

FSC US CONTROLLED WOOD REGIONAL MEETINGS SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN CBA



FSC REGION Southeast (this Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA) is an extension of the Central Appalachian CBA, but for the purposes of this assessment, they are being separated at the regional boundary)

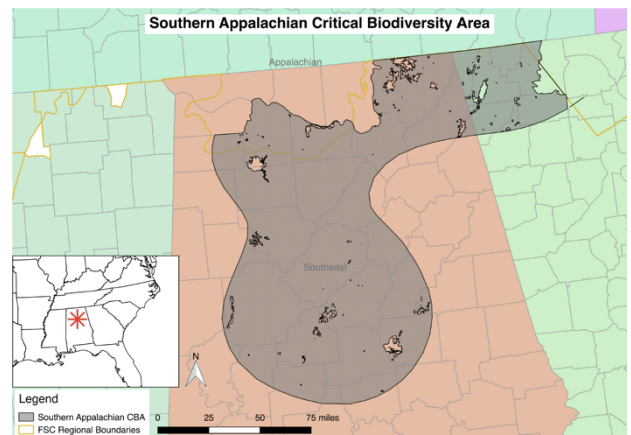
HCVS IN FSC A High Conservation Value (HCV) is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance. FSC is working to ensure that our system helps to maintain and enhance the special places that support these values. For more information on HCVs, see the Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values.¹

WHY IS THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN CBA CONSIDERED AN HCV? This CBA is considered an HCV because it contains a high overall species richness, diversity, or uniqueness within a defined area compared to other sites within the same biogeographic area. The CBA was identified using a species richness index originally published by NatureServe and The Nature Conservancy that identifies areas with high concentrations of rare species. This index preferences species that have limited ranges by applying additional weighting. The results identify areas with concentrations of high biological diversity and spaces with an increased conservation significance.

SUMMARY OF THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN CBA Biodiversity values in the southern Appalachians include aquatic habitats, glades, and montane longleaf pine. Alabama is recognized as having the greatest number of freshwater species of mollusks and fish in the United States, and many of these species have very restricted distributions and specialized habitat requirements that make them highly vulnerable to extinction. The Cahaba River watershed is the center of the biodiversity hotspot, but the biodiversity area includes other smaller watercourses as well. Aquatic habitats driving this concentration of biodiversity include lakes, rivers, streams, bogs, swamps, ephemeral pools, fens, seeps, swamp forests and wet meadows. Other drivers of biodiversity include glades and montane longleaf pine.

Bibb County Glades (i.e. rock outcrops), exposed limestone glades, and sandstone glades in Central Alabama have high density of rare plants. These are open habitats that are dominated by upland herbaceous plant species. There is typically an absence of a tree canopy on glades, resulting in large amounts of sunlight and heat on the surface.

Montane longleaf pine habitats occur in steep rolling topography historically maintained by fire, mostly outside of or on the edge of the Coastal Plain. Biodiversity values are driven in part by the understory plant community.



¹Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values (<https://ic.fsc.org/en/what-is-fsc-certification/consultations/archive/hcv-common-guidance>)

IDENTIFIED THREATS TO THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN CBA HABITATS

<p><u>Acquatic Habitats</u> Numerous sources of information identify threats from forest management activities, particularly non-point source pollution in aquatic habitats (primarily sediments, but also fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, when mis-managed near water bodies), and disturbance to riparian zones.</p>	<p><u>Glades</u> Threats include grazing, non-native species, quarrying, root-digging, plant and animal collecting, removal of large rocks for landscaping, urban development, plowing for fire breaks, use as logging decks (resulting in soil/vegetation disturbance and soil erosion), conversion to other land uses, and ORV damage. No threats from forest management activities were identified.</p>	<p><u>Montane Longleaf Pine</u> Biodiversity values can be adversely affected by forest management activities via conversion of longleaf to other pine types, and the use of management techniques, including herbicide application that have the potential to inhibit native understory communities. As the bulk of the biodiversity exists in the understory of a longleaf pine system, restoration or maintenance of understory species composition is an essential component of longleaf pine conservation. It is possible to harvest in and sustainably manage longleaf pine systems and therefore timber management by itself is not considered a threat. Other threats include fire-suppression, urban development, forest conversion, non-native species, climate change.</p>
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WHAT ARE MITIGATION ACTIONS AND WHAT WOULD WE LIKE TO ACHIEVE?

Companies that mix FSC-certified forest materials and non-certified materials to make products with an 'FSC Mix' claim/logo are required to address certain risks before using the non-certified forest materials. One of these is the risk that their forest materials come from areas where HCVs are threatened by forest management activities. FSC has completed a US National Risk Assessment to identify where this risk is greater than 'low' and one of these is the Southern Appalachians CBA - specifically, the portions that occur within the FSC US Southeast Region and are not effectively protected². Companies that wish to use non-certified materials from the identified places (like this CBA) are required to either avoid sourcing from specific sites where the threats are occurring, or to implement mitigation actions that reduce the risk of sourcing from those sites. For this CBA, any mitigation actions will need to address the threats identified above in **bold**.

The FSC US National Risk Assessment also introduces the concept of holding regional meetings to bring stakeholders together to collaboratively identify effective and practical mitigation actions. We are asking participants to consider landscape-scale mitigation actions, that will help to reduce risks across the landscape in which the companies source forest materials. An effective way to do this may be to build on existing programs and projects that are already tackling these issues. The companies implementing mitigation actions are required to select one or more from the options identified at the regional meetings.

Please help us to determine what these mitigation actions should be, by visiting engage.fsc.us.org and joining the virtual discussion, or attending a regional meeting.

INFORMATION SOURCES THAT MAY HELP GENERATE MITIGATION IDEAS

- [2015 Alabama State Wildlife Action Plan](#)
- [Cahaba River Basin Management Plan](#)
- [Upper Coosa Basin Watershed Management Plan](#)
- [America's Longleaf Alliance](#)

²Effective protection is demonstrated by GAP Status 1 & 2 areas in the PAD-US dataset (<https://gapanalysis.usgs.gov/padus/data/download/>) and USFS Inventoried Roadless Areas (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/roadless/2001roadlessrule/maps/?cid=stelprdb5382437>).

