

# Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Forest Management Audit Report

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## *Missouri Department of Conservation*

*Certificate # SCS-SFI/FM-010232*

*SFI 2022 Standards and Rules®, Forest Management  
2024 Surveillance Audit*

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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® (SFI). 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 or the provision of ecosystem services such as the *conservation* of soil, air and water quality and quantity, climate change *adaptation and mitigation, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitats*, recreation and aesthetics.
- 2. Forest Productivity and Health:** To provide for regeneration after harvest, maintain the health and productive capacity of the forest land base, and to *protect* and maintain *long-term* soil health and productivity. In addition, to *protect* forests from economically, environmentally or socially undesirable impacts 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 and maintain the water quality and quantity of 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 and culturally important*

species, *threatened and endangered* species (i.e., Forest with Exceptional Conservation Values) and native *forest cover types* at multiple scales.

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 geologically or *culturally important* in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.
7. **Legal Compliance:** To comply with applicable federal, provincial, state, and local forestry and related environmental laws, statutes, and regulations.
8. **Research:** To support advances in sustainable forest management through research, science and technology.
9. **Training and Education:** To improve the practice of *sustainable forestry* through training and education programs.
10. **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*.
11. **Transparency:** To broaden the understanding of forest certification to the *Forest Management Standard* by documenting certification audits and making the findings publicly available.
12. **Continual Improvement:** To continually improve the practice of forest management, and to monitor, measure and report performance in achieving the commitment to *sustainable forestry*.
13. **Responsible Fiber Sourcing in North America:** To use and promote *sustainable forestry* across a diversity of ownership and management types in the United states and Canada that is both scientifically credible and socially, environmentally, and economically responsible and to avoid sourcing from *controversial sources* both domestically and internationally.

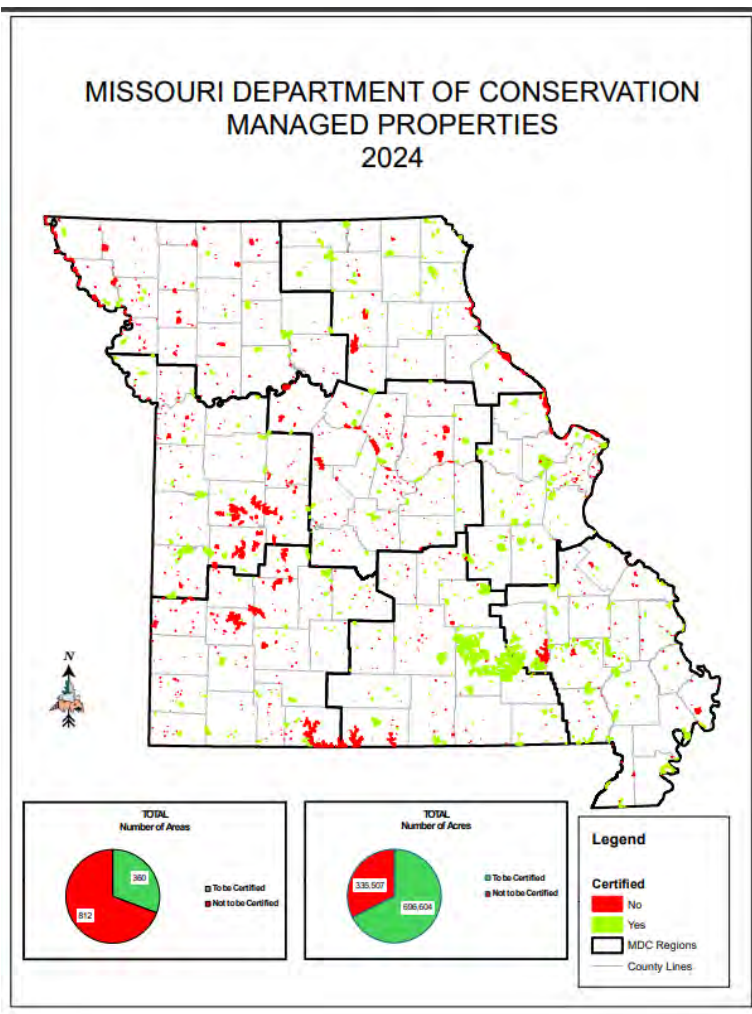
## 1. General Information

### 1.1 Name, Contact, and Certificate Information

<b>Organization Name</b>	Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)
<b>Certification Representative, Address, Phone Number</b>	Marty Calvert 2901 West Truman Blvd.; Jefferson City, MO 65109 (573) 208-3068 <a href="mailto:marty.calvert@mdc.mo.gov">marty.calvert@mdc.mo.gov</a>
<b>Audit Dates</b>	22-24 October 2024
<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>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: List of all sites/FMUs under scope of the certificate, including certified acres: The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) holds a centralized certification that covers eight geographic regions, with management headquarters located in Jefferson City, Missouri. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) manager at MDC is in charge of a robust internal audit program. The Missouri Conservation Commission, as established within the Missouri Constitution, is comprised of 4 citizen volunteers appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Conservation Commission is vested with control, management, restoration, conservation, and regulation of fish, forest, and wildlife resources of Missouri by the Missouri Constitution. The commission appoints the director of MDC and serves as MDC's policy makers, approving wildlife code regulations, strategic planning, budget development, and major expenditure decisions. They fulfill this responsibility through selection of a director who organizes and administers the Missouri Department of Conservation under Conservation Commission policy and oversight. As of July 1, 2020, the Conservation Department has reorganized to a new structure. The previous structure consisted of disciplinary divisions (e.g., Forestry, Fisheries, Wildlife, etc.). The new structure created Regional Units focusing on either state land or private land natural resources work. Each of the eight Regions now have a Regional Administrator who is responsible for all management on that region. A Statewide Resource Management Branch has oversight responsibility on all regional natural resource management. This branch includes Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries disciplines. One of several administrative units within the Conservation Department is the Forestry Section led by the Missouri State Forester. The State Forester reports to the Deputy Director through the Statewide Resource Management Branch Chief. The Forestry Section has specific oversight of the George O. White State Forest Nursery, Fire Program, Rural Forest Fire Equipment Center, Forest Products and Utilization, and Forest Systems. Each Region is under the direction of a Regional Administrator who is assigned varying number of staff depending on the Region's workload. Each Region
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	<p>is further divided into Districts. (Source, <a href="#">Agency Overview</a> and <a href="#">Background - Lands to be Certified</a>)</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sites</th> <th>Sites Audited 2023</th> <th>Sites Audited 2024</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jefferson City</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northeast Region</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southeast Region</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ozark Region</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>St. Louis Region</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Central Region</td> <td>X</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Southwest Region</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Kansas City Region</td> <td></td> <td>X</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Northwest Region</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sites	Sites Audited 2023	Sites Audited 2024	Jefferson City	X		Northeast Region			Southeast Region			Ozark Region	X		St. Louis Region			Central Region	X		Southwest Region		X	Kansas City Region		X	Northwest Region		
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Kansas City Region		X																													
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<p><b>Total Forest Area (Acres)</b></p>	<p>For purposes of SFI certification, approximately 696,000 acres are considered within the scope of compliance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.</p>																														
<p><b>Management Unit Maps</b></p>																															

<p><b>Forest Types and Key Ecological Features</b></p>	<p>The Forest and Woodland Program includes:</p> <p><b>LANDSCAPE LEVEL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Landscape Design with Priority Lands</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Natural Community Restoration on Priority Lands</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Conservation Area Planning Coordination</a></li> <li>• Terrestrial Habitat for Public Use Management</li> <li>• Ecological Health</li> </ul> <p><b>AQUATIC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Wetlands</a></li> <li>• Aquatic Habitat Management for Priority Species</li> <li>• Habitat Management for Streams</li> <li>• <a href="#">Sport Fish Management</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Other Harvestable Fish Species</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Commercial Fishing</a></li> <li>• CAP Lakes</li> <li>• <a href="#">Aquatic Species Production</a></li> </ul> <p><b>OPENLAND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Grasslands</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Ag Crop</a></li> </ul> <p><b>FOREST</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Forest and Woodland</a></li> <li>• Forest Health Management</li> <li>• Fire Detection and Suppression</li> <li>• <a href="#">State Forest Nursery</a></li> <li>• Forest Products Industry</li> <li>• <a href="#">Missouri Forest Ecosystem Project - MOFEP</a></li> </ul> <p><b>INVASIVE SPECIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Feral Hogs</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Invasive Species Management</a></li> </ul> <p><b>WILDLIFE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Deer</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Turkey</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Furbearers</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Migratory Birds</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Small Game</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bear</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Elk</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bird Conservation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Commercial / Confined Wildlife</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Wildlife Damage and Wildlife Human Interaction</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Wildlife Diversity and Endangered Species</a></li> </ul> <p><b>OTHER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural Resource Management Planning Training Program</li> <li>• SRM Branch Information Management Program</li> <li>• Statewide Resource Management Branch Public Contact &amp; Response program</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Aid Program - Wildlife and Sportfish Restoration Program</li> <li>• Statewide Resource Management Branch Contracts, Grants and Agreements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Forest Management Planning</b></p>	<p>The management plan outlines forest management policies and objectives: The MDC links Strategic Priorities, Budgets, Work Plans, and Accomplishments to Deliver Priority-based Conservation. Strategic plan, <a href="https://mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/CCS.pdf">https://mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/2023-04/CCS.pdf</a>. The state conservation lands are organized under areas guided by <a href="#">Finalized Area Plans   Missouri Department of Conservation (mo.gov)</a>. Resources (compendium) for planning include: <a href="#">Atlas of Missouri Ecoregions</a> (this publication can also be found here); MDC Conservation Opportunity Areas; MDC Continuous Forest Inventory; Conservation Commission Policy - Area Planning; MFMG - 11 - Missouri Forest Management Guidelines - Chapter 11: Generally Accepted Principles for Silviculture; MDC Vegetative Management Scheduling and Documentation. Restoration goals are prioritized by areas classified using a Tiered system, described and available here, <a href="#">Missouri Comprehensive Conservation Strategy - MDC Tiered Approach to Natural Community and Habitat Management (arcgis.com)</a></p>
<p><b>Sustainable Harvest Level Assessment</b></p>	<p><b>Sustainable Harvest Levels are maintained through use of:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Inventory and Planning:</i> Area Managers use multiple data sources like Ecological Land Classification System, Web Soil Survey, GIS data, Natural Heritage Database, and more for forest inventory. They work under the guidance of the Forestry Field Programs Supervisor and follow an inventory schedule.</li> <li>2. <i>Reentry Periods:</i> Harvesting cycles are between 10 and 20 years depending on site quality and overall objectives.</li> <li>3. <i>No Fixed Cut:</i> Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) doesn't set a fixed allowable cut but focuses on natural community restoration.</li> <li>4. <i>Research and Modeling:</i> Ongoing research using LANDIS and MOFEP data for growth and yield modeling.</li> <li>5. <i>Area Control Method:</i> Previously used to calculate sustainable harvest levels to address neighbor concerns.</li> <li>6. <i>Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI):</i> Implemented in 2010, it involves 462 plots across 8 regions. One-fifth of these are measured annually to calculate sustainable harvest levels.</li> </ol> <p><b>References:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CFI Summary Report - 2021.pdf</li> <li>• Atlas of Missouri Ecoregions</li> <li>• MDC Conservation Opportunity Areas</li> <li>• MDC Continuous Forest Inventory</li> <li>• Conservation Commission Policy - Area Planning</li> <li>• Missouri Forest Management Guidelines - Chapter 11</li> <li>• MDC Vegetative Management Scheduling and Documentation</li> <li>• FY'20 State Land Accomplishments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Monitoring Program Description</b></p>	<p><b>Metrics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Current Harvest Trends:</i> Fall within long-term sustainable levels identified in the forest management plan.</li> <li>• <i>Inventory Systems:</i> CFI started in 2010, used for annual or periodic harvest level determination.</li> <li>• <i>Periodic Updates:</i> Inventory and harvest plans are updated to account for environmental changes like drought, climate change, etc.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Documentation:</b> All practices and treatments are recorded in Forestry E-GIS and MOFITS.</li> <li>• <b>Social, Environmental, Economic Impacts:</b> Management considers local and regional impacts.</li> <li>• <b>Additional Tools:</b> Various guidelines and policies provide the framework for management practices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Technologies and Systems Used</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOFITS: Data collection system for timber sale documentation and forest inventory.</li> <li>• Forestry E-GIS: Geographical Information System for forest management.</li> <li>• Survey 123: New Public Land reporting system is in development.</li> <li>• Public Lands Performance Reporting Tool: Used by field staff to report accomplishments.</li> </ul>
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### 3. Audit Process

#### 3.1 Applicable Standards and Audit Objectives

<b>Certificate Code</b>	SCS-SFI/FM-010232 <i>Valid from 5 October 2023 Expiry Date 18 October 2027</i>	
<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 <sup>nd</sup> , <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <sup>rd</sup> or <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <sup>th</sup> Surveillance	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer	<input type="checkbox"/> Expansion of Scope
<b>Applicable Standards</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: 2022 Forest Management. Objectives 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SFI: Rules for Use of SFI On-Product Labels and Off-Product Marks <input type="checkbox"/> SFI: Audits of Multi-Sites <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: Forest Management, 2021. <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: AFF 2021 Standards for Independently Managed Groups. Sections <input type="checkbox"/> ATFS: ATFS 2021 Logo Use Guidelines	
<b>Multiple Standards</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A, this is not a multi-standard nor a multi-CB audit.	
<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>	The scope of this audit is “land management on Department of Conservation owned land in the state of Missouri”. The audit was conducted against the SFI 2022 Forest Management Standard. The 2024 Audit evaluated Objectives 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17. There was no substitution or modification of indicators. Specifically, two objectives of the SFI audit were to, 1) verify that the certified organization’s SFI Program is in conformance with the SFI Objectives, Performance Measures, and Indicators, and any additional indicators that the certified organization chooses, and 2) verify whether the certified organization has effectively implemented its SFI Standard program requirements on the ground.	
<b>Description of Sampling Approach</b>	The lead auditor pre-selected field sites to meet sampling requirements of the Standard. For random site/forest selection, the lead auditor used a list of harvest sites done for the prior year to sample a range of conditions and common forest management activities. The preliminary list of sites was submitted to the lead auditor by the certified organization. Alternate sites were selected by the lead auditor to substitute if needed. Forestry environmental risk categories included FORI; RT&E; road infrastructure such as road construction and maintenance; stream crossings; BMP or remediation work; riparian areas; planting; chemical/herbicide applications; recreation; and other unique/special sites.	

	The lead auditor adjusted the sampling and itinerary in the following: additional sites were added during the audit within compartments with active and closed timber sales.
<b>Deviations from the Audit Plan</b>	Were there any significant deviations from the Audit Plan? <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 a Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) and FSC Forest Management (FM) and Chain of Custody (COC), and Sustainable Biomass Partnership Lead Auditor. He has conducted forest management 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, Costa Rica, 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>		

### 3.3 Total Time Spent on Audit

A. Number of days spent on-site for the Audit	3.0
B. Number of auditors participating in on-site audit	1
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	0.5
<b>E. Total number of person days used in audit</b>	<b>3.5</b>

### 3.4 Summary of Audit Itinerary and Site Visits

Location(s) sampled	Southwest and Kansas City Regions
Number of field sites	8
Summary of Cover Types visited	Central hardwoods. Noting that MDC managed based on eco-types and ecosystem restoration goals drives all management, not timber production. As such standard cover types are gradually being converged with ecological plant/wildlife community units over time.
Summary Description /Number of Silviculture Activities inspected	The audit reviewed some standard MDC management of silviculture activities including harvests from single-tree and group selection, timber stand improvement, prescribed burning, and invasive species control designed to restore, maintain, and enhance native plant communities and ecosystems.
Summary Description /Number of Harvest Areas inspected	The audit included 4 closed timber sales used to achieve restoration goals to examine BMPs, potential environmental impacts, and review documentation and process aspects.
Summary Description of Road infrastructure inspections	Roads were examined throughout the audit, with evidence of recent maintenance and in good overall condition. The road projects were primarily maintenance and culvert replacement work.

### 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):

### 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 (2022)	1 <sup>st</sup> Annual Evaluation (2023)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Annual Evaluation (2024)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Annual Evaluation (2025)	4 <sup>th</sup> Annual Evaluation (2026)
No findings	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10			Exceeds 10.1.2		
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
COC					
Trademark					
Group	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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
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<p><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.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><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.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3. Protection and Maintenance of Water Resources.</b> To protect the water quality and water quantity of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and other water bodies.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4. Conservation of Biological Diversity.</b> 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.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 5. Management of Visual Quality and Recreational Benefits.</b> To manage the visual impact of forest operations and provide recreational opportunities for the public.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 6. Protection of Special Sites.</b> To manage lands that are geologically or culturally important in a manner that takes into account their unique qualities.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 7. Efficient Use of Fiber Resources.</b> To minimize waste and ensure the efficient use of fiber resources.</p>	<p>MDC participates in an underutilized species program for Shortleaf pine via the USFS Wood Innovations grant program (see <a href="#">project summary</a>). MDC prepared the <a href="#">Missouri Woody Biomass Harvesting Best Management Practices Manual</a> to guide biomass harvesting and conservation practices.</p> <p>Field-level observation confirms that there are log sorts for railroad ties, pallet grade, sawtimber, and stave material. However, not all markets are equally accessible across the MDC's areas of operation.</p> <p>MDC participated in the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, which discusses forestry and forest products utilization across several states.</p>

<p><b>Objective 8. Recognize and Respect Indigenous Peoples' Rights.</b> To recognize and respect Indigenous Peoples' rights and traditional knowledge.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 9: Climate Smart Forestry.</b> To ensure forest management activities address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.</p>	<p>MDC has prepared the Missouri Department of Conservation Climate Adaptation Framework (May 2024; finalized and in process of publication approval) to identify climate change risks and prioritize actions to address them. Per review of the Climate Adaptation Framework Team list, team members are from many disciplines including policy, wildlife, forestry, natural heritage, fisheries, forest ecology, and education &amp; outreach. MDC has also started tracking fuel-use variables for its fleet of vehicles.</p>
<p><b>Objective 10. Fire Resilience and Awareness.</b> To limit susceptibility of forests to undesirable impacts of wildfire and to raise community awareness of fire benefits, risks, and minimization measures.</p>	<p>MDC has had a <a href="#">fire program</a> since its inception in 1937. Today this program includes <a href="#">assistance to rural fire departments</a>, a link to <a href="#">national fire weather</a>, collaboration and coordination with the <a href="#">National Interagency Fire Center</a>, <a href="#">Big Rivers Forest Fire Management Compact</a>, <a href="#">National Wildfire Coordinating Group</a>. MDC is a member of the <a href="#">Missouri Prescribed Fire Council</a> which is a part of the <a href="#">Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils</a>. MDC uses prescribed fire as an essential tool in vegetation management control and habitat management, which was confirmed via field observation on Big Buffalo Grassland South and the Big Buffalo Creek Ozark Fen.</p>
<p><b>Objective 11. Legal and Regulatory Compliance.</b> To comply with all applicable laws and regulations including, international, federal, provincial, state, and local.</p>	<p>Not evaluated in 2024.</p>
<p><b>Objective 12. Forestry Research, Science and Technology.</b> To invest in research, science, and technology, upon which sustainable forest management decisions are based.</p>	<p>MDC demonstrated copies of the 2023 and 2024 research budget compiled from the RAPTOR database. Topics include aquatic species and habitat, wildlife population management, terrestrial diversity, etc.</p> <p>MDC has a substantial <a href="#">Science Branch</a> that includes Forestry, Fisheries, and Wildlife Research. <a href="#">Projects</a> involve input and close coordination with the Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife Sections. One important example is the Missouri Forest Ecosystem Project, a description of which can be found at: <a href="#">Missouri Forest Ecosystem Project</a>.</p>

	MDC also cooperates with several Universities and Colleges on a variety of natural resource research projects, as confirmed via review of University of Missouri website (e.g., <a href="#">Center for Regenerative Agriculture Resources</a> , <a href="#">Wildlife Ecology and Management Resources</a> (links to MDC), and <a href="#">Free Publications from MDC</a> ).
<b>Objective 13. Training and Education.</b> To improve the implementation of sustainable forestry through appropriate training and education programs.	Not evaluated in 2024.
<b>Objective 14. Community Involvement and Landowner Outreach.</b> To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry through public outreach, education, and involvement, and to support the efforts of SFI Implementation Committees.	<p>MDC leads the SIC and publishes the Missouri Conservationist magazine. Several publications were observed during the audit at local offices, such as Wildlife Management for Missouri Landowners (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.), Natural Communities, Forest Management for Missouri Landowners (2016), Call Before You Cut, Living with Wildfire (2013), and Hunting White-tailed deer in Missouri (2014).</p> <p>MDC administers an extensive landowner outreach and assistance program, which includes an MDC-funded landowner cost share program; technical assistance to landowners, accessing NRCS cost share programs; inspections for the Missouri Tree Farm Program; leveraging of funding from the federal Forest Stewardship Program; and administration of the "<a href="#">Call Before You Cut</a>" program.</p> <p>In consultation with research scientists, stakeholders, and MDC staff produced the Missouri Forest Management Guidelines which are made available to landowners online, on CD and as a hard copy reference document.</p>
<b>Objective 15. Public Land Management Responsibilities.</b> To participate and implement sustainable forest management on public lands.	The agency is required to get input from the public and adjoining landowners as part of its area planning process. This is a formal process, but also includes opportunities during public outreach efforts.
<b>Objective 16. Communications and Public Reporting.</b> To increase transparency and to annually report progress on conformance with the SFI Forest Management Standard.	MDC's public summary reports were found on the SFI; Inc. website as required for public review. MDC also provides copies of past reports publicly online.
<b>Objective 17. Management Review and Continual Improvement.</b> To promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry by conducting a management review and monitoring performance.	MDC has instituted a structured data collection framework aimed at assessing the agency's adherence to the SFI standards. Internal audits are routinely conducted to evaluate this conformance,

	and the findings are then relayed to senior management. Progress toward SFI objectives is consistently reviewed in both monthly staff meetings and quarterly managerial sessions.
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#### 4.4 Existing Corrective Action Requests, OFIs, and Exceeds

No open findings from prior year audits.

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

<b>Finding Number: 2024.1</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 type="checkbox"/> OFI: no deadline <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exceeds: no deadline <input type="checkbox"/> Other deadline (specify):
<b>SFI Indicator:</b>	10.1.2. Use of <i>stand</i> and <i>landscape</i> level management techniques, actions and/or policies to promote <i>forest health</i> and resilience, and to mitigate the likelihood of undesirable impacts of wildfire, such as, prescribed fire, cultural burning, thinning, or hazardous fuel reduction where appropriate based on risk.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Non-Conformity</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Background/ Justification in the case of OFI or Exceeds</b> Per field observation and review of compartment plans, MDC has been incorporating prescribed fire as a silvicultural tool into its stand- and landscape-level management practices for over 15 years. This functions to prepare harvested sites for regeneration, controls fuel loads, and maintains or restores certain unique plant communities that have fire as a natural disturbance. The prescribed fire program predates the existence of this SFI Objective.	

### 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.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Comments:</b>	