



**FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL  
CANADA WORKING GROUP**

**NATIONAL BOREAL STANDARD**

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## **PRINCIPLE #9 High Conservation Value Forests**

**Management activities in High Conservation Value Forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding High Conservation Value Forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach.**

### **Intent, 9**

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) introduced the concept of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) in 1999. HCVFs possess one or more of the following attributes:

- a. Forest areas containing globally, regionally, or nationally significant:
  - Concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or
  - Large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
- b. Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems;
- c. Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g., watershed protection, erosion control); and
- d. Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (e.g., areas of cultural, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

The concept focuses on the environmental, social and/or cultural values that make a particular forest area of outstandingly significant. The intent of Principle 9 is to manage those forests in order to maintain or enhance the identified High Conservation Values. By focusing on maintaining or enhancing the environmental or social values that make the forest significant, it is possible to make management decisions consistent with the protection of such values.

Following its publication, the concept of HCVF has become widely used within the FSC system and elsewhere. This rapid uptake reflects the elegance of the concept, which moved the debate away from definitions of particular forest types (e.g., primary, old forest) or methods of timber harvesting to focus instead on the values that make a forest important.

The HCVF approach is increasingly being used for mapping, landscape management and conservation decision-making approaches to forest resources. It is also being used in purchasing policies and recently has begun to appear in discussions and policies of government agencies. The key to the concept of HCVFs is the identification of High Conservation Values (HCVs).

Because of the importance of this Principle to the boreal forests in Canada, the Boreal Coordinating Committee decided to seek specific guidance from the FSC Canada Board on how best to proceed, with the recommendation that an expert working group be formed. The FSC Canada Board decided to assign the task of convening this group to the National Standards Advisory Committee (NSAC), with a mandate to explore ways to address this Principle in a nationally consistent manner (across all of FSC Canada's sub-

national standards), as well as consistent with relevant policies, tools and guidance material being developed at the international level. Working Group members were selected by a subcommittee of NSAC in December 2002, based upon nominations received from interest groups. The Working Group met on January 13-14, 2003. The tasks of the WG were to develop a framework for identifying High Conservation Value attributes in Canada; and to develop draft indicators related to P9 to be used in the boreal standard, considering input received during the first round of national consultations and consistent with the FSC International Principles and Criteria. The proposed indicators of the WG appear below and the framework for identifying HCVF's is presented in Appendix 4. The Principle 9 Working Group report can be downloaded from: [http://www.fsccanada.org/boreal/word\\_doc/P9\\_report\\_English.doc](http://www.fsccanada.org/boreal/word_doc/P9_report_English.doc).

Because the criteria and indicators under this Principle are based on the process for identifying High Conservation Values and High Conservation Value Forests (described in Appendix 4), the Verification would be based on documentation of the identification process, the results from the identification process and interviews with participants and perhaps selected other stakeholders.

**9.1. Assessment to determine the presence of the attributes consistent with High Conservation Value Forests will be completed, appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management.**

9.1.1 The applicant undertakes efforts to, or makes use of existing efforts to, identify and map the presence of HCVs and HCVPs according to the assessment process in the National Framework (Appendix 4). If the process described in Appendix 4 is not used, the process that is used to identify HCVs and HCVPs must meet key characteristics and the intent of the process in Appendix 4.

Verifiers:

- Documented procedures used to identify and map HCVPs and related values.
- Results of assessment processes – documents, maps, etc.
- Interviews with those involved in identification process.

9.1.2 The applicant involves qualified specialists, directly affected people and Indigenous People in the assessment.

Verifiers:

- List of specialists involved in the assessment.
- Interviews with individuals involved in the assessment.

9.1.3 The applicant ensures that a credible outside review is undertaken and makes the assessment document(s), associated maps, and outside review report available to the public.

Verifiers:

- Documentation of external review process.
- Results of external review.
- List of individuals who contributed to the review.
- Documentation of means by which the report was made available to the public.

**9.2 The consultative portion of the certification process must place emphasis on the identified conservation attributes, and options for the maintenance thereof.**

9.2.1 The applicant provides stakeholders and other interested parties with the opportunities, through a publicized and open consultative process, to input into the identification of High Conservation Value Forests and into the development of management objectives that protect those identified values.9.3. The management plan shall include and implement specific measures that ensure the maintenance and/or enhancement of the applicable conservation attributes consistent with the precautionary approach. These measures shall be specifically included in the publicly available management plan summary.

**9.3 The management plan shall include and implement specific measures that ensure the maintenance and/or enhancement of the applicable conservation attributes consistent with the precautionary approach. These measures shall be specifically included in the publicly available management plan summary without compromising the confidentiality of, or the risk to, environmentally and culturally sensitive features.**

9.3.1 The management plan and supporting documents include specific strategies relevant to identified High Conservation Values that:

- Include and support federal/provincial/territorial recovery plans (biodiversity and wildlife habitat);
- Maintain genetic distinctness (endemic species);
- Ensure the protection and maintenance of critical habitat features (breeding sites, wintering sites, migration sites and routes) by managing access including the location of reserves (no cut areas and modified harvesting), roads as well as seasonal operating restrictions;
- Provide for the genetic mixing (infusion) from source populations of species at risk, species chosen to represent a range of habitat requirements, and focal species that are at the edge of the range or are outlier populations, by ensuring habitat connectivity between the local populations;
- Provisionally defer logging in large landscape level forests until a credible conservation plan has been completed, including: conservation design aspects; protected areas gap analysis, and identification of candidate areas to fill gaps (see Principle 6.4); special management areas; and, appropriate stakeholder consultation;
- Are jointly developed with Indigenous Peoples, local communities and affected forest users where forest areas are fundamental to meet their basic needs and are critical to maintain traditional cultural identity; and,
- Provisionally avoid scheduling logging in large landscape-level forests until a conservation strategy has been completed that includes conservation design aspects, protected areas gap analysis and the identification of candidate protected areas. The conservation strategy should prioritize decisions of location, size and extent of protected area candidates that focus on maintaining the HCV attributes. The strategy has a well-documented rationale and incorporates input from experts and stakeholder consultation.

Verifiers:

- Management plan and strategies related to HCVs.
- Evidence that local Indigenous communities and affected forest users were involved in the development process.

9.3.2 Where a specific High Conservation Value Forest straddles a management unit or is potentially affected by existing or proposed activities outside of the management unit, the applicant demonstrates attempts to coordinate activities with adjacent manager(s) and land users to maintain or enhance the applicable conservation attributes.

Verifiers:

- Correspondence with managers (and land users) of adjacent lands.
- Portions of management plan dealing with management of adjacent lands.

- 9.3.3 The applicant demonstrates that the management strategies and measures selected to maintain or restore High Conservation Values are consistent with a precautionary approach, and with respect to each conservation attribute:
- Will create conditions with a very high probability of securing the long-term maintenance or the restoration of the applicable conservation attribute;
  - Are being implemented; and,
  - Are proving effective (or are adapted as required) based on the results of monitoring.

Verifiers:

- Documentation of management strategies and those portions addressing the above points.
  - Field observations.
  - Monitoring data.
- 9.3.4. Specific measures to maintain or enhance the applicable conservation attributes shall be included in the publicly available management plan summary.

**9.4. Annual monitoring shall be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the measures employed to maintain or enhance the applicable conservation attributes.**

9.4.1 The applicant sets up and implements, or participates in, a program to monitor the status of the applicable HCVs, including the effectiveness of the measures employed for their maintenance or restoration. The monitoring program is designed and implemented consistent with the requirements of Principle 8.

Verifiers:

- Documented HCV monitoring program.
- Results of monitoring program.

9.4.2 The monitoring program is capable of alerting the applicant to changes in the status of a conservation attribute, and determining if the conservation measures are effective in maintaining or restoring the conservation attribute. The results of monitoring are assessed consistent with the monitoring requirements of Indicator 8.1.1.

Verifiers:

- Documented HCV monitoring program.
- Results of monitoring program.

9.4.3 When monitoring results indicate increasing risk to a specific conservation attribute, the applicant re-evaluates the measures taken to maintain or enhance that attribute, and adjusts the management measures to reverse the trend.

Verifiers:

- Documented HCV monitoring program.
- Results of monitoring program.