due date: - 2023-02-10

NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCR Explanations document • Interview with Program Coordinator • Internal Monitoring Template 2022 V2 • Internal Monitoring Forms (completed for each of the 10 FMUs listed in the Internal Monitoring Summary) • Internal Monitoring Summary 2022
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Root cause was determined to be an oversight for the requirement related to the new FSC group standard v2. Through interview with the Program Coordinator the auditor deems sufficient understanding of this requirement has been gained through review of the NCR issued to the indicator.</p> <p>Corrective action was the creation and implementation of a new group internal monitoring template which incorporates the FSC principles and criteria. Auditor reviewed Internal Monitoring Template 2022 V2 and records from all 10 FMUs sampled by the internal monitoring for 2022. Principles 1; 3; 10 in addition to criteria 6.2; 6.3; 6.9 and 9.4 were internally monitored. The auditor deems these procedural updates and subsequent implementation adequate to close this NCR.</p>
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	N.b EOFG should ensure continued conformance with this indicator when transitioning to new FSC community/SLIMF FM standard in 2023.

NCR: 11.3/22	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups FSC-STD-30-005 V2-0 / Requirement 11.3
Report Section:	Annex VII
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
<p><u>Requirement:</u></p> <p>The Group Entity shall specify what constitutes an active management unit for the group and justify the classification of activities as active or inactive management.</p> <p><u>Finding:</u></p> <p>The Group Entity has not defined what is an active or inactive management unit for the group. A minor non-conformance has been issued and is considered minor as the groups internal monitoring sampling procedure considers all FMUs as active management presently, thereby allocating a greater number for internal sampling inspections.</p>	

<u>Evidence:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Coordinator interview • EOFG Forest certification Policies and Procedures Manual 	
Corrective action request:	<p>Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.</p> <p>Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.</p>
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization date Due date: 2023-02-10
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site <input type="checkbox"/> Desk Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCR Explanations document • Interview with Program Coordinator • EOFG Forest Certification Policies and Procedures Manual v4 October 2022 (EOMF_PP_Manual_Oct_2022)
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	<p>Root cause was determined to be an oversight for the requirement related to the new FSC group standard v2. Through interview with the Program Coordinator the auditor deems sufficient understanding of this requirement has been gained through review of the NCR issued to the indicator.</p> <p>Corrective action was the creation and implementation of Policy 3.3 – Active Forest Management Unit Policy within the groups’s Policies and Procedures Manual (pg. 48).</p> <p>Auditor reviewed new policy including stated active/inactive FMU definitions together with rationale from the Group Coordinator and found them aligned with FSC guidance within the group standard The auditor deems this procedural update adequate to close this NCR.</p>
NCR Status:	CLOSED
Comments (optional):	

1.5 Summary of evaluation findings per FSC forest criteria

PRINCIPLE 1: Compliance with law and FSC Principles
Criterion 1.1 Respect for national and local laws and administrative requirements

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	The manager, staff and/or contractors understand their obligations regarding forestry, environmental, labour and health and safety regulations. Employees are well aware of regulatory changes and update their working procedures as necessary to remain in compliance.				
Criterion 1.2 Payment of legally prescribed fees, royalties, taxes and other charges					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no legally prescribed fees, royalties or taxes that are required to be paid by EOFG as it is a not-for-profit. The same applies for county forest members. Woodlot members are required to pay property taxes and the province has a good system of ensuring they are paid.				
Criterion 1.3 Respect for provisions of international agreements					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG is in compliance with Provincial and National laws which in turn are consistent with the treaties that Canada has been a signatory to. EOFG demonstrates knowledge on international treaties and agreements which affect their operations and management.				
Criterion 1.4 Conflicts between laws and regulations, and the FSC P&C					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	No conflicts between FSC requirements and laws and/or regulations were identified.				
Criterion 1.5 Protection of forests from illegal activities					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	<p>The group is mostly composed of private lands occupied by their owners. Trespassing or cutting trees is rarely seen and legal procedures are enforced when it is witnessed. The audit team did not find any instances of illegal/unauthorized activities.</p> <p>Forest managers are aware of this requirement and are declaring any illegal activities happening on their territories. The managers visited during the audit did their best to prevent illegal use of their forests by using signs and restricting access when possible.</p>				
Criterion 1.6 Demonstration of a long-term commitment to the FSC P&C					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Abundant evidence of the commitment to forestry in general is provided. EOFG has a long history of commitment to FSC and to protecting and maintaining the integrity of the forest in the long-term. Moreover, the organization continues to promote certification to non-certified clients.				

PRINCIPLE 2: Tenure and use rights and responsibilities

Criterion 2.1 Demonstration of land tenure and forest use rights

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>There are 2 main types of landowners in the EOFG group:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Private landowners 2) Community forests (county forests, conservation areas). <p>For private landowners, the assessment roll number for the property must be provided on the MFTIP application form. The roll number can be linked to the property tax statement, which includes information about the property title.</p> <p>For the purpose of ownership, Conservation Authorities and County Forest are considered private lands, since all properties are owned fee simple. The FMPs for the group members evaluated list all the properties that are owned by these entities, including property location/boundary information. Maps of the properties are also included in the FMPs or associated operating plans.</p> <p>In the case of Conservation authorities, most properties were acquired with grants provided by the Provincial Government, through the Agreement Forest Program, and/or from donations from private individuals or non-Government organizations.</p> <p>EOFG’s MOU with each member includes details about the property boundaries, size and location, as well as a clause requiring that the applicant be the registered owner of the property.</p>				

Criterion 2.2 Local communities’ legal or customary tenure or use rights

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>All lands included in the scope of this certificate are privately owned. There were no examples of tenure or use rights held by communities that apply to these lands. All activities permitted by the community forests on their lands (camping, hunting, trapping, motorized vehicle access) require either a permit issued by the community forest, or some other form or agreement. These examples are not considered customary or resource use rights.</p>				

Criterion 2.3 Disputes over tenure claims and use rights

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>There are no customary tenure or resource rights that have been identified on member properties, thus this criterion is not applicable. Should customary rights and tenure claims be identified, EOFG’s Policy and Procedure Handbook (Policy 3.2 – Dispute Resolution Policy) – covers grievances with any stakeholder, including those related to customary rights & tenure claims. For communities, ultimately a dispute can be taken to Council who are democratically elected.</p>				

PRINCIPLE 3: Indigenous peoples’ rights

Criterion 3.1 Indigenous peoples' control of forest management					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	The Program Coordinator and all members met displayed an adequate knowledge of Indigenous communities with traditional rights in their region. No conflict over tenure rights was raised by Indigenous communities to the certificate holder nor to the audit team.				
Criterion 3.2 Maintenance of indigenous peoples' resources or tenure rights					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Scope of certificate includes only private and county (community) forests. The dispute resolution requirements in 3.2 are addressed in 3.1.5b. Fee simple forests do not have land claims on them in Ontario and so indigenous rights are addressed at that level.				
Criterion 3.3 Protection of sites of special cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance to indigenous peoples					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	No specific sites identified. The forest managers gather information about Cultural values with Indigenous communities. Some members have had interactions about specific products or ecosites with Indigenous communities in the past and continue to do so in the present.				
Criterion 3.4 Compensation of indigenous peoples for the application of their traditional knowledge					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Not applicable to date. There is no evidence of use of traditional knowledge in forest management by the group members.				
PRINCIPLE 4: Community relations and workers rights					
Criterion 4.1 Employment, training, and other services for local communities					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG and its members have demonstrated a commitment to local community through procurement policies, support of local events, local capacity building and fair remuneration. The audit team noted that the contractors operating on the FMUs are mostly local at the regional scale. In addition, by holding workshop on First Nations values and history the organization is contributing to local communities' stability.				
Criterion 4.2 Compliance with health and safety regulations					
Conformance		Non conformance	X	NCR #(s)	4.2.1/23

Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Standard Operating Procedures, communication and training with forest workers ensure that health and safety procedure implementation on forestry operations generally exceed legal requirements. However, at one active operation no first aid kits were present in forestry machinery, therefore a non-compliance was noted in regards to best practices and Occupational Health and Safety Act.				
Criterion 4.3 Workers' rights to organize and negotiate with employers					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	The audit team did not identify any issues regarding workers' rights to organize. Employees of the members interviewed during the audit were happy to work for their employers. Some were members of unions.				
Criterion 4.4 Social impact evaluations and consultation					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG demonstrated multiple ongoing examples of community engagement. Attendance at local conferences and workshops is frequent. The audit team examined the public consultation process of the county forests sampled during this audit and found that through open houses and public outreach during the development of the management plan, there were multiple opportunities for meaningful opportunities to participate in forest management planning. Additionally, the audit team confirmed with county forest members that notification of neighbors was appropriate and adequate. Detailed records of complaints, requests and consultations and their follow ups were provided to the audit team.				
Criterion 4.5 Resolution of grievances and settlement of compensation claims					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Municipal government agencies have a structure for resolving disputes with the general public and user groups. There are measures in place in member organizations to minimize loss or damage to property through the establishment of legal lines and a thorough notification of neighboring properties prior to harvest. There have been no known instances of EOFG members damaging property, rights, resources or livelihoods during the audit period.				
PRINCIPLE 5: Benefits from the forest					
Criterion 5.1 Economic viability taking full environmental, social, and operational costs into account					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Through the financial policy (Policy 1.2), EOFG provides objectives and a costing matrix as to having the resources for implementing its activities related to the management and monitoring of its group members. Members showed ability to implement their forest management plans and other forest management related activities.				

	The forest management and strategies put in place by community forests and private group members focuses on the ecological productivity of the forest and its on-going wellness.				
Criterion 5.2 Optimal use and local processing of forest products					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	<p>EOFG has defined objectives and procedures, so its group members and forest managers seek the highest and best value possible for their forest products (Policy 2.0 – Processing, Manufacturing and Purchasing). Substantial efforts are made by EOFG and its group members as to favor local processing and being open to new local opportunities. The Group is also providing assistance and information to its members regarding CoC certification.</p> <p>Sites that were recently harvested proved that the management strategies are aiming at obtaining highest and best value for forest products while maintaining ecological productivity.</p>				
Criterion 5.3 Waste minimization and avoidance of damage to forest resources					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	<p>EOFG and group members have management strategies that focus on minimizing waste and damage to other forest resources. Extensive knowledge of the forests by the forest managers helps in the application of operations to reach these objectives. Forest operations are typically all planned with direct tree marking in harvest areas to maximize utilization and management objectives. There was good utilization of harvested material on all recent operations observed during this re-assessment. No on-site processing was observed. All processing is done at an appropriate site in the forest or on the roadside.</p>				
Criterion 5.4 Forest management and the local economy					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	<p>EOFG manages the forests toward a natural composition. This is leading to a diversification of timber products over time. EOFG Policy 2.0 clearly stipulates objectives and procedures so the group can deliver its best at using the full range of timber products present within its certificate, while being open to new opportunities. For example, this past year’s harvests include poles from red pine plantations and sawlogs from hardwoods. Locals and people from the city benefit from the Community Forests for outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing and hunting. These forests are implementing clear objectives of diversifying forest use and when possible, forest products. Private woodlots are mostly for private use, but some of them compliment timber harvesting with operations such as production of maple syrup.</p>				
Criterion 5.5 Maintenance of the value of forest services and resources					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	

Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>EOFG enhances ecological services through explicit consideration in their Standard Operating Procedures, management planning, and afforestation programs. EOFG has defined through its SOP 1.5 – Protection of Forest Values procedures as to identify AOC and develop prescriptions “in order to prevent, minimize or mitigate any potentially adverse effects of forest management activities on identified forest values”.</p> <p>Community Forests and private woodlots represent for forest managers great value for the services and resources they offer. Watershed protection is the main goal of conservation authorities included in the membership of this certificate. All water systems present on the certified land base are documented and their protection taken into account in the forest management plans and activities. Forest managers demonstrated adequate knowledge of procedures to be taken by tree markers and forest operators. One wetland was located near forest operations and a buffer zone had been defined.</p>
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Criterion 5.6 Harvest levels

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
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Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>Selection harvests and thinning are the prevalent type of harvesting done by the group members under the certificate scope. Even though Community Forests have long-term conservation goals within a landscape of ever-increasing development pressure, they have a calculation or rationale similar to the AAC for their annual harvest rate. They are reviewed each 5 years with a new operating plan and the volumes harvested in the past 5 years.</p> <p>Properties on small woodlots do not have AAC calculations. Determination of harvest is based on cruise data and stand structure targets identified in provincial silvicultural guidelines. Considering operations on these small woodlots are all selection harvests and thinning, they allow for a sustainable long-term rate of harvesting.</p>
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PRINCIPLE 6: Environmental impact

Criterion 6.1 Environmental impacts evaluation

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
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Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>The EOFG continues to use a system for assessing environmental impacts appropriate to the scale and intensity of operations under the scope of this certificate.</p> <p>As in previous findings for the EOFG, environmental assessments are generally carried out at the site level using established frameworks from management guides provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. This guidance includes the 'Ontario Tree Markers Guide, A Silviculture Guide to Managing Southern Ontario Forests, and Forest Management Guide for Conserving Biodiversity at the Stand and Site Scale'.</p>
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Criterion 6.2 Protection of rare, threatened and endangered species

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
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Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>Uses the current listing of all Species at Risk (SAR) in the region of their operations as available on NHIC website. Butternut and Black Ash are generally the only species occurring in the properties that require active management. Observation 6.2.1/23 issued regarding the consistency between group members on updating SAR lists.</p> <p>SOP 1.5.1 also contains measures to be taken for maintaining SAR listings on all forest management areas and a precautionary approach to ensure that any planned forest management activity that may affect SAR follows appropriate prescriptions. The measures were found to be implemented by forest managers and members visited as a part of this evaluation.</p> <p>These measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An operational SAR screening to be implemented before and during forest operations (identification with SAR list, consultation with government bodies and local ENGO, field assessment during operational activities); -For areas where a recovery plan exists or is under development, the forest management must implement all measures relevant to their activities and to control illegal activities (hunting, trapping, etc.); -Taking a precautionary approach while developing SAR management plans and prescriptions when no plan exists or field inventories indicate potential presence, which need to be vetted through the Certification Working Group.
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Criterion 6.3 Maintenance of ecological functions and values

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
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Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>All harvests except salvage are pre-marked using certified tree markers under the direction of detailed prescriptions to apply best available management guidelines and provincial scientific criteria for buffer and conservation requirements. This was verified and evident in field site visits and generally demonstrated that harvesting is being implemented in a manner that would achieve the long-term management goals for the forest.</p> <p>FMPs contain quantitative short to mid-term objectives for maintaining or restoring natural conditions in natural forests. For example, gradual removal of red pine plantations through thinning and selective harvest to restore the forest to its natural condition was observed on many managed lots during this audit.</p>
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Criterion 6.4 Protection of representative samples of existing ecosystems

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
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Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>Most of these requirements are not required for SLIMF properties. Gap analysis and protection of representative samples of existing ecosystems has been demonstrated among non-SLIMF members.</p>
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Criterion 6.5 Protection against damage to soils, residual forest and water resources during operations

Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	The EOFG continues to use well established SOPs that address environmental impact at a level at or beyond Provincial guidelines. SOP 1.5 and its AOC prescription table, SOP 2.0 on Access, and SOP 3.0 on Harvesting Guidelines directly address the requirements of Criterion 6.1. Start-up checklists and harvest inspection reports were reviewed for each of the active harvests observed during this audit in addition to worker interviews to verify the communication of all relevant SOPs and harvest requirements.				
Criterion 6.6 Chemical pest management					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	SOP 4.0 clearly describes a forest management approach that seeks to minimize the use of pesticides. FSC prohibited Highly hazardous pesticides are not used. Chemical pesticide use is generally limited to spot or localized applications for the control of invasive species in a manner that meets the intent of indicator 6.6.3.				
Criterion 6.7 Use and disposal of chemicals, containers, liquid and solid non-organic wastes					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	SOP 6.0 addresses the safe handling, storage, and disposal of chemicals, liquid and solid non-organic wastes including fuel and oil. Provincially mandated recycling programs are in place for used oil and plastic containers with requirements for addressing leaking equipment and spills outlined clearly in SOP 6.0. The auditor did not witness spills or observe machinery spills during the audit.				
Criterion 6.8 Use of biological control agents and genetically modified organisms					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG members sometimes make use of biological control agents (i.e., Btk) and have verified their use is appropriate with Provincial authorities. Genetically modified organisms are not used in areas under the EOFG certificate.				
Criterion 6.9 The use of exotic species					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG does not plant exotic or any species which may be considered invasive on any forests. SOP 1.6 describes procedures to limit their invasion in case such species are observed on the members' sites.				
Criterion 6.10 Forest conversion to plantations or non-forest land uses					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	

Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG plans have objectives of restoring forest cover and are active in the management of existing forest. There are no conversions to plantation in any of the forests under the scope of the EOFG certificate. During the field audit multiple sites were observed with a deliberate management approach based on restoring planted areas to natural forest conditions.				
PRINCIPLE 7: Management plan					
Criterion 7.1 Management plan requirements					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Plans are updated regularly at 10-year intervals as the majority are based on the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Plan. There is an appropriate procedure for plan development. SOP 1.1 – The Forest Management Plan Standard Operating Procedure for planning was written using the latest FSC Standard. EOFG requires from Community Forests to provide a forest management plan and documents relevant to elements listed in Annex D of the FSC Standard. Requirements are also described for SLIMF in regard to the Standard. EOFG or a qualified professional identified by EOFG reviews each FMP for approval. EOFG keeps each FMP on file and online in its database.				
Criterion 7.2 Management plan revision					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	SOP 1.1 stipulates that FMP must be kept current in order to incorporate results of monitoring or new scientific and technical information. For private lands, all FMPs are MFTIP compliant, which requires a ten-year renewal period. For the Community Forests, the FMPs generally have a 20-year renewal period, with 5-year operational plans incorporating most recent information in regards to the requirements of the criterion.				
Criterion 7.3 Training and supervision of forest workers					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	All staff are well trained and have credentials documenting their background and training. Tracking of training is the responsibility of the Forest Managers and is audited by the Program Coordinator. EOFG ensures that forest workers receive adequate training and supervision with signed agreements with all of its group members. These agreements are based on the requirements of Policy 1.3 – Minimum Requirements Policy.				
Criterion 7.4 Public availability of the management plan elements					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	All plans are available through the Program Coordinator. Most Community Forests also offer their FMP on their website. For private lands, confidentiality concerns restrict the distribution of information.				

	The discretion of the Program Coordinator is key to fair application of this indicator.				
PRINCIPLE 8: Monitoring and evaluation					
Criterion 8.1 Frequency, intensity and consistency of monitoring					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>The group is generally composed of County Forests of more than 1000 ha and private woodlots of less than 1000 ha managed by their owners. Considering the scale and intensity of each type of forest, each document must monitor the elements indicated in indicator 8.1.1 at an appropriate degree.</p> <p>The MFTIP program for private woodlot owners requires annual monitoring of operations if they occur. For each County Forest, forest managers provide annual reports of activities to the Program Coordinator, which include information such as volumes harvested, operations in HCV, complaints, changes to staff, if pesticides were used, etc. As stated in the group's Procedures and Policies Manual, adaptation to monitoring results is required from forest managers. Some County Forests participate in the MNRF Growth and Yield Program, for which the results are available to the group for monitoring and improvement purposes.</p>				
Criterion 8.2 Research and data collection for monitoring					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>EOFG has an excellent system for collection and storage of information for individual properties. This is digital and in GIS format. The Program Coordinator and its members collect data to monitor the yield of forests products harvested annually, again depending on the scale and intensity of the operations (MFTIP vs County Forests). County Forests provide annual reports to the Program Coordinator about volumes harvested by species and product. Such reports were reviewed by the auditor and met the requirements of the indicator.</p> <p>The FM database is used during the Program Coordinator's field visits to document important changes to the certified area and operations completed.</p>				
Criterion 8.3 Chain of custody					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding <i>(strength/weakness)</i>	<p>The P&P manual documents the procedure to identify FSC-certified products leaving the management unit so that the forest of origin can be identified. Policy 2.3 – Certified Fibre and Non-Timber Forest Products Sales Policy. Bills of lading completed since the last audit were reviewed by the audit team and found to be in conformance.</p>				
Criterion 8.4 Incorporation of monitoring results into the management plan					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	

Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	This is a requirement of the P&P Manual (SOP 1.0 – Planning Standard Operating Procedures). Forest managements plans are reviewed each 10 years for private woodlots (MFTIP) and either 10 or 5 years for County Forests. Discussions with EOFG forest managers and members indicated that they actively were looking for means of improving their forestry.				
Criterion 8.5 Publicly available summary of monitoring					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	<p>EOFG’s website in addition to an annual report publication covers a wide range of subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • total forested area for those seeking FSC certification • education and community outreach updates • Community Forest Carbon Offset Program • Regional Forest Health Network updates <p>For public lands (e.g., County Forests), summary reports are available online or on request.</p>				
PRINCIPLE 9: High Conservation Value Forests					
Criterion 9.1 Evaluation to determine high conservation value attributes					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG is a leader in HCV reporting for private land organizations. Their database provides an online means for managers to report to the Program Coordinator and the HCV assessment checklist provides a solid and usable format for addressing HCVs by local managers.				
Criterion 9.2 Consultation process					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG has a wide range of advisory groups in their structure, including those for the Counties. Access to expert opinion is available through OMNRF, and other experts affiliated with EOFG.				
Criterion 9.3 Measures to maintain and enhance high conservation value attributes					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	Prescriptions for HCV management are vetted by the Program Coordinator, as well as by the Certification Working Group. Expert opinion is sought through the OMNRF, and other EOFG associates.				
Criterion 9.4 Monitoring to assess effectiveness					
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	EOFG has several procedures that generally outline their approach to HCV monitoring (P&P Manual: HCV Policy 1.7, SOP 1.7, SOP 5.0). The emphasis of HCV monitoring includes assessing impacts of harvesting in				

	<p>or near HCV areas. Thus, implementation of monitoring is focused on site visits pre and/or post-harvest.</p> <p>Community Forest managers report annually to the group manager on changes or impacts on HCVF: details regarding new HCV areas, as well as detailing any harvest activity that had taken place in HCV areas. This is meant to alert the Group Manager to follow up on the areas where new HCVs have been identified or where planned activities may have an impact on HCVs.</p>				
PRINCIPLE 10: Plantations					
Criterion 10.1	Statement of objectives in the management plan				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.2	Plantation design and layout				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.3	Diversity in composition				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.4	Species selection				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.5	Restoration of natural forest				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.6	Impacts on soil and water				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	

Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.7	Pests and diseases				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.8	Monitoring of impacts, species testing and tenure rights				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				
Criterion 10.9 November 1994	Plantations established in areas converted from natural forests after				
Conformance	X	Non conformance		NCR #(s)	
Finding (<i>strength/weakness</i>)	There are no plantations that are designated for fibre production. This principle does not apply.				

1.6 Stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples consultation

1.6.1 Stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples consultation process

A formal stakeholder notification was sent out to different stakeholder groups for this audit on September 6, 2022. The audit included inspections of 10 group member properties, and for all properties either the owner and /or forest manager attended the site visit, which provided a good opportunity to interview a sample of group members. Consultation with other stakeholders was undertaken by reviewing the extensive list of stakeholders consulted during the previous annual audit and sampling from stakeholder lists provided by community forests. A variety of classes of stakeholders were notified by e-mail however there was very limited response.

There were no outstanding stakeholder issues or complaints that needed to be evaluated by the auditors. No significant concerns were reported by the FME or discovered by the auditor. It should be noted that most properties are on private land so there is limited stakeholder interaction, refer to Principle 3 and 4 for findings on community and stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder Type (NGO, government bodies, local inhabitant, contractor etc.)	Stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples Notified (X)	Stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples notified directly or provided input (#)
National/Regional ENGOS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
National/Regional Forest NGOs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Academic	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Government Agencies/Regulators	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1
Forest Industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
National/Regional Recreation Organizations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5
Labor Unions/Worker Association	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Indigenous Peoples	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8
Local NGOs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Local Communities/Representatives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Local resource users (trappers, hunt & fish clubs, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4
Local recreationalists (tourism, hiking, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4
Local businesses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Forest Owner or Manager	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12
Buyers	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Contractors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7
Workers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2
Other (describe):	<input type="checkbox"/>	

1.6.2 Stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples comments

No outstanding stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples issues or complaints that needed to be evaluated by the auditor were reported by FME or discovered by the auditor. Findings regarding stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples interactions as part of regular forest management are included under specific Criterion in Annex I.”

2. AUDIT PROCESS

2.1 Certification Standard Used

Standards Used:	<p>FSC Forest Management Standard – Great Lakes St. Lawrence (2010) https://www.Preferred by Nature.org/library/standard/Preferred by Nature-interim-fsc-standard-great-lakes-saint-lawrence-region-canada</p> <p>FSC FM Group Standard (FSC-STD-30-005 v2) https://ic.fsc.org/en/document-center/id/317</p> <p>Chain of Custody Standard for FM https://www.Preferred by Nature.org/library/standard/Preferred by Nature-chain-custody-standard-forest-management-enterprises</p> <p>Trademarks use https://fsc.org/en/document-centre/documents/resource/225</p> <p>NEPCon Interim Standard for Assessing Forest Management in US & Canada – Maple Sugar NTFP Addendum https://preferredbynature.org/library/standard/nepcon-non-timber-forest-product-certification-addendum-nepcon-interim-standard</p>
Local Adaptation: (if applicable)	Not applicable

2.2 Audit Team and accompanying persons

Name	Role and qualifications
James Hallworth, R.P.F.	<p>Lead Auditor</p> <p>James is a Forestry Specialist for Preferred by Nature and a Registered Professional Forester in Ontario with over 8 years of experience in forest and resource management. He successfully completed Preferred by Nature’s FSC FM and CoC lead auditor courses in 2020 and has so far participated in over 45 audits to date. After his Master's degree in Environmental Assessment, James has worked in a variety of positions within the forestry and</p>

	environmental sectors. Past work experiences include the development and implementation of forest management plans as a district forester for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in Northern Ontario, forest resource inventory, timber cruising and plan development within Ontario. International experience includes development, implementation and monitoring of several conservation projects within the UK, China, India and the USA.
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2.3 Audit Overview

Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.

Date(s)	Site(s)	Main activities	Auditor/Org
6 September	Remotely	Stakeholder/Indigenous communities/peoples' notification	James Hallworth
26 August	Remotely	Preparatory call	James Hallworth
Week of 17 October	Remotely	Targeted stakeholder notification	James Hallworth
21 October	On-site	Opening meeting and start of on-site audit	James Hallworth
24 – 28 October	On-site	On-site audit (field visits, interviews, stakeholders, etc.)	James Hallworth
31 October	Remotely	Closing meeting	James Hallworth
Total LOE for audit: 9 = days for preparation, on-site audit, site visits, stakeholder consultation and follow-up			

2.4 Audit Background

2.4.1 Changes in FMEs' forest management and associated effects on conformance to standard requirements

Has the management system changed since the previous evaluation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, briefly review the changes:	
Have there been any complaints, disputes, or allegations of non-conformity with the standards raised against the Organisation during the audit period:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, reference standard and criteria where corresponding findings are found in report:	

2.5 Description of Overall Audit Process

This reassessment was undertaken on-site with some elements such as the management plans and other relevant information such as harvest prescriptions being reviewed by the auditor in his office. The table under section 2.5.2 indicates the sample size, which was determined by following the sampling procedures outlined by the FSC (FSC-STD-20-007). The selection of blocks was made by the auditor and conformed to the minimum sample size that was required.

10 FMUs were audited in total: Quinte Conservation, Larose Forest, Bruce County, Grey County, Town of Oakville, Halton Region, in addition to 4 other private woodlots which included 2 small woodlots of less than 1000 ha which were new to the group certificate. The evaluation process consisted of a review of the FMPs for each of the members, interviews with the Program Coordinator and forest owners/managers in evaluation of all 10 Principles.

The following table explains the sampling calculations used to select FMUs for evaluation and list all FMUs selected for evaluation in table below. The group contains four subsets of forests, a mix of 'public' and private forests of differing land size.

2.5.1 Changes to the certificate scope

Number of hectares added:	-
Number of hectares removed:	374.87
Number of FMUs (properties) added (if applicable):	3
Number of FMUs (properties) removed (if applicable):	20
Total hectares in the certificate:	74,295.53

Number of FMUs (properties) in the certificate:	98
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2.5.2 Sampling and FMUs selected for evaluation

FSC sampling rules were used to select the forest management units (FMUs) to be visited this audit. If applicable, FMUs are divided into subsets based on property size and whether they are new to the group. Small properties are less than 1,000 ha, medium properties are 1,000-10,000 ha, and large properties are >10,000 ha.

Sampling is summarized in the table here:

FMU Subset Category	# FMU in Subset	Minimum # to visit per FSC-STD-20-007	Actual # FMUs visited	Notes/Comments
Community Forests above 10,000 ha	2	2	2	Quinte Conservation and Larose Forests
Community Forests 1,000 - 10,000 ha	9	2	2	Bruce County and Grey County Forests
Private Forest 1,000 - 10,000 ha	1	1	1	Only one in subset
Forests below 1,000 ha	83	3	3	Includes 1 maple syrup producer for NTFP standard
Forests below 1,000 ha – New members	2	2	2	

Note: FSC sampling formulas from FSC-STD-20-007 v3.0 (Forest management evaluations) were used to determine minimum FMUs to visit.¹

Sample FMU selection was based on extent of recent activity, type of activity and also sought to include a diversity of forest managers and at least one FMU that had never been audited (see table below).

FMU Name	Rationale for Selection
Quinte Conservation	Existing Community Forest above 10,000 ha – there are only two forests in this category, and both need to be inspected to meet FSC sampling criteria. Active harvest operations

¹ Sampling formulas (y is #FMUs; x is minimum FMUs to sample)
 FMUs >10,000 hectares: new FMUs (x=y); existing FMUs (x=0.8*y)
 FMUs >1,001-10,000 hectares: new FMUs (x=0.3*y); existing FMUs (x=0.2*y)
 FMUs <1,000 hectares: new FMUs (x=0.6*√y); existing FMUs (x=0.3*√y)
 Multiple FMU: new FMUs (x=0.8*√y); existing FMUs (x=(0.8*√y)/2)

Larose Forest	Existing Community Forest above 10,000 ha there are only two forests in this category, and both need to be inspected to meet FSC sampling criteria. Active harvest operations
Bruce County	Existing Community Forest 1,000 - 10,000 ha Forest - recent harvest operations 2021
Grey County	Existing Community Forest 1,000 - 10,000 ha Forest – recent harvest operations 2021. New FMP 2021-2040.
Private commercial forest owner	SLIMF Existing Private Forest 1,000 - 10,000 ha this is the only forest in this category, and it needs to be inspected to meet FSC sampling criteria
Independent private forest owner	SLIMF Existing woodlot below 1,000 ha and maple syrup producer. Recent harvest operations January 2022 and Invasive species control
Town of Oakville	SLIMF Existing woodlot below 1,000 ha. Invasive species control – chemical and biological control application
Halton Regional Forest	SLIMF Existing woodlot below 1,000 ha. Forest Manager changes. Invasive species control.
Independent private forest owner	Woodlot below 1,000 ha. New member. Tree marking for selection. New Forest Certification Plan 2022-2031
Independent private forest owner	Woodlot below 1,000 ha. New member. Recent harvest. New Managed Forest Plan 2021-2030

2.5.3 List of management aspects reviewed by audit team

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction		Illegal settlement	
Soil drainage		Bridges/stream crossing	X
Workshop		Chemical storage	
Tree nursery		Wetland	X
Planned Harvest site	X	Steep slope/erosion	X
Ongoing Harvest site	X	Riparian zone	X
Completed logging	X	Planting	
Soil scarification		Direct seeding	
Planting site	X	Weed control	X
Felling by harvester		Natural regeneration	X
Felling by forest worker		Endangered species	X
Skidding/Forwarding		Wildlife management	X
Clearfelling/Clearcut		Nature Reserve	
Shelterwood management	X	Key Biotope	
Selective felling	X	Special management area	

Sanitation cutting	X	Historical site	X
Pre-commercial thinning		Recreational site	X
Commercial thinning	X	Buffer zone	X
Logging camp		Local community	

2.5.4 Review of FME Documentation and required records

A. All certificate types

Required Records	Reviewed
Complaints received by FME from stakeholder and indigenous communities/peoples, actions taken, follow up communication	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: The Company informed the auditor that there had been no complaints received from stakeholders regarding the certified properties during the past year, and group members and workers who were interviewed informed the auditor that they were not aware of any complaints. Concerns and issues are tracked and resolved.	
Accident records	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: The Company informed the auditor that there had been no accidents involving group members on the certified properties during the past year, and that the Company had not been informed of any accidents to any contractor staff during the same period.	
Training records	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Training records are provided by the county and community forests, and the conservations authorities, in their annual reports.	
Operational plan(s) for next twelve months	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Planned operations are usually not set on a specific time or date. Harvest is planned based on multiple factors, such as the owner's interest, the contractors' availability, and the forest inventory. Harvest timing restrictions apply to ensure protection for wildlife (ex. birds breeding period). The auditor reviewed the operational plans and prescriptions for upcoming operations.	
Inventory records	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Inventory records were reviewed in the FMPs and are updated to reflect the post-harvest condition based on post-harvest assessments that are undertaken by the forest managers.	
Harvesting records	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Harvest volumes are reported in the county and community forests annual reports.	
Sales and shipping records	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Comments: Harvesting contracts and bills of lading samples were available and provided to the auditor.

B. FSC Group Certificates

Required Group Records	Reviewed
Group management system	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Policies and Procedures manual was reviewed. Some revisions to group manual since previous audit. EOFG is now part of the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA).	
Members list and rate of membership change within the group	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Membership additions and reductions are tracked and readily available.	
Formal communication/written documentation sent to members by the group entity during the audit period	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: There is little formal documentation provided to group members – minutes from meetings of the eastern and southern working groups are provided to relevant group members, newsletters are sent out periodically and information is posted on EOFG’s website. Group events such as tours were conducted in 2022.	
Records of monitoring carried out by the group entity	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Internal monitoring is undertaken using the sampling methodology described in FSC-STD 30-005 (V2).	
Records of any corrective actions issued by the group entity	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Corrective actions were issued by the group entity to 5 FMUs. Auditor reviewed findings.	
Updated list of group members	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments: Readily available and provided.	

3. COMPANY DETAILS

3.1 Client specific background information

Ownership and land tenure description (legal and customary)

All land under the certificate is private lands (patent land). There are three main categories of ownership: (1) Community forests owned by public entities (65,244 ha); (2) Private Commercial Forests owned by businesses (2,318 ha), and; (3) private woodlots owned by private individuals (6,733 ha). There are no customary tenure holders or rights holders. The lands range across eastern and southwestern Ontario.

Legislative and government regulatory context

Forest management activities on private land is under municipal jurisdiction. Forest owned by private individuals or businesses may be subject to municipal forest conservation by-laws that regulate the cutting of trees. Many municipalities do not have any by-laws. Conservation Authorities and Municipally owned forests are not subject to municipal forest conservation by-laws, but rather report to their local council or board of directors.

All eligible landowners under our certificate, other than municipally owned forests and woodlots owned by non-Canadian citizens or permanent residents, are enrolled in the Ministry of Natural Resources Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP). MFTIP is administered by Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR). Under this program landowners receive a property tax reduction in exchange for engaging in good forestry practices on their lands.

Beyond municipal bylaws, all forest owners are subject to Federal laws including the *Migratory Birds Act*, *Fisheries Act*, and *Forestry Act*, and many Provincial laws. For a full list of laws, see the provided list of applicable laws.

Environmental Context

The forests in our program exist within settled landscapes, often dominated by farmland. Some areas in eastern Ontario have significant amounts of regional forest cover while those in the southwest have low levels of regional forest cover. The forest zones covered are the Carolinian and Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Zones. The geography ranges from flat, deep soils, to shallow soils and exposed bed rock. Parts of the certified area in eastern Ontario fall over the Canadian shield, while the rest is over deep soils deposited by glaciers.

Forest management on private lands outside of the certified lands is often, but not always, characterized by neglect, high-grading, and land clearing. The adjacent Crown Lands are all certified to either FSC, SFI, or CSA standards and are well-managed.

The forests are home to high levels of biodiversity and some species at risk and the forests are ecologically important within their local landscapes. Most community forests and some private forests are heavily used by the local people for recreation and provide ecosystem services such as air and water filtration, stormwater attenuation, carbon sequestration, and viewscape benefits.

Harvesting is a common practice on community forest lands with most being plantation management and the conversion of plantation to natural forest. Some stand improvement harvesting and conventional tolerant hardwood management is practiced.

Socioeconomic Context

The certified area lies across a diverse socioeconomic landscape. Some forests are in rural areas with low population densities while others are within easy access of hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people. In all cases, the forests provide important values to the local communities in the form of ecosystem services, forest products, employment, and visual benefits. In most cases, agriculture is the dominant land surrounding the forest.

Community forests are exceptional for their public recreational importance as most forest land surrounding them is owned by private individuals or companies and is inaccessible to the public. Some private woodlot owners operate tourism businesses such as sugar bush tours and cottage rentals, but most own their woodlots for personal enjoyment. Recreational activities on community forests include: walking, running, hiking, wildlife viewing, educational activities, hunting, fishing, biking, dogsledding, skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing. Most community forests have forest tracts and trails that are heavily used with many thousands of visitors each year.

Activities on the forest land, such as trail building, harvesting, and ecosystem restoration, are carried out by the landowners or by contractors under the direction of the landowners. Some recreational activities in some forests, hunting for example, do require permits, but in most cases this is not required. The result is that the forest owners or managers have full control over their lands.

Workers

Number of workers including employees, part-time and seasonal workers:

Total workers	30 workers (provide detail below)	
Local employees	20 Male	10 Female
Non - Local employees	0 Male	0 Female
Number of serious accidents (past 12 month period)	0	
Number of fatalities (past 12 month period)	0	

3.2 Certificate Scope

3.2.1 Description

Reporting period:	Previous 12 month period	Dates	July 1, 2021 to June 30 2022.
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A. Scope of Forest Area

Type of certificate: group	SLIMF Certificate: not applicable
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New FMUs added since previous evaluation Yes No

If Group Certificate: Updated of FMU and group member list provided in **ANNEX VI**
 N/A

B. FSC Product categories included in the FM/CoC scope			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report (do not complete sections below)			
	Level 1	Level 2	Species
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	W1 Rough wood	W1.1 Roundwood (logs)	Refer to Table C below
<input type="checkbox"/>	W2 Wood charcoal		
<input type="checkbox"/>	W3 Wood in chips or particles	W3.1 Wood chips	
<input type="checkbox"/>	W5 Solid wood (sawn, chipped, sliced or peeled)	W5.1 Flitches and boules	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non Wood Forest Products N1 Barks		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other		

C. Species and Sustainable Rate of Harvest (AAC)				
Latin name	Common trade name	Annual allowable cut (m3)	Actual harvest (m3) year	Projected harvest for next year (m3)
Pinus strobus	White Pine		2,319.9	
Pinus resinosa	Red Pine		6,475.5	
Picea glauca	White Spruce		1,278.9	
Hardwood fuelwood/pulpwood			2,015.0	
Softwood			4,205.5	
Hardwood			683.5	
Unspecified logs			15,123.4	
Total AAC				
Total annual estimated log production (m3):			32,101.6	
Total annual estimates of production of certified NTFP:			----	
No change since last year. Annual allowable harvest (AHA) is 1165 ha.			----	
AHA is determined on a stand by stand basis, based on silvicultural principles. Quinte Conservation and Bruce County not reporting AHA. They determine sustainable harvest levels on a stand by stand basis			----	

D. Forest Area Classification

<input type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report (do not complete sections below)			
1. Total certified area (land base)		74,295.53ha	
2. Total forested area		55,972ha	
3. Total production forest area (where harvesting occurs)		47,117ha	
4. Total non-productive forest area (no harvesting)		8,975.5ha	
4.a Protected forest area (strict reserves)	5,108ha		
4.b Areas protected from timber harvesting and managed only for NTFPs or services	3,867ha		
4.c Remaining non-productive forest (other uses)	0ha		
5. Total non-forested area (<i>e.g., water bodies, wetlands, fields, rocky outcrops, etc.</i>)		18,318.53ha	
Forest zone		Great Lakes-St Lawrence	
Certified Area (ha) under Forest Type		74,295.53	
Natural		74,295.53	
Semi-Natural			
Plantation			
Stream sides and water bodies (Linear Kilometers)		120	

E. High Conservation Values identified via formal HCV assessment by the FME and respective areas

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report (do not complete section below)			
Code	HCV TYPES	Description:	Area (ha)
HCV1	Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g. endemism, endangered species, refugia).	Species at risk and their habitat are considered in HCV 1 and they form the largest HCV value, by area, within the certificate. See HCV Reports for each community forest	35,179
HCV2	Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.	See HCV Reports for each community forest	379

HCV3	Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.	Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs) are considered in HCV 3 and are significant value within the certified lands. See HCV Reports for each community forest	14,237
HCV4	Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).	HCV 4 is the second largest HCV by area and generally contains areas that provide important watershed protection and contribute to flood attenuation and drinking water protection. See HCV Reports for each community forest	16,319
HCV5	Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health).	See HCV Reports for each community forest	4,560
HCV6	Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).	See HCV Reports for each community forest	4,115
Number of sites significant to indigenous people and communities			

F. Pesticide Use			
<input type="checkbox"/> FME does not use pesticides			
FSC Prohibited, Highly Restricted and Restricted pesticides used in last calendar year			
Name	Quantity	Reason for use	# of ha treated
Glyphosate	505.15 L (Total solution)	Site preparation and invasive species control	85.63
Dichlorprop-P	1.485 L	Invasive species control	22
Other pesticides used in last calendar year			
Name	Quantity	Reason for use	# of ha treated
Triclopyr	908.5 L (total solution)	Site preparation and invasive species control	62.1

Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki	1424 L	Ldd control	356
Aminopyralid and Metsulfuron-mythel	217 g	Invasive species control	1.5

F. List of overlapping forest tenure holders

FME has no overlapping forest tenure holders in scope or no changes since previous audit

3.2.2 Excision of areas from the scope of certificate

A. Applicability of FSC partial certification

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All forest land owned or managed by the FME is included in the scope of the certificate.
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B. Applicability of FSC excision policy (FSC-POL-20-003)

Important: Excisions and removals from the certified area must be documented below during each audit.

What are area excisions from the certified area?

Requirements of FSC Excision Policy (FSC-POL-20-003) Sections 1.2, 2.2, 3.2 are applicable.

Applicable when the certificate holder decides to isolate/separate an area from the certified area because this area cannot meet the FSC requirements for reasons either within or beyond its control. Possible examples of excisions: nurseries, areas within the FMU that are influenced / affected by activities from other users that result in non-compliance with FSC requirements (ex. Oil and gas, powerline ROWs, commercial gravel, etc.).

What area removals from the certified area?

Requirements of FSC Excision Policy (FSC-POL-20-003) Sections 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 are applicable.

Applicable generally when an area of the certified area is changing tenure type or property. This is considered a removal from the certified area. Possible examples of removals from the certified area: sale of area; conversion of forest to a non-forest area, in cases such as governmental disposition of lands to be converted for development of an infrastructure.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Past excisions or removals from the certified area</p> <p>Check this box and complete sections 2 and 3 below and document conformance to FSC-POL-20-003 if in the past years, any area of the certified area has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excised and its excision proposal evaluated during an audit; AND/OR Removed by another entity (ex. government)
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><u>New or potential</u> excisions and removals from the certified area</p> <p>Check this box and complete sections 1,2 and 3 of below and document conformance to FSC-POL-20-003 if any area of the certified area under evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is proposed to be excised from the certified area; AND/OR • Is being removed from the certified area.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Not applicable</p> <p>The organization has not excised or removed areas from the certified area or does not plan to do so before their next audit.</p>

1. Rationale for new excision of area from the certified area

Finding:

2022

Regarding Bruce County Forest excision (January 13, 2022). Ownership of 306.5 Acres (124 ha, parcel 1- PIN 33146-0471 & parcel 2- PIN 33114-0632) transferred to Saugeen Ojibway Nation in land claim settlement between Bruce County and Saugeen Ojibway Nation. Reason for removal was due to a Land Claim Action initiated by the Saugeen Ojibway Nation in 1994 against the Attorney General of Canada, Her Majesty the Queen Right of Ontario, the Corporation of the County of Bruce, the County of Grey and nine municipalities. The trial of the Land Claim Action commenced in 2019 and is not expected to be resolved for at least several years. The transfer of these 124 hectares to the Saugeen Ojibway Nation was negotiated as a litigation settlement, and therefore now excludes the Corporations of the County of Bruce and Grey County from the on-going Land Claim Action trial.

2021

Land given to Saugeen First Nation from Grey County (total 120 ha, Mountain Lake area), documented in excision form and email. This was outside the Forest Management Enterprise's (FME) control and relates to the settlement of a land claim with the Saugeen Ojibway Nation (Treaty 72 area). Refer to Bruce County finding above.

2. Findings explaining conformance against requirements of FSC-POL-20-003

Finding:

The Auditor determined by inspection of the forest management plan, land excision map and correspondance with the FSC Coordinator and FME manager that management of the excised areas is accomplished in a manner which does not prevent compliance with FSC standards in the remaining FMU.

Excised areas are mapped and tracked in the FME's Geographic Information System (GIS). The excised areas constitute a small percentage of the total FME landbase.

The excised areas are clearly demarcated and are excluded from AAC calculations. The FME has no further responsibility for the land, it is under ownership and stewardship of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation. FME is in conformance with all relevant sections of the FSC Policy of Excision (FSC-POL-20-003).

3. Details of control measures implemented to prevent contamination of FSC certified wood from the certified area with the wood that cannot be certified from the excised/removed forest areas.

Finding:

N/A – no volumes harvested.

4. FSC PUBLIC SUMMARY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. Main objectives of the forest management are:	
<input type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report	
Primary priority:	Forest Health, public benefits
Secondary priority:	Education and information sharing
Other priorities:	Timber harvesting, recreation, wildlife protection
Forest composition:	
Tolerant hardwood, white and red pine, intolerant hardwood, mixed woods, and afforested areas with conifer plantations, typical of the GLSL forest region	
Description of Silvicultural system(s) used:	
Selective logging with continuous cover Small clearcut areas	
2. Silvicultural system	Forest under this management (ha)
<input type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report	
a. Even aged management	
Clearcut (clearcut size range Click here to enter text.)	100 (including salvage and intolerant hardwood management)
Shelterwood	50
b. Uneven aged management	
Individual tree selection	200
Group selection (group harvested of less than 1 ha in size)	
c. Other types of management (specify) Click here to enter text.	Plantation management in afforested stands including thinning and shelterwood harvests: 815 ha
3. Forest Operations	
<input type="checkbox"/> No changes since previous report	
3.1 Harvest methods and equipment used:	
Cut and skid; feller-buncher, skidder, processor; cut-to-length, forwarder	
3.2 Estimate of maximum sustainable yield for main commercial species:	
915 ha of conifer (mainly red pine), 200 ha of tolerant hardwood, 50 ha of intolerant hardwoods. Sustainable harvests are based on areas not volumes. Volumes vary from year-to-year. See section C for more information.	
3.3 Explanation of the assumptions (e.g. silvicultural) upon which estimates are based and reference to the source of data (e.g. inventory data, permanent sample plots, yield tables) upon which estimates are based upon.	

The sustainable annual harvest area and breakdown of volume of species harvested
3.4 FME organizational structure and management responsibilities from senior management to operational level (how is management organized, who controls and takes decisions, use of contractors, provisions for training, etc.).
The certificate manager is responsible for certificate-level administration management as well as coordination of some efforts common to the group such as networking and communicating FSC requirements. Forest managers and/or owners are responsible for managing all forest management activities including management planning, harvest, renewal, and restoration planning, and community engagement.
3.5 Structure of forest management units (division of forest area into manageable units etc.).
Stands are based on typical working groups or areas of like species as is common in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest.
3.6 Monitoring procedures (including yield of all forest products harvested, growth rates, regeneration, and forest condition, composition/changes in flora and fauna, environmental and social impacts of forest management, costs, productivity and efficiency of forest management).
Forest managers monitor their forests and operations based on risk and as needed to ensure the quality of forest operations and protection of values.
3.7 Management strategies for the identification and protection of rare, threatened and endangered species.
SAR or other rare species are documented at the certificate and FMU level based on known local occurrences and as they are encountered in operations or monitoring. Protection is provided based on provincial recovery strategies and industry accepted best management practices including appropriate buffers around areas of concern, restricting operations in sensitive areas, using provincial forest management guides, and FSC HCV frameworks.
3.8 Environmental safeguards implemented, e.g. buffer zones for streams, riparian areas, seasonal operation, chemical storage, etc.
Same as 3.7 above. EOMF has standard operating procedures to protect species and sites from operational damage such as key habitat requirements, rutting and chemical spills.
Other Sections may be added by the FME

Annex IX: List of FMU/members for group certificate

1. Total # members in the certified pool: 98
2. Total area in Current Pool (ha): 74,295.53

CERTIFIED POOL MEMBERSHIP TABLE²

Name of Member/ Contact Details	Assigned Sub Code	Management Tenure	Property Location (e.g. town, county)	Latitude/ Longitude ³	Total area (ha)	Main Products
Bruce County	NA	Community Managed	Walkerton	44.1313° N, 81.1507° W	4,883	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Grey County Forest	NA	Community Managed	Owen Sound	44.4660° N, 80.6327° W	3,274.1	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Halton Region Forest	NA	Community Managed	Milton	44.4660° N, 80.6327° W 43.5130 ° N 79.9233 ° W	665	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Lanark County Forest	NA	Community Managed	Perth	45.0084° N, 76.3589° W	4,621	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)

² Forest certification public summary reports for group certificates shall include an up-to-date list of all group members with name, contact details and the geographical location of their FMUs in the scope of the certificate, unless national legal restrictions do not allow publication of this kind of information (this needs to be specified in the public summary report).

³ The center point of a contiguous FMU or group of dispersed properties that together comprise a FMU in latitude and longitude decimal degrees with a maximum of 5 decimals.

Larose Forest	NA	Community Managed	L'Orignal	45°22'31"N 75°09'54"W	11,092.1	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Limerick Forest	NA	Community Managed	Brockville	44.9127° N, 77.6647° W	6,033.3	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Long Point Region Conservation Authority	NA	Community Managed	Tillsonburg	42.5792° N, 80.4309° W	4,511.7	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Northumberland County Forest	NA	Community Managed	Cobourg	43.9292° N, 78.1108° W	2,225	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Quinte Conservation	NA	Community Managed	Belleville	44.1666° N, 77.3833° W	12,225	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Renfrew County Forest	NA	Community Managed	Pembroke	45.6383° N, 77.1674° W	6,527	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Stormont Dundas & Glengarry (SD&G) Forest	NA	Community Managed	Cornwall	45.1228° N, 74.8733° W	3,973	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
South Nation Conservation	NA	Community Managed	Finch	45.1430° N, 75.0854° W	4,371.9	W1 Rough wood

						W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Town of Oakville	NA	Community Managed	Oakville	43.4260° N, 79.7298° W	842	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Private commercial forest owner (TM)	NA	Privately Managed	Madawaska	45.2618° N, 76.8896° W	1,518.4	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Sub-group of small private woodlots owners (less than 1000 ha)	NA	Privately Managed	Across eastern and southern Ontario	-	7533	W1 Rough wood W1.1 Roundwood (logs)
Total area in certified pool.					74,295.53	