

Australian Standard[®]

Sustainable Forest Management



This Australian Standard® was prepared by the Standard Reference Committee SRC AS4708 of Australian Forestry Standard Limited. As an accredited Standards Development Organization, Australian Forestry Standard Limited develops and publishes Australian Standards. This Standard was endorsed on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 17 May 2013. It was published on 23 August 2013.

The following are represented on the Standards Reference Committee responsible for this Australian Standard®:

- Association of Accredited Certification Bodies (AACB)
 - Australian Forest Growers (AFG)
 - Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)
 - Australasian Pulp and Paper Industry Technical Association (APPITA)
 - Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.
 - Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU)
 - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO)
 - Ecological Society of Australia (ESA)
 - ForestWorks
 - Greening Australia Limited
 - Independent Forest Policy and Forest Science Experts
 - Institute of Foresters Australia (IFA)
 - Planet Ark
 - Timber Communities Australia (TCA)
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Australian Forestry Standard Limited wishes to acknowledge the participation of the expert individuals that contributed to the development of this Standard through their representation on the Committee.

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Australian Standard[®]

**Sustainable Forest Management –
Economic, social, environmental
and cultural criteria and
requirements**

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Reference Committee (SRC4708), a technical committee established for this purpose under the accredited Standards Development Organization – Australian Forestry Standard Limited.

The objective of this Standard is to provide forest managers with environmental, economic, social, and cultural criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests. This Standard, formerly known as the Australian Forestry Standard, was first published as an interim Australian Standard® in 2003 and a full Australian Standard® in 2007. After five years of application the Standard has been reviewed in light of stakeholder expectations, new scientific and technological information, and changes to international norms for sustainable forest management. It has been published as the Australian Standard® for Sustainable Forest Management.

The Standard is intended for voluntary application to any forests being managed for the production of forest products and forest services, whether native or planted forests. It can be utilized by forest managers who are seeking independent, accredited third-party certification of their forest management system and practices. Certification to the Standard is a response to market demands that forest products and forest services come from well managed forests. It aims to support and strengthen policies and regulations that deliver improved environmental, economic, social, and cultural outcomes.

Independent, accredited third-party certification against the Standard provides a clear and unambiguous statement that the production of forest products and forest services within a particular defined forest area is managed in accordance with a set of predetermined and clearly defined environmental, economic, social and cultural performance criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	2
Introduction.....	6
Sustainable Forest Management	6
Forest Certification Principles	7
Use of the Standard.....	8
Process of Development and Revision	9
Structure of the Standard	9
The Standard.....	10
Scope.....	10
Qualifications for Scale and Intensity.....	10
Normative references	10
Definitions.....	11
Forest management criteria and requirements	21
General Requirements.....	22
Criterion 1 – Systematic Management.....	23
Criterion 2 – Stakeholders	26
Criterion 3 – Biodiversity	28
Criterion 4 – Forest Productive Capacity.....	31
Criterion 5 – Forest Ecosystem Health	33
Criterion 6 – Soil and Water Resources.....	35
Criterion 7 –Carbon	37
Criterion 8 – Cultural Values	38
Criterion 9 – Social and Economic Benefits.....	40

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AUSTRALIAN STANDARD®

Sustainable Forest Management

Introduction

Sustainable Forest Management

Sustainable forest management is the management of forests according to the principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development is a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs while conserving environmental values, so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for generations to come.

Management of forests should use the Precautionary Principle for prevention of environmental degradation and the principle of inter-generational equity to maintain the suite of forest values for present and future generations.

There are four principles to sustainable forest management that are embraced by the Standard:

Environmental sustainability

This entails maintaining and or enhancing:

- the ecological processes within forest ecosystems;
- the forest soil and geological features;
- food chains and energy flows;
- carbon, nutrient and water cycles; and
- the biodiversity of forests,

so as to provide viable and functional forest ecosystems. The forest ecosystem needs to support organisms to reproduce, whilst maintaining its productivity, adaptability and capability for self renewal. Forest management needs to support, and build upon these natural ecological components and processes.

Economic sustainability

This entails optimizing the economic benefits for income, employment, goods and services from the mixture of forest uses within ecological constraints. It requires that benefits to the forest manager exceed the costs incurred, and that some form of equivalent capital is handed down from one generation to the next so that our use of the forest does not preclude utilization options for future generations.

Social sustainability

This entails maintaining and enhancing the net social benefit derived from the mixture of forest uses while maintaining options for the future. This includes sustaining the relationship between ethics, social norms, human rights and development. An activity is socially sustainable if it conforms to ethical values and social norms, upholds human rights standards, and does not exceed a community's tolerance of change.

Cultural sustainability

This entails maintaining and enhancing the cultural capital of the community. Cultural capital refers to the collective knowledge, wisdom, cultural practices and related environmental assets valued by communities and handed down from generation to generation by various means.

Forest Certification Principles

The Standard is based on the following factors underlying the three principles of:

Governance:

- being independent and impartial, including a clear separation between development of standards and accreditation of certification bodies;
- complying with and where practical exceeding, legal and other requirements; and
- involving competent national accreditation bodies and independent, accredited third party certification bodies.

Quality:

- being scientifically based and involving the scientific community in its development;
- incorporating performance levels at appropriate scales through an open process involving all interested stakeholders;
- being based on the principles of sustainability;
- compatibility with an internationally-recognized environmental management system;
- being easily understood and leading to the same results when used by different certification bodies; and
- being regularly assessed, revised and updated in the light of new knowledge as part of a continual improvement process.

Accessibility:

- having transparent and understandable processes that are accessible to all stakeholders;
- being accessible to stakeholders with a balance of interests;
- being voluntary and including the broad participation of forest managers;
- accommodating all forest types, scales and ownership structures; and
- minimizing costs of certification and not making forest products uneconomical in comparison to other materials.

Use of the Standard

The Standard recognizes that native forests and plantations are managed for a variety of objectives. It sets out specific forest management performance requirements for operations and activities on the defined forest area. It establishes a systematic approach to forest management including requirements for stakeholder engagement. The Standard does not include any criteria related to the fitness of the forest products and forest services for any purpose. As such, it is fundamentally a clear and unambiguous statement that a certified forest product was grown and harvested at a location that was managed in accordance with a set of predetermined and clearly defined environmental, economic, social and cultural performance requirements that support the sustainable management of forests.

The Standard is intended for voluntary application to any forests regardless of size or ownership. It is intended to be compatible with relevant international and national policy instruments, and has been developed with national and international audiences in mind, as well as for implementation by forest managers in a local or regional setting. The Standard also recognizes the importance of meeting both national and international sustainable wood production and marketing requirements, the resource management needs of the industry, as well as promoting voluntary adoption by producers.

The Standard is supported by a guidance document that identifies appropriate approaches to implementation and differentiates between different scales of ownership (size, groups and management regime) and between native forests and plantations.

Forest owners or managers can form group forest certification schemes that can be certified to this Standard. There is a guidance document supporting this application of forest management system certification.

The Standard relates to the management operations and activities within the defined forest area and in relation to product chain of custody whilst the forest products are under the control of the forest manager. Also, some off-site effects of forest management including impacts on stakeholders and adjacent environments are addressed under the Standard.

The Standard is intended to support and strengthen the regulatory framework within which forest managers operate. Compliance with legislation is a minimum requirement. The Standard sets a suite of requirements that support the achievement of sustainable forest management and which may involve going beyond a legal minimum in order to gain benefits from certification.

The Standard does not set site-specific requirements for particular forest types, communities or individual operations as they vary with bioregion and legal jurisdiction. These are addressed under each level of government legal requirements.

There are requirements for researching, monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of management in relation to the forest management performance and stakeholder engagement requirements, and review and continual improvement of the management system.

Certification to the Standard is voluntary and only awarded on the basis of an audit undertaken by an independent third party auditor from an accredited Certification Body.

Process of Development and Revision

This Standard has been prepared by the Standard Reference Committee formed for this purpose (SRC4708). The Standard Reference Committee is made up of representatives of a broad range of stakeholders covering environmental, economic, social and cultural interests. They have reviewed comments received during the two public comment phases and have prepared a standard that has been approved as an Australian Standard®.

The requirements of the Standard are derived from certain elements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) environmental management system (EMS) Standard AS/NZS ISO 14001:2004, the Montreal Process criteria and indicators for temperate and boreal forests, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes' (PEFC) meta standard for sustainable forest management (PEFC ST 1003:2010), JAS-ANZ Requirements for Bodies Certifying Forest Management Systems and the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council. The Standard is the forest management standard of the Australian Forest Certification Scheme.

These processes provide a basis for the development of the Standard that is compatible with other national and international schemes and standards that aim to support and achieve sustainable forest management.

Structure of the Standard

The Standard consists of:

- an introduction that describes the rationale for a forest management standard; the process for its development including its structure, content, and use; and
- normative requirements and definitions. The Standard is made up of criteria that specify the principles required for sustainable forest management and normative requirements that are audited to demonstrate compliance. Each criterion and requirement is named with a heading and number.

There are two informative supporting guidelines that accompany the Standard. There is a guideline for the application of the Standard and a guideline on the management of group forest certification schemes seeking certification to the Standard. The Guidelines are produced by Australian Forest Standard Limited in consultation with the Standard Reference Committee to assist in the implementation of the Australian Forest Certification Scheme. They are not subjected to the Australian Forestry Standard Ltd processes for creating Australian Standards.

The Standard

Scope

The Standard specifies environmental, economic, social and cultural criteria and system and performance requirements for the production of forest products and forest services that support good practices and continual improvement towards sustainable forest management.

The Standard can be applied to any defined forest area irrespective of scale or type of ownership, or whether native forest or plantation. A forest manager seeking independent, third-party certification, must demonstrate compliance with the requirements of each criterion.

The Standard is supported by a Guideline which provides advice to forest managers and auditors relating to its implementation. This guidance does not create additional normative elements. Rather, it is intended to add clarity through additional information and practical examples where appropriate.

The Standard includes some general requirements that do not relate to sustainable forest management criteria but are required to allow the certification of the forest manager and identify their responsibilities in the chain of custody for forest products obtained from the defined forest area.

Qualifications for Scale and Intensity

The requirements are qualified and are applicable only where relevant to the actual operations of the forest manager and to their defined forest area. The scale and nature of the defined forest area, the scale and nature of the enterprise and the scale and nature of the impacts on the identified aspects of forest management can be considered in the application of the requirements and some will not apply in all cases. Unless the contrary intention appears the singular includes the plural and vice versa.

Normative references

As the Standard has been prepared to include within its requirements all of the elements that must be considered by forest managers without the need for reference to other sources for required elements, there are no normative references.

Definitions

For the purpose of the Standard, the definitions below apply.

aspect	An element of an enterprise's activities that can interact with environmental, economic, social or cultural factors and that can affect the outcomes of forest management for the production of forest products and forest services. A significant aspect is one that has, or can have a significant impact.
assessment	Process of determining the status or condition of a forest value by a person with technical expertise before or after a forest management activity. It is also undertaken to determine the impact and effectiveness of the forest management activity.
audit	A systematic and documented verification process of objectively obtaining and evaluating evidence to determine whether an organization's management system conforms to forest management performance criteria and requirements of the Standard.
biodiversity	The diversity of plants, animals and other living organisms in all their forms and levels of organization, and includes the diversity of genes (or units of heredity), species and ecosystems. It also includes the composition, structure and function of ecosystems and the evolutionary and functional processes that link them.
bioregion	Large, geographically distinct areas of land with common characteristics such as geology, landform patterns, climate, ecological features and plant and animal communities. The bioregions for Australia are described in the latest version of the Interim Biogeographic Regionalization for Australia (IBRA).
carbon cycle	The biogeochemical cycle by which carbon is exchanged among the living, land and water components, and the atmosphere of the Earth. It describes the movement of carbon as it is recycled and reused throughout the biosphere.
chain of custody	The process of tracking wood and forest products originating in sustainably managed forests through all phases of ownership, transportation, and manufacturing from the defined forest area to the final product and delivery to the end consumer.

code of practice	A set of objectives, outcomes, goals or operating procedures designed to control, regulate or govern field activities.
continual improvement	Process of enhancing the management system to achieve improvements in overall performance in line with the enterprise's forest management policy through monitoring, evaluation and review.
crown cover	Area of ground covered by tree canopies, ignoring overlaps and gaps within individual canopies.
damage agent	A factor that can cause a reduction to forest values or impact on forest ecosystem health and vitality including endemic or exotic species, and physical processes like cyclones and bushfires.
defined forest area	An area of forest (including land and water) to which the requirements of the Standard are applied. It includes productive and non-productive forest areas, streamside reserves, conservation areas, and roads, etc. The defined forest area is described by survey plans, legal title(s), gazettal notices or GIS shape files, whether as freehold, joint venture, agreement, lease or crown land. The forest manager seeking certification to the Standard will need to demonstrate management control and legal rights over the forest operations in the defined forest area through appropriate agreements or contracts, which allows them to achieve all of the requirements. The forest manager is precluded from omitting elements of its operation which would otherwise be included in its defined forest area from the scope of its certification.
degraded forest	A forest that has reduced capacity to provide goods and services because it has lost structure, function, species composition and or productivity normally associated with the forest type on that site. A degraded forest requires silvicultural intervention to restore its productivity.
direct dealing	Conduct by the forest manager which has the effect of undermining, or is likely to undermine, the authority of the representative organization of workers which occurs when the forest manager by-passes the representative organization of workers in order to engage in discussions, bargaining or negotiations with represented forest workers in relation to matters that fall within the scope of collective bargaining without the participation of the representative organization of workers.