

<b>Mid Carolina Forest Management Group Certification Documented Control System</b>			
	Document: MCFMG-PROC-002 FSC Forest Management Operations Manual	Last Revised: 02/28/2012	Version: 2

## **SCOPE**

Mid Carolina Forest Management Group is a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Management group of forest landowners committed to the mission of promoting long-term responsible forest management strategies that improve the health of forest and freshwater ecosystems while increasing economic development in the communities where the forests they manage exist.

The MCFMG Operations Manual provides information regarding the operating structure, policies, and procedures of the program. This Operations Manual is intended to conform to the FSC Standards and other associated standards and procedures stated below. Detailed instructional guidance for Group members and their contractors is provided in this Operations Manual.

## **REFERENCES FOR CERTIFICATION**

FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0)	FSC standard for group entities in forest management groups
FSC-STD-01-001	FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship
FSC-STD-01-002	FSC Glossary of Terms
FSC-STD-01-003	SLIMF Eligibility Criteria
	FSC-US Forest Management Standard (v1.0)
FSC-POL-30-001	FSC Pesticides Policy (2005)
FSC-GUI-30-001 (V2-0)	FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation (2007)

## **Operational Policies**

The following operational policies are organized in the order of the FSC 10 Principals and are intended to explain how MCFMG and Group members conform to FSC certification requirements.

### **1. Compliance**

#### **1.1. Membership & Management Records**

MCFMG maintains a web-based database of all Group members including all contact and Membership status information. The Group Manager also maintains copies of Group members' forest management plans, Group Membership Applications, Group Membership Agreements, proof of legal land tenure, ecological monitoring records, harvest yield information, sales data, and all other relevant documents. These documents and data are also kept in electronic format using the Group's enterprise software. Any documents not available in digital format are stored in files in Group Manager's main office. All proprietary Group member information is kept confidential. Proprietary information is available only for internal assessments and for verification purposes by the Certification Body.

Forestry related laws and regulations for Georgia and South Carolina

## **SOUTH CAROLINA**

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- SC Forest Laws - <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/reflaws.pdf>
- SC Best Management Practices for Forestry – <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/refbmp.htm>
- Clean Water Act - <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/sec404.cfm>
- FIFRA - <http://www.epa.gov/regulations/laws/fifra.html>
- Endangered Species Act - <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/esa.html>
- SC Nongame & Endangered Species Conservation Act - <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t50c015.htm>
- SC Pollution Control Act - <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t48c001.htm>

## GEORGIA

- Clean Water Act - <http://water.epa.gov/lawsregs/guidance/wetlands/sec404.cfm>
- FIFRA - <http://www.epa.gov/regulations/laws/fifra.html>
- Endangered Species Act - <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/esa.html>
- Georgia Environmental Regulations - [http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/rules\\_exist.html](http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/rules_exist.html)
- County Timber Harvesting Regulations and Ordinances in Georgia - <http://warnell.forestry.uga.edu/service/library/index.php3?docID=272&docHistory%5B%5D=11>
- Georgia Best Management Practices for Forestry - <http://www.gfc.state.ga.us/forestmanagement/documents/BMPManualGA0609.pdf>

### 1.2. Document Control & Confidentiality Policy

Documents and information related to MCFMG and individual Group members are kept strictly confidential. Only the individual landowner, the Certification Body and Group Management will have access to records for individual properties. Landowners are free to share their own records as they see fit, but must give the Group Manager permission to share documents with other parties. Summarized information regarding the aggregate Membership will be available upon request.

### 1.3. Structural Requirements & Limitations

MCFMG will notify the Certification Body of every new property added to the Group program within 30 days of acceptance. These notices will be given by email and will include owner's organizational name, property location, acreage and description of forest type. The Group Manager or designee will also notify the Certification Body within 10 days of any Group member properties whose certification status is suspended or terminated. Group Membership termination follows the procedures described in FSC FM Group System Procedures (MCFMG-PROC-001) Section 1.3.4.

### 1.4. Certification Compliance & Performance Evaluation Protocol

MCFMG is accountable to the Certification Body, the FSC accredited certifier, for assuring compliance with the certification standards and for meeting the requirements for field reviews. Group members are required to provide access to their property for the purpose of compliance reviews by Group Management and the Certification Body.

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The Group Manager evaluates the performance of natural resource professionals providing services to Group members. Performance evaluations are used to determine that service providers possess appropriate expertise and meet established standards for quality, consistency, and compliance with the certification standards.

The Group Manager determines certification compliance throughout the forest management process. The Group Manager is responsible for conducting all necessary monitoring visits unless a formal agreement and service contract is developed with a qualified party. The Inspector will notify the landowner at least two days prior to conducting a site visit.

The forms, checklists, and other documents related to these compliance and performance reviews are included in the Operations Manual Appendix, and are available on the Group website.

<http://www.Mid Carolina Forest Management Group.org>

MCFMG maintains an up-to-date document library of its policies and FSC documents on its website, or provide active links to such documents on the FSC website. This library will be updated as new policies emerge, and will be checked annually to ensure that links are active and that correct documents are posted.

<http://www.Mid Carolina Forest Management Group.org>

Additional documents are available on the FSC-US website.

[http://www.fscus.org/standards\\_criteria/](http://www.fscus.org/standards_criteria/)

## 2. Tenure & Use Rights

### 2.1. Tenure & Use Rights

MCFMG is committed to upholding FSC Principles 2 and 3 in relation to Tenure & Use Rights & Responsibilities and Indigenous Peoples' Rights. MCFMG requires all participating landowners to verify that title to land they are enrolling is clear and legally secure, that the boundaries are properly identified on the ground, and that timber harvesting or other operations are legally permitted. The Group Manager maintains copies of a land title or other documentation to verify claims. Group members will generally need to provide specific documentation third parties only where there is risk of infringing on use and access rights.

### 2.2. Dispute Resolution

Prior to joining the Group, Group members are required to disclose any known disputes over land ownership, property boundaries, and indigenous rights claims. Group member properties must be free of such disputes prior to receiving Membership. If a dispute arises during Membership, Group members must make diligent effort to resolve the dispute following a process similar to the Group dispute resolution process described in FSC FM Group System

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Procedures (MCFMG-PROC-001) Section 1.3.6 or by appropriate application of local, federal, or tribal law.

When a dispute arises over land tenure or use, the Group member will notify the Group Manager within 30 days. The Group Manager will notify the Certification Body within 60 days if the dispute is not resolved. Group members will enter in good faith into mediation or arbitration to resolve any land tenure/ land use disputes. If these actions do not succeed, judicial action may be needed. Group members will obtain resolution that conforms to applicable laws.

### 3. Indigenous Peoples' Rights

3.1. MCFMG is committed to identifying and protecting any known or suspected cultural or historical resources or sites on Group member lands. The Group will be fulfilling this commitment by contacting appropriate public agencies and tribal organizations to identify sites and historical resources.

3.2. All Group members who have reason to believe that there are sites of interest to American Indians on Group member property will contact American Indian authorities to assess the risk of impact. Sites of interest include those with ecological, cultural or economic importance. A list of cultural, archeological or other related sites will be maintained where they are known or found to occur. Group members with large properties who are eligible because of low intensity of operations must attempt direct consultation with Tribes. Most Group members will not be required to directly consult with American Indian groups.

#### 3.2.1. Recognized tribes in South Carolina

- o American Indian Center of South Carolina: [americanindiancenterofsc@hotmail.com](mailto:americanindiancenterofsc@hotmail.com)
- o Beaver Creek Indians: [klcrothers@mindspring.com](mailto:klcrothers@mindspring.com)
- o Catawba Indian Nation: [wenonahh@ccppcrafts.com](mailto:wenonahh@ccppcrafts.com)
- o Chaloklowa Chickasaw Indian People: [rahunnicutt@pbtcomm.net](mailto:rahunnicutt@pbtcomm.net)
- o Chicora Indian Tribe of South Carolina: [chicoraindiannation@hotmail.com](mailto:chicoraindiannation@hotmail.com)
- o Cherokee Tribes of South Carolina: 803-699-0446
- o Croatan Indian Tribe of Orangeburg: 843-534-8862
- o Edisto Indian Organization: 843-871-6740
- o Pee Dee Indian Tribe: [redfeatherruns@msn.com](mailto:redfeatherruns@msn.com)
- o Piedmont American Indian Association: [gynorris@charter.net](mailto:gynorris@charter.net)
- o Santee Indian Organization: 803-515-4906
- o Santee Indian Nation: 864-948-9546
- o Waccamaw Indian People: [www.waccamaw.us](http://www.waccamaw.us)
- o Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians: [leachlis@aol.com](mailto:leachlis@aol.com)

### 4. Community Relations & Worker Rights

#### 4.1. Social Impacts & Stakeholder Consultation

4.1.1. MCFMG is committed to identifying the potential social impacts of forest management conducted through the Group and incorporating the results of evaluations of social impacts into planning and project implementation processes.

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Because the lands enrolled in the Group are small and privately owned, individual properties have limited immediate public impact. However, these lands do provide an important 'matrix' in the landscape that helps protect and enhance forest health and aesthetics in the region. To address and identify social impacts and ensure that stakeholders are informed and invited to provide comment, the Group Manager is committed to summarizing information regarding the aggregated Group membership and making it available on request to stakeholders. All operational information regarding the structure of the Group, including a quarterly updated list of all Members, is available at the Group website or upon written request of the Group Manager.

4.1.2. MCFMG uses a Group Member Pre-assessment Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-003) based on the FSC Standard to collect information about the land ownership, tenure, use rights and other information for the member property. Information about adjacent landowners and land uses and any existing conflicts or concerns is used in ongoing development of individual management plans. Whenever possible, Group members or the Group Manager are expected to notify in advance and communicate with neighbors and other potentially affected stakeholders about their planned activities. These communications are generally documented and recorded on the Group Communications Record (MCFMG-DOC-008). Group members often also play a lead role in identifying reasonable solutions to any existing or discovered concerns. This includes the evaluation of known or suspected historical or cultural resources and sites and the development of protection recommendations when such resources are present.

4.1.3. During harvest or other treatment planning, Group members or Group Management will ensure that no conflicts arise from surrounding landowners in relation to transportation and access arrangements. Property boundaries shall be marked and verified as needed to prevent trespass.

#### 4.2. Historic & Cultural Resources

4.2.1. MCFMG will take precautions to avoid loss or damage to any historically or culturally significant resources on Group member properties.

4.2.2. The Group requires Group members to use a forest management plan development process that includes an investigation of known or potential historical and cultural resources on or near their property. This information can be gathered through interviews with the landowners, consultation with state agencies or state maintained databases, and site reconnaissance. Group manager and or members will follow a consultation process similar to that used for assessing High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF) to assess historical and cultural resources.

4.2.3. If Group members identify historical and/or cultural resources on their property or in a nearby location that may be affected by management on the property, the location of the resource must be recorded in the plan and the resource must be described. Management or protection of the resource must be detailed in the management plan and in subsequent

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operational plans. All protection measures must comply with Best Management Practices or site level guidelines (both mandatory and voluntary). All applicable laws must also be followed and the State archaeologist should be notified in the event that a burial site or human remains are found or suspected to be present.

#### 4.3. Safety Policy

4.3.1. Throughout all forest management operations and harvesting activities, all timber purchasers, operators, service providers and other agents or staff working for Group members are must conform to required Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) safety measures in service contracts and agreements. All Group staff and service providers are expected to know, understand, and apply appropriate safety measures. All logging operators are required to conform to state safety laws. The Group Manager and Group members are encouraged to hire only qualified contractors that can conform to FSC operational requirements.

South Carolina Department of Labor websites for workplace safety:

South Carolina Department of Labor, Labeling and Regulation; Division of Labor:  
<http://www.llr.state.sc.us/labor.asp>

#### 4.4. Service Provider Requirements

4.4.1. MCFMG Members are strongly encouraged to contract with formally recognized Preferred Providers for forestry related services, although Group members may contract with any natural resource professional meeting or exceeding Group minimum requirements. In this case, it is the Group member's responsibility to verify that the contractor has appropriate training, meets the above listed qualifications, and complies with state health and safety laws and licensing requirements. All service providers must comply with Group policies, forest management plans, and the FSC Standard. The Group Manager has thoroughly reviewed the training, past performance and licenses, if applicable, of these contractors. Services may include, but are not limited to, management plan development, harvest planning, tree marking, logging, road construction, tree plantings, or habitat enhancement.

4.4.2. The Group Manager and Group members are responsible for communicating all Group requirements to service providers, preferably within the context of a service contract. The Group provides the FSC Principles & Criteria, US Forest Management Standard, template management plans, sample contracts, and all other documents and materials to Group members in the Operations Manual, Document Directory (MCFMG-DOC-001), the Group website (<http://www.Mid Carolina Forest Management Group.org>), or by mail on request.

4.4.3. Service providers must:

- i. Strictly follow the Group member's approved management plan and Group Systems Procedures.

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- ii. Follow the Group approved Chain of Custody procedures.
- iii. Carry adequate liability insurance.
- iv. Operate in full compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal voluntary policies, required laws, and established standards regarding natural resource management, best management practices, and/or the forestry profession.
- v. Demonstrate adequate ability and experience in writing, administering, and implementing management plans that meet the FSC US Forest Management Standard (*Applies only to foresters*).
- vi. Through their actions, demonstrate a commitment to serving Group members and helping them maintain FSC certification by complying with all Group policies.

#### 4.5. Education and Communication

4.5.1. In the interest of providing continuing education opportunities for both Group members and natural resource professionals, The Group Manager facilitates continuing education intended to build skills and understanding in sustainable forest management. The Group Manager will verify in the Group Annual Report (MCFMG-DOC-015) and during site monitoring using the Group Member Monitoring Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-013) whether the performance of contractors meets FSC criteria and Group policies. The Group Manager will issue conditions to Group members if service provider work is out of compliance. The Group Manager reserves the right to contact service providers to assess qualifications and competency to meet FSC requirements.

### 5. Benefits from the Forest

#### 5.1. Local Economic Benefits

- 5.1.1. MCFMG supports landowner goals and long-term economic and ecological sustainability by providing technical and professional resources. The group certification provides an economy of scale that would otherwise keep the benefits of certification out of reach for many landowners.
- 5.1.2. The Group program provides market connections for forest land owners to sell timber to FSC certified mills, and mills who wish to buy from Group member properties. The Group Manager offers complete guidance to Group members on FSC Chain of Custody compliance to capture the full benefits of certification. Group Management offers technical and marketing services to Group members with value-added processing enterprises.

#### 5.2. Rate of Harvest

5.2.1. The harvest of forest products must not compromise desired future conditions of FMP or extract resources at an excessive rate or in a manner that damages other resources, such as soil or water. Harvest operations must minimize waste and residual stand damage. Only commercially usable timber should be harvested, and most of the timber cut during harvest operations should be removed from the site. Harvest operations must, however,

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leave adequate biomass on the ground to protect soil productivity without unduly creating fire risks.

5.2.2. Timber harvest must not exceed growth over any 10 year period. Growth estimates and calculated sustained yield levels will be based on stocking and site condition using site index models or best available information. The Group encourages Group members to consult with foresters and document these estimates. Group members who harvest timber at intervals greater than 10 years must compute harvest based on the volume of growth since previous harvest and target stocking levels. The Group Manager will evaluate members' annual reporting forms to ensure that timber stands reach target stocking as quickly as is practicable. Stocking will of course vary depending on management objectives and species. The Group Manager provides monitoring and inventory guidelines.

5.2.3. The annual growth for MCFMG is calculated using the data from the USFS GForest Website, including surrounding counties in Virginia and North Carolina. The average growth data by forest type/dominant species is applied to the stands and acreages within the management plans and aggregated on the CCFMG level as shown on the Group Annual Allowable Harvest Summary (MCFMG-DOC-011). Soil type data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil data was used to develop site index for MCFMG management plans.

### 5.3. Preferred Provider Eligibility

5.3.1. MCFMG is committed to promoting technical expertise in the regional economy. One of the goals of the Group is to increase access to high quality resource management services for Group members as well as landowners outside the Group program. To this end, the Group formally recognizes Preferred Providers that demonstrate a high level of competency, professionalism, and a long-term commitment to FSC standards, and are regionally based.

### 5.4. Non-Timber Forest Products

5.4.1. All materials originating from a certified forest have the potential to be marketed with the FSC label. However, because of the wide variability in the level of understanding regarding appropriate management of many non-timber forest products, MCFMG will take a precautionary approach to the harvesting and marketing of non-timber forest products from Group Member properties.

For non-timber forest products:

5.4.1.1. Management plans for properties enrolled in the MCFMG program must identify and address any existing or potential non-timber forest products on the property.

5.4.1.2. Members interested in continuing or beginning to harvest non-timber forest products must:

- Collect harvest volume records



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- Document the location of harvests and existing populations
- Develop a detailed management plan for the species being harvested
- Demonstrate due diligence investigating current knowledge regarding appropriate management, harvest levels, utilization standards, and regeneration rates for the harvested species
- Maintain compliance with all FSC certification standards, with special attention paid to the applicability of High Conservation Value Forests and rare, threatened, or endangered species standards
- Develop and implement a monitoring plan

## 6. Environmental Impacts

### 6.1. Rare, Threatened or Endangered Resources

6.1.1. MCFMG is committed to identifying and protecting rare, threatened, or endangered (RTE) resources on all properties enrolled in the Group. The Group requires that forest management plans include investigations to identify RTE plants, animals and/or natural communities in the field. The Group Manager or Group members and their contractors will investigate existing RTE databases and records for the property and surrounding area and will facilitate communication with the appropriate parties. The Group also requires that plan writers demonstrate a technical knowledge of RTE species and an ability to identify them in the field. The intensity of any surveys will increase with the size of the ownership.

6.1.2. If a plant, animal or community is identified as RTE, the Group requires that it be documented in the forest management plan and appropriate management guidelines be clearly stated and followed in any subsequent site-disturbing activities. The management guidelines must be species and site specific and comply with the most current available knowledge about the habitat or management requirements of the identified resource and any applicable regulation. The management plan, recommendations, and eventual treatment designs must include guidance for species-specific protection, conservation, or restoration of critical habitat elements where RTE species exist. The appropriate state or federal agencies will be notified as required by applicable law and certification standards.

### 6.2. Exotic Species

6.2.1. MCFMG discourages the planting of exotic tree species. Group members must not actively propagate or disseminate any exotic species that are known to be invasive or to reduce local biodiversity through competition. If non-invasive exotic species are planted, the Group member will document the origin of the seed or plant and the location of planting. The Group member is responsible for keeping this record and for monitoring the planting site.

6.2.2. The Group Manager, with appropriate assistance of the Group Member, shall develop a policy to control or remove existing or invading exotic plant species on their property. Exotic species control will not violate the policy on use of chemical herbicides.

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Appropriate control techniques are mechanical removal (by hand, herbivore, or machine), or targeted use of narrow spectrum, non-persistent herbicides. It is the responsibility of the Group Members and land managers to monitor property for invasive exotic species—plant, animals, insects, fungi – so that prompt control is possible. Control measures will be developed on a site by site basis to ensure appropriate local considerations. These control measures will be based upon “A Management Guide for Invasive Plants in Southern Forests” by James H. Miller, Steven T. Manning and Stephen F. Enloe. Published by the USDA Forest Service, Southern Research Station. General Technical Report SRS-131.

### 6.3. Conservation Zones & Protected Areas

6.3.1. MCFMG recognizes the value of identifying conservation zones and protected areas within the Group membership. These zones can serve as references areas that can help improve management goals and design. These areas can also enhance monitoring and research efforts. The Group encourages the development of conservation zones on Group member properties with special emphasis given in the following situations:

- The Member property contains rare, threatened, or endangered species or their habitats, or any identified High Conservation Values;
- The Member property has large areas of plantations (*See the FSC US Forest Management Standard for minimum requirements of natural forest and late seral forest cover on plantation ownerships*);
- The Member has a personal commitment to establishing protected areas or conservation zones;
- The property contains an area or habitat most appropriately managed through preservation.

6.3.2. The Group Manager verifies in Group member management plans that sufficient areas of conservation zones are designated. Larger properties, not meeting SLIMF criteria, must designate a minimum of 10% of their area as conservation zones. Most Group members protect a significant acreage by complying with the FSC US Forest Management Standard and state laws on watercourse buffer zones, and interior habitat requirements. Although the Group does not maintain a fine-scale map of all ownerships, it does maintain a region-wide map of point locations and verifies maps of property and protected areas within each individual management plan. Group members that do not meet SLIMF criteria with larger properties will maintain a range of ecological successional stages.

6.3.3. The Group requires the management plan of each Group member not meeting SLIMF criteria to identify the location and extent of conservation areas. Although the Group will not map all conservation zones, it will verify during site visits and in Group member management plan maps that at least the minimum area is protected. Any changes to Group member ownership will be recorded in the Group database and reported to the Certification Body, as required under Section 1.3.4.

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6.3.4. The Group requires members to manage their lands in a way that maintains, and enhances vertical and horizontal structures as well as downed woody debris, snags and large live trees. Prior to any harvest or activity on a tract a Pre-Activity/Harvest Planning Checklist will be filled out (MCFMG-DOC-016). Retention trees and/or areas will be addressed at this time.

#### 6.4. Forestry Practices

6.4.1. The ecology of local forests will be maintained, enhanced or restored by management activity. Group members maintain or create on their property biodiversity, productivity, natural processes, ecological successional pathways, forest regeneration, and old-growth stands and individual trees. The silvicultural practices on Group member property should promote and protect natural ecosystem function. Group members will use information on ecological succession, habitat, and land use patterns at various spatial scales to make decisions about forest management. Every Group member with a sufficiently large property and in meeting the SLIMF criteria will set a goal to restore rare native ecological communities.

6.4.2. Group members will use silviculture consistent with natural forest disturbance regimes. Silvicultural prescriptions will retain structural and biological diversity in the stand to maintain or restore productivity and habitat quality. That is, management will aim to retain areas including understory plants and advanced regeneration, a range of tree size and age classes, as appropriate to forest type, old-growth individual trees, animal habitat (e.g., logs, snags), and coarse woody debris. Even-aged silviculture may be used when necessary, within the restrictions of the FSC Standard. Silvicultural prescriptions will take into account natural disturbance risks such as fire and wind-throw, and attempt to minimize harm from such events. Any salvage harvest operations will consider ecological impacts, as well as economic benefits.

6.4.3. Existing old-growth stands, defined by FSC as:

Type 1 Old Growth: 3 acres or more that have never been logged and that display old-growth characteristics.

Type 2 Old Growth: 20 acres that have been logged, but which retain significant old-growth structure and functions.

By these definitions there are no known old growth area's in the vicinity of MCFMG. The area that MCFMG operates in has been heavily logged for many generations. Most areas have been cleared for agriculture at some point in the last 100 years. Areas that have reverted to forests have been actively managed. It is possible that small pockets of areas exist that have not been harvested, cleared, or impacted by natural disasters. If the managers of MCFMG find an area that display's old growth characteristics they will protect the area from harvesting and road construction, and from other timber management activities.

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The management plan of each owner will prescribe operational plans to protect water and soil quality. State Best Management Practices for forestry will be met or exceeded to control erosion; minimize forest damage during harvesting, road construction, and all other mechanical disturbances; and protect water resources. Road building and harvest operations will conform to detailed rules of FSC Criterion 6.5. Buffer zones around water bodies will at all times be respected. Minimal harvest activity may be allowed for restoration and fuels reduction reasons. Road construction and maintenance data will be collected by the Group as part of its Group Member Annual Monitoring Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-013) and Group Member Annual Activity Report (MCFMG-DOC-014), and will be evaluated during site visits by assessors.

- 6.4.4. MCFMG discourages the use of pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. The use of integrated pest management strategies should always be favored over the use of chemical pesticides, when feasible based on the precautionary principal and commonly accepted scientific evidence. Regular monitoring and vigilance is important protection against pest outbreaks. The Group acknowledges that in some circumstances exotic, invasive pests can only be effectively controlled with chemical pesticides. Permitted chemical compounds should only be used when clearly justified based on the circumstances.
- 6.4.5. Evidence of use or improper storage of prohibited chemicals by a Group Member or Member's contractor will result in a corrective action request or precondition. The Group will suspend the Membership of any Group Member who does not cease to use and store prohibited chemical pesticides. Prohibited chemicals include those chemicals which are considered highly hazardous as described in "FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation" (FSC-GUI-30-001 V2-0).
- 6.4.6. When chemicals are used, they should be low toxicity, narrow spectrum, targeted to the pest or pathogen of interest, and should not be environmentally persistent. Group members must monitor the effects and impact of chemical use. Workers must be informed of the risk of pesticide exposure and how to limit exposure.
- 6.4.7. Group members and their contractors must dispose of chemicals and chemical containers, including permitted pesticides, and fuel and oil containers, in an environmentally responsible manner. Equipment must be regularly checked for leaks, and parked outside of riparian zones. Spills must be identified, contained, and cleaned up immediately. Notice of spills must be given to state authorities as required by law. Group members must have procedures in place to contain and clean up any chemical spills before forest operations begin. These procedures must be explained in the management plan.
- 6.4.8. All applicators, whether the landowner, an employee or contractor, must follow the laws and manufacturer recommendations on the use of the chemical.

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6.4.9. The Group Manager will record all uses of chemical pesticides by Group members on the Group Pesticide Use Record (MCFMG-DOC-022) or in the management database. Records include:

- Trade name of the product
- Location of the site treated
- Area of the site treated in acres
- Method of application
- Date chemical use started
- Date chemical use finished
- Total quantity of the chemical used in gallons.

6.4.10. The Group encourages forest management avoids or minimizes use of chemical pesticide if there are effective alternative practices available. Chemicals that are prohibited from use are listed in Annex 2 of the “FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation” (FSC-GUI-30-001 V2-0). Use of these chemicals will lead to termination of Membership in the Group.

The “FSC Pesticides Policy: Guidance on Implementation” (FSC-GUI-30-001 V2-0) is available at:

<http://www.fscus.org/images/documents/FSC-POL-30-601.pdf>

This information is based on research and ratings by the U.S. EPA and the World Health Organization. Note that the FSC lists chemical compound names, not trade names. Group Members must exercise care by reading the containers of any pesticides to find the active ingredient and verify that the compound is not prohibited by FSC and Group policy. Group Members must also ensure that chemicals are never stored in unlabeled containers.

## 6.5. GMOs & Biological Control Agents

6.5.1. The use of biological control agents should generally be avoided unless it is a widely accepted agent that presents a low risk of harm. As with chemicals, the use of biological agents must be well-documented, and reported to the Group before use. If absolutely necessary, non-invasive exotic organisms may be used to control invasive, exotic species. Such practice must follow scientifically accepted methods, and must be used under strict monitoring on a limited scale.

6.5.2. Group members shall not use genetically modified organisms on their property for re-forestation, pest control, or any other reason. Genetically improved organisms, i.e., Mendelian cross breeding, such as improved domestic tree varieties, may be planted.

## 7. Forest Management Plan

### 7.1. Procedure

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7.1.1. Development of a forest management plan that meets FSC standards is a critical first step towards eligibility for the Group program. A property cannot be enrolled in the certified pool until a management plan is established that meets certification criteria. (MCFMG-DOC-023)

7.1.2. Forest management plans meeting MCFMG requirements must:

- Expressly identify the management objective chosen as the course of action to be followed for each stand;
- Be updated at least every five years to record changes in inventory, landowner goals, site conditions, and other factors;
- Incorporate regeneration data as a key factor in making future harvesting decisions.

7.1.3. The management planning process includes several steps:

- Identification of a qualified service provider if the landowner does not possess sufficient forestry skills.
- Development and review of a management plan, submitted to Mid Carolina Forest Management Group.
- Revision of the management plan based on MCFMG requirements and comments received from the Group Manager, the landowner, or service provider.
- Finalization and acceptance of the management plan by the landowner, service provider, and the Group Manager.

7.1.4. Throughout the management planning process, the Group Manager is the party responsible for assuring that the certification standard is being maintained. The service provider and Group member are responsible for communicating with the Group Manager throughout the various steps, providing any requested information, and complying with Group policies. To maintain their certification, the Group member must follow the management prescriptions and procedures outlined in the approved management plan and or Group operations manual.

## 7.2. Management Plan Content

7.2.1. Each Group member will have a forest management plan document. This document can be scaled to the size of the property—larger properties will require more detail and analysis. Management plans should be updated at least once every ten years. All management plans will state the following:

- Management objectives
- Description of the forest resource, including:
  - Explanation of forest management systems to be used, i.e., silviculture;
  - Explanation for the rate of proposed harvest;
  - Provisions for monitoring environmental conditions;
  - Means of protecting the environment from the impacts of management;
  - Means of identifying and protecting rare, threatened and endangered ecosystems and species, and HCVFs

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- Maps of the property, management units, protected areas, watercourses;
- Explanation of timber harvest operational techniques planned.

7.2.2. The forest management plans and or Group operations manual state the procedures by which Group members or their contractors will monitor forest condition. (MCFMG-DOC-013)

### 7.3. Inventory

7.3.1. The Group Member forest management plan will describe monitoring procedures necessary to address the requirements of Criterion 8.2. Monitoring will be documented using the Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-020).

7.3.2. Group Member Forest Management Plans will describe forest composition, standing volume, growth and yield of timber, and general ecological conditions.

## 8. Monitoring

### 8.1. Monitoring

8.1.1. Part 3 Internal Monitoring describes the procedure by which Group members will be monitored within the Group.

### 8.2. Data Collection

8.2.1. Group members will report annually on timber harvest and reforestation by using the Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-020) to record volumes harvested. **The use of the Annual Activity Report Form (MCFMG-DOC-014), has been deemed to be repetitive and the Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-20), will be used to compile all data for The Group Annual Report (MCFMG-DOC-15) effective 6-1-12.** The Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-020) will be compared with copies or original mill tally sheets from Group members. The Group Members Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist will be summarized in the Group Annual Report (MCFMG-DOC-015).

8.2.2. The Group Manager will ensure Group Members monitor forest conditions and collect data based on Criteria 8.2 as stated below will be reported using the Activity/Harvest Inspection Checklist (MCFMG-DOC-020).

- 8.2.2.1. Yield of all forest products harvested.
- 8.2.2.2. Growth rates, regeneration and condition of the forest.
- 8.2.2.3. Composition and observed changes in the flora and fauna.
- 8.2.2.4. Environmental and social impacts of harvesting and other operations.
- 8.2.2.5. Costs, productivity, and efficiency of forest management.

### 8.3. Inventory Procedure

8.3.1. MCFMG will maintain, in the database, an annual allowable cut calculation for each Member property, summarized on the Group Annual Allowable Harvest Summary

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(MCFMG-DOC-011) (*group AAC*). The entire Membership harvest will be tracked through annual monitoring by MCFMG to compute the group harvest volume. The group harvest of the entire Membership will not exceed the group AAC.

8.3.2. Group members must include procedures for forest inventory in their management plans. All properties larger than the Group average and all properties with regular, significant timber harvest will calculate AAC for that property. These properties will base AAC on forest inventory. The Group Manager will estimate an AAC based on soils, stand age, and species composition for small properties, as described below

#### 1. Steps to Determining AAC

The annual growth is calculated using the data from the USFS GForest Website, including surrounding counties in South Carolina and Georgia. The average growth data by forest type/dominant species is applied to the stands and acreages within this management plan and aggregated on the MCFMG level.

Soil type data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) soil data was used to develop site index for this management plan.

The economy has negatively impacted forest management in this geographical area by restricting the market place. Many forest land owners have delayed harvests of stands that have reached silvicultural maturity because they were unable to market their products. When markets open back up there may be stands that need to be harvested to prevent disease and insect problems. The overall harvests may vary above or below the average annual allowable harvest, but will on average be at a level that is allowable and beneficial to the forest.

### 9. High Conservation Value Forests

#### 9.1. Role of Group Certification

9.1.1. Though most lands eligible for the Group program have been significantly altered from their condition prior to European settlement, forests and habitats with high conservation value do remain within the Group focus area. Group members manage their property for the property's specific forest values, while the group as a whole manages HCVs in a coordinated fashion. While the matrix landscape (not FSC-certified) presents a risk to HCVs, the growth of the group activity leads to a larger coordinated HCV effort.

9.1.2. The Group uses a program of initial assessment Group HCVF Assessment Report (MCFMG-DOC-024), Group Member HCVF/Cultural/Land Use Questionnaire (MCFMG-DOC-025) and annual monitoring, appropriate to the size and vulnerability of the conservation attributes. The presence of, impacts on and mitigation of impact is monitored as part of the process using site visits, spot checks, Annual Reporting Form reporting. The Group Manager tracks the total area and type of HCVF that is protected at the group



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level. This monitoring will also quantify the impact of the group on HCVs to ensure that the net impact will be an increase in acres of protected HCVF.

9.1.3. High Conservation Value Forests are those that possess one or more of the following attributes:

- Forest areas containing globally, regionally, or nationally significant: concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
- Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems.
- Forest areas that provide critical ecosystem services. See FSC Principle 5.5.
  - Habitat for old-growth/ late successional forest-dependent species;
  - Watershed protection;
  - Erosion control;
  - Protection of fish-bearing streams.
- Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., 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).

9.1.4. It is important to note that high conservation value habitats are not limited to forests. The Group recognizes that Group member properties may include rare wetlands, prairies, shorelines, or other habitats in the forest that merit conservation. The Group requires that the management planning process include steps to identify intact natural communities within or adjacent to Group member properties. These communities can be identified through existing records and databases, interviews with the landowner, and site reconnaissance. Group staff will assist land owners/managers in verifying that appropriate steps are taken to determine the presence of HCVF attributes on Group member lands. The Group member's assessment will be conducted at the time of drafting or submitting the management plan to the Group manager. (See FSC Principle 9)

9.1.5. The Group Manager will conduct an annual HCVF assessment on current areas identified as such. If there are any changes to the HCVF's already identified in the MCFMG then the Group Manager will make notations in the management plans. If there happen to be no changes to the HCVF's currently identified or no added HCVF's throughout the year then this information will be communicated by the Group Manager. Any additional FMU's that fall outside the initial geographical area of the MCFMG will have an HCVF evaluation conducted.

## 9.2. Framework

9.2.1. Group members and their contractors must assess the properties for high conservation value forests. The Group uses the framework developed by Gary Dodge, Director of Science & Certification for FSC-US. See *FSC-US HCVF Draft Framework 20 July*

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2010.pdf at <http://www.fscus.org/documents/>. The assessment of HCVF must appear in the Group member forest management plan. At the time of joining, The Group Manager will verify the adequacy of the HCVF assessment and framework application. The framework will be used as a checklist to verify that Group members have properly identified HCVs, and can appropriately protect HCVFs.

9.2.2. The purpose of the HCVF principal in the FSC standard is to provide adequate protection of sites of exceptional biodiversity, exceptionally intact forest landscapes, underrepresented or rare ecological communities, with threatened species or communities, fragile ecological characteristics that could be easily damaged by active forestry operations, and forests that protect water resources and human uses.

### 9.3. Procedures

9.3.1. Group staff will verify procedures are followed to evaluate the effectiveness of Group member HCV assessments and that management plans have followed these procedures:

- Identify existing resources (maps, management plans, scientific and historical literature)
- Determine if HCVFs are present on the property of interest
- Consult with foresters and other resource professionals, the local community, and American Indian community
- If HCVF attributes are identified, the land manager will proceed to the next two steps below. In the absence of likely HCVs, the manager may stop here. However, Members must document the assessment and be aware of the possibility of later identification of HCVs because of, for example, new scientific knowledge or shifting habitat
- The Management Plan must address the likely impact of management on HCVF, and propose means of minimizing negative impacts
- There must be a monitoring plan to annually check the impact of management on HCVs. Monitoring must include field checks; and if management activities are causing negative impacts, the management plan must be adapted to attempt to reduce or eliminate the impact. Field checks can be informally conducted as part of other management activity.

9.3.2. Members will report in their Annual Forms (MCFMG-DOC-014 an MCFMG-DOC-013) responses the following information about their property. Each item will specify whether the particular HCV is present and, if so, will describe its location, extent, and characteristics. See *FSC Step by Step Guide*, p. 18.

- Concentration of rare, threatened or endemic species
- Landscape-level contiguous forest area
- Rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- Area critical for:
  - watershed function
  - erosion control
  - fire barrier
- Basic needs of local community

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- Area critical to cultural identity

9.3.3. For Group members who identify HCVPs on their property, The Group Manager will assist with the creation of site-specific management options. If a high conservation value habitat is identified, the management plan must provide information about the location, size, and composition of the habitat. The management plan must also provide detailed guidance for appropriate management that is in compliance with both FSC standards and the most current and reliable knowledge about effective protection, restoration, or maintenance of the identified habitat. The management must comply with all applicable regulations. Appropriate state or federal agencies must be contacted as required.

## 10. Plantations

- 10.1. The definition of a plantation in the FSC US Forest Management Standard, Principle 10 is, “tree dominated areas substantially lacking in natural forest attributes that generally require human intervention to be maintained.”
- 10.2. Most planted stands within the Group possess characteristics of semi-natural stands by having extended rotation lengths and possessing characteristics of native ecosystems (multiple flora species and multi-layered stand structures).
- 10.3. Group Members may maintain “Principle 10” plantations on their property. “Principle 10” plantations on land converted from natural forest after 1994 are not certifiable if the current owner is the party responsible for conversion unless the plantation is being managed for restoration to semi-natural conditions. Existing forest in High Conservation Value areas must not be converted to “Principle 10” plantations or non-forest land uses such as agriculture.
- 10.4. Natural forest will be maintained or restored on properties with significant “Principle 10” plantations. Areas of forest/plantation that are to be restored are chosen using a landscape analysis focusing on enhancing native forest characteristics or providing important ecological benefits such as under-represented forest conditions or the social values associated with natural forest condition.
- 10.5. Where natural ecosystems were previously converted to plantations, a percentage of the total area of the FMU must be maintained and/or restored to natural or semi-natural cover is:
  - 10.5.1. For 100 acres or less, at least 10 percent;
  - 10.5.2. For 101-1,000 acres, at least 15 percent;
  - 10.5.3. For 1,001-10,000 acres, at least 20 percent;
  - 10.5.4. For > 10,000 acres, at least 25 percent.
- 10.6. New plantations will establish more diverse forest stands suited to each site. Nursery stock will be of local origin. See Section 5 Environmental Impacts on the GMO and exotic species policies. Soil fertility, forest health, e.g., risk of pest outbreak, fire damage, invasive species presence, and social impacts, will be monitored and protected by Members.
- 10.7. Plantations will be mitigated by mandatory protection of natural forest on the remaining area. See conservation zones in 5.6 Environmental Impacts, above. Such natural forest may be managed on

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long rotations, depending on the ecology of the site. Enrichment planting is a recommended technique for establishing biodiversity in plantations and harvested natural stands.