GUIDANCE NOTE

CONTROLLED WOOD FROM TASMANIA

FSC Australia has received inquiries from companies wishing to source controlled wood from Tasmania.

This guidance note is provided to ensure consistency in the advice offered to companies seeking controlled wood from Tasmania.

Background

The draft risk assessment produced by the FSC Controlled Wood Risk Assessment Team is currently available from the FSC Australia. This draft has been distributed for public comment before it is finalised.

The draft contains two findings of particular relevance to Tasmania:

1. All uncertified sources of wood in Australia are regarded as having unspecified risk for High Conservation Values;
2. Tasmania and the Northern Territory have unspecified risk for conversion of natural forests for plantations and other non-forest uses.

In light of this, companies seeking controlled wood from Tasmania are required by FSC-STD-40-005 (Ver. 2.1 ENG) to undertake an “Annex3” program of verification, including an on-site audit, of their intended sources of uncertified wood that is wished to be considered controlled wood.

Annex 3 program of verification audits require inter alia:

• That the company seeking controlled wood conduct regular verification audits of the forest management unit by people with sufficient knowledge and expertise;
• That there be field audit of the company’s program of verification audit by an FSC accredited certification body, normally the certification body that issued the FSC Chain of Custody Certificate to the company;
• That the company demonstrate that forest management activities do not threaten high conservation values in the FMU;
• That the company engages in stakeholder consultation with NGOs and others with an interest in the forest area with a view to identifying high conservation values;
• That all types of natural and semi-natural forests and other wooded ecosystems are not being converted to plantations or non-forest uses.
ADVICE

1    Sourcing Controlled Wood from Tasmania

FSC Australia has advised that the simplest way for companies to provide evidence of compliance with these requirements would be to source wood from recognised plantations. These plantations are easily identified on official maps of Tasmania; they are distinctive in terms of species types, they were converted some years ago and are less likely to still contain high conservation values and, the chips from these sources can be easily identified through the supply chain including at the customer end. It is important to note that sourcing from these plantations still requires the certificate holder to conduct an Annex 3 assessment to help verify its source.

FSC Australia has been informed that one Tasmanian forest product company has sought to redefine ‘regrowth forests’ as ‘seeded plantations’. Given this definition has no currency in Australian forestry we do not include regrowth forestry or ‘seeded plantations’ in this definition of plantations.

Wood from natural or semi-natural forests in Tasmania have not been included in this advice note as this would require a rigorous case by case analysis to confirm that degradation of high conservation values and conversion is not associated with those sources. We have also been advised that it would be almost impossible to track this wood through the supply chain and ensure that it was separated from wood that did not meet the requirements for controlled wood.

A map of Tasmanian plantations is available from:  http://www.thelist.tas.gov.au/

NOTE – To access data, click on ‘List Map’ to entire site. Then choose ‘Other’ → ‘Forest Vegetation Groups’ → ‘Entire State’ → then zoom into region in question and refer to ‘Legend’ to locate plantations

Companies are reminded that they must be able to track wood coming from these plantation areas to segregated stores/piles. Similarly, it must also be possible for auditors to verify that the controlled wood has come from said segregated stores/piles.

2    Stakeholder Consultation

FSC Australia advises that stakeholder consultation should be accessible, transparent and rigorous for all groups wishing to comment on controlled wood issues, particularly high conservation values.

Stakeholders should be advised no less than a clear 30 days prior to a verification audit of the company’s intention to undertake an audit (60 days for the first verification audit). Notification should be through company stakeholder lists (that include a cross-section of stakeholders) and the FSC Australia electronic newsletter. They should be invited to contact FSC Australia to discuss the process and be provided with a copy of the relevant standard.

Stakeholders should be invited to make written submissions or a personal presentation during the verification process. Stakeholders wishing to make a presentation to the verification auditor should be
able to do so without the presence of staff from the organisation being audited. Stakeholders and companies should treat each other with respect in the consultation process. Where stakeholders make a reasonable request to show the verification team evidence of forest management practices believed to be threatening high conservation values, this should be accommodated within the verification audit. Verification audit reports should demonstrate to the certification body how stakeholder views were taken into account and evaluated in the audit process.

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