

AS4708 GN02–2013

**Sustainable Forest Management –
Guidance for the certification of group
forest management**

(Guidance Note 02 to AS4708–2013)



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- Association of Accredited Certification Bodies (AACB)
 - Australian Forest Growers (AFG)
 - Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA)
 - Australasian Pulp and Paper Industry Technical Association (APPITA)
 - Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.
 - Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union (CFMEU)
 - Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO)
 - Ecological Society of Australia (ESA)
 - ForestWorks
 - Greening Australia Limited
 - Independent Forest Policy and Forest Science Experts
 - Institute of Foresters Australia (IFA)
 - Planet Ark
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Australian Forestry Standard Limited wishes to acknowledge the participation of the expert individuals that contributed to the development of this Standard through their representation on the Committee.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Guidance for the certification of group forest management</i>	7
<i>Section A</i>	7
The Australian Standard® for Sustainable Forest Management.....	7
<i>Section B</i>	9
Forest Management Certification of Groups.....	9
<i>Section C</i>	13
Guide to Group Forest Certification Scheme Requirements	13
<i>Section D</i>	15
Guide to Group Managers	15
<i>Section E</i>	22
Guide to Group Members	22
<i>Section F</i>	24
Guide to Group Certification Document Requirements	24
Proposed Documentation for Group Forest Certification Schemes	25

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Guidance for the certification of group forest management

Section A

The Australian Standard[®] for Sustainable Forest Management

FOREWORD

The certification of a group of forest owners is an approach to forest certification which allows forest owners to become voluntarily certified under one certificate and share the financial obligations arising from forest certification as well as the common responsibility for forest management. This approach aims at improving information dissemination and co-operation in forest management among individual forest owners and reduces the risk of non-compliance.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Australian Standard[®] (AS 4708-2013) for Sustainable Forest Management (AFS) is to provide forest managers and forest owners with economic, social, environmental and cultural criteria and requirements that support the sustainable management of forests for wood production.

Independent, third-party Certification against the AFS provides a clear and unambiguous statement that wood production in a particular defined forest area was managed in accordance with a set of predetermined and clearly defined environmental, economic, social and cultural performance requirements that support sustainable management of forests.

Guidance for native forest and plantation ownerships to the AFS is provided by Guideline GN01.

In Australia there are significant numbers of small forest holdings. The limited financial income of small forest owners; periodicity of their management activities and revenues; limited access to information and knowledge; as well as limitations relating to their conformity with some of the criteria for sustainable forest management which cannot be achieved in small forest areas, represent significant barriers to forest certification.

This Guideline has been prepared to assist forest managers and forest owners of small scale native forest and plantations in developing and adopting an operational group management system that would aim at meeting the requirements of independent third party certification to AFS. It is informative only and provides information for forest owners and auditors. Alternative methods may be suitable for forest managers to demonstrate the control required to meet the AFS.

CERTIFICATION OF GROUPS OF FOREST OWNERS

Certification of groups of forest owners offers the opportunity for owners/managers of small forest areas to join together and gain benefits of increased scale, while retaining management control of their forest.

AFS Group Certification provides an approach to forest certification whereby individual forest owners or managers come together under a group structure. The certification process involves evaluating and certifying forest owners or managers with individual properties under a single certificate for the group which covers the total area of the participating Group Members. Certification in a group allows individual forest owners or managers to benefit from efficiencies that can accrue as being part of a larger group, as well as gain access to services that can be cost effectively provided through a group structure.

Organisations eligible for Group Certification include landowner or forestry associations, private forestry development committees, government resource agencies, private companies offering group services, cooperatives or other legal entities that can demonstrate management responsibility and authority.

Groups differ from multi-site organisations in that Group Members individually undertake management activities on their forest. The control of the activities is directed by the Group Manager. The table below shows the different types of organisation that can be covered by the AFS.

Ownership Types	Number of Sites	Organisation Type
Single forest owner and single forest manager	One site	Single Entity
Single forest owner and single forest manager	Multiple Sites	Multi-site Entity
Multiple forest owners and single forest manager	Multiple Sites	Multi-site Entity
Multiple forest owners and multiple forest managers controlled by a Group Manager	Multiple Sites	Group Entity

GROUP FOREST MANAGEMENT AND THE CERTIFICATION MANUAL

Certification requires that a Group Entity be established to oversee and administer the process. A number of legal, administrative and oversight responsibilities must be met by the group management system. The Guideline is augmented by a series of documentation and templates (available separately to this Guideline) which pertain to the Certification process for groups and are available for adoption and use by Group Entities.

Section B

Forest Management Certification of Groups

1 Scope

This Guideline provides information for the evaluation of a Group Entity and facilitates the management of a group of forest management units under a single Forest Management Certificate.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document the terms and definitions given in the AFS apply together with the following definitions.

2.1 Certified Area

The forest area covered by a forest management certificate representing the sum of forest areas of the Group Members.

2.2 Document Confirming Participation

A document issued to a Group Member that refers to the Forest Management Certificate and that confirms the Group Member as being covered by the scope of the Forest Management Certificate.

2.3 Forest Management Certificate

A document confirming that the Group Entity complies with the requirements of the AFS and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

2.4 Group Entity

An entity that represents the Group Members, with overall responsibility for ensuring the conformity of forest management in the certified area to the AFS and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme.

2.5 Group Forest Certification Scheme

A scheme or arrangement managed by a Group Manager on behalf of a Group Entity allowing for the certification of Group Members under one Forest Management Certificate.

2.6 Group Manager

A person with delegated responsibility for administering the rules of the group, especially the admission and removal of Group Members in a manner that ensures the integrity of the scheme.

2.7 Group Member

A forest owner/manager or other entity who:

- is covered by the Forest Management Certificate;
- has the legal right to manage the forest in a clearly defined forest area;
- has the ability to enter a legal agreement with the Group Entity; and
- can make arrangements to ensure that the requirements of the AFS are implemented in that area.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION

3 General

The Group Forest Certification Scheme should provide clear definitions relating to the following terms, which are in conformity with the definitions of those terms presented in chapter 2:

- (a) the Group Entity,
- (b) the Group Manager
- (c) the Group Member, and
- (d) the Certified Area.

3.1 Group Size

There is no restriction on the size that a certificate can cover in terms of the number of Group Members, their individual property size or total forest area. The Group Entity should have sufficient human and technical resources to manage and control the Group Forest Certification Scheme in line with the AFS and other applicable requirements.

3.2 Conformity with Australian Forestry Standard

The Group Forest Certification Scheme should define requirements which ensure that the Group Entity and Group Members' collectively conform to the AFS.

3.3 Responsibilities of the Group Entity

The Group Forest Certification Scheme should define the following requirements as the responsibility of the Group Entity:

- (a) To represent the Group Forest Certification Scheme in the certification process, including in communications and relationships with the Certification Body, submission of an application for certification, and contractual relationship with the Certification Body;
- (b) To provide a commitment to comply with the AFS and other applicable requirements;

- (c) To establish and maintain written procedures for the management of the Group Forest Certification Scheme including recommended practices for forest management (silvicultural systems);
- (d) To clearly define and document the responsibilities between the Group Entity, the Group Manager and the Group Members in relation to forest management activities;
- (e) To keep records of:
 - the Group Entity and Group Members' conformity with the requirements of the AFS, and other applicable requirements;
 - all Group Members, including their name, legal status, contact details and maps and supporting documentation describing the Certified Area;
 - any records of training provided to staff or Group Members, relevant to the Group Forest Certification Scheme;
 - records of annual production of forest products from the Certified Area;
 - the internal monitoring programme, and any preventive and/or corrective actions taken; and
 - internal reviews of the Group Forest Certification Scheme;
- (f) To establish a written agreement with all Group Members that includes the Group Member's commitment to comply with the AFS. The Group Entity should have a written contract or other written agreement with all Group Members covering the right of the Group Manager to implement and enforce any corrective or preventive measures, and to initiate the exclusion of any Group Member from the scope of certification in the event of non-conformity with the AFS, and other applicable requirements;
- (g) To provide Group Members with a Document Confirming Participation upon acceptance into the Group Forest Certification Scheme;
- (h) To provide all Group Members with information and guidance required for the effective implementation of the AFS and other applicable requirements;
- (i) To operate an annual internal monitoring programme that provides for the evaluation of the Group Members' conformity with the AFS and other applicable requirements;
- (j) To annually review the Group Forest Certification Scheme's conformity with the AFS that includes reviewing the results of the internal monitoring programme and the Certification Body's findings;
- (k) In cases where the Group Forest Certification Scheme allows a Group Member to be covered by an additional forest certification scheme, the Scheme shall ensure that non-conformity by the Group Member under one scheme is addressed by the other scheme; and
- (l) To establish and enforce rules to ensure the correct use of the Forest Management Certificate, logos and other intellectual property belonging to Australian Forestry Standard Limited by Group Members.

3.4 Responsibilities of Group Members

The Group Forest Certification Scheme should define the following requirements for the Group Members:

- (a) To enter a written agreement with the Group Entity, that includes a commitment to comply with the AFS and other applicable requirements of the Group Forest Certification Scheme;
- (b) To comply with the AFS and other applicable requirements of the forest certification scheme;
- (c) To provide full co-operation and assistance in responding effectively to all requests from the Group Entity, the Group Manager or Certification Body for relevant data, documentation or other information;
- (d) To allow access to the Group Manager or Certification Body to the Certified Area, whether in connection with formal audits or reviews or otherwise;
- (e) To implement relevant corrective and preventive actions established by the Group Manager; and
- (f) To use the Forest Management Certificate and logos and other intellectual property belonging to Australian Forestry Standard Limited in accordance with the rules of the Group Forest Certification Scheme.

A Group Member may appoint a third party to act on their behalf to ensure their compliance with the requirements of the Group Forest Certification Scheme but at all times must be able to demonstrate they have control of the forest operations undertaken on their behalf.

Section C

Guide to Group Forest Certification Scheme Requirements

SELECTION OF THE CERTIFICATION BODY

The Group Entity may request proposals from JAS-ANZ accredited Certification Bodies to conduct the AFS Certification. The Group Entity may want to provide the prospective Certification Bodies with a copy of the application, its current list of members and indicators manual, or any other background information that would allow the Certification Bodies to prepare an accurate proposal and quote to conduct the Group Certification. The Group Entity is responsible for selecting the Certification Body to conduct the certification.

4 Legal Requirements

- 4.1 The Group Entity shall be an Australian legal entity competent to sign agreements with Group Members and to enter into binding contracts with Certification Bodies and others
- 4.2 The Group Entity shall designate a full or part-time Group Manager responsible for overseeing all of the administrative details of AFS Certification. The Group Manager will generally be the representative of the Group Entity.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

- 5.1 Each Group Entity, its Group Members and Group Manager will need to define their respective roles and responsibilities in administering and implementing the AFS certification process.
- 5.2 The Group Manager administers the affairs and implements the policies, procedures and rules of the Group Entity. The responsibilities of the Group Manager may be shared with any number of personnel within the Group Entity.

6 Group Membership Fees

- 6.1 The Group Entity should determine all applicable fees that it is going to charge Group Members to join and participate in the Group Entity. Membership fees should take into consideration the amount of fees that the Group Entity is required to pay Australian Forestry Standard Limited in relation to the registration and use of the AFS and Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) logos.

7 Indicators Manual and Evidence File

- 7.1 The Group Entity may want to develop an indicators manual outlining how each of the AFS requirements is being achieved. The manual could include a description of the objective evidence to demonstrate to an independent third party that the AFS is being achieved.
- 7.2 Objective evidence can take the form of written documentation, interviews with appropriate personnel, and inspection of field sites to observe practices. The written

documentation should be filed in a central audit evidence file so that it can be readily located and inspected.

8 Forest Owner Entry and Departure from the Group Entity

- 8.1 The Group Forest Certification Scheme should provide processes for Group Member entry into, and departure from, the Group Entity.
- 8.2 The Group Forest Certification Scheme should establish procedures for the compliance of participating Group Members (complying and non-complying) so as to ensure the Group Entity retains its Certification status as valid once the AFS Certification requirements have been achieved.

9 Internal Dispute Resolution Process

- 9.1 The Group Forest Certification Scheme should have an established process for addressing and resolving disputes regarding conformance with the AFS between and among the Group Members and the Group Manager.
- 9.2 The dispute resolution process should be sufficiently defined by the Group Forest Certification Scheme so that all parties understand the rules. Such rules should cater for various levels of resolution and embody the principles of procedural fairness.

10 Background Information and Materials

- 10.1 The Group Entity is encouraged to develop appropriate informational materials to help prospective members understand the various policies, procedures and rules of the Group.
- 10.2 Group Entities should understand what their obligations are for implementing and achieving the AFS. The Group Entity is encouraged to provide an overall written or oral explanation of the Group Certification Process to the Group Members. Confidentiality provisions and protections should be in place to ensure that confidential aspects of a Group Member's lands and management plans are protected.

Section D

Guide to Group Managers

THE GROUP MANAGER

The Group Manager is responsible for administering the group, ensuring that the requirements of the AFS are being implemented and achieved, accepting new Group Members into the existing group and guiding the group and its members through the AFS Certification Process.

INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE AFS

An important responsibility of the Group Manager is to understand and interpret the AFS in the context of their group. The context includes the scope, scale and complexity of the Group Entity. Also, large Group Entities with a number of forestry staff would have a more complex and detailed forest management program than a very small Group Entity with minimal forestry staff. The Group Manager must interpret and appropriately apply the AFS in the context of the group and be able to clearly explain the criteria and requirements to the Group Members.

The Group Manager should also determine how the requirements of the AFS relate to individual Group Members. For example, the AFS requires compliance with all relevant Australian, State and local government legislation and regulation. The Group Manager must be familiar with relevant laws and regulations relevant to Group Members' operations and be able to direct them to such resources.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE GROUP ENTITY

The Group Manager should provide initial information to prospective new Group Members regarding the application process and entry into the Group Entity. An application package of information should be developed containing basic information including:

- a copy of the current AFS;
- the application process;
- any by-laws of the Group Entity;
- the obligations of Group Members;
- advice on group fees;
- the AFS certification process; and
- other associated details as outlined below.

A suite of templates has been prepared to assist groups in their self-administration. This package is titled the "AFS Group Certification Document Package". Each of the functions described below is underpinned by documents available in this package. Groups may choose to adopt the formats provided in some, all, or none of these templates.

11 Management Plan

The AFS requires Group Members to have a written forest management plan consistent with the scope and scale of forestry operations on the property. Each group Member must either have an individual management plan or be covered by a larger Group management plan where responsibility for management has been delegated to a resource manager. Group Members should work with the Group Manager, consulting foresters, or other qualified natural resource professionals to prepare management plans for their property.

12 Application for Group Membership

The Group Entity should have a procedure defining its application process and a means for ensuring that the applicant and the potential forest lands to be part of the Certified Area are eligible and managed in a manner consistent with the AFS. The procedure should include a signed application or statement of commitment by the applicant, evidence of a written management plan, and the consent of the applicant to allow access to the property for purposes of internal and external inspection.

The application should also be reviewed to determine if the applicant meets the size, forest type, location, and type of ownership or other requirements established by the Group. If the application for membership in the Group appears to be complete, the Group Manager or his/her designated representative may conduct an on-site inspection of the property.

12.1 Inspection and Approval of New Group Members

The Group Manager should schedule a meeting or phone call with the applicant or his/her representative to determine if the applicant meets the requirements of the Group Entity and the AFS. The meeting or phone call should include a review of the requirements of the Group, as well as the criteria and requirements of the AFS.

It is important that the applicant achieve the applicable criteria and requirements of the AFS prior to entry into the Group Entity. Entry into the Group Entity signifies that the applicant is actively implementing and achieving the AFS. If the applicant is not in conformance with the AFS, it could jeopardise the continuing Certification of the Group Entity.

The Group Manager is encouraged to use a Checklist to document that each of the AFS criteria and requirements are met. Where a non-conformance is identified, it must be documented and a Corrective Action Request (CAR) form (or equivalent) be completed by the inspector. The applicant should be instructed to address each of the non-conformances and complete the relevant documentation. The documentation should be reviewed, approved and signed by the Group Manager. When all of the non-compliances have been addressed to the satisfaction of the Group Manager, the applicant may be considered for Group membership.

When the applicant demonstrates their conformance with the AFS, and willingness to abide by group rules, then the applicant can become a member of the group. The Group Manager should document the acceptance of new Group Members into the group. Appropriate documentation may include correspondence with the applicant, the application to become a new Group Member, the monitoring checklist and any applicable CAR forms. The Group Manager should maintain documentation regarding Group Members at appropriate locations.

12.2 Maintaining Membership in the Group

The Group Manager should ensure that appropriate records are maintained, both for administering the Group and for use in Certification audits and surveillance audits. The Group Manager should maintain an electronic or hard copy file on each Group Member, consisting of all documentation relating to that member.

The Group Manager should ensure that any new Group Members are added to membership and mailing lists, are invoiced for any applicable fees, and take care of any other administrative details.

13 Training and Education

The Group Manager should evaluate training needs of the group and individual Group Members to ensure sufficient knowledge to implement and maintain the AFS requirements. The Group Manager should periodically assess the need for training in:

- technical forestry;
- silvicultural techniques appropriate to the forest area;
- relevant laws and regulations;
- biodiversity, wildlife, soil and water protection;
- the audit process and possible audit findings;
- the corrective action process;
- the AFS requirements and certification processes; and
- the requirements of the Group Forest Certification Scheme.

This training can be intensive or extensive, and can be held for both staff of the Group Entity and/or individual Group Members that take an active role in the management of their forests.

14 Monitoring

The Group Manager should periodically monitor the forest management plans and activities of the Group Members to ensure that they continue to conform to the AFS.

The Group Manager should establish a procedure and schedule for conducting ongoing monitoring of the Group Member's conformance with the AFS. The schedule should allow for annual visits to at least a sample of properties.

The Group Manager may choose to use a checklist to document the monitoring process and to report appropriate findings to the individual Group Members. Where a non-conformance is identified during ongoing monitoring, the Group Manager should complete the CAR form and work with the Group Member to address the non-compliance.

If a Group Member is certified to more than one forest certification scheme, the Group Manager will monitor the compliance of the Group Member with the other schemes and develop corrective actions for any non-conformities that arise from the other scheme that affect compliance with the AFS.

All monitoring checklists and CAR forms should be retained in the Group Member's file.

15 Departure from the Group

Group Manager should ensure that Group Members are committed to long-term forest management in conformance with the AFS. If a Group Member elects to sell their property for whatever reason, or decides to withdraw from the Group, the Group Manager should document this, and remove the member from the list of Group Members.

The Group Entity should also maintain a formal procedure for expelling the Group Member if they do not meet the requirements of the AFS, and are not willing or able to take appropriate corrective action in the required time. The procedure should outline the circumstances which could trigger expulsion, the manner in which the Group Member is informed of a potential non-conformance with the AFS, the procedures for working toward corrective action, the procedure for actual expulsion from the Group, and a process for the member to appeal the expulsion ruling.

The Group Manager should document each step in the expulsion process to clearly outline the problem, allow time to correct the problem, check to ensure that corrective action has taken place, or notify the Group Member of their removal from the Group Entity. The notification of removal from the Group should explain the appeals process, and indicate that the expelled party can no longer claim membership in the Group or Certification to the AFS.

The Group Manager may want to form an Appeals Committee, made up of representatives of the Group Members that would define the key elements of the appeals process. The Appeals Committee should administer the appeals process on behalf of the Group. The Appeals Committee may also be the entity that serves to resolve internal disputes.

16 Maintaining Group Records

The Group, upon its formation, will have chosen the set of documents it requires to function. These may have been based upon the examples in the Group Certification Document Package.

The Group Manager is responsible for maintaining access to, and control of, all written records and documents. The Group Manager, on behalf of the Group Entity, must maintain a document control system to ensure that each Group Member can access the current version of all relevant documents. Each relevant document should be assigned a current issue number and a last revision date.

All documents utilised during the day to day running of the group must be held by the Group Manager at an appropriate location and retained for use during AFS audits.

16.1 Annual Reporting to AFS Limited

AFS Limited requires Group Entity to annually update certain information regarding the Group Entity including:

- number of Group Members;
- the total area of the Certified Area in the Group;
- new entries and departures from the membership; and
- other information.

The Group Manager should submit annual reports to AFS Limited and maintain copies of past annual reports on file.

17 Audit Preparation and Planning

Once the Group Entity has selected and contracted with a Certification Body to conduct the Group Certification, the lead auditor should contact the Group Manager to make appropriate arrangements, including: set tentative dates for the review of background documentation, prepare the audit plan, and conduct of the field audit.

The lead auditor should work with the Group Manager to develop an appropriate audit plan that considers the scope and scale of the Group Entity, how many audit person days will be needed, the dates and locations of the audit, and the dates for completion of audit report and issuance of the AFS Group Certificate. The audit plan should be cognisant of the sampling guidance for multi-site organisations, as provided in ‘Annex 2 – Multi-site Certification’ of the latest version of JAS-ANZ’s Procedure 26 – General Requirements for Bodies Operating Assessment and Certification of Forest Management Systems.

The Group Manager should also work with the lead auditor who will select field sites for inspection, as well as Group Members and other personnel that may serve as interviewees. The Group Manager should contact a representative list of Group Members to ensure their availability during the audit, check access to field sites, and make appropriate preparations for the field audit. The Group Manager and selected Group Members should serve as escorts for the Certification Body and its audit team members and provide other logistical and technical support.

The Group Manager should review the audit plan and details of the audit process with the lead auditor prior to the field audit. The Group Manager should be notified prior to the audit if there appears to be any incomplete documentation and possible major non-conformances. Appropriate preparation and planning will help ensure that the audit process proceeds smoothly, efficiently and economically.

18 Certification Process

The Group Manager should be the focal point for communication with the lead auditor during the field audit. The Group Manager should ensure that the audit plan is followed, that audit findings are appropriately documented, that any disputes are appropriately handled, and that overall audit procedures are followed. The Group Manager should also be ready to develop Corrective Action Plans if a non-conformance is identified and documented by the Certification Body.

The Group Manager may also want to review the final report for accuracy and appropriate documentation. The Group Entity is required to develop a summary report, in consultation with the Certification Body, on conformance with the AFS, to ensure that it is a fair representation of audit findings.

The Group Manager should ensure that the appropriate indicators and supporting objective evidence is available to demonstrate that the Group Entity and its Group Members are in conformance with the AFS. The Group Manager should work with the Group Members to ensure that the AFS is implemented and is appropriate to the scope and scale of their properties.

The Group Manager should receive the final AFS Group Certification Audit Report from the Certification Body and communicate the findings to the Group Entity and Group Members. If a Certification audit results in a CAR, the Group Manager should coordinate with the Group and/or individual Group Members to develop corrective action plans and work to ensure timely implementation. Once the Certification Body issues the AFS Certificate, the Group Manager holds the certificate on behalf of the Group.

The Group Manager is also responsible for maintaining current and accurate records from the audit process. Some of the records that should be kept include:

- a list of Group Members that were part of the AFS Certification Audit;
- the total number of hectares included within the scope of the Audit;
- a copy of the Final Report and any CAR forms issued by the Certification Body;
- a copy of the summary report;
- copies of Corrective Action Plans that are implemented to “Close Out” the CAR;
- evidence of monitoring the Corrective Action to ensure the same problem does not recur; and
- notifications from Group Members of their departure from the Group Entity.

19 Re-Certification

To maintain a valid Certification status, the Group Manager should keep the Group Entity’s program up to date and in ongoing conformance with the AFS. This can be done as part of ongoing technical assistance and forest management services to the Group Members. Any Corrective Action Plans that were developed during the initial audit shall be monitored and closed according to the timeframes indicated on the CAR form.

After two (plus) years of ongoing forest management and continual improvement, the Group Manager should begin preparations for the re-Certification audit that should be conducted no later than the third year as all certificates have a three year validity period.

The Group Manager should update any management plans, indicators and evidence manuals, evidence files or other documents in preparation for the re-Certification. Outdated copies of written documentation should be removed from the active files and from other places of use. Documents that need to be retained for legal and other legitimate purposes, consistent with the document retention policy, should be so indicated and filed.

The Group Manager should document areas of continual improvement based upon experience, past audit findings, ongoing monitoring, and new research findings.

20 Group Certificate, Logos and Public Claims

The Group Manager should receive a copy of the Certification from the Group Certification Body within an appropriate period following the issuance of the final report based on conformance with the AFS. The Certificate will have been assigned a Certification Number and/or a Certificate Number by the Group Certification Body. The Group Manager should provide either a copy of the Certificate to each Group Member which will include an appendix (if applicable) listing all Group Members or an individual attestation which refers to the Certificate.

The Group Manager is responsible for applying to AFS Limited for access to the AFS Logo and the PEFC Logo on the basis of the accredited AFS Certificate (refer to 6.1 Group

Membership Fees). The Group Manager will be able to advise Group Members on their unique registration number, which will also include the Group Entity unique number, for the two logos and on the claims which can be made as a consequence of AFS Certification.

The Group Manager is responsible for making sure that any public claims about the independent, third-party Certification are accurate and truthful, and consistent with the AFS and PEFC Logo Use Rules Manuals and truth in advertising guidelines. The Certification Body will be responsible for monitoring the use of the two logos from AFS Limited and the claims of the Group Members.

The Group Manager and Group Members may issue a press release, conduct tours, and otherwise communicate the fact that the Group Entity has achieved independent AFS Certification.

Section E

Guide to Group Members

THE GROUP MEMBER

Each Group Member is responsible for implementing the requirements of the AFS and for implementing any policies, rules and procedures specified by the Group Entity. This involves working either independently or with a delegated service provider or the Group Manager to ensure that forest practices are properly implemented, maintain an up to date management plan, and provide objective evidence demonstrating that the AFS criteria and requirements have been achieved. The Group Members are also to follow the group procedures for logo use as required by any Group Entity licences with Australian Forestry Standard Limited or PEFC.

21 Application

Group Members that are interested in joining an existing certified Group Entity should be encouraged by the Group Manager to complete an application and submit the application to the Group Entity.

As part of the application process, the Group Member indicates their consent to voluntarily become part of the Group Entity, the time frame covering the agreement, authorisation for the Group Manager and auditors to access the property, and authorisation to be part of the group.

22 Monitoring and Auditing

The Group Member should be prepared and agree to have his or her property periodically monitored and audited to assess conformance with the AFS. The Group Manager and an independent Certification Body will conduct the monitoring and/or auditing periodically. The Group Member may want to be present for each of these visits, or can arrange to have the Group Manager or his/her designee present to address technical forestry and other details.

The Group Member should be prepared to provide certain information about the property to the Group Manager and Certification Body including: the number of hectares involved, the silvicultural techniques that are practiced on the property, the landowner's long-term commitment to active ownership and management of the resource, a copy of the forest management plan, and any other pertinent information regarding the property.

22.1 Internal Review or Audit

The Group Entity may want to undergo regular internal reviews using a monitoring checklist and the Group Entity may want to make sure that all required elements of the AFS are in place and that objective evidence exists to demonstrate conformance.

Any internal review should be conducted by a person(s) that can be objective in their evaluation. The internal audit should be used by the Group Entity to test its preparedness for certification or surveillance audits, to ensure that the scope of the Group Entity is well thought out and documented, and that there are no major non-conformances.

22.2 Corrective Action

The Group Member should be prepared to develop a Corrective Action Plan contained on a CAR form, if a major or minor non-conformance with the AFS is identified by either the internal review, Group Manager or independent Certification Body. The Group Member needs to be willing and able to implement appropriate corrective action in the required timeframe as specified on the CAR form, or risk possible expulsion from the Group Entity.

The Group Manager or Certification Body should document findings and evidence of non-conformance on a CAR form, or equivalent procedure. The Group Member, with the possible assistance of the Group Manager, would then prepare a Corrective Action Plan addressing how the immediate impacts would be mitigated, what the root cause of the non-conformance was, the timeframe for completing the corrective action, and how future non-conformances can be prevented. The Group Member should then sign the Corrective Action Plan and submit it to the Group Manager or Certification Body for review and approval.

23 Departure from the Group Entity

Group Members should be committed to long-term forest management and membership of the Group Entity. If the Group Member decides to sell the property and/or resign from the Group Entity, immediate written notification should be provided to the Group Manager.

If the Group Member no longer chooses to conform to the requirements of the AFS, he/she should voluntarily withdraw from the Group Entity.

If the Group Manager or other Group Members become concerned that a Group Member is consistently out of conformance with the AFS, an on-site monitoring visit should be conducted to confirm the potential non-conformance. If a non-conformance is found, a CAR form should be completed and signed by the Group Member.

If the Group Member fails to take corrective action within the specified timeframe, the Group Manager, on behalf of the Group Entity, may ask the Group Member to voluntarily withdraw from the Group Entity. The Group Manager and Group Members should work in a positive and collaborative manner to address any findings of non-conformance and to correct any problems. The formal expulsion process should be used only as a last resort.

Section F

Guide to Group Certification Document Requirements

INTRODUCTION

Certification requires that a Group Entity be established to oversee and administer the process. Australian Forestry Standard Limited has prepared a Group Certification Document Package that provides a structured approach to identifying, assigning, implementing and monitoring these processes.

USE OF PROCEDURES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Group Entities can use the document package as a framework for the documentation that is required under the AFS criteria and requirements. The documents should be applied as templates and be tailored and modified to suit individual Group Entities. Other procedures can also be added or procedures removed as seen fit by the Group Entity.

Variations in regulation between State and Territory governments, as well as differences in the dynamics of group structures will determine necessary and pertinent aspects of the documents. As Group Entities will endeavour to ensure that documentation is sufficient to attain and maintain AFS certification, advice from Certification Bodies may be required during any scoping visit.

DOCUMENTATION CATEGORIES

DOC - Documents for Group Entity Management

POL - Policies from Group Manager and Group Members

PROC - Procedures for Group Entity Management

T - Templates for Planning

CERTIFICATION MANAGEMENT DOCUMENTS FOR GROUP ENTITIES

The list below identifies the proposed documentation. As documentation is periodically updated or new documentation is approved and included as part of the documentation package, AFSL will share and publish new versions and new documentation as it becomes available.

*Proposed Documentation for Group Forest Certification Schemes***DOC- Documents for Group Entity Management**

- GM-DOC-01. Document Register
- GM-DOC-02. Group Structure and Organisation
- GM-DOC-03. Responsibility Chart
- GM-DOC-04. Application Form
- GM-DOC-05. Membership Contract
- GM-DOC-06. Register of Members
- GM-DOC-07. Pre-Entry Inspection Checklist
- GM-DOC-08. Monitoring Schedule
- GM-DOC-09. Monitoring Checklist
- GM-DOC-10. Corrective Action Request (CAR) Form
- GM-DOC-11. Corrective Action Request (CAR) Register
- GM-DOC-12. Corrective Continuous Improvement Checklist
- GM-DOC-13. Group Certification process
- GM-DOC-14. Safety Induction
- GM-DOC-15. Hazard and Risk Assessment
- GM-DOC-16. Register of Training Needs

POL - Policies from Group Manager and Group Members

- GM-POL-01. Policy for Membership
- GM-POL-02. Policy for Environmental Management
- GM-POL-03. Policy for Fire Management
- GM-POL-04. Good Neighbour Policy
- GM-POL-05. Policy for Forest Management
- GM-POL-06. Policy for Continous improvement

PROC - Procedures for Group Entity Management

- GM-PROC -01. Procedure for Application and Joining
- GM-PROC -02. Procedure for Monitoring
- GM-PROC -03. Procedure for Corrective Action Requests
- GM-PROC -04. Procedure for Leaving and Expulsion
- GM-PROC -05. Procedure for Stakeholder Engagement
- GM-PROC-06. Procedure for Record Keeping
- GM-PROC-07. Procedure for Membership Structure
- GM-PROC-08. Procedure for Dispute Resolution
- GM-PROC-09. Procedure for Training
- GM-PROC-10. Procedure for Management Review

T - Templates for Planning

- GM-T-01. Forest Management Plan
- GM-T-02. Fire Management Plan
- GM-T-03. Forest Harvest Safety Plan
- GM-T-04. Forest Harvest Plan
- GM-T-05. Self-Assessment for AFS Certification

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Australian Forest Growers. (n.d.). *AFS Small Growers*. Retrieved from Australian Forest Growers: <http://www.afg.asn.au/services/projects/afs-small-growers.html?start=1>

American Tree Farm System-IMG-01. (2010.). *Documents*. Retrieved from ATFS: http://www.treefarmssystem.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/1/3630b2029e4441d15c6a8965587cfdb5/pdf/atfs_img_sop_final_5.18.2010.pdf

FSC-STD-30-005 (V1-0) EN. (2009). *GROUP CERTIFICATION STANDARD*. Retrieved from FSC: http://www.fsc.org/fileadmin/web-data/public/document_center/international_FSC_policies/standards/FSC-STD-30-005_V1-0_EN_Group_Entities_FM_Groups.pdf

NAFI. (2008). *Reports*. Retrieved from National Association of Forest Industries: <http://www.nafi.com.au/site/NAFIREports.php>

PEFC ST 1002:2010. (2010.). *Group Forest Management Certification*. Retrieved from PEFC: <http://www.pefc.org/resources/technical-documentation/pefc-international-standards-2010>

Australian Forestry Standard Limited

Australian Forestry Standard Limited (AFS Ltd) is a not-for profit public company and an accredited Standards Development Organization. It owns and manages two Australian Standards®, AS4708 Sustainable Forest Management and AS4707 Chain of custody for certified wood and forest products. These Standards are key components of the Australian Forest Certification Scheme which is operated by AFS Ltd to support and encourage good forest management and to provide information to users of wood and paper products about the source of those products.

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Standards Australia is an independent company, limited by guarantee, which prepares and publishes most of the voluntary technical and commercial standards used in Australia. These standards are developed through an open process of consultation and consensus, in which all interested parties are invited to participate. Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commonwealth government, Standards Australia is recognized as Australia's peak national standards body.

Australian Standards

Australian Standards are prepared by committees of experts from industry, governments, consumers and other relevant sectors. The requirements or recommendations contained in published Standards are a consensus of the views of representative interests and also take account of comments received from other sources. They reflect the latest scientific and industry experience. Australian Standards are kept under continuous review after publication and are updated regularly to take account of changing technology.

International Involvement

Standards Australia is responsible for ensuring that the Australian viewpoint is considered in the formulation of international Standards and that the latest international experience is incorporated in national Standards. This role is vital in assisting local industry to compete in international markets. Standards Australia represents Australia at both ISO (The International Organization for Standardization) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

Electronic Standards

All Australian Standards are available in electronic editions, either downloaded individually from SAI Global, or via on-line and CD ROM subscription services. For more information phone 131 242 or visit www.saiglobal.com.

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