



FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL™
UNITED STATES

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Issue Overview: Forest Workers

*To Support Public Consultation of the Forest Stewardship Council U.S.
National Forest Stewardship Standard (NFSS)*

October 5, 2020

Introduction

The Forest Stewardship Council U.S. (FSC US) developed this issue overview to support stakeholders who are interested in participating in the public consultation on Draft 1 of the revised FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard for the conterminous United States.

As the world's most trusted forest certification system, the existing FSC US Forest Management Standard offers a solid foundation for the current revision process. The issue overview is intended to facilitate actionable, informed input as FSC works to further refine Draft 2 of the revised Standard.

Ultimately the revision process is about identifying the appropriate balance between an existing "best-in-class" standard that is practical and achievable, with targeted refinements to streamline the Standard where possible, and incorporate changes that bring it into alignment with FSC Principles and Criteria Version 5, as approved by FSC's membership.

Summary

Principle 2 is now dedicated to workers, with a new emphasis on promotion of gender equality, more explicit requirements for training, and an extension of worker protections to employees of contractors and subcontractors who are working on FSC-certified forests, as well as the contractors themselves.

The Standard Development Group has identified a number of concerns linked to specific Criteria and Indicators in Principle 2 that are not completely resolved in this Draft 1 standard. To address these concerns, the Standard Development Group has asked FSC US staff to coordinate a Forest Workers Forum¹ during the public consultation period. The objectives of this forum include confirming that the Indicators identified are adequate for ensuring conformance of organizations with certain Criteria and identifying potential verifiers by which organizations can feasibly demonstrate that they are in conformance with Indicators.

The outputs from the Forum, which will include potential verifiers or potential alternative indicators, will be considered by the Standard Development Group in its development and approval of a Draft 2 Standard.

¹ Individuals who would like to be considered for participation in this forum should send an email to FM.revision@us.fsc.org with the subject, "FSC US Forest Workers Forum" and with a brief description of their interest and the experience and knowledge that they would bring to the forum. Participation in the forum will be limited to increase effective engagement.

Find it in the Standard

The entirety of Principle 2 is focused on workers.

While the applicability of indicators in Criterion 2.2 (gender equality) and Criterion 2.4 (fair wages) are limited to the employees of certified organizations, the remainder of the Principle 2 Indicators are applicable to all workers (including contractors, subcontractors and their employees).

A requirement for worker training is not new, but Indicator 2.5.1 now references Annex E which provides guidance on the activities for which training should be considered to ensure worker safety and well-being.

Rationale

While FSC has included protections for workers since its inception, recent changes have increased the emphasis on including contractors and subcontractors, which is in line with International Labor Organization fundamental principles and rights at work. In addition, FSC is increasing its emphasis on gender equality.

In the US, workers – especially those who are migrant and undocumented – are open to exploitation in forest management. While it is FSC’s understanding that Certificate Holders are following all relevant labor laws, there is concern about contractors and subcontractors working on FSC-certified Management Units, especially when it comes to the health, safety and well-being of their employees.

There is also a concern that the extensive use of contractors and subcontractors may represent a loss of economic opportunities for the local communities adjacent to or surrounding FSC-certified Management Units.

Impacts of the revision

For Certificate Holders employing contractors and subcontractors on certified Management Units, there may be additional requirements to verify conformance with labor laws. However, additional protections for these workers will help to ensure the safety and well-being of some of the more vulnerable US residents.

Key question for public consultation

- Have workers’ rights, safety and well-being been appropriately addressed in the Draft 1 revised standard?
- Will the changes result in indicators that are feasible for certified organizations?
- Do you have suggestions for ways to verify conformance of certified organizations with worker indicators, especially as they apply to contractors, subcontractors and employees of these contractors?

How to provide input

Individuals who are interested in participating in first phase of the public consultation on Draft 1 of the revised FSC US National Forest Stewardship Standard are encouraged to [visit the web pages dedicated to the consultation](#). Within these web pages, participants will find the draft revised standard, plus additional resource materials, learn about opportunities to participate in webinars, and how to submit comments on the draft.

Any comments that a participant wishes to be formally recognized must be submitted via the FSC Consultations Platform by Friday, December 18, 2020.