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 the Southern Appalachian Critical Biodiversity Area (CBA), along with definition of any identified gaps in the final set of options.

The US Controlled Wood National Risk Assessment identifies two drivers of biodiversity in this CBA that may be threatened by forest management activities: Montane Longleaf Pine and Aquatic Habitats.

* Montane Longleaf Pine: As the specified risk area associated with this CBA overlaps with the specified risk area associated with HCV 3 Native Longleaf Pine Systems (NLPS), any Organization that is mitigating risks associated with sourcing from areas of NLPS that are within this CBA will already be mitigating the identified risk associated with this driver of biodiversity, and no additional mitigation is needed.
* Aquatic Habitats: Mitigation to address the identified risk associated with this driver of biodiversity will still be required, and the proposed mitigation options are provided below. Please note, however, that due to the very similar input provided on this topic for both the Central Appalachian CBA and the Southern Appalachian CBA, the proposed revised mitigation options are the same. This will allow an Organization that sources from both areas of specified risk to use the same option to mitigate risk in both areas.

**Please note that almost 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 that collaboration when feasible.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Education & Outreach**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Option  (#2) Improve/promote/support/develop/ encourage logger/landowner education to increase and improve the implementation of forestry BMPs within the Southern Appalachian CBA, specifically those that reduce siltation and address steep slope impact | Topline Input   * Support for promoting and improving logger, landowner and supplier education * Public awareness important too * Opportunities for very beneficial partnerships – other organizations and public agencies * Could include improving materials/fact sheets for pertinent practices |

*Consultation Insights: This mitigation option received more outright support overall, and within individual perspectives, than any other option suggested for addressing aquatic biodiversity. As with other similar mitigation options, comments suggested that it could be broadened to include more potential audiences, flexibility in delivery and a breadth of messages, including both awareness of the potential impact of forest management activities on aquatic biodiversity and what can be done to address any threats. The input and comments related to education and outreach were very similar to those received for the Central Appalachian CBA, and therefore the same mitigation option language is proposed.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

**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 increasing and improving Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation that focuses on aquatic biodiversity conservation within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area, communicate to audiences (as described below) the values of aquatic biodiversity, threats from poorly implemented forest management, and management practices that will reduce or eliminate these threats, including but not limited to practices for management activities on steep slopes, and practices that will prevent siltation.**

* **Materials: Developed by, or developed in cooperation with, organizations/individuals with expertise in aquatic biodiversity conservation, or FSC US, and delivered in a manner that will be the most effective in achieving the desired outcome of increasing and improving BMP implementation that focuses on aquatic biodiversity conservation, 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 increasing and improving BMP implementation that focuses on aquatic biodiversity conservation within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in conservation of aquatic biodiversity. Depending upon the Organization’s location in the supply chain, communications may be directly with loggers, land managers or landowners responsible for the management activities implemented, or through intermediaries such as community members, forest managers, suppliers, forestry associations, landowner associations, or in collaboration with organizations/individuals already working with the same desired outcome.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Research & Mapping**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Options  (#1) Support research into the effectiveness of forestry BMPs related to steep slope logging techniques within the Southern Appalachian CBA, followed by efforts to adapt the BMPs in associated states if/as indicated by the results | Topline Input   * Support research, including ongoing efforts * Consider combining #1 and #2 (research and education) * Do we really need to re-address or evaluate BMPs? * This research already exists * Also include mapping areas of higher risk * Clarify why only steep slopes |

*Consultation Insights: Input shared during the Regional meeting was mixed and somewhat limited, but the written feedback provided on the worksheets was generally positive, or supportive with some adaptations, with limited opposition. These generalizations are consistent across perspectives. The concerns expressed had to do with whether or not this mitigation option insinuates that BMPs need to be re-evaluated, and that there is already research that concludes that BMPs are effective. There is substantial research that finds that BMPs are effective for their intended purpose associated with the adherence to the Clean Water Act, but there are still questions to be answered related to the effectiveness of BMPs in conserving biodiversity. The input and comments related to research and mapping were very similar to those received for the Central Appalachian CBA, and therefore the same mitigation option language is proposed.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

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

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 effectiveness of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for conserving aquatic biodiversity, or identifying landscapes within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area that include forests where there is higher level of the identified risk; and**
2. **If research on effectiveness of BMPs, advocate for changes to state BMPs that reflect the results of the research, or if mapping of higher risk areas, use the results of the research to improve implementation of another mitigation option.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Conservation Initiatives**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Original Proposed Options  (#3) Meaningful engagement with land trusts active within the Southern Appalachian CBA to access sustainably managed forests that protect aquatic habitat | Topline Input   * Not just land trusts * Need to clarify or remove ‘meaningful’ * Perhaps specify working land easements * Support for this option, if adapted |

*Consultation Insights: There was limited input on this mitigation option, with most of it focused on clarifications needed in the language of the option. However, there was very little outright opposition from any perspective. The comments recognized that there might be other organizations beyond land trusts that might be supportive of sustainable forest management and aquatic biodiversity conservation. As the input and comments to supporting conservation initiatives that were received were very similar to those received for the Central Appalachian CBA, the same mitigation option language is proposed.*

**Proposed Revised Mitigation Option**

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

**Engage with and/or provide monetary or in-kind resources to conservation organizations or similar entities that are supporting or promoting programs or projects to develop new or augment existing programs that will: 1) result in increased and improved implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) with a focus on aquatic biodiversity conservation; or 2) result in increased access to incentive programs for landowner who restore, maintain or enhance forests within the specified risk area and the Organization’s supply area in a way that will conserve aquatic conservation, with a particular focus on forests within areas of the specified risk area identified as having higher risk. These entities may include: non-governmental organizations that have active programs/projects to conserve aquatic biodiversity or the forests important for doing so; and/or federal, state and/or local governmental organizations.**

**CENTRAL THEME: Direct Influence**

*Consultation Insights: As with the Central Appalachian CBA comments, there were a number of suggestions for mitigation actions specific to Organizations that are near the beginning of the supply chain and have a unique opportunity to directly influence the forest management activities that are implemented at supply sites. Due to the similarities, the same mitigation options are proposed.*

**Proposed Mitigation Options**

**The following are offered as options for Organizations that purchase directly from the source forest, or with suppliers that do so:**

1. **Engage with a conservation organization or similar entities, or FSC US, to identify landscapes of particular concern related to the risk of receiving non-certified supplies from areas where aquatic biodiversity are threatened by forest management activities, and then communicate this information to suppliers, along with: 1) recommended Best Management Practices that will conserve aquatic biodiversity; and 2) contact information for organizations that may be interested in working with the landowner on conserving the forest in question in a manner that will continue to conserve the aquatic biodiversity.**
2. **Document acceptable implementation of Best Management Practices that conserve aquatic biodiversity for harvests that produce non-certified materials that will be controlled by the Organization.**
3. **Include Best Management Practices that will conserve aquatic biodiversity in harvest plans and/or in contracts made with loggers for harvests that produce non-certified materials that will be controlled by the Organization.**

**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.