The following document summarizes the input received during and immediately following the 2018 Controlled Wood Regional Meetings and provides rationale for the resulting mitigation options for Mesophytic Cove Sites (MCS), along with definition of any identified gaps in the final set of options.

**Please note that any of the proposed mitigation options may be done individually or in collaboration with other certificate holders, or other entities that have similar desired outcomes. Collaboration is encouraged to scale up potential mitigation impact, and FSC US will seek to assist with collaboration when feasible.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Education & Outreach**

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| Original Proposed Options(#4) Encourage treatment of invasives pre- and post- harvest, thereby reducing potential for spread (#5) Encourage forest treatments that emulate natural disturbance through small openings(#6) Improve information flow (when available) with those planning/managing cove sites  | Topline Input* Broad support for educational efforts to improve information flow
* Target audience for education may include landowner, foresters, loggers, etc.
* Materials should provide tools to help identify where MCS might occur on the landscape, a definition of MCS (checklist of site characteristics), communicate their conservation value, and best management practices and invasive species management.
* Stepwise approach as research becomes available
* Outcomes focused on increased awareness and appreciation for MCS
* Identification tools are key – need to develop a defined set of criteria to allow landowners, foresters, and loggers to be able to identify sites.
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*Consultation Insights: Stakeholders from all perspectives widely supported the use of education and outreach to improve the flow of information to landowners, loggers, and foresters. Feedback during the meeting identified key components that would be required of the education materials, including identification tools to assist people on the ground with identifying the MCS, information about the significance of these rare communities on the landscape, and information about where these sites might occur and best practices for management. Additional mapping and research may also be needed to improve information about where these sites are located and how best to manage them, particularly in light of the potential impacts for invasive species. Mapping and research are addressed through other mitigation options, and the should be to have those findings incorporated into this mitigation option as well.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Options**

**The following is offered as an option that could be scaled for any impact level:**

**Using materials (as described below), and with a desired outcome of engaging landowners, loggers, and forest managers within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in conservation of Mesophytic Cove Sites (MCS), communicate to audiences (as described below) the significance and social values of MCS, how to identify them in the field, threats from incompatible forest management and spread of invasive species, and opportunities for conservation of MCS through management implementation and practices that reduce the likelihood of introducing invasive species.**

* **Materials: Developed by, or developed in cooperation with, organizations/individuals with expertise in conservation of MCS, or FSC US, and delivered in a manner that will be the most effective in achieving the desired outcome of engaging landowners, loggers, and forest managers in conservation of MCS, while reflecting the specific context and characteristics of the Organization.**
* **Audiences: Audiences will reflect the specific context and characteristics of the Organization, but communications should be directed toward those audiences where the communications will be most effective in helping to achieve the desired outcome of engaging landowners, loggers, and forest managers within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in conservation of MCS. Depending upon the Organization’s location in the supply chain, communications may be directly with landowners, loggers, and forest managers, or through intermediaries such as community members or suppliers, at community events, workshops, or association meetings, or in collaboration with organizations/individuals already working for conservation of MCS.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Research on MCS**

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| Original Proposed Options(#2) Actions that result in reduced introduction of invasives during forest operations(#4) Encourage treatment of invasives pre- and post- harvest, thereby reducing potential for spread (#5) Encourage forest treatments that emulate natural disturbance through small openings | Topline Input* Broad feedback that more information and research is needed on the characteristics/definition of MCS, management practices that conserve MCS, and invasive species management
* Some suggestions that research on management practices is already available, but potentially lacking for invasive species
* Explore where additional research is needed to fill knowledge gaps, focus on identification, management practices, and invasive species
* Use findings from research to influence education and trainings for landowners, loggers, and forest managers
* Create a databank/information clearing house of research
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*Consultation Insights: A mitigation option related to researching the best identification methods, management practices that are compatible with MCS, and invasive species management was supported by stakeholders. Feedback was mixed regarding what research was already available, but some suggested that research on management practices to conserve MCS may already exist (Fernow Experimental Forest), and research could focus on filling knowledge gaps such as with improving the management and prevention of invasive species. Research findings should become publicly available and incorporated into the implementation of other mitigation options to support the stepwise approach to addressing the conservation of MCS in the Appalachian region.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as an option that could be scaled for any impact level:**

1. **Engage with and/or provide monetary or in-kind resources to an entity or alliance that is currently conducting, or has the capacity to initiate, research on management practices for conservation of Mesophytic Cove Sites (MCS), invasive species management, including treatment and prevention, and development of improved identification tools for MCS, in areas that overlap with the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area; and**
2. **Use the results of research on management practices, invasive species management, and identification tools, to improve implementation of another mitigation option.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Mapping MCS**

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| Original Proposed Options(#3) Create a collaborative process whereas stakeholders could contribute accurate field data/information as discovered and begin building such an educational state/county/stand location style of mapping | Topline Input* Broad support for a collaborative effort to better map locations of MCS
* Some concerns regarding information sharing of mapped locations and potential risk to MCS
* Explore what models and maps already exist, perhaps through state heritage programs
* Collective effort could be modeled after Longleaf Pine Initiative
* Use findings from mapping to influence education and trainings for landowners, loggers, and forest managers
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*Consultation Insights: There is generally broad support from stakeholders for better mapping of MCS locations. However, some suggested that this effort may be duplicative in some regions as there are models and maps that currently exist such as the NC State Natural Heritage Program. Additionally, some concerns were expressed that sharing MCS location information publicly may put these ecosystems at risk for increased degradation. A collaborative effort will need to explore what models and maps currently exist while also addressing the challenges associated with mapping MCS locations while protecting the ecosystem.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as a two-part option for ‘High Impact’ organizations:**

1. **Develop or join an alliance that is working to map or refine existing maps of Mesophytic Cove Sites (MCS) in areas that overlap with the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area that will complement other MCS mapping efforts in the region, and is working on the challenge of providing this information of MCS locations while ensuring the protection of the ecosystem; and**
2. **Use the results of the mapping work to improve implementation of another mitigation option.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Staff Training**

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| Original Proposed OptionNone | Topline Input* Suggestions for direct staff and logger training for those Organizations at the beginning of the supply chain
* Training topics should include: identification of MCS (practice using checklist of site characteristics), conservation and social value, management techniques, and treatment and prevention of invasive species (power washing equipment)
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*Consultation Insights: The desired outcome for this training would need to be similar to the education/outreach option above, and the information communicated would also need to be similar. This option is applicable to only a very small portion of the Organizations (those closest to the forest), since the staff of organizations further from the forest have little ability to mitigate risks based simply upon increased knowledge about MCS and associated management activities. Need to recognize that once is not enough, but that annual training may not be necessary if the information has not changed, and also that there may be alternatives to Organization-provided training.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**The following is offered as an option for Organizations with staff who have direct contact with landowners, loggers, and forest managers and/or who are on-site at the forest material origin prior to harvest:**

**Ensure staff receive training or the equivalent, with periodic refreshers that include any new information, on identification of Mesophytic Cove Sites (MCS), conservation and social value, management techniques, and treatment and prevention of invasive species. The training or equivalent shall be: a) customized for MCS associated with the forest types that occur within the Organization’s supply area; b) developed by, or developed in cooperation with, organizations/individuals with expertise in conservation of MCS, or FSC US; and c) result in staff having knowledge on these subjects to the extent that they are able to communicate the same content to the landowners and land managers with whom they are working.**

**GAPS IN THE SET OF MITIGATON OPTIONS**

FSC US Staff evaluation of this set of mitigation options, through the lens of the shared criteria, did not identify any significant gaps, with the possible exception of the requirement for 'auditability.' We will be looking to your comments for suggestions on how to address this potential gap, as well as for identification of any other gaps and suggestions for their resolution. Additionally, we will be meeting with Certification Bodies during the consultation and expect that they will also provide input on improvements in auditability.