

Forest management certification

Forests NSW

Certification Officer

Forests NSW is certified as compliant with the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) AS 4708) by an independent auditor accredited by JAS-ANZ to audit against this internationally recognised forest management standard.

The standard is based on criteria for sustainable forest management agreed upon by the PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes), an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation that promotes sustainably managed forests through independent third party certification. PEFC is a global umbrella organisation for the assessment of, and mutual recognition of, national forest certification schemes, such as the Australian Forestry Certification Scheme (of which the Australian Forestry Standard is part).

Forest management certification using an internationally recognised standard, such as the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) or the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC), independently assures the consumer that the certified timber products they purchase have been produced in a socially, ecologically and economically sustainable manner.

What is forest management certification?

Forest management certification is a market-based, voluntary forest management tool designed to recognise and promote environmentally responsible forestry and sustainability of forest resources.

The certification process involves an evaluation of forest management planning and forestry practices by an external, independent auditor according to

an agreed set of criteria and requirements. The criteria and requirements are often above and beyond regulatory requirements, and address social, ecological and economic aspects of forest management.

Characteristics of the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS)

The AFS is a 'Standard' endorsed on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia. The AFS also draws upon an internationally agreed framework for regional criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in Australia (as per the Montreal Process).

The Standard is designed to foster continuous improvement in all aspects of forest management.

Why did Forests NSW seek forest management certification?

Forests NSW voluntarily sought and gained certification as a demonstration of the organisation's commitment to ecologically sustainable forest management.

Additionally, certification will ensure that timber products produced from logs harvested in NSW State forests remain competitive in the local and international marketplace. Certification may also assist in developing new markets as large buyers in Australia and overseas seek timber products accredited to internationally recognised standards.

Forest management certification allows for certified timber to be traced and visibly marked, differentiating it from competitors in the marketplace. The purchasing of independently certified products has become an increasingly

important consumer trend, as buyers of a range of products want an assurance of sustainability or 'environmental friendliness' of their purchase.

Further benefits:

- Better environmental outcomes in forests (e.g. soil and water quality)
- Better cultural heritage outcomes
- Better management of resources
- Consistent standards of supervision
- Improved consistency in planning, management and operations
- Greater transparency and accountability
- Better internal communication
- More rapid response to emerging problems
- Improved ability to report to regulators.

How is forest management certified?

In the case of the AFS, forest managers such as Forests NSW, need to meet criteria set out in the forest management certification standard. The AFS criteria are:

- Systematic forest management
- Public participation and adherence to good neighbour principles
- Protection and maintenance of biological diversity of forests
- Maintenance of the productive capacity of forests
- Maintenance of ecosystem health and vitality
- Protection of soil and water resources
- Maintenance of forests' contribution to carbon cycles
- Protection and maintenance of indigenous and non-indigenous peoples' heritage values
- Maintenance and enhancement of long-term social and economic benefits.

To find out more about how Forests NSW meets these criteria visit the NSW DPI website (www.dpi.nsw.gov.au).

The forest manager is externally audited in a process that includes a review of documents, interviews with personnel and on-the-ground inspections of a range of forest operations. The auditors' report confirms Forests NSW leading role in socially, ecologically and economically

sustainable forestry management. A summary of the external audit findings of Forests NSW is available by calling +61 (0)2 98720111 or emailing ems@sf.nsw.gov.au

How do I tell if wood products are certified?

Those companies that process timber and wish to market it as certified need a 'Chain of Custody Standard' (AS 4707-2006 or similar standard) certificate to verify the timber that came from certified forests is the same timber that is marketed and sold as certified timber products.

Consumers can identify these certified timber products by looking for the forest management certification logos shown below.

Conclusion

Forest management certification is a global trend gaining more precedence in Australia as forest growers and timber processors respond to consumer demands for assurances of sustainability.

Forests NSW is pleased to have met the Criteria set out in the Australian Forestry Standard and have independent verification of its socially, environmentally and economically sustainable forest management practices.



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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (May 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up-to-date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.