Public Notification Letter

To: Interested Parties
From: SCS Global Services
Date: August 31, 2013
Re: Notification of FSC Preliminary Assessment of VicForests

Summary: As part of an FSC preliminary assessment, SCS is currently seeking stakeholder input regarding the forest management of VicForests. Please comment via email, or call our offices or representatives to discuss (contact info below).

VicForests is undergoing a preliminary assessment against the Forest Stewardship Council’s (FSC) Controlled Wood standard. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a non-profit organization devoted to encouraging the responsible management of the world’s forests. FSC sets standards that ensure forestry is practiced in an environmentally responsible, socially beneficial, and economically viable way.

VicForests is a Victorian State-owned business responsible for the harvest, regeneration and commercial sale of timber from a total of 2,500,000 hectares of State forests, in the eastern half of Victoria, on behalf of the Victorian Government. An annual harvest of 3,000 hectares is derived from the total available forest area of 1,200,000 hectares.

Scope and Certification Evaluation Process

SCS Global Services (SCS), a FSC-accredited certification body based in Emeryville, California, will conduct this FSC evaluation. The preliminary assessment will be conducted against both FSC’s Controlled Wood Standard for Forest Management Enterprises FSC-STD-30-010 (V 2-0), and the SCS Interim Standard for Forest Management Certification in Australia, Version 1.0.

A preliminary assessment is designed to identify any major gaps or problem areas in VicForests’s forest management practices regarding conformance to the FSC standard. According to FSC protocols, this assessment cannot yet result in an award of certification. If VicForests chooses to proceed, a full evaluation may follow at a later date.

The preliminary assessment process includes the following phases:

- Public notification: distribution of the standard and solicitation of comments on the certification applicant; Audit planning and document review;
- Field assessment: A representative sample of field sites and operations within the defined forest area are inspected by a team of auditors;
- Stakeholder consultation;
- Synthesis of findings: Compliance with the standard is ascertained and the certification decision is formulated;
- Reporting: A report describing the evaluation process, findings, and an assessment of VicForests readiness for a later certification audit is produced;
Evaluation Team

Robert J. Hrubes, Ph.D.

Dr. Hrubes is a California registered professional forester (#2228) and forest economist with over 30 years of professional experience in both private and public forest management issues. He is presently Executive Vice-President of SCS Global Services. In addition to serving as team leader for the Michigan state forestlands evaluation, Dr. Hrubes worked in collaboration with other SCS personnel to develop the programmatic protocol that guides all SCS Forest Conservation Program evaluations. Dr. Hrubes has previously led numerous audits under the SCS Forest Conservation Program of North American public forest, industrial forest ownerships and non-industrial forests, as well as operations in Scandinavia, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Australia and New Zealand. Dr. Hrubes holds graduate degrees in forest economics (Ph.D.), economics (M.A.) and resource systems management (M.S.) from the University of California-Berkeley and the University of Michigan. His professional forestry degree (B.S.F. with double major in Outdoor Recreation) was awarded from Iowa State University. He was employed for 14 years, in a variety of positions ranging from research forester to operations research analyst to planning team leader, by the USDA Forest Service. Upon leaving federal service, he entered private consulting from 1988 to 2000. He has been Senior V.P. at SCS since February, 2000.

Graeme Lea

Graeme is a Lead Auditor for FSC FM and CoC/CW and has 30 years experience in forestry in New Zealand and Australia, is qualified as a Forest Service Woodsman and has been involved in many aspects of forestry, including establishment, silviculture, harvesting, sawmilling, processing, exporting and bio-security. Graeme gained a NZQA National certificate in Forest Product Inspection while working in New Zealand, and has been a qualified Quality Management auditor for approximately ten years. In addition Graeme has also undertaken ISO 14001 training. Graeme moved to Adelaide South Australia four years ago and since that time has taken part in Forest Management, Controlled Wood and Chain of Custody audits and assessments, but has also undertaken Controlled Wood auditing on Papua New Guinea. Graeme has been part of more than twenty teams for Forest Management audits in both exotic and indigenous forests and has also carried out in excess of 55 Chain of Custody audits.

Call for Public Participation

SCS welcomes comments on the forest management of VicForests or other topics pertinent to their conformance to the standard, such as whether VicForests complies with the legal, social, technical, and environmental requirements of the standard or identification of high conservation value forests[1] within the lands of VicForests. The audit team can make arrangements to allow stakeholders to meet with them during the evaluation upon request. All comments and sources will be kept in strict confidence at the request of the commenter.

Comments can be submitted via email, standard mail, or facsimile to Robert Hrubes – contact information below.

Dates

The field evaluation is scheduled to commence during the week of September 30th, 2013. SCS will make arrangements to meet with interested parties during the evaluation if appropriate, but it is preferred that comments are submitted before the evaluation commences.

Dispute Resolution Procedure

As provided by the FSC Interim Dispute Resolution Protocol and the SCS Forest Conservation Program Quality Manual, dispute resolution procedures are in place and available to interested parties at http://www.scsglobalservices.com/your-feedback

Additional Information


Please contact us:
SCS proudly introduces the Kingfisher certification mark, signifying products and services that deliver proven environmental, social and quality benefits.

[1] High Conservation Value Forests possess one or more of the following attributes: a) forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant: concentrations of biodiversity values (eg. 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 (eg. watershed protection, erosion control) d) forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (eg. subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities’ traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities). Also see Principle 9, in the FSC Principles and Criteria.