

Forest Certification Review Interim Report and Next Steps

Wisconsin Council on Forestry Issue Brief

Authors: DNR Technical Team with the COF Steering Committee **Date Presented:** December 20, 2012

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Expected Outcomes:

Council consideration of the interim report on certification review and decision on next steps to assure that the full review report in June 2013 meets the COF intent.

Background:

The COF approved a review of the state's investment in forest certification with an interim report to the Council in December 2012 and a final report by June 2013. The COF steering committee and a DNR technical team have been working since October and respectfully submit their interim report for Council consideration.

The interim report summarizes known information about the costs and benefits of certification and also gaps in information. These gaps represent areas of the original scope that have not yet been addressed and also information that is core to the costs/benefits picture but does not exist.

The review team realizes that it is difficult to critically assess whether work will add value. Asking "does the proposed work add critical value?" may help the council decide whether to direct the review team to pursue additional pieces of work.

Sections 10–12 of the report are **placeholders** for additional information:

Section 10 – summaries of other organizations forest certification reviews. Possibilities that have been mentioned include Menominee Tribal Enterprises (dropped FSC and subsequently recertified under FSC), Minnesota DNR's 2010 review (maintained SFI and FSC dual certification), Indiana DNR 2012 review (dropped ATFS in favor of FSC), State of Maine, and State of Pennsylvania. It is likely that this could take a week or more of time for interviews with an outcome of short descriptive summaries. **Should the review team spend resources to investigate and summarize other organization's reviews? What does the Council want to learn from other's reviews and decisions?**

Section 11 – establish a new regional certification scheme. The possibility of establishing a Lake States or Great Lakes certification scheme in addition to or in place of existing schemes. This work is estimated to take a couple of weeks to up to a month to investigate and frame the requirements in a meaningful way. **Should the review team spend resources to investigate and summarize the requirements for establishing a credible regional forest certification scheme? What specific information does the Council hope to learn?**

Section 12 – other information gaps.

1. **Specific information about the importance for forest certification to Wisconsin companies.** No current published information about the impact or importance of forest certification to Wisconsin companies exists. Previously published studies (Hubbard) are outdated or present information generalized at regional or national scales. Specific information about a company's business volume or value of certified products is most often held as proprietary information;

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confidential interviews have been used to assess importance (MN DNR 2010 review). Companies have publically responded to generalized surveys of importance (e.g. very important, somewhat important, or not important). **The technical team recommends updating the 2003 Hubbard survey in a modified format to assess the importance of forest certification to Wisconsin businesses. Should the team spend resources to pursue this proposal?**

2. **Specific information about the relative merits of single vs. dual certification.** Wisconsin's information is based on our experience with dual certification. **Should the review team spend resources to describe the relative merits of single certification for the various schemes vs. dual certification?**
3. **Literature review of consumer opinion and awareness.** The review scope includes this literature review, but an initial review of the literature found that there is little information available that is pertinent for Wisconsin. Original research is needed to inform the current state of consumer opinion and awareness. **The review team recommends that the literature review of consumer opinion and awareness of certification be removed from the scope of the certification review.**
4. Other gaps identified by the Council? Are there other information gaps that the team should address within the scope and timing of this review?

Council Action:

1. Discuss and decide the review scope questions for Sections 10-12
2. Provide additional comments and recommendations.

Supporting Documentation: Certification Review Interim Report