



Forest Stewardship Council

FSC High Conservation value Forest Concept and Principle 9 application in the Congo Basin

FSC Principle 9 Maintenance of high conservation value forests

Management activities in high conservation value forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach.

The Precautionary Approach

An approach requiring that when the available information indicates that management activities pose a threat of severe or irreversible damage to the environment or a threat to human welfare, The Organization will take explicit and effective measures to prevent the damage and avoid the risks to welfare, even when the scientific information is incomplete or inconclusive, and when the vulnerability and sensitivity of environmental values are uncertain. (**Source: Based on Principle 15 of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Wingspread Statement on the Precautionary Principle of the Wingspread Conference, 23-25 January 1998**).

FSC Criteria for Principle 9

9.1 Assessment to determine the presence of the attributes consistent with High Conservation Value Forests will be completed, appropriate to scale and intensity of forest management.

9.2 The consultative portion of the certification process must place emphasis on the identified conservation attributes, and options for the maintenance thereof.

- FSC requires the forest manager to consult experts and stakeholders in identifying High Conservation Values

- Identification is not linked to designated areas, as these are often a representative sample of areas with HCVs.

- Areas equivalent in value to designated areas still need to be managed in a manner which maintains these values in the FSC system.

FSC Criteria for Principle 9

9.3 The management plan shall include and implement specific measures that ensure the maintenance and/or enhancement of the applicable conservation attributes consistent with the precautionary approach. These measures shall be specifically included in the publicly available management plan summary.

-FSC requires that management options reflect the results of consultations with experts and stakeholders.

9.4 Annual monitoring shall be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the measures employed to maintain or enhance the applicable conservation attributes.

HCVF Categories

High Conservation Value Forests are those that possess one or more of the following attributes:

- a) Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g. endemism, endangered species, refugia); and/or large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance
- b) Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems
- c) Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control)
- d) Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

Defining HC VF

- FSC International is the only body which can approve local definitions of HC VF for those seeking FSC Certification
- This is achieved through registered national and regional standards setting processes
- Other guidance and toolkits are out there as useful information but they have no official status within the FSC system.

HCVF and IFL

HCV a)... large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.

Intact Forest Landscape (IFL) is an unbroken expanse of natural ecosystems within the zone of current forest extent, showing no signs of significant human activity, and large enough that all native biodiversity, including viable populations of wide-ranging species, could be maintained.

HCVF and IFL next steps:

- Qualify and quantify the values at the Forest Management Unit level;
- Agree appropriate management options which maintain and enhance these values;
- Establish where present through survey and mapping at the Forest Management Unit level;
- Implement appropriate management and monitor;
- Until this is in place the precautionary approach must be applied.

HCVF next steps:

- Task Force needs to be appointed to assess the various HCVs, not just IFL;
- Detailed mapping and surveying are one priority;
- Establishing appropriate management is another priority;
- Congo Basin Standards Development Group need to help plan the process and agreed the outcomes.



Thank you

Richard Robertson
FSC Policy and Standards Unit

email: national.indicators@fsc.org

www.fsc.org