



Forest Stewardship Council®



Guidance for Standard Developers to Develop a National Threshold for the Core Area of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) within the Management Unit

FSC-GUI- 60-004 V1-0 EN



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**Guidance for Standard Developers to Develop a National Threshold for the
Core Area of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) within the Management
Unit Guidance for Standard Development Groups:
Developing National High Conservation Value Frameworks**

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The Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC) is an independent, not for profit, non-government organization established to support environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

FSC's vision is that the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide. FSC is the leading catalyst and defining force for improved forest management and market transformation, shifting the global forest trend toward sustainable use, conservation, restoration, and respect for all.

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1. Background

Motion 65:2014 is asking FSC to direct standard developers to develop indicators that aim to protect the vast majorities of IFLs, and “if by the end of 2016 a relevant standard has not been implemented, a default indicator will apply that mandates the full protection of a core area of each IFL within the management unit. For this purpose, the core area of the IFL will be defined as an area of forest comprising at least 80% of the intact forest landscape falling within the FMU.” The Motion 65 is implemented through an Advice Note until a national standard with IFL indicators is launched¹

The High Conservation Values Technical Working Group developed International Generic Indicators (IGI) to implement the motion which were approved by the FSC Board of Directors in 2017. According to the IGI instructions (Annex H), the figure of what constitutes the “vast majority” in a national context may differ from the 80% default threshold, providing it achieves the greatest amount of conservation gains based on national or eco-regional considerations.

Motion 34:2017 requested FSC to conduct regional assessments of the short and long-term impacts – positive and negative – of the management and protection measures associated with the implementation of Motion 65:2014 and the IGIs for IFLs.

2. Objective of this Guidance

This document aims at supporting the implementation of relevant IGIs by providing additional guidance in situations where a standard developer wishes to deviate from the default threshold of 80% of the IFLs to be protected within the Management Unit (MU). This guidance relates to IGI 9.2.5 (FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0) and the corresponding ‘Instructions for standard developers’ (Annex H, section A).

3. Effective Date and Validity Dates

Approval date	20 th November 2019
Publication date	23 rd June 2020
Effective date	23 rd June 2020
Period of validity	Until replaced or withdrawn

4. Policy recommendations for the protection of IFLs in national FSC standards

- i. FSC uses the Global Forest Watch (GFW) definition of Intact Forest Landscape and the IFL maps published at www.globalforestwatch.org. National FSC standards should ensure that forest managers operating in the management units overlapping with these IFLs incorporate the IFL map for Jan 2017 to the forest management plan.

¹ The Advice Note for Motion 65 (ADV-20-007-018) allows Forest Management operations, including harvesting and road building to proceed in IFLs, only if they: (i) do not impact more than 20% of IFL within MU, and (ii) do not reduce any IFLs below the 50,000 ha threshold in the landscape. The Note will expire in each country once the National Forest Stewardship Standard or Interim National Standard with indicators for IFLs becomes effective.

- ii. FSC recognizes that as the GFW maps are based on remote sensing they sometimes inaccurately show the IFLs: industrial activities that occurred during the last 30-70 years but were hidden below the canopy or re-vegetated are not always detected. Therefore, Standard developers are encouraged to prepare updated maps that accurately portray the actual areas of IFLs using Best Available Information. This includes the possibility that some areas identified as IFL on the GFW maps are actually no longer IFL.
- iii. Standard developers shall consider the Instructions given in FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0 Annex H and establish the national thresholds for IFL core areas using a risk-based approach. The further the threshold is deviating from the default level of 80%, the stronger justification is needed, combined with evidence of broad support by stakeholders in all chambers.
- iv. The IGI do not provide any minimum threshold of what can still be considered the “vast majority” of IFLs within the MU that must be protected. Standard developers who consider the 80% threshold as not achieving the greatest conservation gains are therefore required to specify such a threshold. There may either be one common threshold in a national standard that applies in all circumstances, or the standard may provide different thresholds for different situations, depending on:
 - The type of certificate holder (local community, SLIMF, large scale operation, state forest, etc.),
 - The results of the Motion 34 study on the impacts of the new rules requiring IFL protection,
 - The presence of Indigenous cultural landscapes,
 - Site-specific characteristics of the MU, including the level of overlap between the MU and the IFL,
 - The extent of exploitation and degradation of the forest within the MU, or
 - An assessment at the landscape level of the ecological distinctiveness of the IFL,
 - Other aspects as agreed in consensus by the SDG.

The agreed threshold(s) should not be lower than the default minimum threshold as provided in Clause v.

- v. Protecting the ‘vast majority’ of IFLs implies that the IFL area protected within the MU shall exceed 50%. In addition, forestry operations shall not lead to the reduction of any occurrence of IFL below 50,000 ha in the landscape². For that purpose, a monitoring system³ has to be in place to alert changes in IFL areas in the wider landscape.

An exception to the threshold of 50+ % within the MU is provided in Clause vi below.

- vi. Standard developers may choose not to establish thresholds for the protection of IFLs in the national standard when all IFLs in the country are formally and

² Certificate holders usually cannot control other actors outside their MU, but they can still monitor the changes in the entire IFL to avoid fragmenting it below 50,000 ha due to their own activities within the MU. This monitoring should include restoration activities aiming at an increase of IFL in the landscape.

³ Such as Global Land Analysis and Discovery ([GLAD](#)).

effectively protected. Accordingly, legal protection of relevant parts of IFL areas may justify thresholds below 50+ % within the MU.

- vii. It is recommended that the indicators developed to protect IFLs within the MU are forest tested during the standard development process to outline the likely economic, environmental and political consequences (both pro and con). Adapted indicators shall be justified in line with the guidance above.
- viii. Some generic aspects justifying adjustment of the default threshold are listed in Figure 1.

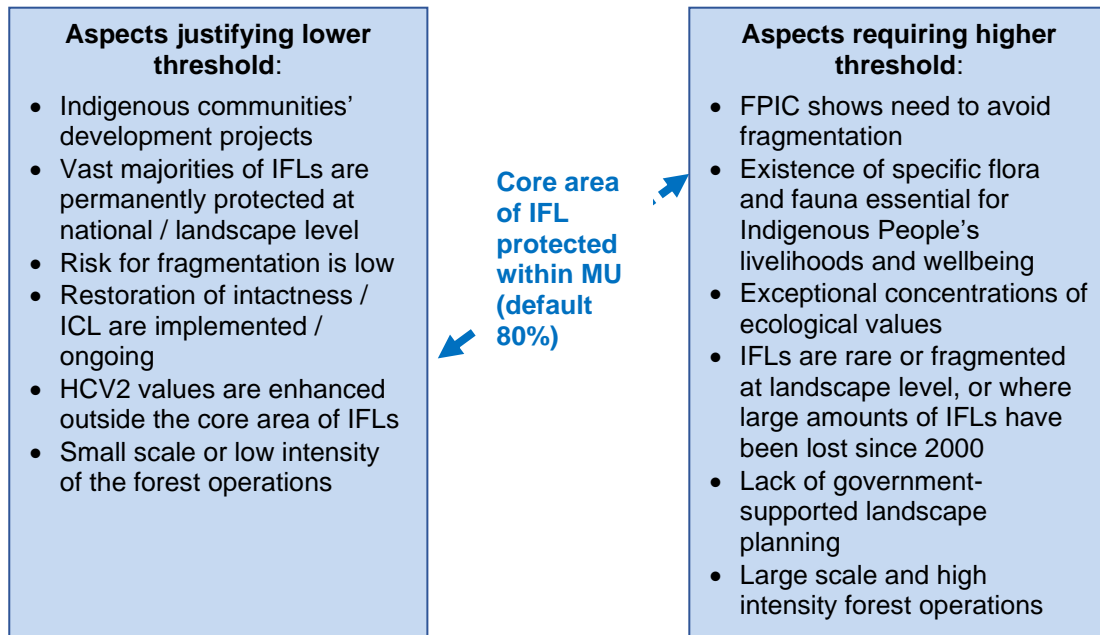


Figure 1: Overall approach for setting thresholds for IFL core areas in national FSC standards

5. Definitions

Core area: The portion of each *Intact Forest Landscape** designated to contain the most important cultural and ecological values. *Core areas** are managed to exclude *industrial activity**. *Core Areas** meet or exceed the definition of *Intact Forest Landscape** (Source: FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0).

NOTE: Core area is the outcome of a process of defining the threshold for 'vast majority'. It is the portion of the total IFL area within a MU that needs to be "maintained" as IFL – the part outside of the core area (but within the MU) shall be managed as HCV 2 and thereby could lose the "intactness".

Indigenous cultural landscapes: *Indigenous cultural landscapes** are living landscapes to which *Indigenous Peoples** attribute environmental, social, cultural and economic value because of their enduring relationship with the land, water, fauna, flora and spirits and their present and future importance to their cultural identity. An *Indigenous cultural landscape** is characterized by features that have been maintained through long-term interactions based on land-care knowledge, and adaptive livelihood practices. They are landscapes over which *Indigenous Peoples** exercise responsibility for stewardship (Source: FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0).

Industrial activity: Industrial forest and resource management activities such as road building, mining, dams, urban development and timber harvesting.

Intact Forest Landscape: a territory within today's global extent of forest cover which contains forest and non-forest ecosystems minimally influenced by human economic activity, with an area of at least 500 km² (50,000 ha) and a minimal width of 10 km (measured as the diameter of a circle that is entirely inscribed within the boundaries of the territory) (Source: Intact Forests / Global Forest Watch. Glossary definition as provided on Intact Forest website. 2006-2014).

Vast majority: 80% of the total area of *Intact Forest Landscapes** within the *Management Unit** as of January 1, 2017. The *vast majority** also meets or exceeds the minimum definition of *Intact Forest Landscape** (Source: FSC-STD-60-004 V2-0).

NOTE: According to the IGI instructions (Annex H), the figure of what constitutes the “vast majority” in a national context may differ from the 80% default threshold, providing it achieves the greatest amount of conservation gains based on national or eco-regional considerations.



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