



<b>Code</b>	INT- FSC-STD-AUS-01-2018_01
<b>Requirement (s)</b>	FSC-STD-AUS-01-2018 <i>The FSC National Forest Stewardship Standard of Australia</i> . Criterion 9.1
<b>Publication date</b>	29 March 2021
<b>Background:</b> Old-growth forest is defined in the FSC-STD-AUS-01-2018 standard as <i>“ecologically mature forest with negligible disturbance”</i> . A forest stand is defined as <i>“An individual portion of the Management Unit managed as a singular unit. This may be in the form of a coupe, harvest block, regeneration area or a designated conservation zone and should be identifiable in Management Plans and mapping.”</i> A Management Unit is defined as <i>“a spatial area or areas submitted for FSC certification with clearly defined boundaries managed to a set of explicit long-term objectives which are expressed in the management plan.”</i> That is, a Management Unit and Forest Management Unit (FMU) are equivalent terms.  At issue is the Guidance for Old-Growth Forests text box that is found on page 66 of the Standard. The Guidance contains the following: <i>“It is important to note that the presence of HCV 3.3 old-growth forest in the management unit does not necessarily exclude harvesting. It is the responsibility of The Organization to demonstrate that its status at a landscape level will be maintained and not threatened as a result of management activities.”</i>  There are conflicting interpretations of this Guidance language among stakeholders and members of the Australian Standards Development Group.  One interpretation is that harvesting of/in old-growth forest is allowed provided that it can be demonstrated by the Forest Management Entity that such harvesting of old-growth trees/stands does not threaten the viability of old-growth as an ecological component, at the landscape level.  The opposing interpretation is quite different, that harvesting within the Management Unit is allowed, but the harvesting of individual old growth trees or stands within the Management Unit is not permitted.  <b>In this context, is the harvesting of old growth permitted, if the Forest Management Entity can demonstrate that its management activities are not threatening old-growth forest* at a landscape level, and the other HCV requirements in the Standard are met?</b>  Management of <i>old-growth forest*</i> is regulated as follows:	





- 1) Identified HCV 3.3 *old-growth forest\** shall\* be maintained and/or enhanced within the *Management Unit\** taking into account the presence and condition of HCV 3.3 *old-growth forest\** at a *landscape\** level.
- 2) Management activities negatively impacting HCV 3.3 *old-growth forest\** are not permitted.
- 3) There are instances where removal of trees in HCV 3.3 *old-growth forest\** may occur, limited to management activities which maintain and/or enhance the identified *High Conservation Values\**, such as removal of trees that are not characteristic to *old-growth forest\** as well as tree removals for safety and access provided this is justified.

NOTE: The guidance regarding identification and assessment of HCV 3.3 *old-growth forest\** provided in the guidance box on page 66 of the National Forest Stewardship Standard still applies.