

Smallholder Access Program pilot test



The background

In the Southern and Central Appalachian region of the United States, more than half of forest land is owned by private landowners, with 39 million hectares of forest smaller than 100 hectares. Commonly, the only forest management that occurs in these small forests is a harvest once every 40-60 years, so long-term forest certification, with annual audits, just doesn't make sense for them.

However, collectively, this group holds significant wood resources that, if certified, "would reduce impacts on environmental values, and help to address the demand from US-based companies looking to source local timber responsibly."

"Long-term forest certification just doesn't make sense for these smallholders."

What we are doing

The Smallholder Access Program (SAP) is a two-year pilot project designed to boost access to forest certification for woodland owners with less than 100 hectares in the Southern and Central Appalachian region of the United States.

Together, FSC and the Rainforest Alliance's Appalachian Woodlands Alliance created a very simple standard, with only 31 indicators. It focuses on responsible forest management, as well as critical issues of importance for both the environment and forest owners in the region. It also recognizes that in this region, and with this group of smallholders, there is a low risk for negative impacts on many of the social and environmental values that are addressed in most FSC forest management standards.

The SAP pilot builds on the existing framework of FSC forest management group certification, with the US-based forest owners

encouraged to gain access to certification by joining forces with organizations that already have experience with FSC in this region.

Collectively, many forests will become temporarily FSC certified and the harvested timber will also be FSC certified.

Key features

- The South and Central Appalachia is an **ideal testing ground**, with 50-90% of wood supply in the region coming from forests of less than 100 hectares.
- The process behind this approach **can be replicated in other regions of US** or even the world, depending on the results of this pilot test.
- The temporary certification is focused on a short period of time just before, during, and after a harvest.
- The pilot project is testing new approaches to FSC forest management groups, auditing, and timber certification.

Current progress and next steps

FSC is now monitoring progress among the landowners and certificate holders that are taking part in the pilot.

After they have gone through a formal audit, and additional third party experts have been onsite to assess the outcomes, a qualitative evaluation will be carried out, including exploring whether the SAP poses any reputational risk to FSC or any wider environmental or social risk.

The first-year evaluation will take place in May 2020.

Reference documents

- FSC-POL-01-001 FSC Policy for Pilot Tests of Draft FSC Standards
- FSC-STD-USA-01-2010 USA Natural and Plantations EN
- FSC-STD-30-005 FSC Standard for Group Entities in Forest Management Groups
- FSC-STD-20-007 Forest Management Evaluations

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