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Family Forests Alliance Participates in Certification Field Test

Field Test is Next Step in Revision Process for FSC Family Forest Standard

(New Gloucester, Maine) – The FSC Family Forests Alliance, a national partnership of individuals and organizations committed to promoting responsible forest stewardship, recently participated in the field testing of the revised forest certification standard of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The revisions include special provisions for family forestlands.

“Family forestlands represent more than half of the forests in the United States and call for unique attention from the FSC program. We are pleased to be involved in the standard development process; especially at this critical stage of testing the proposed standards’ effectiveness,” says Kate Albert Read, Secretariat for the Alliance and Director of Harvest Certification and Research for the Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands.

As many family forest owners participate in FSC certification via group certificates, the three-day process included a feedback session on the FSC-International Committee (FSC-IC) Group Certification policy as a primer for an in-depth dialogue and field test of the proposed FSC-US draft standard for Family Forests. Pina Gervassi of the FSC-IC joined the U.S. participants to provide updates on FSC-IC developments, to receive feedback on Group Certification policy issues, and to observe the Family Forest Standard test.

The work took place primarily during visits to family forests in Wisconsin, members of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ (WDNR) Managed Forest Law group. The participants in the tour included certification auditors, FSC staff, representatives of the Family Forests Alliance, WDNR staff, and other group managers and observers. The proposed revisions to the standard were thoroughly evaluated on the ground through a simulated audit. The group subsequently evaluated how the proposed revisions to the standard might create new opportunities for family forest owners during an intensive critique session.

“The FSC program is the fastest growing forest certification program and market demand for FSC-certified products is also growing,” says Read. “By making the standard work better, more landowners can take advantage of these opportunities.”

The full results of the field test will be released as the revision process for the standards is completed. The Alliance is preparing a summary of observations from the field test.

For more information:
www.familyforestsalliance.org