



Forest Stewardship Council®



Approval of Forest Stewardship Standards

FSC-PRO-10-606 (V2-2 EN)



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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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A Scope

The objective of this document is to provide an internal procedure for the FSC Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) to ensure a consistent decision-making process for the approval of Forest Stewardship Standards¹. These include the following:

- National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) (and sets of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) indicators developed by SDGs to complement FSSs which do not include NTFPs in the scope).
- Regional Forest Stewardship Standards (RFSS).

This procedure is binding for FSC staff as well as for members of the FSC Policy and Standards Committee (PSC).

The procedure is publicly available to provide guidance to interested parties including Standard Development Groups.

B Effective date

This procedure becomes effective upon approval.

C References

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

FSC-STD-01-001 FSC Principles and Criteria

FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms

FSC-STD-60-002 Structure and Content of National Forest Stewardship Standards

FSC-STD-60-006 Process requirements for the development and maintenance of National Forest Stewardship Standards

¹ The approval of Interim National Standards (INS) and low complex National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) has been delegated by the FSC Board of Directors at their 82nd meeting to the Policy Steering Group, an internal committee of the FSC secretariat.

FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators
FSC-PRO-60-006 Development and Transfer of National Forest Stewardship Standards to the FSC Principles and Criteria Version 5-1
FSC-GUI-60-002 Guideline for Standard Developers for addressing risk of unacceptable activities in regard to scale and intensity
FSC-PRO-10-607 Approval of Interim National Standards (INS) and low complex National Forest Stewardship Standards (NFSS) and addendum PSU checklists with analysis of process and content (: transfer matrix and assessment report template)
Terms of Reference and Operating Procedure Policy and Standards Committee

D Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this procedure, the terms and definitions provided in *FSC-STD-01-002 FSC Glossary of Terms*, and the following apply:

FSC Forest Stewardship Standard - The FSC Principles and Criteria together with the addition of indicators that are adapted to regional (trans-national, supra-national), national and/or sub-national conditions in order to be implemented at the forest management unit (FMU) level constitute an FSC Forest Stewardship Standard. (Source: FSC-STD-60-006 V1-2)

Note: The standard may have a national or regional scope. It specifies the requirements certificate holders have to conform with in order to obtain FSC FM certification. In some instances where an FSS does not include NTFPs in the scope, SDGs may develop a set of NTFPs indicators independently of the FSS development process and submit them for approval.

FSC Interim National Standard - The FSC Principles and Criteria together with the International Generic Indicators (IGI) that are adopted or adapted to the national conditions by a Technical Working Group (TWG). It specifies the requirements with which The Organization must conform in order to obtain FSC certification in countries that are lacking NFSS. (Source: FSC-PRO-60-007 V1-2)

Note: The standard may have a national or regional scope. In some instances where an FSS does not include NTFPs in the scope, TWGs or CBs may develop a set of NTFPs indicators independently of the INS development process and submit them for approval.

Policy Steering Group - Steering committee with a fixed composition of FSC senior management team members established to govern policy development and revision processes in accordance with *FSC-PRO-01-001 V3-1 Development and revision of FSC normative documents*.

The Board has delegated PSG the decision making on Interim National Standards as well as low complex National Forest Stewardship Standards at Board Meeting 82.

1 General Principles

- 1.1 Formal decision-making authority in relation to approval of FSC Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) rests with the FSC Board of Directors.
- 1.2 The FSC Board of Directors delegated the authority to approve FSSs to the Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) at Board Meeting 58 in November 2011.
- 1.3 The FSC Board of Directors delegated the authority to approve Interim National Standards (INS) and low complex NFSS to the Policy Steering Group at Board Meeting 82 in November 2019.

Note: The criteria established for identifying low complex NFSS are outlined in FSC-PRO-10-607a.

- 1.4 The FSC Performance and Standards Unit (PSU) acts as the Secretariat to the PSC and shall prepare a Recommendation Note (see example in Annex 2) for each FSS that is submitted by an FSC National Office or registered Standard Development Group (SDG) for formal approval. The PSU Recommendation Note should not be more than twelve (12) pages and shall include:
 - A decision request cover sheet with a list and explanation of all documents and materials associated with the standard;
 - A brief outline of the forest sector and forest conditions in the country;
 - A summarized description of the standard development process applied by the SDG together with PSU's evaluation of the SDG process and conclusions on conformance to FSC requirements;
 - A summarized description of the content of the standard together with PSU's evaluation of the contents and conclusions on conformance to FSC requirements;
 - Identification of the numbers of International Generic Indicators (IGI) that have been adopted, adapted, or dropped and the number of new Indicators that have been added;
 - A summary of the comments and issues identified by external reviewers;
 - A confirmation by PSU that all FSC procedures and rules relevant to the development and endorsement of an FSS have been followed and that the standard is ready for PSC consideration and decision;
 - Observations about any major issues with the standard that should be evaluated by the PSC, including major issues resolved between the SDG and PSU that require PSC consideration, and any issues not resolved between SDG and PSU;
 - Recommendations about any potential conditions to be associated with approval that the PSC should consider; and
 - Any other key information deemed relevant by PSU for decision-making by the PSC.
- 1.5 Together with the Recommendation Note, PSU shall submit the following Key Documents to the PSC:
 - A copy of the FSS that has been submitted for formal approval;
 - The PSU detailed evaluation of the standard and a summary of the interactions between PSU and SDG and final conclusions by the PSU on any outstanding process or content matters raised by the PSU (National Forest

Stewardship Standards pre-approval assessment report (FSC-RP-V01-01-EN);

- A Transfer Matrix showing all Indicators in the standard, the consistency of these Indicators with the IGI, and any PSU or external reviewer comments;
- Third party evaluations of the FSS; and,
- Any other documents of significance.

1.6 In addition to the Recommendation Note and the Key Documents, PSU may provide additional Supplemental Documents. These documents may vary by country but could include, for example:

- Membership of the SDG;
- Stakeholder consultation process;
- Details of public meetings; and,
- Any other supplemental information deemed potentially useful for the PSC.

1.7 All related information (PSU checklists with analysis of process and content) shall be available to the PSC through the PSC SharePoint site² and on request.

1.8 The PSU shall only submit a FSS to the PSC if in its evaluation it believes all relevant requirements have been met and it deems the standard ready for consideration by the PSC, and ready for approval or conditional approval.

2. The Approval Process

2.1 The Policy Manager – Forest Management (the Manager) shall, at least four (4) calendar weeks prior to a scheduled PSC meeting, submit the Recommendation Note on the standard (the PSC version as per Clause 1.3 above) to the PSC, and email the PSC members to advise that all documents related to a NFSS are posted on the PSC SharePoint site and invite questions and requests for additional information.

2.2 Prior to the PSC meeting scheduled to consider the decision on the standard the Manager shall have responded to any comments, queries and additional requests for information with the aim of addressing these prior to the meeting.

2.3 The Manager shall collate and keep records of these communications on issues raised in relation to the standard and the response of the PSU, in order to annex them to the Decision Form and minutes.

3. Decision making

3.1 At the scheduled PSC meeting that has quorum the PSC may make a decision on an FSS following consideration of the Recommendation Note, the pre-approval assessment report (FSC-RP-V01-01-EN and any additional information provided by PSU and any recommendations provided by PSU relating to the standard.

3.2 The Chairperson of the PSC shall structure and facilitate discussion on the submitted FSS and PSU documents and, with approval of PSC members, shall record and sign the decision reached in consensus by the members of the PSC in the PSC Decision Form (see example in Annex 1).

3.3 The PSC shall normally seek to make a decision on a standard at the first scheduled meeting following submission to the PSC, or in exceptional

² <https://onefsc.sharepoint.com/sites/PolicyandStandardsCommittee-PSU->

circumstances shall make a decision within a maximum of three scheduled meetings that have quorum.

- 3.4 The PSC has four options for making a decision about an FSS submitted through PSU for consideration:
- a) Approve the submitted FSS as an FSC FSS;
 - b) Approve the submitted FSS as an FSC FSS, upon completion of conditions;
 - c) Return the submitted standard to the SDG through PSU for additional work prior to re-submission for approval; or
 - d) In situations where the PSC is unable to reach a consensus decision on approval or approval with conditions, the PSC shall defer the decision-making process to the Board of Directors. The PSC shall request that the Board of Directors either:
 - provide direction to the PSC on how to address specific issues identified by the PSC and, with Board guidance, allow the PSC to continue deliberation on the standard; or,
 - take responsibility for decision making on the standard from the PSC.
- NOTE: If the PSC is not in consensus and defers the decision-making process to the Board of Directors, it shall state the reasons for this decision as per normal PSC procedures, and may suggest what steps it considers necessary in order to address its concerns.
- 3.5 If the PSC has taken a positive decision to approve the standard as submitted, the FSS is formally considered approved. This decision does not require further ratification by the FSC Board of Directors.
- 3.6 If the PSC has taken a positive decision to approve a standard with conditions, the PSC may delegate authority to determine when those conditions have been met by the SDG and the authority to approve the standard to the PSU Director or Chief Policy Officer. The PSC may also delegate the authority to the PSU Director or Chief Policy Officer to allow the partial meeting of a condition and to approve the standard in those circumstances where the SDG has demonstrated that it has made every effort to meet the condition and has provided satisfactory justification to the PSU Director or Chief Policy Officer as to why the condition could not be fully met. These decisions must be fully rationalized and documented and do not require further ratification by the PSC or by the FSC Board of Directors.
- 3.7 If the standard receives approval as an FSC FSS, the Manager shall inform the applicant of the approval, or the approval with conditions, share the PSC Decision Form signed by the PSC Chair, and initiate the next steps according to FSC-STD-60-006.
- 3.8 If a standard submitted by an SDG does not receive approval by the PSC, the PSC shall provide reasons for the decision in the PSC Decision Form. PSU shall inform the applicant of the rejection by the PSC and the reasons.

4. Review of a PSC Decision with respect to an FSS

NOTE: If an SDG wishes to challenge the PSC decision on an FSS, the following procedure will apply.

- 4.1 Upon receiving notice of a decision by PSC to return a standard to an SDG for further work, or of conditions imposed by the PSC on approval of a standard, the SDG may file a request with the PSC Chair that the PSC review its decision. The SDG shall provide reasons for the request for review.

- 4.2 The PSC Chair shall immediately establish a chamber-balanced subgroup of the PSC to address the issues raised by the SDG and to make a recommendation to the full PSC.
- 4.3 Upon receiving a request for a review from an SDG, the PSC shall complete review of the decision within 90 days.
- 4.4 Upon receiving a decision from the PSC, based on its review, the SDG may use the FSC dispute resolution process (FSC-PRO-01-005).

**Annex 1 Policy and Standards Committee
Decision Form**



**Regional and National Forest
Stewardship Standards Decision
Form**

Name of standard

1. General information

1.1 Applicant Body (NO/ SDG)	
1.2 Document title	
1.3 Document code	
1.4 Date of submission by NO / SDG	
1.5 Author of the PSU evaluation report	
1.6 Date of the PSU evaluation report	
1.7 Date of submission to the PSC	
1.8 Name of the Chairperson of the PSC	

2. Decision

2.1 Decision by PSC	
Date	Signed PSC Chair, (non-voting) On behalf of PSC members

3. Conditions

Approval Conditions	Rationale

Annex 2 PSU Recommendation Note Template



Policy and Standards Committee (PSC) Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) Recommendation Note

FSC-REP- VERSION – EN

Country

Date

Decision Request Cover Sheet:

1. General Information on the Forest Stewardship Standard

1.1 Applicant Body (NO/ SDG)	
1.2 Document title	
1.3 Document code	
1.4 Date of submission by NO / SDG	
1.5 Author of the PSU evaluation report	
1.6 Date of the PSU evaluation report	
1.7 Date of submission to the PSC	
1.8 Name of the Chairperson of the PSC	
1.9 List of documents submitted together with the standard	

2. Decision

2.1 Decision by PSC	
Date	Signed (PSC Chair)

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3. A brief outline of the forest sector and forest conditions in the country.

4. A summarized description of the standard development process.

4.1 PSU evaluation of the process and conclusions on compliance with FSC requirements.

5. A summarized description of the standard content.

5.1 PSU evaluation of the content and conclusions on compliance with FSC requirements.

6. Evaluation of use of International Generic Indicators (IGIs) as starting point.

7. External reviewers' note

8. Issues identified from evaluation to be evaluated by PSC

9. Additional note deemed relevant for PSC decision if any

10. Annexes: Record of communication on the standard

11. Recommendation Note by the Manager including recommendations about any potential conditions for the approval of the standard

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