

## Working Discussion Document:

# Potential Criteria for Evaluating Draft Mitigation Options

## (Updated Post-Asheville Meeting)

The following potential working criteria and mitigation concepts were offered by FSC in the July 2018 Asheville meeting as a possible basis of discussion for stakeholder consultation and outreach. The intention was to expand and refine our collective thinking, not to limit it. Input on mitigation criteria will serve as a basis for further regional consultations. Input on mitigation options will be used as a basis for ongoing decision-making about preferred mitigation options.

**GREEN highlight** is used to indicate input received during the Asheville meeting.

**YELLOW highlight** is used to indicate input that seemed to resonate particularly well.

### REFLECTIONS ON SCOPE

- Clarify what is 'risk' in this situation [*The 'risk' is the risk of using materials from 'unacceptable' sources; unacceptable sources include places where identified environmental values are threatened by forest management activities*]
- Note: FSC does not have a definition for 'mitigate' – therefore, the Oxford English Dictionary definition should be used, "To moderate (the severity, rigor, heinousness, etc.) of something". Mitigate means to reduce severity of risk – does not mean that the risk must be completely eliminated 'Mitigation' is not used in the context of 'wetlands mitigation' – it is NOT compensation for damages that are knowingly caused
- Clarify the intent of the scope, specifically:
  - Reducing risk vs mitigating risk [*The intent is for implemented mitigation actions to mitigate risk within a defined area of risk, but with the recognition that this may be a longer-term process, and not possible within a very short period of time, or if requiring site-specific actions, due to the complexity and characteristics of US supply chains*]
  - Mitigating risk vs mitigating impacts [*The applicable FSC standard requires that companies that wish to source forest materials from places where risk greater than 'low' has been identified must implement actions that will mitigate the risk of sourcing material from 'unacceptable sources'*]
- The focus is maintenance or enhancement of identified environmental values – does not mean no forest management activities in most situations
- Proposed concept is to significantly reduce or remove threats to identified environmental values, done as a long-term process at a landscape scale, that will ultimately result in a low risk level (for the risk of using materials from 'unacceptable' sources)
- Bring both mitigation options to table (landscape-scale & longer-term, fine-scale/site-specific & shorter-term) and decide what applies most appropriately to the region, risk concern
- Provide options that do not require site-specific knowledge of the origin of non-certified forest materials
- Include practical solutions
- Calibrate between Certification Bodies (auditors) on what is acceptable behavior/effort by certified companies that wish to mix certified and non-certified forest materials
- FSC must do more to clarify scope in clear terms, relative to this meeting and meetings moving forward.

## **POTENTIAL MITIGATION CRITERIA**

(No priority intended by numbers, just for reference)

1. Results in decreased threats from forest management activities
2. Improves knowledge about places where the conservation value is being threatened so that they can be avoided
3. Proven effectiveness in maintaining or enhancing conservation value
4. Doesn't require companies to make extensive investments to infrastructure
5. Provides a workable option for small enterprises
6. Supports an ongoing initiative/program that is already producing positive outcomes
7. Doesn't require knowledge of specific sites from which forest materials originate
8. Differentiates requirements between companies that buy directly from the forest, and those that don't

**\*\*\* Among these criteria, please kindly mark up doc in term of: what resonates (+) / needs clarification (-) and / or strengthening? (Δ)**

### **Top-Line Responses: (+) Resonates**

- #7 heads in the right direction
- #s 1,2,3,4,5,6 resonate
- Adaptable to small enterprises is important

### **(-) Needs Clarification (or Does Not Resonate):**

- #1 – 'Decreased threats' is a weird rubric; should it be 'results in decreased impact'?
- #5 – Adjust to 'Provides a workable option for all enterprises, including small and others'
- #8 – Principle of 'differentiates requirements' is good, but unclear how implementation this could be done
- #7 – Who doesn't need to have 'knowledge'? Flooring company or someone on the ground who can facilitate mitigation?
- #6 – Needs clarification on what those initiatives/programs are and what do 'positive outcomes' mean? Create efficiencies, link information between companies, etc.
- #1 – Change 'decreased threats' to 'increase positive impacts of forest management'?
- 'Improve knowledge' - remove avoid, and add 'so that they can be mitigated'
- #3 – Eliminate 'proven' and stick with 'Effective' or 'Proven or reasonable expectation of effective...'
- #2 - Change 'avoided' to 'avoided or mitigated'

### **(Δ) Needs Strengthening:**

- Criteria must pass through 4 top line filters: efficacy, clarity, efficiency, practicality; ADD: measurable, auditable
- Add 'shareability'? Make sure companies not all acquiring same info, duplicative effort
- How will FSC track mitigation implementation to determine if moving from specified risk to low risk?
- Explain and show how criteria will be used
- How does traceability of materials work into this – could it help?
- Add 'based on science'

### **Cheoah Bald Salamander – key dynamics to consider:**

- ❖ Distribution is limited to an area around the Cheoah Bald, mostly within the Nantahala National Forest and along the Appalachian and Bartram Trails; associated national forest management areas emphasize management considerations related to the salamander and/or recreation associated with the trails
- ❖ Most of range is within mesic second growth forests, but the species is very slow to recover following clear-cut harvests; providing areas for refuge may help with recovery
- ❖ NC Wildlife Action Plan indicates that there is a need to better define the distribution

### *POTENTIAL Mitigation actions suggested to date in conversations with technical experts regarding the Cheoah Bald Salamander:*

- Help to provide matching funds for conservation land acquisition (establish a fund?)
- Influence forest management practices to leave scattered down woody debris (not piles) and nearby areas of refuge, and to limit large canopy gaps
- Invest in student research to improve knowledge of distribution and other population characteristics
- Invest in education to improve forest management practices in the species range
- Develop partnerships with universities and other NGOs (trails?) that can influence land management within the species range

### **Top Lines**

- Unique species situation – know range fairly well (not perfectly), not other characteristics
- Could get traction with this species, have an impact
- Need tighter clarification on range
- Don't reinvent wheel – get the information that exists into the right hands
- Who is already doing this? Build on their efforts?
- This is about mitigation via the application of existing knowledge in the hands of those who are actually harvesting trees
- Successful formula: expert knowledge combined with best management, sharing that and open space for continuous improvement
- This can't simply be policy and research costs on the backs of certificate holders – this is about leveraging resources in ways to get things done
- Need to make this real, not window washing (or green-washing)
- Reiterate that research is key, but not only funding students; support whomever is doing the needed work
- We need to get a better idea of where the habitat is located and what the species requirements are and any associated best management practices
- Sharing information is key – landowners, loggers, other (those that can influence forest management practices)
- Emphasis on adaptive management. Use what we have, build and improve on it.
- Remember that we're talking about landscape scale – if we're supporting organizations, they should be working at this scale.
- We're not talking about funds for acquisition, but more about research.
- Make sure that the "who" (for sharing information or support of efforts) includes state agencies

- Who else can become champions for the salamanders? NGOs, trails groups, others
  - Working forestland easements a consideration, but only if the emphasis is on 'working' and 'as an option'
  - Research – need more information about the species' characteristics
  - Need to identify what protections are already in place
  - If the mitigation action is 'Contributing' – how does it work? What does it mean?
  - Focus needs to be on partnerships – must include diverse groups
  - Participation in national forest plan revision process
  - Potential for direct and indirect promotion of best management practices – good auditability around communication
  - Some suppliers have direct impact on logger training – could incorporate a module on this species
  - Direct participation in planning for lands within the species' range
  - Build on existing assets in the region as opposed to creating a new fund – TNC, universities, Heritage Program, land conservancies
  - Auditability concerns about providing research or enhancing existing research – need clarity on the impact of this research and when the 'contribution' ends in terms of audits
- How do we implement something that meets requirements and is auditable? We are talking about influencing forest management – but certificate holders implementing actions are not FM organizations.
  - There's a clear limit to the extent to which certificate holders are likely to take on additional burdens to mitigate – therefore, it will need to be a **collective effort** on the part of the certificate holders and other entities who are linked to the ground
  - Potential for undue burden to likely land on certificate holders who are able to influence those on the ground; will need link up certificate holders without influence on the ground with those who have it

### **Mesophytic Cove Sites – key dynamics to consider:**

- ❖ Highly diverse, closed-canopy hardwood forests that occur in large patches on concave slopes that accumulate nutrients and moisture – including both rich and acidic types.
- ❖ The geologic formations that support this forest type are not rare, but examples that retain a high diversity of species in both the canopy and the forest floor and a complex forest structure are very rare; the high productivity of these sites has meant that they are highly valued for timber production and typically have seen repeated harvests
- ❖ Incompatible forest management can threaten remaining examples through alterations to the structure and composition of the forest, through conversion to other forest types, and through introduction of invasives, or vegetative changes that promote their spread.

### *POTENTIAL Mitigation actions suggested to date in conversations with technical experts regarding Mesophytic Cove Sites:*

- Mitigation actions that result in decreased rates of hi-grading
- Mitigation actions that result in reduced introduction of invasives during forest operations
- Efforts to restore degraded cove sites (to reduce rarity)

- Encourage treatment of invasives pre- and post- harvest, thereby reducing potential for spread
- Encourage forest treatments that emulate natural disturbance through small openings
- Improve information flow (when available) with those planning/managing cove sites
- Establishment of a fund that will help to defray the cost of conservation easements
- Address challenges related to historic fire extent and oak recruitment
- Create a fund that helps subsidize or support contractors to implement invasive treatment activities on-the-ground
- 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

**Central Appalachian Critical Biodiversity Area - key dynamics to consider:**

- ❖ Concentration of biodiversity in this area is driven by the extremely diverse forest types and one of the richest temperate freshwater ecosystems in the world
- ❖ Historically, forest management was a threat to the forests, however the highest priority current threats to the forests overall are from other sources (Cove sites excluded).
- ❖ Forest management is identified as a threat to the aquatic biodiversity, through hydrologic alteration following conversion from hardwood forests to non-native pine, and forestry practices that result in loss of near-stream forested habitat, sedimentation, and severe erosion of riverbanks.

*POTENTIAL Mitigation actions suggested to date in conversations with technical experts regarding the Central Appalachian CBA and associated aquatic biodiversity:*

- Contribute to a local land trust
- Establishment of a fund that will help to defray the cost of conservation easements that include increased width buffers and harvest/management plan review prior to forest harvest (could be set up to target specific landowners as desired by the company)
- Use of Blue Ridge Forever conservation value viewer to identify areas of greater risk, and establish a mitigation bank in those areas with 'forest conservation credits'
- Improve logger education to increase the implementation of forestry BMPs
- Influence state policy to introduce more severe consequences for lack of BMP implementation, in states with lower implementation rates
- Support research into the effectiveness of forestry BMPs related to steep slope logging techniques; followed by efforts to adapt the BMPs if/as indicated by the results
- Invest in harvesting equipment that is more appropriate for harvesting on steep slopes (e.g. aerial cable yarding)
- Create a fund that provides capital assistance for contractors to purchase more advanced technology

Top-Lines for Central Appalachian CBA & Mesophytic Cove Sites were provided via post-it.

### **What is Least Clear on the Roadmap?**

- Compliance pathway: What does a certificate holder do as of today; as of the day the Controlled Wood Regional Meeting Report is published
- Calibrating the requirements to ensure similar expectations of certificate holders
- How will the Board approval process work? *Board bylaws require that they work on a consensus basis (i.e., all decision participants do not oppose; quorum is required for decisions)*
- How likely will the Board deliver on time? *They are aware of the importance of this effort and have worked to deliver previously (e.g., FSC US National Risk Assessment delivered by June 30)*
- What are the chances that FSC International will not approve the Risk Assessment? *Highly unlikely.*
- Will the draft CW Regional Meeting Report be publically available? *We will make it available as it goes to the Board.*
- How to provide feedback at this point? *Primary method is via the Discussion Forum on the website – the Asheville forum will remain open for 2 weeks following the posting of mitigation ideas that are the outputs from this meeting*
- Can we post anonymously? *Yes, use the email provided on web-site for communication with FSC US and we will post your comment for you*
- Potential critical fail – what about auditor calibration? How will the certification bodies (auditors) determine if the mitigation action has been implemented? *We may need to provide verifiers to help maintain consistency*
- Any one mitigation option? Need to either be effectively equivalent, or clearly defined by scale, intensity and risk