

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and branches. The trees are tall and thin, with green foliage. A large green circle is overlaid on the upper half of the image, containing white text.

Sustainable Forest Alliance Inc.

**Beneficial Management
Practices FSC guidelines**

Sustainable Forest Alliance Beneficial Management Practices FSC guidelines

Date: April 21st, 2026

Prepared and Adopted by the Sustainable Forest Alliance (SFA) based on Nova Scotia Association for Woodland Certification (NSAWC) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Principles

The SFA is committed to management by its certified group members to the Forest Stewardship Council Principles and Criteria (FSC P&C). The following Standard Operating Procedures are guidelines of our management approach which comply with the spirit and intent of the Forest Stewardship Council Principles and Criteria.

About the organization

The Sustainable Forest Alliance Inc. (SFA) is a non-profit organization in Prince Edward Island dedicated to the stewardship of the Island's private forests. We are committed to the sustainability of forests and the forestry sector on Prince Edward Island.

The SFA is a service-oriented organization with a mission of creating markets and energy opportunities, providing resources, information and support to member forest-owners to promote the implementation of sustainable forest management, FSC certification and thereby improve the social, environmental and economic potential of members' economic value for their woodlots.

Ecosystem based forest management standard

This SFA FSC Manual will follow all policies from the Ecosystem based forest management standards administered by the Forest Enhancement Program, with the additions herein.

Beneficial Management Practices

The Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) are organized according to FSC Principles. Performance and related documentation must provide evidence of adherence to BMPs, as auditors will look for this evidence of compliance. BMPs are dependent on each other and no practice stand alone without considering all others that are applicable. All must be considered in operational planning and implementation.

For example, high conservation value forests (HCVF) must be identified and addressed in all phases of forest management. Water quality must be a priority whenever watercourses are present. This manual includes BMPs for Species at Risk (SAR) bird and SAR lichen habitat, bat habitats, vernal pools, and raptor nests.

(See Appendix 1 for links to original publications on integrated BMPs.)

Principle 1: Compliance with Laws and FSC Principles

All SFA members within the certified group will comply with local, provincial, and federal forestry, wildlife, water quality and labor laws as well as adhere to identified or applicable international treaties.

1. The SFA will have access to a list of all such regulations through government websites.
2. Landowners will undergo inspections and a certification assessment as proof of commitment and compliance with the FSC plans created through the SFA.
3. The SFA will issue non-conformance corrective action requests to address identified deficiencies, up to and including removal from certified pool.

Principle 2: Tenure & Use Rights & Responsibilities

The SFA will be notified if any member in the certified pool is involved in any land claim dispute. The Federal and provincial authorities will deal with comprehensive land claims or treaty negotiations.

1. The members of the certified pool must demonstrate legal documentation of land title and rights of ways.
2. Landowners will respect traditional or other established use rights of the land.
3. Landowners may protect their lands from unauthorized use with gates, security patrols or other suitable means of monitoring.

PRINCIPLE 3: Indigenous Peoples' Rights

1. If areas of archeological significance are identified on a woodlot, experts must be contacted to conduct archeological surveys and if verified sites must be recorded and protected by machine exclusion zones (MEZ).
2. Any areas of cultural significance brought to the attention of the SFA or its members and will be documented along with how it is being addressed
3. The SFA and its members will all laws and treaties regarding rights and protections of indigenous peoples.

PRINCIPLE 4: Community Relations and Workers Rights

1. Consider potential impacts on neighbors and the public when planning forest management activities.
2. Workers are free to collectively bargain with their employers.
3. Favor local contractors for logging and planting on condition of performance and cost.
4. Favor local sawmills when selling logs on condition of performance and prices.
5. Follow all laws related to employment and safety.
 - Contractors are required to follow all regulations and rules in regard to safety when working on woodlots.
 - Woodlot owners who do their own work or hire individuals to work on their woodlots are required to have the following personal protective equipment
 - CSA-Approved hard hat
 - Hearing protectors
 - Face screen and or safety glasses or goggles.
 - Cutting pants (if using a power saw)
 - CSA Grade 1 boots (chain saw boots recommended if using power saw)
 - A pressure bandage (first aid kit recommended)
6. A work alone policy with appropriate communications and emergency response plan must be in place for any individual, either employed or self-employed, working alone within the scope of the forest management plan.
7. Individuals have the right to refuse unsafe work.

PRINCIPLE 5: Benefits from the Forest

1. Recognize that long-term forest stewardship is closely linked to social, environmental and economic viability.
2. Be prudent in determining harvest schedules and setting resource goals to optimize economic value.
3. Avoid forest management practices that could undermine the economic feasibility of the operation.
4. Maintain sustainable yield: The forest inventory is "principal" and the growth is "interest" earned on the principal. A sustainable forest allows the perpetual harvest of interest without depleting the principal.
5. Forest products will be handled to minimize losses due to mechanical damage, insects, or other losses.
6. To improve economic viability in the long term, the woodlot owner is encouraged to use fuel efficient machinery. New machinery should be considered for fuel efficiency as well as its environmental impact on the woodlot.

PRINCIPLE 6: Environmental Values and Impact

1. Preplanning and Assessment

- a. Assess the potential for environmental impacts before harvesting. (Ex-Rutting)
- b. Design measures to mitigate potential environmental impacts.
- c. Preplan and mark in the field the harvesting and road-building layout.
- d. Take into consideration the cumulative impacts of the proposed management activities.

2. Watercourses

- a. Follow all local and federal law and buffer zone regulations laid out in the management plan boundaries and on government websites.

3. Silviculture

- a. Maintain a variety of ages and size classes and promote structural diversity.
- b. Where possible restore older age classes and portions of forest to late successional communities. (Multi-storied canopy, large diameter trees and at least 60% canopy cover)
- c. Based on the stand's inherent capability, achieve a maximum annual growth rate in stands where the goal is timber production.
- d. Achieve maximum stocking through inter-planting of diverse species or natural seeding.
- e. Attempt to maintain tree species diversity by encouraging increase representation of forests which better characterize the Acadian forest region.

4. Forest Roads and landings

- a. Road construction and upgrades will be identified on the Management plan if known at the time of plan construction.
- b. The access plan must consider all identified forest values.
- c. Landings must not be constructed in riparian zones or buffer areas.
- d. Ensure new road access is legal. Determine if permission is needed from neighbors.
- e. Flag new roads to ensure access plan is followed.
- f. Roads shall be built so as not to impede natural drainage.
- g. Design roads and landings to accommodate safe processing of products, safe piling, and safe movement and of workers and equipment.
- h. Significant damage to roads or landings will be repaired.
- i. Plan forest road construction to avoid vernal pools and their associated upland habitats.
- j. Plan road construction to coincide with favorable weather conditions.

5. Harvesting Methods

- a. Use methods that best protect soil and avoid activities that will alter wetland hydrology.
- b. Maintain maximum rutting averages less than 15cm deep over any 2m length. Site remediation is required above this threshold.
- c. Utilize directional felling to minimize damage to remaining stand.
- d. Use existing roads, landings, and trails, and do not move soil unnecessarily.
- e. Maintain erosion control measures, road grades should not exceed 10%, except over short distances, and then must not exceed 12%.
- f. Avoid Road building activities within wetlands and wet forest sites.
- g. Improve Road drainage and repair erosion problems.
- h. Flag constructed skid trails, landings, and roads.
- i. Where possible, crush and spread landing slash on adjacent skid trails and where other erosion control measures are inadequate and if practical, leave treetops and limbs on site to enhance woody debris and forest floor structure.
- j. In partial harvesting treatments, ensure practices do not exceed a maximum threshold of 15% damage to residual stems.
- k. Plan block and strip harvests and pesticide applications to avoid vernal pools and their associated upland habitats.
- l. Limit harvesting activity near Vernal pools to retain 75% of the canopy within 30m and avoid heavy machinery where possible in this zone. Retain 50% of the canopy out to 100m. Strive to limit harvesting/pesticide activity in these zones to winter.
- m. Residual trees must have a minimum of 30% live crown and be of good health and form

6. Wildlife and Species at Risk

- a. Avoid tree harvesting operations within 100 meters of a hawk or an owl nest while it is occupied. Only partial cutting to a maximum of 50% should take place within a further 50 meters of a nest which is being used year after year.
- b. Retain at least six to eight snag/cavity trees per hectare for nest/den recruitment (Where applicable without danger to infrastructure. Girdle, if necessary, give preference to Poplar.)
- c. Retain a minimum of 15 trees per hectare (greater than or equal to 18 cm diameter at breast height), with preference given to trees greater than or equal to 24 cm.
- d. Prohibit any harvesting activity mid-May to mid July, unless work is started by or before mid-May (For example, work should not be initiated in a fresh patch of forest in mid-June)
- e. Retain a MEZ buffer of 20m If any nests are observed. For example, if a female songbird is flushed from the ground within 1 to 2 meters of a forestry operator.
- f. Retain a MEZ buffer at least 30m around any wetland or watercourse. Increase to 50 m around known SAR breeding or nesting site (for bats and birds).
- g. Prohibit any harvesting activity within a 200m buffer of a designated occurrence of threatened lichen and 100m for lichen species of special concern.

- h. The woodlot owner will make the Program Forester aware of any provincially rare species and species at risk.
- i. The Program Forester will search the provincial significant habitat and wetlands datasets through the most up to date GIS layer data, present in the plan templates.
- J. The Forest Manager will observe and be aware of any species at risk or provincially rare species while collecting stand data.
- K. To address any rare or species at risk confirmed on the site, the forest manager and landowner will follow all appropriate laws and BMPs established in this document and the Eco-system Services Manual.
- L. If possible, limit beaver trapping where they are not damaging roads or high value timber as they create irregular wet habitats.

7. Chemical Use

- a. Use chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers, other) only when justified. Examine alternatives to pesticide use.
- b. An appropriate registered and classified pesticide may only be used in crisis situations. An example is severe insect infestation or control of invasive species.
- c. Implement an integrated pest management strategy.
- d. Only pesticides registered by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency under the federal Pest Control Products Act and approved for use under the provincial Pesticide Control Act by the Department of Environment and Land may be used.

8. Integrated Pest Management

- a. The IPM plan is specific to each plan as identified through the threat of pests to the forest during the development of the management plan. A general IPM strategy is listed for the woodlot as well as an assessment for pest and severity of risk (low, medium, high).
- b. The treatment recommendations default to non-chemical approaches (harvesting, species selection through silviculture, preventative measures through existing forestry techniques).
- c. Chemical alternatives are considered only when all other options have been eliminated.

PRINCIPLE 7: Management Plan

- 1. Covered under management plan template created and administered through the SFA.

PRINCIPLE 8: Monitoring and Assessment

1. Chain of Custody (COC)

- a. Products shipped to the mill must be shipped under the appropriate certified PID#
- b. On December 31st of each year, if timber has been harvested the Harvest Volume Report with PIDs/treatments, must be filled out and sent to the group manager.
- c. Follow all requirements of purchaser requesting COC for forest products.

Monitoring and Inspections are carried out by a designated individual(s) provided by the SFA. Copies of inspections and monitoring will be given to the woodlot owner. Results of the inspections and monitoring will be sent to appropriate government officials if required.

PRINCIPLE 9: Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF)

Refer to NSAWC HCVF program: <https://www.nsforestcertification.info/high-conservationvalue-forests/>

PRINCIPLE 10: Plantations

Note: Planting trees does not necessarily result in a plantation. Plantations are monocultures where a single species is planted and all other tree species are suppressed or removed. The SFA will encourage enrichment plantings of other tree species typical to the area where these are found growing in sufficient quantity and quality to eventually lead to a more natural type of forest.

1. Forest Renewal is a priority and where possible the promotion of natural regeneration will be encouraged by selecting appropriate treatments.
2. The design of plantations will promote the protection, restoration and conservation of adjacent natural forests.
3. Encourage replanting with diverse economic species native to the area.
4. The plantation provides socioeconomic benefits for the community and landowner.
5. Tree species are adapted to the area.
6. Natural forests are not converted to plantations.

Appendix 1

List of resources used to build this adaptation of PEI BMPs

SAR Lichens:

https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/habitats/terrestrial/pdf/SMP_BFL_At-Risk-Lichens.pdf

Raptor nests:

https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pei_forest_wildlife_manual_1994.pdf

Canada Warbler:

<https://landbirdsar.merseytoheatic.ca/>

Eastern Wood-Pewee:

<https://landbirdsar.merseytoheatic.ca/>

Olive-Sided Flycatcher:

<https://landbirdsar.merseytoheatic.ca/>

Vernal Pools:

https://www.maine.gov/dacf/mfs/projects/kennebec_woodlands/downloads/documents/vernal_pool_hmg.pdf

Cavity Trees and Snags:

https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/pei_forest_wildlife_manual_1994.pdf

Bats

<https://mtri.speciesatrisk.ca/sites/mtri.speciesatrisk.ca/files/MTRI%20beneficial%20management%20practices%20for%20bats%20-%20pgs%20EN.pdf>

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The mark of
responsible forestry