

AS4708 GN01–2013

**Sustainable Forest Management –
Guidance for the certification of forest
management
(Guidance Note 01 to AS4708–2013)**



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 - 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)
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Sustainable Forest Management – Guidance for the certification of forest management (Guidance Note 01 to AS4708–2013)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certification of Forest to AS4708.....	7
<i>1 Introduction.....</i>	<i>7</i>
1.1 What is a Standard	7
1.2 Mutual Recognition of Forest Certification Schemes	8
1.3 PEFC Endorsement.....	9
1.4 Application of Requirements	9
1.5 Use of Certification Marks	10
<i>2 Certification Framework.....</i>	<i>10</i>
2.1 Certification process	10
2.2 Certification bodies.....	11
2.3 Audit team	11
2.4 Undertaking the audit.....	11
2.5 Audit findings	12
2.6 Site sampling	12
2.7 Surveillance audits	12
2.8 Certification of Group Entities.....	13
2.9 Defined forest area.....	13
2.10 Statistical monitoring to protect environmental, economic, social and cultural values	13
2.11 Timeframe.....	14
2.12 Size of ownership	14
2.13 Scale of requirements.....	15
2.14 Structure of Guideline.....	15
Guidance for Forest Management Certification.....	17
<i>General Requirements</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>CRITERION 1 – Systematic Management</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>CRITERION 2 – Stakeholder Engagement.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>CRITERION 3 –Biodiversity Values.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>CRITERION 4 – Forest Productive Capacity.....</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>CRITERION 5 – Forest Ecosystem Health.....</i>	<i>73</i>
<i>CRITERION 6 –Soil and Water Resources.....</i>	<i>85</i>
<i>CRITERION 7 – Forest Carbon</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>CRITERION 8 – Cultural Values</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>CRITERION 9 – Social and Economic Benefits</i>	<i>104</i>

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Section A

Certification of Forest to AS4708

1 Introduction

The objective of the Australian Forestry Standard (AS4708-2013) is to provide forest managers with environmental, economic, social, and cultural criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests.

Buyers of timber, in common with buyers of other goods such as food and clothing, are interested in where the product they buy comes from, and how it has been produced. In order to satisfy this interest, many timber producers have introduced the use of systems of independent certification of forest management and various forms of labelling.

All those approaches for the provision of useful and reassuring information to consumers pre-suppose that there is a set of criteria that the producers and/or the forest products are required to meet in order to qualify for a certificate or a label.

In the case of timber, these criteria relate to the forest management practices employed in the growing and harvesting of the trees from which the wood products are sourced. Sometimes the processes that the timber has subsequently undergone will also be examined.

The principal reassurance that the supply chain and final consumers are seeking is that the forests supplying particular wood products are being well-managed. The quality of forest management is sometimes summarised by saying that a forest is (or is not) being sustainably managed.

The Australian Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (the Standard) seeks to distil from community values and the science of forest management those environmental, economic, social and cultural criteria that are considered to be most important for ensuring that a forest is well-managed. It is intended that the Standard be used by accredited and independent third party certification bodies and that it embodies forest management performance criteria which support continual improvement toward sustainable wood production in Australia. The Standard is based on internationally agreed criteria and reflects broad multi-stakeholder support. It is intended for voluntary application and will assist to promote access to both domestic and international markets for timber from certified forests. It is applicable to all forests managed for forest products and services, regardless of type and scale of ownership, or forest type, whether natural or planted forest.

1.1 What is a Standard

Standards are accepted specifications that define materials, methods, processes and practices that, when effectively implemented, ensure that consistent and acceptable levels of quality, performance, safety and reliability are achieved. Certification of forest management provides an assurance that the quality of the forest management practiced conforms to a specified standard. Standards are voluntary compliance documents that only become mandatory if called up through legislation or contractual obligation.

The Standard is a nationally endorsed Australian Standard developed within the recognised international frameworks of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators (1995) and the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) 14000 series of international, voluntary environmental management standards, but which takes account of local operating conditions.

The Standard was developed taking into account:

- the unique character of Australia's forest ecosystem and the particular requirements for sustainable management of Australia's forests, compared to the existing schemes for forests in other nations;
- Australia's international agreements and commitments, national and State legislative frameworks, national standards and principles, national and regional policy initiatives, and agreed codes of forest practices; and
- community expectations for sustainable forest management, addressing environmental, economic, social and cultural issues.

1.2 Mutual Recognition of Forest Certification Schemes

International recognition of national certification schemes is now common place, prompted by concerns regarding credibility and acceptance in the global economy, confusion amongst consumers, and a need to provide verification of responsible forest management to customers. Two principal international initiatives are the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Both these schemes offer an umbrella for the recognition of national and regional initiatives in certification of forest management that have been or are being developed in a number of countries. A large degree of commonality exists between the Standard and the performance requirements of these initiatives.

The Standard was developed cognisant of the criteria for international recognition, including those criteria of:

- being independent and impartial, including a clear separation between development of standards and accreditation of certification bodies;
- being accessible to all interested stakeholders with a balance of influences;
- incorporating performance levels at appropriate scales through an open process involving all interested stakeholders;
- being voluntary and including the broad participation of forest managers;
- accommodating all forest sizes and ownership structures;
- being scientifically-based and involving the scientific community in its development;
- combining with an internationally recognised environmental management system;
- having transparent and understandable process that is accessible to all interested parties;
- being easily understood and leading to the same results when used by different certification bodies;
- being regularly assessed and revised in the light of new knowledge as part of a continual improvement process;
- allowing bearable costs of certification and not making wood and non-wood products uneconomical in comparison to other materials;
- complying with government forest policy and regulations; and
- involving competent accreditation bodies and independent, accredited third party certification bodies.

1.3 PEFC Endorsement

The essential components of the Australian Forest Certification Scheme (AFCS) have been evaluated against the requirements of the PEFC Council's Standards, Technical Document and its Annexes for the purposes of seeking mutual recognition with other national schemes within the PEFC Council framework. In October 2003, AFSL submitted its application and scheme documentation for a conformance (evaluation) assessment by the PEFC Council. The application was successful and the endorsement has been maintained since this time.

This endorsement allows certified forests managers to be recognised under both schemes and for the use of both logos subject to the licence conditions imposed by both schemes.

1.4 Application of Requirements

Forest management certification can occur with different forest ownership and management arrangements, including:

- a single contiguous forest site, managed by one owner, manager, or agency;
- an aggregation of forest sites under a single land tenure arrangement that are managed by a single forest manager using a single overall management system or process;
- a group of forest sites under multiple land tenure arrangements that are managed by a single forest manager using a single overall management system or process; and
- a group of forest sites under multiple land tenure arrangements that are managed by multiple forest managers using a single overall management system or process controlled by a group manager;

Native forests and/or plantations (exotic and/or native species) may be covered by a single forest management certification.

The forest operations and activities to be included under a single certificate will depend on factors such as the nature, scale and intensity of activities. While small areas of forest may not include the full suite of forest values, the combination of forested areas in a region will provide the basis for sustainable forest management. Forest managers may in these situations rely on the broader environmental planning powers of Commonwealth, State and or Territory, and local or regional government to manage regional sustainability requirements.

Each of the forest management and public participation performance and management systems requirements are intended to be incorporated into forest management to the extent that the forest manager can control or influence their achievement within the defined forest area.

The forest management performance requirements need to be applied at appropriate ecological, temporal and spatial scales, recognising that different criteria apply at different scales that will affect the ability of the forest manager to control or influence their achievement. The requirements should also be interpreted and applied in the context of the relevant policy and legislative framework.

The management system requirements need to be applied in a manner commensurate with the size and nature of the forest manager's particular activities, and will be audited accordingly.

It is recognised that some requirements may be inappropriate for some forest managers in some situations. Some flexibility to allow local adaptation may, therefore, be acceptable. The certification body carrying out the audit will make a professional judgement as to the acceptability of the flexibility, and may consult appropriate specialists.

1.5 Use of Certification Marks

The use and application of certification marks is strictly controlled by the international certification community, local accreditation bodies, certification bodies and government trade practices and fair trading organisations.

The Standard sets performance requirements for sustainable forest management and nominates the specific activities that must be performed in order for that outcome to be achieved. Certification marks related to the Australian Forest Certification Scheme can be fixed to a product to indicate that the product originated from a forest certified to the Standard. The use of certification marks is controlled by licence agreements and is subject to the conditions of these agreements including the payment of fees.

2 Certification Framework

2.1 Certification process

The certification process involves determining whether forest management meets all the normative requirements of the Standard. The following are the main steps in the certification process.

Initial approach	When a forest manager makes an initial approach to an accredited certification body, the certification body will ask for some basic information about the forest management in order to provide a quote and formal proposal.
Scoping visit	Though not essential, a scoping visit is useful in identifying at an early stage any areas where forest management is unlikely to meet the requirements of the Standard so they can be addressed before the audit begins.
Formal application	When a forest manager is ready to proceed with certification, they complete a formal application form and agree a fee with the certification body.
Initial audit (Stage 1)	The certification body will undertake a review of key management system processes and a sample of field operations, and provide a report that assists the forest manager to identify and rectify any major areas of concern. NOTE: Forest managers undertaking certification may seek to substitute this stage by self or assisted completion of project checklists which cover the requirements of the Standard.

Certification audit (Stage 2)	The certification body evaluates the management of the forest against the requirements of the Standard.
Certification	If the evaluation is positive, a certificate of registration will be issued.
Surveillance audits	The certification body will check the certificate holder to ensure continued compliance with the Standard. They will check that any corrective actions the forest manager was asked to carry out have been completed.
Re-certification	The certification body will periodically need to re-evaluate the management of the forest against the requirements of the Standard.

2.2 Certification bodies

Certification bodies are specialist organisations that undertake independent, third-party assessments of conformance with established standards. In Australia, the Joint Accreditation System for Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ) accredits certification bodies to audit and certify to particular standards, to provide an assurance that certification bodies are both competent and independent in regard to their certification activities.

2.3 Audit team

Audits will be carried out by a team nominated by the certification body, comprising a lead auditor/team leader and other auditors, who together, have suitable experience and expertise to carry out the audit. The process of selecting the team will be compliant with JAS-ANZ Procedure Number 26, Requirements for Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of Forest Management Systems (Issue No 3 February 2008) or its replacement.

2.4 Undertaking the audit

The main step in the certification process is the audit. During an audit, it is the job of the audit team to assess whether or not the management of the forest complies with the requirements of the Standard. This is done by collecting and analysing *objective evidence* of compliance against each requirement. Evidence can be collected through:

- examination of documents, such as management plans, monitoring records or data from surveys;
- observations of actual on-the-ground practices and conditions in the forest; and
- interviews with staff, contractors and interested parties.

Information gathered from interviews should be verified by acquiring supporting information from independent sources. Non-verifiable statements should be identified as such.

The audit will be conducted according to JAS-ANZ Procedure Number 26, Requirements for Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of Forest Management Systems. (Issue No 3 February 2008) or its replacement.

2.5 Audit findings

The audit team should review all the audit evidence to determine whether forest management conforms to the requirements of the Standard. The audit team should ensure that any audit findings of non-conformity are well documented and supported by audit evidence.

There are two types of non-conformance:

- major non-conformances occur when forest management is failing to meet a relevant requirement; and
- minor non-conformances occur when forest management is partially failing to meet a requirement, or is where there is significant risk of a requirement not being met.

If minor non-conformances are found, the certification body may still award a certificate, provided that the forest manager identifies the root cause of the non-conformance and provides a plan acceptable to the certification body to meet the outstanding requirements within an agreed time frame. The certification body will verify that the plan is being/has been implemented and the requirements are being met during their regular surveillance visits.

If a major non-conformance is found, no certificate can be awarded until the requirement is met. If there is a substantial time-lag before the major non-conformance is addressed, a new audit may be required in order to achieve certification.

2.6 Site sampling

Some large forest managers may operate over a large number of forest sites. In some circumstances, the entire organisation can be certified on the basis of a sample of sites within the defined forest area.

The basis for selection of sites for sampling is that:

- at least part of the sample shall be random;
- the full range of sites shall be formed into subgroups of like-forest sites on the basis of ecosystem, size of the forest, and tenure;
- a sample of sites shall be taken from each of the subgroups, and
- the minimum number of sites audited shall be sufficient to provide an appropriate statistical level of significance/confidence.

2.7 Surveillance audits

After initial certification, a minimum of two surveillance audits of the certified forests and forest management system will be conducted over the 3 year certification cycle, preferably twelve months apart. This is a partial audit of the requirements, and is planned to cover all requirements over the three-yearly certification cycle. Some key requirements will be reviewed on an annual basis.

After three years, the certified forest manager must be reassessed.

2.8 Certification of Group Entities

The certification of Group Entities offer the opportunity for managers or owners of small forest areas to join together and gain benefits of increased scale, while either retaining or contracting out management control of their forest.

Certification requires that all group members commit themselves to complying with the requirements of the Standard. Group members must be organised under an entity that is capable of entering an agreement with a certification body on the group's behalf. The group must maintain a register of members with relevant data such as the area participating in the certification.

A separate guideline has been prepared for the operation of group certification entities.

2.9 Defined forest area

The forest manager will need to specify or define an area of forest (including land and water) to which the requirements of the Standard are applied. The defined forest area does not have to be a contiguous block or parcel of land. The forest manager will need to demonstrate management control over the defined forest area which allows them to achieve the requirements of this Standard.

The intent of the above guidance is to provide sufficient flexibility to allow forest managers to define the coverage of their Australian Forestry Standard certificate in a way which reflects their business needs and differing operational situations. Nevertheless, it is intended that this guidance should preclude an organisation omitting elements of its operation which should be properly included in its defined forest area from the scope of its certification.

In certain circumstances, two or more organisations may have forest management interests in the defined forest area. In some instances one organisation may have a custodial or ownership right whilst another organisation has a management or operational role. The organisation seeking certification against the Standard will need to demonstrate that it has management control over the forest operations through appropriate agreements or contracts, for the purpose of meeting the requirements of the Standard.

There are no performance requirements set in the Standard for the operation of nurseries and forest managers can exclude nursery sites from the defined forest area. Forest managers operating transport infrastructure outside the forest area can exclude such areas from the defined forest area. Areas such as log dumps, merchandising yards or ports can be excluded from the defined forest area except that the requirement 0.2 applies to the forest products that have come from the defined forest area.

2.10 Statistical monitoring to protect environmental, economic, social and cultural values

To protect the environment, society and the economy, we need monitoring systems that:

- (i) tell us there *is* a serious problem when one exists (thus avoiding over-confidence) and
- (ii) tell us there *is not* a serious problem when there isn't one (thus avoiding false alarms).

The first is crucial for detecting unacceptable impacts on environmental, economic, social and cultural values, the second for ensuring that the economy is not unnecessarily regulated.

Certification procedures generally implicitly assume that, if no problem is observed, none exists; that is, they ignore the possibility of over-confidence. Experience has demonstrated the difficulty of detecting unacceptable environmental impacts against a background of natural variation, measurement error, and incomplete knowledge of biological or ecological processes. Furthermore, monitoring procedures do not attempt to determine whether the intensity of monitoring is excessive, laying an unnecessary burden upon a proponent.

To remedy this situation, the Standard requires that monitoring protocols are scientifically rigorous and sufficiently powerful to detect failed performance requirements and in time to apply remedial actions. As a result, those who propose a monitoring system must demonstrate that the system would be reasonably certain of detecting unacceptable impacts for a defined set of indicators, at an agreed level of reliability and commensurate with the consequences of the risks.

This approach should give stakeholders confidence that the monitoring program will reliably report the actual sustainability of the operation seeking certification while minimizing the burden upon industry of unnecessary monitoring.

2.11 Timeframe

Special features of forest management are the long-term implications of management strategies and the lengthy process of the growth and development of a forest. Decisions made decades ago strongly influence the forests of today. Therefore, the requirements of the Standard oblige the forest owners, managers and certification bodies to assess forests on their present structure and layout and to consider the plans for forest management in the short, medium and long-term.

Where present structure and layout fail to meet the requirements of the Standard, forest managers will need to demonstrate through management planning documentation, design plans and on-going activities in the forest that they are taking active measures to achieve conformance with the requirements. They will also need to demonstrate that there is a timeframe for achieving full conformance based on sound management principles.

2.12 Size of ownership

The level and complexity of management needed to meet the requirements of the standard will depend on the scale, size, type and ownership of the forest being audited. In particular, small ownerships will not be expected to have the same level of documentation or management systems and procedures as larger ownerships. Certification bodies will take account of the size of the ownership and the scale and intensity of management and operations. The determining factor is the risk of the forest management system failing to effectively and consistently achieve the forest management performance requirements, at the existing levels of documentation or system development.

The complex nature of forests and forest management makes it impossible to provide an exact classification of scale. In particular, in some situations it will be the size of the forest and the extent of forest operations that is relevant (e.g. the scale and rate of harvesting) whereas in others it will be the size of the forest manager that will determine what is expected.

The following should be used as a guide:

Small - typically less than 1 000 hectares in size;

Medium - a forest area typically between 1 000–10 000 hectares in size; and

Large - a forest area greater than 10 000 hectares.

Some independent forest managers act for a number of clients each of whom owns a small forest. However, the total area managed by the independent manager is not small. For the purposes of certification in such instances, some of the forest management performance requirements may still be interpreted as for small ownerships, but others, particularly the management systems requirements, might be more appropriately interpreted as for medium and large.

2.13 Scale of requirements

Many of the requirements in the Standard, particularly those relating to forest operations and conservation, relate to proportions of the overall forest area. In applying such requirements, an appropriate scale must be decided which allows the forest manager to achieve the requirement in the way that is best suited to the nature of the forest.

This is particularly important for:

- large forest blocks, particularly single-species plantations, and
- holdings which are under common management but are physically fragmented (e.g. in estates with several blocks of forest).

In large blocks of forest, it is acceptable to meet some requirements by concentrating management in one area provided that:

- all plans for implementing a requirement unevenly within the block are based on good practice which aims to meet the purpose of the requirement; and
- wherever appropriate management is based on a design plan.

In holdings under a common management which are physically fragmented, it will normally be acceptable for the requirements to be met over the holding as a whole, not in each individual block provided that:

- plans for implementing requirements unevenly in different blocks are based on good practice which aims to meet the purpose of the requirement; and
- wherever appropriate management is based on a design plan.

Other cases may arise which are not covered by this guidance. Such cases will be assessed by the certification bodies on a case by case basis.

2.14 Structure of Guideline

This guideline does not create additional normative elements. Rather, it is intended to add clarity through additional information and practical examples where appropriate. The guidance is set out in two sections:

Guide to verification - suggests whether a document/systems review should be supported by field verification or interviews with staff or stakeholders. It also suggests the types of documents and processes that are likely to provide an appropriate basis for the evaluation of compliance with the requirements. The suggestions are not exclusive, exhaustive or mandatory - certification bodies will not always need to use all the suggested methods, and may seek verification in other ways. Lastly, this section suggests some sources of information for audit evidence such as records and documents within the scope of the audit.

Guide to implementation - aims to help both the forest manager and the certification body to understand how requirements should be applied in practice. More information is provided to elaborate some requirements, the meaning of certain terms or phrases is explained, and examples of appropriate action are given.

The guidance for each of these sections is provided in up to four ways. Guidance is provided firstly for all forest managers irrespective of scale or type of forest. Secondly, guidance may be provided that only applies to large or large and medium forest managers. Where guidance is specific for the type of forest these are identified with sub headings for Native Forest or Plantations.

This guideline uses the definitions of terms from the Standard.

This guideline applies to the application of the Standard in Australia. Other guidelines may be required for its application to other jurisdictions.

Section B

Guidance for Forest Management Certification

General Requirements

The intent of these general requirements is to ensure that the Standard provides a single source of all of the requirements for certification. These general requirements have been included to ensure consistency with the JAS-ANZ procedure setting out requirements for bodies certifying forest management systems and for compatibility with the Australian Standard for chain of custody for forest products (AS4707).

Requirement 0.1 Defined Forest Area

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that the forest manager has adequate control over the defined forest area to allow for demonstration of compliance with the requirements of the Standard and to ensure that the defined forest area is correctly described and any changes are accurately monitored.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That the appropriate agreements or contracts are in place to demonstrate control.

Maps of the defined forest area can be provided.

Large and Medium Forest Managers

A register of changes to the defined forest area exists.

Indicators

Land titles for private land are held by the enterprise.

Legislation, regulation and agreements are in place for public land.

Maps of the defined forest areas are available to the public by any means.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

The forest manager must have effective control of the defined forest area to demonstrate compliance with all of the requirements of the Standard. Control may be directly or indirectly through robust arrangements with third parties that can demonstrate compliance with the relevant requirements of the Standard.

These controls include the simple contracting of some operations such as harvesting to a third party. That party must be required by contracts to abide by the forest managers' systems for control of compliance with the requirements of the Standard.

Complex arrangements where public land is managed by a range of government departments responsible for parts of the entire spectrum of sustainable forest management must demonstrate overall compliance with a single certificate issued to the body deemed to have sufficient control to be the forest manager.

The forest manager is not allowed to identify operations or areas where the requirements of the Standard are not met and artificially exclude these from the defined forest area.

Sources of information

Legislation and the associated instruments.

Land titles.

Maps of the defined forest area.

JAS-ANZ Procedure Number 26, Requirements for Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of Forest Management Systems, Section J8.6.1.

Requirement 0.2 Chain of Custody

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that the forest manager has adequate control over the certified forest products and services to allow for demonstration of compliance with the requirements of the Standard and AS4707.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That the appropriate documents and procedures are in place to allow for the buyers of certified forest products to clearly demonstrate that they have been provided with products from a forest(s) within the scope of the forest management certificate.

That sufficient control over the forest products exists to minimise the risk that products from forests that are not covered by the certificate are mixed with the products from the certified forests either deliberately or accidentally.

Indicators

Documents clearly define the certification status of all forest products sold.

Processes are in place to reliably produce such documentation.

The risks of contamination with non certified products has been identified and appropriately treated.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

The forest manager must document that the products sold are from the certified defined forest area. Control must be demonstrated up to the point of sale or transfer. Forest managers that have facilities outside of the defined forest area such as log dumps or processing facilities must now have a management system to demonstrate the compliance with this requirement at these sites.

Sources of information

Chain of Custody Standard AS4707.

PEFC Chain of Custody Standard, PEFC ST 2002-2010.

CRITERION 1 – Systematic Management

The intent of this criterion is to ensure that forest management is carried out within a framework that enables the forest manager to address the organisation's management activities relevant to the forest management performance requirements, and is commensurate with the nature and scale of its business. It is designed to be compatible with the ISO International series of AS/NZS ISO 14001:2004 EMS standard. The management system framework is to be flexible and adaptable for forest managers at all scales, and to provide for continual improvement in management.

Requirement 1.1 Policy

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure a policy commitment to the elements of well managed forestry on the defined forest area.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That a forest management policy addressing forest management is in place, and is relevant to the nature, scale of ownership and impacts of the business.

That there is a commitment to compliance with relevant legislation and other requirements.

That there is ongoing development of awareness, personal commitment, motivation and leadership from top management or owner to systematic management and continual improvement in management performance.

That the forest manager demonstrates a long-term commitment to adhere to the requirements of the Standard.

Indicators

Forest management policy.

On-going programs or processes to communicate and reinforce commitment to the forest management policy and environmental awareness to employees/staff/contractors.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

The Forest Management Policy might include statements on:

- the core values of the manager in relation to pursuing sustainable forest management consistent with the Standard's requirements;
- an awareness of and commitment to continual improvement in performance outcomes;
- compliance with relevant regulations, laws and other criteria to which the manager subscribes, including payment of legally prescribed royalties, taxes, fees and charges and the requirements of codes of practice;

- respect for relevant international agreements which Australia has ratified and internationally agreed principles of sustainable forest management;
- minimising any negative impacts of forest management activities;
- key objectives and targets in relation to the criteria and requirements of the Standard;
- requirements of and communication with stakeholders;
- developing procedures to monitor and evaluate the performance (outcomes) of management and associated performance indicators; and
- education and training of staff and employees;

Large and Medium Forest Managers

- encouraging support for the forest manager's forest management system by suppliers and contractors.

Sources of information

Regulatory authorities, government agencies and associated web sites and informative material.

AS/NZS ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems – Requirements with guidance for use.

Industry associations, professional institutions and groups.

Commercial databases.

Requirement 1.2 Forest Management Plan

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure the development of a Forest Management Plan that establishes a strategic framework for the achievement of the requirements of the Standard and compliance with legal, and other requirements to which the organisation subscribes.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation

Basis of assessment

That the Forest Management Plan has been formulated and is in place.

That specific aspects and impacts of the organisation's operational activities have been identified, assessed and, where appropriate, mapped in relation to the requirements of the Standard.

That objectives, targets and procedures in relation to the forest management performance requirements are established for a range of the significant impacts. It is not required to have objectives and targets for all significant impacts consistent with ISO 14001. The significance of impacts is to be determined after the control measures have been assessed. Small growers can prepare objectives and targets for a limited number of the most significant impacts.

That legal and other requirements have been identified.

That monitoring processes are planned.

That stakeholder feedback has been sought and considered.

Indicators

Forest Management Plan.

List of identified environmental, economic, social and cultural values relevant to forest management performance criteria and requirements.

List of legal and other requirements.

Maps of specific aspects and impacts.

The protection and maintenance of significant environmental and other special values are considered in the Forest Management Plan.

Guidelines/procedures for controlling and preventing environmental impacts.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

It is recognised that the Forest Management Plan including objectives and targets, will vary to accommodate forest type, regional conditions, tenure of the defined forest area and management intent. It is not the intent of this requirement to determine the specific format or content of the Forest Management Plan, and the forest manager has scope to flexibly define the planning process and documents to suit his/her management processes, provided the basic forest management performance requirements of the standard are met. The Forest Management Plan can be made up of a series of documents that collectively form the Plan. For public forest management agencies, traditional or statutorily defined management planning processes may provide the appropriate framework. Both public and private forest managers may however seek to define more commercially relevant instruments which build on existing corporate, business and environmental planning processes.

A list, or register, of legal requirements pertaining to forest management activities would facilitate keeping track of compliance with such requirements. Legal requirements may include:

- those specific to forest operations;
- environmental laws;
- authorisation, licences and permits; and
- property rights and vestment of the resource.

Management plans or equivalent instruments might include maps, including relevant zoning, of the defined forest area, and environmental and other special values.

Requirement 1.3 Implementation

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure the forest manager can demonstrate capacity to successfully implement the management system.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation with verification in the field.

Basis of assessment

Those operational controls for achieving objectives and targets of management and meeting the requirements of the Standard are in place.

That management plans or equivalent instruments and procedures for forest management operations and activities are documented, kept up-to-date, and can be readily located.

That contingency/emergency plans are in place to manage unexpected situations.

That human and financial resources, specialised skills, and technology essential to implementation and control of the management system is appropriate to the type and scale of ownership.

That roles, responsibilities and authorities for staff and workers are defined.

That managers, supervisors and workers (including contractors and their workers and self-employed persons) understand their responsibilities and accountabilities and are sufficiently trained in their various tasks.

That an appropriate means for communication of relevant procedures and requirements to staff and workers, suppliers and contractors, and reporting of outcomes of forest management activities and incidents is established.

Indicators

Register/list of individual and group responsibilities and accountabilities.

Records of training of forest field workers in:

- environmental awareness
- management process skills
- proper application of operational procedures

Specific operational plans, procedures, controls and guidelines relating to the requirements of the Standard.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Appropriate actions might include:

- establishing a document control process that ensures that relevant documents are up-to-date, complete and appropriately authorised, can be readily located and periodically reviewed and revised as necessary, and that obsolete documents are promptly removed;
- preparing emergency and accident plans that include prevention and mitigation of environmental impacts;
- establishing and ensuring minimum competency standards for key jobs and tasks;
- training programs for employees/staff and workers, suppliers and contractors so that they are aware of their responsibility and accountability, are motivated in relation to meeting forest management performance requirements, that key operators and staff and workers within the organisation identify and understand the legislative and other requirements affecting their activities, and are competent for the tasks they are required to perform; and
- providing operational plans for individual operations that incorporate a map(s) and identify relevant operating conditions and controls for specified activities - in terms of operational plans, the harvest plan will play a key role.

Native Forest

Operational plans might include: on-site assessments of fauna, flora, water, soil and timber values for each area, coupe or compartment of forest proposed for harvesting. The harvest plan might also include the following parameters where relevant: silvicultural treatments, prescriptions for the protection of environmental values such as, flora, fauna and soil, and codes of practice covering licensing requirements, planning provisions for harvesting, tree marking and retention, wet weather controls, pollution controls, and protection of important natural and cultural heritage values.

Plantations

Operational plans might include the following parameters where relevant, silvicultural treatments, prescriptions for the protection of environmental values, codes of practice covering licensing requirements, planning provisions for harvesting, wet weather controls, pollution controls, and protection of important natural and cultural heritage values.

Requirement 1.4 Monitoring and Corrective Actions

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to identify areas and causes of non-conformances, implement remedial actions and implement or modify controls to avoid repetition of the non-conformance to support continual improvement in forest management.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation with verification in the field.

Basis of assessment

That appropriate auditing, monitoring and reporting procedures are in place for verifying legal compliance and conformance with management plans or equivalent instruments and procedures.

That compliance/conformance against relevant environmental law, regulation and established performance indicators can be demonstrated, and/or that appropriate and effective corrective action can be demonstrated in response to identified non-conformance.

That monitoring of the significant/key aspects of the forest resource and forest management activities is periodically performed.

That monitoring procedures allow for comparison of change over time.

That legible, identifiable and traceable records of monitoring and evaluation of management are maintained.

Large and Medium Forest Managers

That long-term (performance-based) monitoring of forest management outcomes is undertaken for relevant requirements so that adverse impacts that may arise can be detected and to ensure that procedures and strategies are appropriate.

That reliability/error rate is known (where it can be established statistically).

Indicators

Records of monitoring outcomes.

Documentation of audits, monitoring and evaluation of the key impacts of the organisation's activities.

Documentation of changes in procedures resulting from corrective and preventative action.

Communications and reports of the results of monitoring to those within the organisation who are responsible for forest management performance.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Measuring, monitoring, evaluating, and maintaining appropriate records are key activities of management to ensure that management is performing in accordance with the stated forest management arrangements and performance requirements. Maintaining records of monitoring and evaluation, and subsequent reporting on performance of management, its achievements, and progress towards meeting the forest management performance requirements are key elements of the management system for achieving continual improvement.

Routine monitoring may detect compliance failures that are due to chance or that are not symptomatic of poor practice. Conversely, they may, by chance, fail to detect important breaches of practice. The Standard recognises the need to ensure that the reliability with

which breaches of compliance will be detected is known and is appropriate to the scale and intensity of operations.

The Standard utilises the approach of setting minimum performance thresholds in key areas but builds on this approach by establishing a framework for continual improvement which incorporates a process within which trends in monitoring data trigger a range of responses appropriate for the importance of the change. For example, when unwanted trends in monitoring data are identified (e.g. a substantial decline, a consistent decline, or a run of results outside a control limit), it will trigger an investigation to identify the cause of the trend and specify appropriate remedial action, if any.

Under this approach the discovery of a trend of concern would not in itself represent a breach of sustainable practices. Rather, certification bodies should establish that:

- assessment results are regularly plotted; and
- trends in the data are noted and appropriate action taken.

Setting performance indicators of forest management to be monitored will allow the outcomes of forest management to be assessed for their effectiveness.

Routine monitoring may detect compliance failures that are due to chance or are not symptomatic of poor practice or they may, by chance, fail to detect important breaches of practice. The Standard recognises the need to ensure that the reliability with which breaches of compliance will be detected is known and is appropriate to the scale and intensity of operations.

This approach to monitoring aims to provide a system that is reasonably certain of detecting important changes, if they exist, and avoid the over confidence of monitoring systems that assume if no problem is detected – none exists. Furthermore, it provides a basis for determining whether monitoring effort is excessive in order to minimise unnecessary monitoring (and thereby costs).

Large and Medium Forest Managers

In recognition of the crucial role that the environment plays in forest management activities, the forest manager may report to stakeholders on performance in relation to designated forest management requirements. This provides a means of demonstrating corporate responsibility to the broader community.

Certification bodies should establish that reliability/error rates are known (in circumstances in which they can be established statistically).

A large number of the specific Standard requirements do not lend themselves to statistically reliable monitoring (including many of the requirements under Criteria 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9). Statistical analysis should be restricted to situations in which this approach is possible, meaningful and practical.

Appropriate actions might include:

- developing strategies for routine monitoring to build on research findings (for example intensive research might be used to establish the effectiveness of prescriptions in

moderating particular impacts, strategic monitoring in a subset of managed areas could then be used to support extrapolations of research findings about moderating impacts to the defined forest area); and

- program of continual improvement.

There are two key aspects to implementing monitoring, measuring and evaluation processes:

1. Routine monitoring of compliance of plans and management practices with legal requirements to ensure that planning and management practices are in accordance with planned arrangements and support the achievement of forest management performance criteria. Appropriate actions might include:

- monitoring compliance with legislation and other requirements to which the organisation subscribes;
- evaluation of audit reports of compliance or non-compliance with plans and operational procedures;
- identifying and correcting deficiencies in forest management practices where non-compliance is identified; and
- maintaining appropriate monitoring, evaluation and audit records

2. Routine monitoring of the performance and outcomes of forest management in relation to forest management requirements that is objective, verifiable and reproducible, and that is commensurate with the size and nature of the organisation's activities.

This approach provides the forest manager with a monitoring “tool” to identify deficiencies in forest management performance at an early stage, and fix any problems before they become entrenched or irreversible, thus reducing potential economic and environmental costs.

Appropriate actions might include:

- routine monitoring of forest management (performance) outcomes using a systematic approach including stakeholder participation where appropriate;
- regularly recording and visually plotting assessment results as trends of change to provide a baseline of typical patterns;
- setting agreed forest management performance indicators and measures, “management control limits or thresholds” and “acceptable patterns” where the reliability/error rate can be established statistically to determine whether performance of management is “within” or “outside” these, as indicated by the monitored trends of change in a designated value;
- significant changes in the nature or condition of a value (that is outside the agreed management control limits) are noted and root causes investigated and identified; and
- remedial management actions are taken when a significant or “abnormal” adverse trend is detected, or, management can be enhanced when a trend indicates improvement in a particular value.

Requirement 1.5 Review

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure the continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the forest management system and its procedures and to ensure continual improvement in management performance and forest management outcomes by establishing and maintaining appropriate mechanisms for evaluation and review.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation

Basis of assessment

That the results of audits of the management system and monitoring of forest operations and other information are periodically evaluated and reviewed.

That the components of the management system, including monitoring and feedback mechanisms for continual improvement, are periodically evaluated and reviewed.

That changes to the management system are implemented on the basis of these reviews, as well as changing circumstances including changing legal requirements, lessons learnt from operational experience, market preferences, and the views of stakeholders.

Whilst the main focus of this requirement is to ensure continual improvement in the forest management system, it must be recognised that the status quo on certain forest management elements may be current best practice or a reasonable outcome.

Indicators

Records of review and evaluations.

Records of changed practices and management system elements.

Records of investment in research and development and technology transfer.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Management review may address the possible need for changes to policy, management objectives and targets, management plans or equivalent instruments and operational procedures, monitoring and evaluation, and other elements of the management system to meet changing circumstances and the commitment to continual improvement.

As part of the review process, appropriate actions might include:

- reviewing changes in legal requirements, advances in scientific research and technology, lessons learnt from operational experience, market preferences, and changes in the expectations and views of stakeholders;
- an evaluation of management system components including review procedures and feedback mechanisms for continual improvement;
- a review of relevant research and development (R&D); and

- implementation of changes to the system as required.

Such review would occur at intervals appropriate to the scale and extent of the defined forest area and level of activity in that area. Review of the management system during periods where there were no forest operations underway or planned would only be general in nature.

Where the Forest Management Plan is a composite of plans and any of the component plans are prepared by other organisations the reviews should be undertaken by that organisation. The forest manager will only be required to undertake reviews of other organisation's plans where it is appropriate and it is clear that reviews have not been undertaken and there are issues of currency or accuracy evident that are able to be addressed.

Requirement 1.6 Research

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure that new knowledge about the forests within the defined forest area and forest management activities are obtained and used by the forest manager.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation

Basis of assessment

That the results of research and new other information are periodically evaluated and reviewed.

That change to the management system is implemented on the basis of advances in scientific research and technology.

That the forest manager is making commitments to research by direct action or association.

Indicators

Records of research undertaken.

Records of changed practices and management system elements.

Records of investment in research and development and technology transfer either directly or through contributions to research and development organisations such as Forest and Wood Products Australia.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Field trials and experimental operations can be conducted directly or in association with grower organisations.

An active investment in relevant R&D, whether directly or in co-operation and support for industry R&D Corporations and Co-operative Research Centres, would demonstrate pro-activity contributing to research.

CRITERION 2 – Stakeholder Engagement

The intent of the requirements under this criterion is to facilitate proactive and cooperative engagement to support the implementation of this Standard by a local, informed and active stakeholder base.

Requirement 2.1 Identify stakeholders

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to demonstrate that the forest manager knows who the relevant stakeholders are.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That a systematic and documented basis for identifying stakeholders has been implemented.

That a list of relevant stakeholders and contact information is established and maintained.

That no systematic or significant omissions are identified.

Indicators

List of stakeholders identified.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Identification of stakeholders should aim to ensure that participating neighbours and stakeholders are representative of a wide range of interested parties. It is important to consider the broader public interest where decisions are likely to be seen as having regional significance.

Relevant stakeholders may include:

- neighbours and local residents that may be impacted directly by forestry operations;
- local government bodies and regulatory authorities; and
- suppliers and customers.

Large and Medium Forest Managers

Relevant stakeholders may also include:

- community and forest user groups and organisations with an environment/conservation, economic, social or heritage interests in the defined forest area;
- media;
- unions and employees;
- Indigenous groups or communities; and
- regional and local tourism associations.

The methods used to identify possible stakeholders will vary, depending on the resources and time available to the forest manager and the types and location of the potential stakeholders and a number of the methods could be used together.

Sources of Information

Sources of information that can be used to identify stakeholders include:

- former ATSIC Regional Councils, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and local Indigenous communities;
- local government authorities;
- State and Territory Government agencies responsible for forestry, lands and natural resources;
- media reports;
- correspondence;
- local industry or commerce groups;
- relevant local individuals (neighbouring farms and residents); and
- local and regional community groups, environment and conservation groups and natural interest groups.

Requirement 2.2 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to ensure the forest manager has a documented process for engagement with stakeholders.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That the forest manager has documented processes for engagement with stakeholders.

That processes for stakeholder interaction and feedback are considered in the plan.

That the plan includes a dispute resolution process.

The plan includes the communications expected with stakeholders and the general public including through the release of information about the defined forest area and its management.

Indicators

A Stakeholder Engagement Plan exists.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

The stakeholder engagement planning process may be integrated with other planning processes.

It is recognised that the scale of the forest manager will determine the complexity and scope of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Forest managers operating on private property will have simpler Stakeholder Engagement Plans than those operating on public land.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan may include a Good Neighbour Charter.

Disputes can result in delays and conflict. The resolution of disputes contributes to ensuring both stakeholders' and the forest manager's needs are addressed and satisfied to some mutually agreeable extent. Conflict resolution can often be difficult to achieve and in some instances, may not satisfy all parties. However, genuine attempts to resolve conflicts, is an essential part of any forest management system.

Procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes might cover:

- identification and recording of complaints and disputes received (e.g. a complaints register);
- a mechanism for substantiation of complaints and disputes and identification of immediate and longer-term corrective and preventative actions;
- documentation of agreements reached to resolve disputes; and
- documentation of corrective and preventative actions taken and assessment of their effectiveness.

The following guidelines may be used in resolving conflicts:

- make sure both parties are clear about the issue/s that are causing the conflict;
- try and understand the other parties' point of view;
- explain your point of view and provide all the information behind your standpoint;
- try and identify areas where either party may be prepared to compromise; and
- consider using a mediator both parties believe to be neutral.

Requirement 2.3 Stakeholder Participation

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to provide opportunities for stakeholders to meaningfully participate in the forest management planning process and to influence its outcomes. However, this does not mean that decision-making should rest with stakeholders. Rather, the requirement provides a mechanism for the forest manager to demonstrate that public input is taken seriously by being responsive to and respectful of this input.

The rights of private ownership of land and other property rights should be recognised in the application of this requirement.

In the context of this requirement, it is noted that the extent of relevant stakeholder interests in publicly owned forest will be significantly broader than will be the case for privately owned forest.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation and interviews with stakeholders.

Basis of assessment

That communication with stakeholders can be demonstrated.

Large and Medium Forest Managers

That relevant stakeholders have been invited to participate in the development of the Forest Management Plan and reasonable efforts have been made to encourage their participation.

That stakeholders have access to relevant background information to support and encourage their interest in participating in the development of the management plan or equivalent instruments.

That stakeholder participation processes have clearly defined operating rules (including scope of activities; goals; timelines; selection criteria for participants (where necessary); roles, responsibilities and obligations of participants; decision making methods; information access; and dispute resolution) appropriate to the scale and tenure of the defined forest area and that participants have an opportunity to influence the process's operating rules.

That stakeholder participation processes make allowances for cultural differences of participants.

That grievances and disputes have been addressed appropriately.

Indicators

List of stakeholders contacted, including those that choose not to participate.

Record of communication to and from stakeholders regarding participation in the forest management planning process, including information provided to stakeholders.

Record of input from stakeholders to the management planning process and the forest manager's consideration and response to stakeholder input, including any processes to resolve disputes.

Level of stakeholder and community support for forest management.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

It is recognised that stakeholder participation is a multi-lateral process that may operate on different scales and time periods for different dimensions of the forest management planning process. The forest manager has flexibility to define appropriate methodologies which are consistent with its particular operating environment. This might build on existing stakeholder participation processes addressing any gaps as necessary. Stakeholder input could include work carried out by other bodies under legislative or regulatory requirements such as planning approvals under local government processes or regional planning processes.

Relevant background information to support and encourage stakeholder participation in developing forest management planning might include provision of relevant information about the defined forest area /forest, its values and proposed management.

It is recognised that forest managers cannot ensure the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the forest management planning process. Forest managers will need to document that they have made diligent efforts to engage stakeholders in an appropriate way.

It is also recognised that planning processes can raise issues and concerns outside the scope of the forest managers' responsibility or control. Clear articulation of the operating rules, particularly regarding the scope of the forest management planning process, will assist in demonstrating appropriate management of this issue.

Attempts made to identify and communicate with stakeholders, as well as actual communication should be documented and the documents retained to provide evidence of the forest manager's efforts to identify relevant stakeholders. The thoroughness of this process will not only help protect the interest of stakeholders, but assist in development of the forest management processes.

Methods might include:

- letter drops (e.g. to surrounding properties);
- formal documented communications and enquiries to boards, departments and groups;
- direct contact via the telephone;
- advertisements in local, regional and national newspapers; and
- face-to-face communication with potential stakeholders or persons that may have additional information.

Requirement 2.4 Stakeholders Affected by Forest Operations

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is for forest managers to be good neighbours by providing relevant information and notification of operational activities to adjacent landholders, regular users of the defined forest area and local communities, and by seeking outcomes that minimise adverse impacts.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation and interviews with neighbours, regular users and local communities.

Basis of assessment

That the forest manager has communicated and consulted with affected stakeholders on forest management operations that may have an impact on adjoining lands.

That the forest manager has communication material that explains the benefits of sustainable forest management.

Indicators

Record of communication/consultation with neighbours and regular users.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Planning to assess the possible impact of forest operations on immediate neighbours, their property and assets, and regular users access for legal and traditional uses, is good practice. Once the impacts are identified, appropriate operational controls can be developed to manage the identified risks.

Forest management operations, that could adversely impact on neighbours and regular users, include:

- fire management, including regeneration and hazard reduction burning (e.g. smoke haze and fence damage);
- application of pesticides (e.g. spray drift and water quality);
- pest animal control including baiting (e.g. non-target species);
- harvesting and associated operations (e.g. visual amenity, noise and water quality); and
- road and other infrastructure construction (e.g. dust and noise).

Notifying neighbours and regular users of proposed operations provides a high level of transparency through which stakeholders can gain confidence in the forest manager, leading to an on-going working relationship. Even if the operations are unlikely to cause an unacceptable impact, it is good practice to keep neighbours and regular users informed prior to conducting major activities in the area. It is also necessary for forest managers to notify the appropriate regulatory authorities of any operations that require their prior notification or approval.

Communication with immediate neighbours and regular users can be achieved through:

- letter drops;
- the telephone;
- permanent or temporary signs located on the defined forest area boundaries;
- advertisements in local, regional and national media;
- face-to-face communication or meetings; and
- consultation with forest user groups, including Indigenous groups.

Requirement 2.5 Records

GUIDE TO VERIFICATION

The intent of this requirement is to encourage forest managers to record communications with stakeholders so as to add to the stakeholder list and provide evidence that can be used to improve stakeholder engagement.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will provide guidance on the types of communications to be recorded and the process to be used. Routine and low value communications can be treated differently to critical communications.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation and interviews with complainants.

Basis of assessment

That every reasonable effort is taken to record stakeholder communications.

Indicators

Record of communication/consultation relating to the identification and handling of disputes and grievances.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

Stakeholders will expect that their communications will be adequately treated and considered. By maintaining a recording process forest managers will be able to demonstrate and acknowledge the receipt of communications. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will have a risk assessment process to ensure that the cost of recording all communications can be balanced with the cost of missing details on vital communications.

Requirement 2.6 Public Disclosures**GUIDE TO VERIFICATION**

The intent of this requirement is to encourage forest managers to communicate with stakeholders about the Forest Management Plan and their compliance with the Standard.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will identify what other information the forest manager will make available publicly.

Type of requirement

Document-based evaluation.

Basis of assessment

That summaries of the Forest Management Plan and audit reports are available publicly.

That other public disclosures identified in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan are made.

Indicators

Records of disclosures are available.

Websites contain the required documents for review and/or download.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION

A forest manager who makes the entire Forest Management Plan available to the public is deemed to have satisfied the requirement to provide a summary.