

Important Things to Consider Prior to Conducting Your Harvest

The following three programs provide certification that management and harvest of the forest is done in a sustainable fashion. There are many reasons you may wish to consider participation in one or all three of the certifications. You may be concerned for the environment. Also, if your plan calls for a harvest, some timber processing facilities may prefer timber harvested under one or all three of the systems. There may also be a premium paid for timber harvested in a certified sustainable manner, although such a premium may or may not be available depending on the processor.

We are providing this document so that you may make informed choices regarding sustainable management and harvest of your land. If you are scheduled for a harvest, it is important to discuss the harvest with your forest management plan writer. When you speak with them, also ask about the certification options and whether participation in any or all three of the options is appropriate for you and your land.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified Timber

FSC is a member driven council that has established international standards for the management and harvest of timber and the chain of custody of the harvested timber from the land to the processing facility to creation of various wood products. As a “low intensity” and/or small forest (<2000 acres) landowner, you have the potential to be part of a FSC accredited landowner group, which allows multiple landowners to be certified under one certificate rather than be individually certified. While individual certification can be very cost-prohibitive, group certification is set up in a way that it can be relatively inexpensive or even free to individual landowners. The FSC compliant group standards (which are audited annually by an independent FSC certified accredited auditing body) certifies your forestland based on your management plan and associated practices in the plan. FSC requires that all links in the chain of custody be FSC Certified from the purchasers of your stumpage to the network of FSC Certified companies on its way to a finished product. The following web site will provide you additional information about FSC Certification.

<https://us.fsc.org/en-us/certification>

Michigan Contact: Currently, there is no FSC program for family forest owners in Michigan.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

SFI is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable forest management, primarily in North America and is also accepted globally. This option contains a Forest Management Standard, a Fiber Sourcing Standard (recycled content and certified forest and a Chain-of-Custody Standard). SFI places a Certified Sourcing label and a Chain-of-Custody label. To become Certified under the SFI program an application is submitted for participation in SFI. SFI contracts an accredited certification body to complete an on-site audit to verify the SFI forest management standard has been met.

<http://www.sfiprogram.org/>

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American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

ATFS is a program that certifies that your forest management practices are conducted in a sustainable manner based on a forest management plan that meets the standards established by ATFS. A management plan that addresses air, water, soil quality, wildlife, special sites, invasive species and pest management as well as other forest practices consistent with the ATFS standards are an important part of the program. A landowner contacts ATFS and if the site meets the eligibility requirements an ATFS trained inspecting forester meets with the landowner on site and verifies the standards are being met.

<https://www.treefarmssystem.org/>

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