

# Forest Certification Information Sheet for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



On May 11<sup>th</sup> 2004, the State of Massachusetts (MA) received Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) endorsed forest certification for the State lands managed by the principal agencies of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA):

- Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR), Division of State Parks and Recreation (DSPR) – 285,000 acres
- Department of Fish and Game (DFG) – 110,000 acres
- Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR), Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) – 45,000 acres
- Re-Certification of the Quabbin Reservoir (DCR–DWSP) – 59,000 acres

## 1. **What is Forest Certification?**

Under the sponsorship of the FSC, Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) promotes responsible forest management by certifying environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable forest management. Consumers purchasing products bearing the FSC and SCS labels can be assured that their wood products come from forests that have been responsibly managed to FSC standards.

## 2. **Why is this significant?**

FSC Green Certification evolved from the certified organic grown agricultural programs and has expanded to millions of acres of the best-managed forests in the world. The certification being awarded to EOEA agencies is one of less than a dozen such certifications awarded to states and is the first comprehensive award because it involves all of the managed forestland under environmental agencies in Massachusetts. Other state designations were for only a subset of state lands (for example, only forest department and not fish and wildlife land or only a portion of the state). This award builds on the certification award received in 1998 by the DCR for the Quabbin Reservoir holding – the first FSC Green Certified public forestland award in the U.S.

## 3. **What were EOEA's Goals in undergoing Green Certification and are they being met?**

- a) *Improve forest management practices on state forestlands* – the requirements for management improvements for EOEA agencies over the first 5 year period of Green Certification are literally a “blueprint” to further improving our forest management program.
- b) *Identify opportunities for coordination of forest management among the three state forest management agencies* – in undergoing Green Certification the agencies have already begun significant coordination efforts on areas such as designation of “forest reserves”, rare and endangered species and archaeological site policy, forest road inventories, and forest type mapping. The agencies have also begun coordinating management of nearby properties to enhance landscape-scale natural resource and ecosystem management.
- c) *Encourage improvements in private forestland practices, by providing examples and building toward market incentives for verified sustainable management practices* – since EOEA began undergoing Green Certification, a landowner cooperative of more than 25 owners, a large mill’s forestland and two saw mills have undergone and received Green Certification. Green

Certification at Quabbin has helped in the ability of DCR to sell its forest products at good prices – DCR has averaged \$1 million in timber sale revenues over the past few years. DCR also set aside about 20% of the forests at Quabbin in reserves where no commercial forestry occurs.

- d) *Improve public understanding and confidence of active forest management practices on state forestlands, by providing an independent, FSC-accredited audit of those practices* – in beginning to implement requirements of Green Certification, EOEI received positive feedback on initial management plan documents from several environmental organizations and the general public.
- e) *Increase timber revenues through increasing sustainable forestry and access to Green Certification markets* - Green Certification has helped put the DWSP on a sustainable forestry program that averages \$1M per year. Once management plans and other requirements are in place – DSPR and DFG will also increase the sustainable timber revenues to proportionate levels while setting aside significant areas in forest reserves where commercial forestry will not be permitted.

#### **4. Who determines the Standard for Certification?**

The Forest Stewardship Council is an international organization that evaluates, accredits, and monitors independent forest product certifiers. Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) is accredited as a certifier by the Forest Stewardship Council and uses an accredited set of standards based on the FSC principals and criteria in its evaluation activities.

#### **5. What are the steps required in the SCS Certification Evaluation Process?**

A full evaluation of the land under consideration is conducted following the steps below:

- a) Assemble evaluation team of natural resource professionals;
- b) Publicize upcoming evaluation and standards to be used;
- c) Determine evaluation scope, collect and analyze data;
- d) Consult with stakeholders;
- e) Score the operations performance relative to the standard;
- f) Specify pre-conditions, conditions, and recommendations; and
- g) Write report and have results peer reviewed.

#### **6. What are the Evaluation Criteria used by SCS?**

- a) The generic certification criteria of the SCS Forest Conservation Program, accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The criteria are organized into three program elements: **Timber Resource Sustainability, Ecosystem Maintenance, and Financial, Socio-Economic, and Legal Considerations**. The generic criteria are contained in the SCS Forest Conservation Program Operations Manual, available upon request from SCS.
- b) The FSC Principles & Criteria, specifically the Northeast Regional Standard, to which the SCS generic criteria have been harmonized. These criteria are available at [www.fscoax.org](http://www.fscoax.org).

#### **7. What is Timber Resource Sustainability?**

The timber resource sustainability program element is concerned with the manner in which the timber inventories of an ownership are managed for continuous production over the long run. The evaluation considers the degree to which:

- a) Forest stands are maintained or restored to fully stocked, vigorous growing condition, occupied by high-valued tree species;
- b) Steady, significant progress is made, over time, in "regulating" the age and/or size class distribution of stands (even-aged management) or trees or groups of trees (uneven-aged management);
- c) Standing timber inventory is built up to levels associated with optimal stocking;
- d) Temporal harvest patterns at the ownership level (or the working circle level, for larger ownerships) generally exhibit stability and absence of wide-fluctuations; and
- e) Management is oriented towards yielding high-valued timber products.

### **8. What is Forest Ecosystem Maintenance?**

This program element is concerned with the extent to which the natural forest ecosystems indigenous to the ownership are adversely impacted during the process of managing, harvesting, and extracting timber products. The evaluation considers:

- a) Forest community structure and composition;
- b) Long-Term ecological productivity;
- c) Wildlife management actions, strategies, and programs;
- d) Watercourse management policies and programs;
- e) Pesticide use – practices and policies; and
- f) Ecosystem reserve policies.

### **9. What are the Financial, Socio-Economic, and Legal Considerations?**

This program element is concerned with three non-biophysical issues. First, it addresses the financial viability of the ownership structure and management program. Second, this program element addresses the socio-economic dimension of sustainable forest management – the human dimension of forestland use and the goods and services yielded from the forest. Special emphasis is placed upon sustaining the historical patterns of benefit, particularly to local and regional populations (including employees, contractors, neighbors, and local communities). Lastly, this program element addresses the legal and regulatory context in which forest management operations are conducted. The evaluation considers:

- a) Financial stability;
- b) Community and public involvement;
- c) Public use management;
- d) Investment of capital and personnel;
- e) Employee and contractor relations; and
- f) Compliance with relevant laws, regulations, treaties and conventions.

### **10. Where can I obtain additional information?**

More information about FSC and SCS can be obtained at [www.fscoax.org](http://www.fscoax.org) and [www.scs1.com](http://www.scs1.com).

Information about State of Massachusetts forestlands can be found on the EOEA website at [www.state.ma.us/envir/](http://www.state.ma.us/envir/).

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