



Principles and Criteria Review

Briefing Paper on Biodiversity Conservation

Bonn, 08th November 2010

This paper was produced by the P&C Review Working Group (P&C Review WG) to explain its approach to conservation of biodiversity in the revised Principles and Criteria and to address stakeholder concerns raised in relation to this approach. The paper will also serve as a basis for further discussions at the P&C Review Workshop on the 15th and 16th of November 2010. The P&C Review Working Group does not pretend that this could be The Last Word on the issue.

In line with its terms of reference, the tasks of the P&C Review Working Group are mainly:

- a. to clarify the FSC requirements, so as to reduce disparities in evaluations by ASI-accredited conformity assessment bodies;
- b. to shift the wording of Criteria towards outcomes where practicable; and
- c. to minimize the variety of interpretations found in national forest stewardship standards and national adaptations of the generic standards developed by the conformity assessment bodies.

Should you have any further questions regarding this issue, please contact Matthias Fecht at m.fecht@fsc.org

What is the issue as perceived by some FSC stakeholders?

Several stakeholders have questioned the extent to which an Organization should take account of conservation measures existing in the surrounding region and landscape when deciding on measures for Biodiversity Conservation within the Management Unit.

In particular, the question concerns cases where biodiversity is well conserved in the surrounding landscape, especially in adjacent or nearby official Protected Areas. In such cases, some stakeholders have argued that it should be quite unnecessary for an Organization to establish conservation areas within its management unit (unless required for HCVs), since the conservation of all biodiversity values is already assured.

Other stakeholders have argued that the establishment of conservation areas in every certified management unit has always been, and should continue to be, a basic FSC requirement which must be maintained.

What is the response by the P&C Review WG?

The P&C Review WG recognized that the concept of a conservation area is every management unit has been with FSC from the start. It has been built into several national standards, sometimes with a percentage-based size requirement. Some relaxation is allowed for SLIMFs.

To relax this requirement would require a clear understanding of exactly when and where such areas are not a valuable element of good forest management. However, the P&C Review WG has taken account of the following considerations:



- Conservation specialists have a high degree of agreement that effective biodiversity conservation at national and regional levels cannot depend only on officially Protected Areas. What happens outside such areas is also vital for the conservation of the majority of species.
- In many countries, Protected Areas have weak levels of protection, and in all countries they are subject to political decisions.
- If some conservation areas are to serve the purpose of base-line monitoring of the effects of management activities, they should preferably be inside the management unit.
- P&C Review WG members share the view that every certificate holder should be ready to assign some area of the management unit where the main objective is environmental and biological conservation. This effort must be sufficiently intensive and extensive that the conserved areas are, or are designed to become, self-sustainable. The WG does not support 'window-dressing' odd fragments of the management unit as conservation areas.

At the same time, the P&C Review WG members recognize that the scale, intensity and objectives of conservation areas and efforts should vary according to the circumstances, especially according to the scale and intensity of management activities, the risks caused by these activities to environmental values inside and outside the management unit, the size of the management unit itself, and the quality and status of the environmental values inside and outside the management unit. One of the implications is that management units in regions where biological diversity is already well-protected may require smaller conservation areas (or fewer but larger areas), and/or less intensive conservation efforts than management units which contain a high proportion of the biodiversity values of the region. Such decisions should be taken case by case, and reviewed by the certification bodies. This issue is covered in more detail in the latest draft for Principle 6, especially for Criteria 6.4 and 6.5 (see below).

Proposed criterion 6.5 does not require that any portion of existing plantations be converted/restored to some natural ecosystem, as implied by current Criterion 10.5. Instead the proposed criterion refers to "the management unit", while the current criterion refers to "a proportion of the overall forest management area." All management units are expected to manage sample areas for conservation, which may in some cases require that some planted areas be managed towards more natural ecosystems. This approach is fully compatible with the precedents set during 15 years of FSC certification, see for example Draft Generic Indicators 6.2.8L and 6.2.8LP, shown in FSC-GUI-60-004 Structure and Content of Forest Stewardship Standards, which reflect the results of an analysis of 17 national or regional standards and 12 certification body generic standards existing in June 2007.

In line with the above the P&C Review Working Group is proposing the following revised version of Criteria 6.4 and 6.5.

6.4 (revised 6.2) The Organization shall protect the survival and viability of rare and threatened species and their habitats in the Management Unit through conservation areas, connectivity and (where necessary) other direct measures. These conservation areas and other measures shall be proportionate to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities and to the conservation status and ecological requirements of the rare and threatened species. The Organization shall take into account the geographic range and ecological requirements of rare and threatened species beyond the boundary of the Management Unit, when determining the measures to be taken inside the Management Unit.



Explanatory Notes:

1. Criterion 6.4 deals with the survival of rare and threatened species (as defined), while Criterion 6.5 deals with conservation of ecosystems not especially linked to rare or threatened species, and Criterion 6.6 deals with biological diversity in general. Rare, fragile and threatened habitats and ecosystems are covered in HCV 4
2. Habitats for rare and threatened species include areas for procreation, feeding and shelter, including seasonal cycles of breeding, migration, hibernation etc.
3. The objective of the criterion is to ensure survival and viability of rare and threatened species and their habitats. Therefore, the conservation areas may include or consist of areas that provide full protection and security against human interference and site-disturbing activities, with natural processes and/or areas that provide long-term spatial protection, where this is necessary for their survival and viability. Conservation areas in general are covered by C.6.5, while this C.6.4 covers the special requirements of those rare and threatened species which may require other measures in addition to other designated conservation areas, such as the scheduling of management activities during breeding seasons.
4. Some areas may require deliberate management interventions to maintain or improve the attributes of the area for the benefit of rare and threatened species.
5. The survival of rare and threatened species does not always require habitats that are completely protected from human activities. Therefore, depending on the specific situation, properly controlled forest management and harvesting in the management unit and in some conservation areas may be fully compatible with the objective of ensuring survival and viability of rare and threatened species and their habitats.
6. Proportionate to scale, intensity and risk means that higher levels of potential and actual negative impacts of management activities require larger efforts in relation to species protection. Other direct measures may include restoration of habitats, introduction or enrichment with animal or plant species, the control of alien predators and pests, the scheduling of management activities to avoid disturbance during nesting or fruiting seasons, the implementation of low-impact harvesting, and many other prevention or mitigation measures that are not in conflict with national laws and regulations.
7. Rare species (as defined) are uncommon or scarce, but not classified as threatened. These species are located in geographically restricted areas or specific habitats, or are scantily scattered on a large scale. They are approximately equivalent to the IUCN (2001) category of Near Threatened (NT), including species that are close to qualifying for, or are likely to qualify for, a threatened category in the near future.
8. Threatened species (as defined) meet the IUCN (2001) criteria for Vulnerable (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR), and are facing a high, very high or extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. These categories may be re-interpreted for FSC purposes according to official national classifications (which have legal significance) and to local conditions and population densities (which should affect decisions about appropriate conservation measures)
9. "... geographic range and ecological requirements of rare and threatened species beyond the boundary of the Management Unit..": For example, any rare and threatened species that have a range outside the management unit that is small, fragile and heavily threatened may require greater protective measures inside the management unit than other rare and threatened species that have wide and secure range.



6.5 (revised 6.4) The Organization shall identify, conserve and/or restore representative sample areas of natural ecosystems within the Management Unit. The size, design and connectivity of these areas, and the management measures applied in them, shall be proportionate to the uniqueness, vulnerability, conservation status and value of these ecosystems, and to the scale, intensity and risk of management activities in the management unit as a whole.

Explanatory Notes:

1. Criterion 6.5 deals with conservation of ecosystems not especially linked to rare or threatened species while Criterion 6.4 deals with the protection of rare and threatened species and their habitats.
2. The purpose of the samples is to provide long-term protection of the ecosystems, to help ensure the viability of the species occupying the management unit, to help maintain the resilience and adaptability of the management unit to climate change, and at the same time to provide baseline data for assessments and monitoring of the effects of management in the management unit as a whole, and of natural cyclical and secular changes including climate change
3. This criterion makes it clear that every certified management unit is expected to include sample areas which are managed and protected primarily (but not necessarily exclusively) for purposes of conservation (and, where necessary, restoration) of native ecosystems. Other management objectives may be applied in the same areas, so long as they are compatible with the primary objective of conservation.
4. The scale of conservation and/or restoration is determined by the conservation status, value and uniqueness of the ecosystems in question as well as the scale, intensity and risk of management activities in the management unit as a whole. Special rules may be applied to very small properties among SLIMFs, and to group certificates.
5. The criterion refers to both conservation and/or restoration, because restoration might not be required in Management Units with intact examples of natural ecosystems.
6. "Restore": In Management Units with only degraded (or no) examples of natural vegetation, The Organization is expected to designate and manage sample areas principally for biological diversity of native species, using appropriate restoration techniques to create areas of natural vegetation where necessary. This does not amount to any obligation to restore or recreate native ecosystems which no longer exist, but rather areas of native species of plants and animals as a contribution to biodiversity conservation.
7. The concept of uniqueness takes account of the extent and range of these ecosystems inside and outside the Management Unit. It includes the concepts of rarity, conservation status, value and importance. Uniqueness is high if the management unit contains a large proportion of a natural ecosystem with limited distribution. Uniqueness is low when the management unit contains only a small proportion of its natural range.
8. Conservation status refers to the formal status of the ecosystem, in national regulations or habitat classification systems. Conservation value concerns how rare or uncommon an ecosystem is, how important it is to the species that occupy or use it, and how vulnerable it is to disturbance.
9. The criterion clarifies that the size, the management practices and level of protection of the sample must be proportionate to the uniqueness, conservation status and value of the natural ecosystems. Accordingly, the Organization has a greater responsibility to conserve natural ecosystems where there is good reason to believe that specific natural



ecosystems are inadequately protected in the region, according to available stakeholder and expert opinion. Accordingly, samples may be smaller or fewer when these ecosystems are effectively protected elsewhere in the region, and when they are common or widespread.

10. The identification of suitable sample areas, and compliance with this criterion, may require engagement of national and local authorities, scientific experts and/or other knowledgeable stakeholders mandated for or specialized in the conservation and restoration of ecosystems.
11. The Criterion does not require that these conservation areas in each management unit should be given legal 'protection status' under national laws and regulations. Such legal status may be appropriate and beneficial in some circumstances, to be considered by managers case by case. The samples may be integrated into national or regional habitat protection plans in order to contribute to landscape level conservation, but this does not imply a transfer of ownership or responsibility.

Proposed FSC Glossary definition of Conservation Areas

Several people suggest the need for a definition of conservation areas / protected areas, etc. It would be helpful to have a statement of the objective of Conservation Areas, for purposes of compliance with the P&C, since different criteria seem to require Conservation Areas for slightly different objectives. I suggest something like:

Conservation Areas: for the purposes of the FSC P&C, Conservation Areas are areas of land and ecosystems designated in the management planning documents, and actively managed, to provide a credible assurance of achieving any one or more of the following objectives:

- (1) to ensure the long-term maintenance of viable populations of all species resident in the management unit (C.6.6), with special reference to rare and threatened species and their habitats (C.6.4),
- (2) to ensure the long-term maintenance of samples of natural ecosystems found in, or typical of, the management unit, including their characteristic age and size distributions and soil characteristics, with special reference to rare and threatened ecosystems and habitats, and those that are vulnerable to disturbances, sufficient to serve as base-line reference points for detecting and monitoring environmental changes in other parts of the management unit (C.6.5), and
- (3) to establish and maintain natural ecosystems, adapted to the site (C.6.5), as a contribution to the conservation or flora and fauna in the region (C.6.6). Conservation Areas should be managed in ways that ensure that these and/or other objectives are achieved, to be determined case by case, which may require some interventions, and may not necessarily exclude other practices such as controlled harvesting.

Sources

FSC-GUI-60-004 (V1-0) FSC Forest Stewardship Standards: structure, content and suggested indicators: http://www.fsc.org/fileadmin/web-data/public/document_center/national_FSC_standards/FSC-GUI-60-004_EN_V1-0_Structure_Content_FSS.pdf