

# Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Forest Management Audit Report

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## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – County Forest Program

Certificate #SCS-SFI/FM-000083

SFI 2022 Standards and Rules®, Forest Management  
4<sup>th</sup> Surveillance Audit

Client Address	<u>Wisconsin DNR - Forestry Division 101 S Webster Street PO Box 7921</u>
Client Contact	<u>Doug Brown</u> <u>Phone: 715-966-0157</u> <u>Douglas.Brown@Wisconsin.gov</u>
Client Website	<u>https://wisconsincountyforests.com</u>

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# Public Summary Report

## SFI® Forest Management Standard

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### SECTION A – PUBLIC SUMMARY

#### Foreword

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#### Organization of the Report

This report of the results of your audit assessment is divided into two sections. Section A provides the public summary and background information that is required by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®. Section A is made available to the public and is intended to provide an overview of the audit process, the management programs and policies applied to the forest, and the results of the audit. Section A will be posted on the SFI website and Section B contains more detailed results and information for required SFI record-keeping or for use by the Certified Organization.

#### Principles of SFI Forest Management

The SFI 2022 Standards and Rules® for Forest Management promotes sustainable forestry and includes measures to *protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.*

The 13 *SFI Principles* for Forest Management are:

1. **Sustainable Forestry:** To practice sustainable forestry to meet the needs of the present while promoting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by practicing a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation and the managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products and ecosystem services such as the conservation of soil, air and water quality, climate change mitigation, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats, recreation and aesthetics.
2. **Forest Productivity and Health:** To provide for regeneration after harvest and maintain the productive capacity of the forest land base, and to protect and maintain long-term forest and soil productivity. In addition, to protect forests from economically or environmentally undesirable levels of wildfire, pests, diseases, invasive species and other damaging agents and thus maintain and improve long-term forest health and productivity.
3. **Protection of Water Resources:** To protect water bodies and riparian areas, and to conform with forestry best management practices to protect water quality, to meet the needs of both human communities and ecological systems.
4. **Protection of Biological Diversity:** To manage forests in ways that protect and promote biological diversity, including animal and plant species, wildlife habitats, ecologically important species and native forest cover types.

5. **Aesthetics and Recreation:** To manage the visual impacts of forest operations, and to provide recreational opportunities for the public.
6. **Protection of Special Sites:** To manage lands that are ecologically important, geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.
7. **Responsible Fiber Sourcing in North America:** To use and promote among other forest landowners sustainable forestry that is both scientifically credible and economically, environmentally and socially responsible.
8. **Legal Compliance:** To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.
9. **Research:** To support advances in sustainable forest management through forestry research, science and technology.
10. **Training and Education:** To improve the practice of sustainable forestry through training and education programs.
11. **Community Involvement and Social Responsibility:** To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry on all lands through community involvement, socially responsible practices, and through recognition and respect of Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional forest-related knowledge.
12. **Transparency:** To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the Forest Management Standard by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.
13. **Continual Improvement:** To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to sustainable forestry.

## 1. General Information

### 1.1 Name, Contact, and Certificate Information

<b>Organization Name</b>	Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – County Forest Program	
<b>Certification Representative</b>	Doug Brown Phone: 715-966-0157 <a href="mailto:Douglas.Brown@Wisconsin.gov">Douglas.Brown@Wisconsin.gov</a>	Kristin Lambert 608-212-0320 <a href="mailto:Kristin.lambert@wisconsin.gov">Kristin.lambert@wisconsin.gov</a>
<b>Phone Number</b>	715-966-0157	
<b>Address</b>	Wisconsin DNR - Forestry Division 101 S Webster Street PO Box 7921	
<b>Audit Dates</b>	31 July – 4 August 2023	
<b>SFI Certificate Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multi-site. This Audit covered the requirements of the central organization and a subset of sites. These sites were selected based on proximity and length of time since previous audits. See Summary of Audit Itinerary for details of sampling.	

## 2. Summary Description of the Management Unit(s)

<b>Description of Ownership</b>	A history of the Wisconsin County Forest program is included here: <a href="https://wisconsincountyforests.com/about/history/">https://wisconsincountyforests.com/about/history/</a>  All area is publicly owned by counties included in the certificate scope as described here: <a href="https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/timbersales/countyforests">https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/timbersales/countyforests</a>		
<b>Total Forest Area (Acres)</b>	1,446,251 acres		
<b>Description of Sites and Group Membership under Scope</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: List of all sites/FMUs under scope of the certificate, including certified acres.		
	<b>County</b>	<b>SFI-only certified acres</b>	<b>FSC- and SFI-certified acres (dual certification)</b>
	Ashland		40,305
	Barron		16,304
	Bayfield		174,487
	Burnett	111,516	
	Chippewa		
	Clark		
	Douglas		281,893
	Eau Claire		52,712
	Florence		37,003
	Forest		15,251
	Iron		175,343
	Jackson		122,685
	Juneau		17,799
Langlade	130,839		
Lincoln		100,843	

	Marathon	30,674	
	Marinette	230,103	
	Oconto		43,792
	Oneida		82,920
	Polk	17,183	
	Price		92,294
	Rusk	89,253	
	Sawyer		115,199
	Taylor		17,728
	Vilas		41,151
	Washburn		150,196
	Wood		37,826
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>609,567</b>	<b>1,615,731</b>
	<b>Management Unit Maps</b>	Provide a link to any public maps. <a href="https://wisconsincountyforests.com/">https://wisconsincountyforests.com/</a> and <a href="https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/CountyForests">https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/CountyForests</a>	
<b>Forest Types and Key Ecological Features</b>	<p>General description of major timber types with a general characterization of management approaches used (natural regeneration vs. planting, thinning regimes, even-aged vs. uneven-aged silvicultural).</p> <p>Wisconsin County timber types are similar to other publicly-managed lands in the state. Refer to the Timber Sale Handbook cited on this webpage: <a href="https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/countyforests/timber">https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/countyforests/timber</a>. Other information on forest types is available from these sources: <a href="#">Wisconsin's Forest Resources</a> and <a href="#">Wisconsin County Timber Management</a>.</p>		
<b>Forest Management Planning</b>	<p>The management plan outlining forest management policies and objectives: A general description of the overarching management system and all county FMPs are available via in links on this webpage: <a href="https://wisconsincountyforests.com/forest-management/">https://wisconsincountyforests.com/forest-management/</a></p>		
<b>Sustainable Harvest Level Assessment</b>	<p>Public Summary of how long-term harvest levels are determined, maintained, and monitored. <i>Note: Details supporting this description are provided with evidence under Performance Measure 1.1, when evaluated.</i></p> <p>Land reconnaissance (recon) is utilized in all the county forestry programs to assess geographical, structural, and compositional attributes of existing resources. Gathered field information is stored in the Wisconsin Forest Inventory &amp; Reporting System (WisFIRS) management application. The database is used to analyze existing resources, evaluate management alternatives, and assist in the development and implementation of management plans. Recon is used to assess forest resource information at the property level. All annual forest management activities done by any program (fish, wildlife, parks, endangered resources, etc.) that alters vegetation in any way (e.g., invasive species treatments, timber stand improvement, site preparation, tree planting, timber sales, and wildlife habitat management) is identified by compartment and stand within WisFIRS. Needs listed in the database, in addition to other multi-disciplinary input, is used in determining property budgets and annual work plans.</p> <p>Minor changes to annual harvest rates occur each year when planning is conducted for each county forest. During planning, if harvest intervals or early or late constraints are changed, the calculated annual allowable harvest changes accordingly. If harvest dates are updated on a large amount of the property, then the AAC can also be impacted.</p>		

	<p>Harvest rates are established using area control methods and the data from WisFIRS. County forestry committees and county boards develop budgets annually, during which AAC acres are considered.</p>
<b>Monitoring Program Description</b>	<p>WisFIRS is the main monitoring tool for tracking harvest volumes and harvest scheduling. The DNR conducts wildlife surveys on county forests: nesting bird surveys, grouse transects, summer deer observations, winter track surveys, bear surveys, and a variety of other wildlife and plant monitoring. Wisconsin County Forestry Program (WCFP) also requires annual reports and annual work plans for each county. These annual plans routinely include information on the system of forest roads. Wisconsin’s Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality includes the need for inspection at regular intervals for active roads and inspection of inactive roads.</p> <p>The Natural Heritage Information (NHI) database is updated based on the results of statewide inventories, data generated by NHI cooperators at universities, nonprofit organizations, federal and state agencies and individuals; and published literature and reports submitted to the DNR.</p> <p>Foresters are trained to assess sites for invasive plants during routine forest reconnaissance. Invasives are on the recon datasheet to allow for retention of this information. Several counties participate in Cooperative Weed Management Associations. Additionally, DNR also has a system for gathering invasives information (aquatic, wetland, and terrestrial) from the general public.</p> <p>Forest health monitoring, including spongy moth and EAB surveys, occurs at the state level. During routine forest reconnaissance, foresters are trained to assess sites for invasives. Some counties locate incidents of invasive species detections via GPS for use when controlling and monitoring.</p> <p>As part of monitoring active harvest sites, as well as closing out such sites, county foresters ensure that protected areas, set-asides, BMPs, and buffer zones are implemented according to the prescription. Notes from visits to active sites were reviewed, as were harvest close-out checklists.</p> <p>FECVs are monitored regularly, which was verified through document review and interviews with county staff. DNR wildlife monitoring can be found on several of its websites, such as <a href="http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/reports.html">http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/reports.html</a> and <a href="http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/report.html">http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/report.html</a>.</p>

### 3. Audit Process

#### 3.1 Applicable Standards and Audit Objectives

<b>Certificate Code</b>	SCS-SFI/FM-000083	
<b>Audit Type</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 1, Preliminary Review Audit	<input type="checkbox"/> Stage 2, Certification Audit
	<input type="checkbox"/> Re-Certification	<input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Additional Surveillance
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <sup>st</sup> , <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup> , <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> Surveillance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer	<input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of Scope
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other ( <i>describe</i> ):	

<b>Applicable Standards</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: 2022 Forest Management. <i>Objectives 1-17. Exclusions, if applicable:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Audits of Multi-Sites <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: Forest Management, 2021. <i>Standards 1-8</i> <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: AFF 2021 Standards for Independently Managed Groups. Sections 1-4 <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: ATFS 2021 Logo Use Guidelines		
<b>Multiple Standards</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A, this is not a multi-standard nor a multi-CB audit. List/Describe other schemes		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Combined <i>A combined audit is when a client is being audited against the requirements of two or more</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Joint <i>A joint audit is when two or more auditing organizations cooperate to audit a single client.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Integrated <i>An integrated audit is when a client has integrated the application of requirements of two or more management systems standards into a single management system and is being audited against more than one standard.</i>
<b>SFI Substitute or Modified Indicators</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None, <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Substitute or Modified Indicators used and justification:		
<b>Certificate Scope/ Statement</b>	<p>The scope of the certificate includes all forest management activities associated with the Organization's sustainable forest management system within defined county-owned- and -managed forest lands located in the State of Wisconsin and includes the harvest, transport, and sale or trade of forest products, and other forest management system activities for the Audit Objectives. The Organization has sufficient control over any contracting or outsourcing of forest management planning and activities to ensure conformance to applicable certification requirements.</p>		
<b>Description of Sampling Approach</b>	<p>Four counties were sampled based on sampling formulae in accreditation requirements. Within each county, the audit team visited examples of management activities completed within the past two years.</p>		
<b>Deviations from the Audit Plan</b>	<p>Were there any significant deviations from the Audit Plan?</p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes. If yes, provide a description and explanation.		

### 3.2 Audit Team

<b>Auditor name:</b>	Kyle Meister	<b>Auditor role:</b>	Lead Auditor
<b>Qualifications:</b>	<p>Kyle Meister is an SFI and FSC Forest Management (FM) and Chain of Custody (COC), and Sustainable Biomass Partnership Lead Auditor with SCS Global Services. He has conducted FSC FM pre-assessments, evaluations or surveillance audits in Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain, and all major forest producing regions of the United States. He has conducted COC assessments in Bolivia, Canada, Panama, and the United States (California, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia). Mr. Meister has successfully completed CAR Lead Verifier, ISO 9001:2008 Lead Auditor, SA8000 Social Systems Introduction and Basic Auditor, RSPO Supply Chain Lead Auditor, SBP Lead Auditor, and FSC Lead Auditor and Trainer Training Courses. He holds a B.S. in Natural Resource Ecology and Management and a B.A. in Spanish from the University of Michigan; and a Master of Forestry from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.</p>		
<b>Auditor name:</b>	Shannon Wilks	<b>Auditor role:</b>	Team Auditor
<b>Qualifications:</b>	<p>Shannon Wilks has over 31 years of professional experience in the forest industry. Roles have included procurement, supply chain management, contract negotiations and environmental management/certification compliance. Experience includes 20 years with a</p>		



	global forest products company, 4 years of industrial site management and 7 years as a forest certification auditor. Mr. Wilks is a Controlled Wood Senior Lead Auditor for FSC® Chain of Custody, FSC Forest Management, FSC Controlled Wood, Lead auditor for Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) Chain of Custody, SFI Fiber Sourcing, SFI Forest Management, SFI Certified Sourcing, American Tree Farm System®-Georgia Tree Farm Inspector #165961, Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) Chain of Custody Standard and a Lead Auditor for ©Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP). Mr. Wilks is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University with a Bachelor of Science-Forest Management degree. He is also a member of the Texas Forestry Association and holds a Texas Accredited Forester certification #158.
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### 3.3 Total Time Spent on Audit

A. Number of days spent on-site for the Audit	4.5
B. Number of auditors participating in on-site audit	2
C. Number of days spent by any technical experts (in addition to amount in line A)	0
D. Additional days spent on preparation, stakeholder consultation, and follow-up	2
<b>E. Total number of person days used in audit</b>	<b>9</b>

### 3.4 Summary of Audit Itinerary and Site Visits

Location(s) sampled	Washburn, Sawyer, Barron, and Burnett Counties
Number of field sites	36
Summary of Cover Types visited	Field sites included following cover types: Aspen, Red Pine/Meadows, Aspen/Northern Hardwoods, Special Site, HCV Site, Red Pine, State Natural Area, Jack Pine and Recreation Trail.
Summary Description /Number of Silviculture Activities inspected	Field sites included following silviculture activities: Active harvesting, wildlife habitat, interim harvest operations, harvest sale preparations, shelterwood, no management activity, completed thinning operations, prescribed fire for habitat management, regeneration, salvage harvesting operations, select harvesting operations and recreation.
Summary Description /Number of Harvest Areas inspected	Field sites included 3 active harvest operations, 2 interim harvesting operations, 1 shelterwood, 9 completed thinning operations, 2 salvage operations and multiple select harvesting operations. Majority of stands contained multiple harvesting prescriptions which are described within field site notes.
Summary Description of Road infrastructure inspections	Main access and interim roads were observed during field sites. Multiple uses of water diversion aspects were confirmed including water-bars, fjords, logging debris, wing ditches, crowned and ditched roads and use of rock for soil and water protection.

### 3.5 Evaluation of Management Systems

SCS deploys teams with expertise in forestry and other relevant fields to assess the certified organization's conformance to SFI standards and policies. Audit methods include reviewing documents and records, interviewing personnel and contractors, implementing sampling strategies to visit a broad number of forest cover and harvest prescription types, observing implementation of management plans and policies in the field, and collecting and analyzing relevant stakeholder input. When there is more than one team member, each member may review parts of the standards based on their background and expertise. Applicable aspects of the Management System under evaluation, such as Management System Review and other relevant Objectives, Performance Measures, and Indicators will also inform the audit team. On the final day of an evaluation, team members convene to deliberate the findings of the audit jointly. This

involves an analysis of all relevant field observations, interviews, reviewed documents and records, and relevant stakeholder input. Where consensus among team members cannot be achieved due to lack of evidence, conflicting evidence or differences of interpretation of the standards, the team is instructed to report these in the certification decision section and/or in observations.

### 3.6. Changes to Management System

- There were no significant changes in the management and/or harvesting methods that affect the FME's conformance to the SFI standards, rules, and policies.
- Significant changes that affect the management system occurred since the last audit described as follows (describe): This is the first audit of the organization to the SFI 2022 requirements.

### 3.7 Confirmation of Meeting Audit Objectives

1. Determination of the conformity of the client's management system, or parts of it, with audit criteria (Selected Objectives, Performance Measures, and/or Indicators).
2. Determination of the ability of the management system to ensure the client meets applicable statutory, regulatory and contractual requirements.
3. Determination of the effectiveness of the management system to ensure the client can reasonably expect to achieve specified objectives.
4. As applicable, identification of areas for potential improvement of the management system.

The objectives for this audit included:

Audit Objectives were met	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If no, provide an explanation:
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## 4. Results of Audit

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### 4.1 Grading of Possible Findings

Once a consensus is reached by the audit team, determinations of grading are made as to the level of findings. Grading of findings may occur as follows:

- *Major CARs:* Major Corrective Action Requests (CARs) occur when one or more of the SFI 2022 Standard(s) performance measures or indicators has not been addressed or has not been implemented to the extent that a systematic failure of a Certified Organization's SFI system to meet an SFI objective, performance measure or indicator occurs.
- *Minor CARs:* An isolated lapse in SFI 2022 Standard(s) implementation which does not indicate a systematic failure to consistently meet an SFI objective, performance measure or indicator.
- *Opportunities for Improvement:* Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs) are identified by audit team members where the client is in conformance, but there is a risk to conformance in the future. Nonconformance with the standard requirements cannot be recorded as OFIs.
- *Exceeds:* Practices that exceed the basic requirements of the SFI 2022 Standards and Rules for Forest Management or Fiber Sourcing.

## 4.2 Table of Audit Results and History of Findings for Certificate Period

This table lists Findings to the Performance Measure and/or Indicator level for each year of the certificate period and is updated annually.

SFI Objective	Cert/Re-cert Evaluation (year)	1 <sup>st</sup> Annual Evaluation (year)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Evaluation (year)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Evaluation (year)	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Evaluation 2023
No findings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1					
2					
3					1 OFI
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
COC					
Trademark					
Group					
Other					

## 4.3 General Description of Evidence of Conformity

This section summarizes the general evidence found to verify conformity that is detailed in Appendix 5.

SFI Objective	Summary of Evidence
<b>Objective 1. Forest Management Planning.</b> To ensure forest management plans include long-term sustainable harvest levels and measures to avoid forest conversion or afforestation of ecologically important areas.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 2. Forest Health and Productivity.</b> To ensure long-term forest productivity and conservation of forest resources through prompt reforestation, afforestation, deploying integrated pest management strategies, minimized chemical use, soil conservation, and protecting forests from damaging agents.	Review of guidance documents, policies, interviews with field personnel and auditor observations during field sites confirmed active Integrated Pest Management program. Adequate reforestation utilizing primarily natural regeneration with isolated stands of conifers requiring artificial regeneration was confirmed. Organization has a

	consistent method for monitoring regeneration and maintaining records within GIS system. No afforestation projects were observed. Field site observations confirmed protection of soils and maintenance of healthy forests.
<b>Objective 3.</b> Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources. To protect the water quality and water quantity of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies.	Not evaluated in 2023 but one (1) opportunity for improvement was identified during audit.
<b>Objective 4.</b> Conservation of Biological Diversity To maintain or advance the conservation of biological diversity at the stand- and landscape- level and across a diversity of forest and vegetation cover types and successional stages including the conservation of forest plants and animals, aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, old-growth forests and ecologically important sites.	Documented plans, policies, interviews with personnel & contractors and field site observations confirmed protection of biological diversity. Multiple cover types, riparian buffers, system for evaluating the occurrence of endangered species of flora and fauna and protection of historical, cultural and archaeological sites was confirmed during audit.
<b>Objective 5.</b> Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits. To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 6.</b> Protection of Special Sites. To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.	Auditors' review of detailed procedures within policies, GIS mapping technology, archaeological and ecological evaluations and observation during field sites confirmed protection of Special Sites is a high priority within program.
<b>Objective 7.</b> Efficient Use of Fiber Resources. To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 8.</b> Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights. To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 9:</b> Climate Smart Forestry To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.	Organization has conducted a detailed risk assessment and adaptation plan for each county within the scope of certificate. Training was conducted for field personnel to develop resources for identification of strategies.
<b>Objective 10.</b> Fire Resilience and Awareness To limit susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of fire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 11.</b> Legal and Regulatory Compliance To comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, international, federal, provincial, state, and local.	Auditors' review of policies, handbooks, contracts and observations of regulatory postings were the main evidence confirming compliance. Interviews with personnel and contractors, review of web and

	observations were also conducted. No adverse regulatory issues were identified.
<b>Objective 12.</b> Forestry Research, Science and Technology. To invest in research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 13.</b> Training and Education. To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry through appropriate training and education programs.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 14.</b> Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach. To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.	Not evaluated in 2023.
<b>Objective 15.</b> Public Land Management Responsibilities. To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.	Review of County Forest websites confirmed planning for Comprehensive Land Use Plans are posted for public review. Interviews with personnel and recreational user groups confirmed communication and planning coordination during forest management activities.
<b>Objective 16.</b> Communications and Public Reporting To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.	Review of SFI website confirms Public Summary Report for previous audit was posted. Required submission of Annual Progress Report was completed prior to deadline.
<b>Objective 17.</b> Management Review and Continual Improvement: To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.	Auditor review of annual County Partnership Meeting agendas and Annual Management Review conducted by senior management in July 2023.

#### 4.4 Existing Corrective Action Requests, OFIs, and Exceeds

<b>Finding Number: 2022.1</b>	
<b>Finding and Deadline</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):
<b>SFI Indicator:</b>	SFI FM 2019, 6.1.2: Appropriate mapping, cataloging and management of identified <i>special sites</i> .
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Non-Conformity</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds</b> There is an opportunity to improve the mapping and cataloging, of identified special sites among the County Forest System.	
<b>Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be</b>	NA – OFI

<i>prepared by Organization)</i>		
<b>SCS Review of Action Plan</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected ( <i>explain</i> ):
	SCS representative:	Date:
<b>Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization</b>	During the 2022 forest certification audit of the Wisconsin County Forests Program, it was apparent that the auditors and county staff had differing understanding of the designation and management of “special sites” under the SFI Standards and Rules. We prepared a white paper to discuss specifically the identification, management and protection of SFI Special Sites. In addition, a discussion of related FSC requirements is also included for completeness.	
<b>SCS Review of Implemented Actions</b>	Reviewed white paper, which attempts to reconcile SFI and FSC concepts under the WCFP. Counties that were found to have NCRs under the FSC standard last year also presented updated cataloging and maps of special sites.	
<b>Status of Finding:</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> Other decision ( <i>refer to description above</i> )	

#### 4.5 New Corrective Action Requests, OFIs, and Exceeds

<b>Finding Number: 2023.1</b>		
<b>Finding and Deadline</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Major: Pre-condition to certification <input type="checkbox"/> Major: 3 months from Closing Meeting <input type="checkbox"/> Minor: Next audit (surveillance or re-evaluation) or 12 months from closing <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):	
<b>SFI Indicator:</b>	3.2.1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Conformity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds</b> Indicator: 3.2.1- Program addressing management and <i>protection</i> of water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, <i>wetlands</i> , other water bodies and <i>riparian areas</i> during all phases of management.  Finding: 2023.1- Tract 37-20: Harvest area in a minor section of riparian buffer zone (RMZ) did not retain recommended 60 square feet of basal area of long-lived trees species. Sale was established in the winter of 2020 with 3+ feet of snowfall on ground, which was prior to the revision of the 2460 form in late 2022. Therefore, no deviations from recommended RMZ practices were noted. Observation for overall buffer around riparian zone appeared to meet recommendations with the aforementioned exception. Opportunity to improve protection of entire buffer on RMZs with recommended basal area retention.		
<b>Action Plan and Root Cause Analysis (to be prepared by Organization)</b>	N/A-OFI	
<b>SCS Review of Action Plan</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejected ( <i>explain</i> ):
	SCS representative:	Date:

<b>Evidence and Actions Implemented by Organization</b>	
<b>SCS Review of Implemented Actions</b>	
<b>Status of Finding:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Closed <input type="checkbox"/> Upgraded to Major <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other decision (refer to description above)</i>

## 5. Certification Decision

The certificate holder has demonstrated continued overall conformance to the applicable Sustainable Forestry Initiative standards. The SCS annual audit team recommends that the certificate be sustained, subject to subsequent annual audits and the Certified Organization's response to any open CARs.	<b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Comments:</b>	

