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SFI Comments on the BC Review of the Private Managed Forest Land Act

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The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting forest sustainability and supporting the linkage between sustainable forests and communities through grant programs, carefully targeted research, direct leadership of critical initiatives, and partnerships that effectively contribute to multiple conservation objectives. SFI is the world's single largest certification standard, encompassing 25% of all certified forest globally.

At SFI, conservation of forests and their social and ecological benefits are integral aspects of our work, and we strive every day to ensure our SFI Forest Management Standard and the research we support are effective and relevant. Our standards hold SFI certified companies (known as SFI Program Participants) to the highest level of forest conservation requirements and ensure that they are guided by forest research – which is a unique requirement of the SFI Program Standards.

The SFI Forest Management Standard applies to both private (approximately 3 million ha) and public lands (approximately 118 million ha) in Canada. All SFI Program Participants contribute not just to forest sustainability, but to the diverse work of SFI across the range of supply chain assurances, conservation leadership, and support for environmental education and community engagement. SFI is endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), and products certified to the SFI Standard are sold in more than 120 different countries.

SFI is pleased to provide comments on the BC government's review of the Private Managed Forest Land Act. We offer the following points for consideration:

The SFI Sustainable Forest Management Standard

The SFI Forest Management Standard has 13 Principles and 15 Objectives that ensure that sustainably managed forests provide for the conservation of ecological values, protection of biodiversity, and benefits to local communities both now and into the future. Specifically, the SFI Forest Management Standard assures the maintenance and conservation of numerous values, including:

- Forest health and productivity (Objective 2) – This objective includes provisions for prompt reforestation after harvest, the minimization of chemical use to achieve management objectives while protecting employees, neighbors, the public and the environment, and the prevention of fires and other undesirable events.
- Protection and maintenance of water resources (quality and quantity, Objective 3) – This objective assures the protection of the water quality of rivers, streams and lakes, wetlands and other bodies of water through: meeting or exceeding all local, provincial, federal laws, and meeting or exceeding best management practices, the implementation of water, wetland and riparian protection measures based on soil, vegetation and terrain types, harvest systems, and provincial guidelines or other applicable factors.
- Conservation of biological diversity (including species at risk, Objective 4) – This objective assures that SFI Program Participants actively work to conserve biological diversity, protect threatened and endangered species, forests with exceptional conservation value, and old-growth forests. Private forests provide habitat for a wide range of species, including species at risk. Recent work with Mosaic Forest Management, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and other collaborators and private landowners has led to providing regulators through certification with further clarification regarding the significant systems SFI Program Participants have in place to help conserve and recover species at risk on their lands.
- Management of visual quality and recreational values (Objective 5) – This objective assures the management of the visual impacts of forest operations, and the provision of recreational opportunities for the public. Across the SFI footprint in North America, 96% of forests certified to the SFI Standard is available to the public for outdoor recreation.
- Recognition and respect for indigenous rights (Objective 8) – This objective provides the assurance that SFI Program Participants not only recognize the rights of indigenous peoples, but actively engage with those communities directly. For example, Mosaic Forest Management, an SFI Program Participant, has achieved Progressive Aboriginal Relations certification on their lands on Vancouver Island.
- Forestry Research, Science and Technology (Objective 10) – The SFI Forest Management Standard uses new research findings in forest management to continually improve management practices and results. This help foster collaborations with researchers, this objective requires SFI Program Participants to participate or provide in-kind support to research collaborations, a unique requirement among forest certification systems. This requirement has led to the direct investment by SFI Program Participants of nearly \$1.7 billion dollars in forest research since 1995, 80% of which were allocated to conservation-related objectives.

These and other objectives of the SFI Forest Management Standard provide the assurances that SFI Program Participants are managing their lands sustainably, and are meeting public values for reforestation, water quality and quantity, riparian management, biodiversity and species at risk, and recreational values, among others. All companies certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard undergo annual third-party independent certification audits by competent and accredited certification bodies.

The Role of the Private Managed Forest Land Act

The greatest threat to forests globally is the conversion of those forests to other land uses. In the tropics, drivers of conversion are often commodity production or shifting agriculture¹, and in more developed countries it may be urban expansion. Given the ecological, social and economic value of forest lands as working forests, preventing forest cover loss – irrespective of its cause - remains an important priority. SFI has long participated in collaborations like Keeping Forests As Forests, an initiative to create focus on maintaining the long-term economic and ecological viability of forests in the southern US, where urban development pressures can sometimes be high.

While the drivers of forest conversion vary around the world, one thing is consistent: where land use change has the potential to provide more short-term value than forest management, there is a risk of landowners converting forest to other uses, to our collective detriment. In order to reduce the risk of conversion, any additional incentives to retain working forest should be encouraged.

In BC, *the Private Managed Forest Land Act* provides a useful incentive and effective means to ensure private forests in BC remain working landscapes that support the communities in which they are located, while at the same time requiring high standards for management by those organizations and landowners that participate in the program. The SFI Forest Management Standard (or similar credible certification programs) helps provide the assurances that these lands are sustainably managed over the long-term. Given the ecological, social and economic value of these lands as working forests, the Private Managed Forest Act is a valuable and effective tool to help maintain them.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and provide comment. We would be happy to continue engaging with you on this directly should you require any further information on SFI and our role in supply chain assurances, conservation leadership, and support for environmental education and community engagement.

Sincerely,



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¹ Curtis, P.G., C.M. Slay, N.L. Harris, A.Tyukavina, M.C. Hansen. 2019. Classifying drivers of forest cover loss. Science. 361, Issue 6407, pp. 1108-1111.