SmartLogging:

Independent, Performance-based Certification for Responsible Loggers

Service Description

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A Service of the Rainforest Alliance SmartWood Program

Summary

Many forests around the world have limited or non-existent management plans, especially small and medium-sized ownerships. Yet these forests represent an increasingly important source of timber and non-timber forest products. Even with the best management plan, a forest can be degraded by poor harvesting practices. Recognizing the impact that wood harvesting companies can have on the health of forest ecosystems, the SmartWood program of the Rainforest Alliance has worked with forest products companies, loggers, forestry specialists, academics, and environmentalists to develop "SmartLogging" - a third-party, performance-based certification system for loggers.

To achieve SmartLogging certification, loggers must demonstrate that they employ socially, environmentally and economically responsible harvesting practices, adopting regional best management practices, protecting wildlife habitat, complying with worker safety regulations and operating an ethical business. After an initial certification assessment, SmartLogging certified loggers undergo annual performance audits to ensure continued conformance with the standards.

SmartLogging provides an opportunity for conscientious loggers to gain public and market recognition, provides peace of mind to private landowners who hire certified loggers and allows forest products companies a means to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable forestry practices by "greening" their supply chain.

SmartLogging certification is available to individual loggers and logging companies, groups of loggers often represented by loggers' associations, and forest products companies.

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1.0 Introduction

The wood products industry has been under intense scrutiny in recent years as environmentalists, consumers, landowners, and policy makers have sought to achieve a balance between production, the stability of resource-based economies, and the long term sustainability of the world's forests. A number of initiatives have resulted, with the focus primarily upon the land management and production practices of wood products industries and the safety of individual loggers.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC), Lembaga Ekolabel Indonesia (LEI), and Malaysia Timber Certification Council (MTCC) among others certify that forest management companies and governments are managing their lands in a manner that will not jeopardize the availability of forest resources for future generations. Logger education programs and low impact logging initiatives provide training courses and certificates addressing safety and technical skills.

While these initiatives have led to improvements, one element of the wood products industry still remains largely unrecognized, or at least only indirectly recognized or monitored – the logging community. Wood harvesting companies, ranging from sole proprietors to large-scale businesses to state run enterprises, have perhaps the greatest direct impact on the health of the forest ecosystem. They also often operate on forest land where there has been limited, if any management planning. Their operations supply raw material for wood products industries, but they also have the potential to better preserve or damage water and soil quality, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and forest aesthetics.

Recognizing the need for a third party certification program for forest products harvesting companies, the SmartWood Program of the Rainforest Alliance worked with forest products companies, loggers, forestry specialists, academics, environmentalists and other interested parties to develop the "SmartLogging" Program. The purpose of the program is performance-based, third party logger certification. The end goal will be to ensure a supply of environmentally harvested forest products from the world's working forests. The SmartLogging program has, with multi-stakeholder consultation, developed best practice logging standards and assessment procedures.

2.0 Benefits of Involvement in SmartLogging

There are many benefits to being involved in SmartLogging. Here are several key benefits:

1. SmartWood will provide a technically rigorous third-party evaluation of the candidate's harvesting practices;

2. SmartWood will provide letters of support and other private business-to-business communications written by SmartWood on a case-by-case basis that provide proof of SmartLogging certified loggers and forest product companies commitment to responsible harvesting practices;

3. Listing on the Rainforest Alliance and SmartWood websites;

4. Public use of Rainforest Alliance and SmartWood names (uses must be specifically approved by the Rainforest Alliance); and

5. Assistance from Rainforest Alliance/SmartWood in disseminating information about your involvement in the SmartLogging Program.

3.0 SmartLogging Program Requirements

To attain SmartLogging certification, the candidate operation must conform to the requirements defined in the SmartLogging Certification Standard. The SmartLogging Standard is categorized into eight subject areas that are used by auditors for assessing performance of harvesting operations.

SmartLogging certification is performance-based, meaning that the assessment of an individual harvester or group of harvesters will focus on evidence gathered through documentation, on-the-ground harvesting practices, and interviews with the harvester and stakeholders.

The subject areas for evaluation in the SmartLogging Certification Standard are:

1. Legal Requirements
2. Harvest Planning and Monitoring
3. Harvest Practices
4. Community Values
5. Occupational Health and Safety
6. Business Viability
7. Continuous Improvement and Innovation
8. Silviculture and Reforestation

Each subject area is assessed by evaluating associated criteria and indicators. The fundamental intent of each criterion is the most important factor for SmartLogging assessments. Conformance at the criterion level is required to receive a SmartLogging certificate. The indicators are a tool for assessing conformance with each criterion. All indicators must be evaluated during the initial assessment. Auditors are to use professional judgment when evaluating the indicators, and must reach a clear conclusion as to whether the fundamental intent of each criterion has been met. Verifiers may be used by the auditor(s) to help evaluate the indicator, but are not required to be met by the candidate operation. If there is nonconformance at the criterion level, a major Corrective Action Request (CAR) will be issued. Nonconformance with an indicator will generally result in a minor CAR. CARs issued as a result of non-conformances must be closed (met) during the audit year.

A SmartLogging certified operation will be required to submit to an annual audit to ensure continued compliance with the SmartLogging Standard. The annual audit first will focus on applicable CARs, second on issues raised by stakeholders, and third on whether the operation is continuing to meet the SmartLogging standard.

4.0 Overview of the certification assessment process

SmartLogging provides a standardized, yet flexible process for loggers and forest product companies to attain certification. The steps of this process are outlined below.

4.1 Application and Service Agreement

The certification assessment process begins with a SmartLogging candidate submitting an application to SmartWood. The candidate harvester or group manager (when a group of loggers applies for certification) is assigned a SmartWood Task Manager who will work with the SmartLogging certification candidate to determine the scope of certification and develop a certification assessment cost estimate. After agreeing on the budget, a Service Agreement is formalized and the assessment process can begin.

4.2 Auditor Selection and Planning

The SmartWood Task Manager, with input from the candidate operation, selects a qualified Lead Auditor and other team members (where appropriate) to participate in the assessment. The Lead Auditor is chosen based on their experience and knowledge of logging operations, master logger programs, BMPs, forest management and SmartLogging standards and auditing experience. The auditor must also be free of conflicts of interest with the certification candidate. For example, the auditor can not have any financial interest in the candidate's operations, come from a competing operation or have any ongoing disagreement with the candidate. Auditors are provided with detailed guidance on the certification process and are provided training and written SmartLogging auditing procedures.

4.3 Fieldwork Evaluation

Evaluation of conformance with the standard is based upon data collected by the auditor(s) through review of the harvester's documentation, interviews with employees and stakeholders, and field observations and measurements. The Lead Auditor organizes opening meetings with the harvester or group manager to review the assessment scope and procedures, and certification standards. The assessment process then moves quickly to the field phase. Inspections are made to sites chosen by SmartLogging auditor(s) based on a comprehensive review of the candidate's harvesting systems, harvesting jobs, forest conditions, discussions with interested/affected stakeholders, and identification of critical issues or challenging sites.

4.4 Data Analysis and Decision making

The auditor(s) evaluates performance by the harvester at the criterion and indicator level of the standard. Any non-conformances are analyzed and classified as either minor or major and specific corrective action requests (CARs) are defined. The following definitions apply, and are the basis for all certification assessments:

Nonconformance	Corrective Action Type	CAR definition
Major nonconformance: failure to meet the objectives of the criterion	Major CAR	Requirements that harvester must meet before SmartLogging certification by SmartWood can take place.
Minor nonconformance: noncompliance not leading to failure at the criterion level	Minor CAR	Requirements that harvester must meet, within a defined time period (usually one year), during the period of the certification.
Observation: very minor problem or beginning stages of a problem that if untreated could result in a minor non-conformance	Observation	Non-mandatory actions or recommendations suggested by the assessment team to address the operation's performance.

5.0 Complementary Add-on Certifications

SmartLogging candidate operations may also apply for the following complementary add-on certifications when they apply for SmartLogging certification:

Controlled Wood – Controlled wood certification assures consumers and forest product companies that the forest products they buy have not been illegally harvested and have not originated from controversial sources. In order for companies to make a product using materials from both FSC certified and non-FSC certified forests they must obtain Controlled Wood from the non-FSC forests. Harvesters certified by SmartWood to the Controlled Wood standard will be able to supply those companies with Controlled Wood. Controlled Wood certification is based on the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Standard FSC-STD-30-010 – Controlled Wood for Forest Management Enterprises.

Chain of Custody (CoC) – CoC certification assures consumers and forest product companies that the wood they buy comes from certified harvesting operations. Also based on FSC Standards, a CoC candidate operation is evaluated to ensure that they have systems in place to track FSC certified wood from the forest to the manufacturer

Verification of Legal Origin (VLO)/Verification of Legal Compliance (VLC) – VLO focuses on the auditing of timber from forest sources to verify a documented legal right to harvest pursuant to the laws and regulations of the government of jurisdiction and that those suppliers follow and maintain documented chain of custody systems. VLC expands upon the basic component of legal origin, through verification that the timber was produced in a manner that complies with all applicable and relevant laws and regulations governing forest management and trade in the jurisdiction.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Objective 8 – Candidate operations can also meet the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard (SFIS) Objective for Procurement (SFIS Objective 8) through the SmartLogging Program.

6.0 Who Can Get Certified

SmartLogging certification may be obtained by:

- Individual harvesting companies,
- Individual harvesters (i.e. sole proprietors);
- Groups of harvesters (often represented by a logger association); or
- Forest products companies.

Whether individual loggers or groups of loggers are certified, each candidate operation must demonstrate compliance with SmartLogging standards. For group SmartLogging certification assessments, a sample of group members is selected and audited and each group member is expected to demonstrate full compliance with the SmartLogging criteria and indicators.

Comment on the SmartLogging Standard and Certification Processes

We strongly encourage input, either positive or negative on both our certification standards and our certification procedures. For a copy of the SmartWood guidelines and more information about the program, see www.smartwood.org or contact your local field representative or Walter Smith, Senior Technical Specialist, SmartWood Headquarters (61 Millet Street, Suite 201, Richmond, Vermont USA 05477, telephone 802-434-8701 or FAX 802-434-3116).