

Principles and Criteria Review

Briefing Paper on Landscapes and Mosaics

03 November 2010

This paper was produced by the P&C Review Working Group (P&C Review WG) to explain its approach to varying mosaics and landscape values in the revised Principles and Criteria and to address stakeholder concerns raised in relation to this approach. The paper will also serve as a basis for further discussions at the P&C Review Workshop on the 15th and 16th of November 2010. The P&C Review WG does not pretend that this could be The Last Word on the issue.

In line with its terms of reference, the tasks of the P&C Review Working Group are mainly –

- a. to clarify the FSC requirements, so as to reduce disparities in evaluations by ASI-accredited conformity assessment bodies;
- b. to shift the wording of Criteria towards outcomes where practicable; and
- c. to minimize the variety of interpretations found in national forest stewardship standards and national adaptations of the generic standards developed by the conformity assessment bodies.

Should you have any further questions regarding this issue, please contact Matthias Fecht at m.fecht@fsc.org

What is the issue?

Draft 3-0 of the revised Principles and Criteria included proposed Criterion 6.8 designed to replace parts of the current Criteria 10.2 and 10.3, especially the elements referring to mosaics, natural landscapes, and diversity of ages, species, structures and ecosystems. Other elements of criteria 10.2 and 10.3 such as streamside zones, wildlife corridors were moved to proposed Criterion 6.7.

The comments on draft 3-0 of the P&C expressed an overall dissatisfaction across all chambers in relation to the proposed wording for Criterion 6.8 indicating a strong need for further revision. Concerns were expressed that the wording would lack a reference point in the form of natural patterns, would not require the restoration of previously existing forest patterns, the proposed reference to land uses could require environmentally damaging practices or prevent restoration. On the other hand it was pointed out the criterion could only be applied to plantations, would prevent forest managers from carrying out management activities that would result in changing mosaics over time, should be flexible in relation to following changes occurring in the landscape.

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What is the response by the P&C Review WG?

The P&C Review WG concluded that in order to find a satisfactory solution it is necessary to identify what FSC was trying to achieve for these elements when they were incorporated in the current P&C almost 15 years ago, and how knowledge of ecosystem dynamics has increased since then.

The conclusion is that FSC was dealing with two related items of the structure and layout of a Management Unit, both internally and in relation to the surrounding land-scape: (a) **environmental & economic resilience** and (b) **landscape values** (as defined). These elements are both covered by the new criterion 6.8.

Environmental & economic resilience (as defined) refers to safeguards, mitigation measures and the "economic, ecological and social stability" mentioned in the current Criterion 10.3. These may be enhanced by, for example, a mosaic or other pattern of conservation areas, connectivity, the multiple "species, age classes and structures" of the current Criterion 10.3 and the "wildlife corridors and streamside zones" of the current Criterion 10.2. All these and other elements may help to maintain the resilience of the MU in the face of pests, changes in demand, climate change and other hazards.

Landscape values (as defined) refer to the physical landscape + human perceptions. They are not mentioned in the current P&C. However, there is a strong perception that the references to mosaic and the natural landscape in the current Criterion 10.2 and Criterion 10.3 were *partly* motivated by a concern to protect those features of the landscape that are valued by people living and visiting in the area, and to avoid the appearance created by relatively large uniformly regenerated clear-felled areas, or blocks of monoculture plantations, especially when they replace "cultural landscapes" (cf. UNESCO) which often have quite small-scale patterns of fields, crops and other uses. Such large and uniform areas lack the appearance of spatial and seasonal variations found in natural vegetation or in traditional cultural landscapes, even though they are almost always divided into units of different age and size classes. They are often perceived by local and regional stakeholders as a serious loss of landscape values.

Still, some landscape changes come with social benefits: Before 1940, almost all over the world, land management depended on fire or animal traction or human muscle. Since 1945, landscape management has depended more and more on diesel-power machinery, and as a consequence farm and forest workers live longer, have fewer accidents at work, and are much more healthy, but the landscape has been homogenized and depopulated.

It is helpful to recognize that ALL forests and landscapes are "dynamically varying mosaics", at different scales of space and time. Even great blocks of forest in Amazonia and boreal Canada have changing patterns of species composition over long pe-



riod, as well as small-scale internal mosaics. And landscape values are important in artificial or man-made landscapes as well as in "natural or semi-natural" landscapes.

(Illustration: In old agricultural "cultural landscapes", with many small fields and woods, plantations may be more acceptable to stakeholders, respecting current landscape values, if they have a similar mosaic pattern of species and ages on a similar spatial scale, taking account also of local topography and drainage lines, rather than trying to imitate some ancient, long-lost, forgotten, pre-historic forest which may have been a single apparently-uniform solid block of forest. In other regions, large blocks of natural vegetation were replaced by large blocks of soy, rice, sugar cane, pasture or other failed land uses, and large blocks of productive tree plantations may be considered entirely acceptable)

The new Criterion 6.8 addresses these issues more explicitly, avoiding some of the ambiguities of the current Criterion 10.2 and 10.3.

One of the main sources of confusion is the last sentence of the current Criterion 10.2: "The scale and layout of plantation blocks shall be consistent with the patterns of forest stands found within the natural landscape".

The P&C Review WG concluded that the reference to "the natural landscape" did not refer to any concept of ancient, pre-human or pre-industrial landscapes. We know of no FSC documents which support such an interpretation. For example, the current (existing) Criterion 6.4 requires protection of "existing ecosystems ... in their natural state", making it clear that "naturalness" may refer to what is there now, not to what was there at some undefined period in the distant past.

For these reasons, the new Criterion 6.8 includes a re-interpretation of some of the elements of the current Criterion 10.2 and 10.3:

- The new Criterion 6.8 refers to all vegetation types in the whole MU, and not
 just to plantations. It is applicable especially to activities which may have major impacts on the pattern or structure of the vegetation, such as plantations
 and logging operations.
- The concept of "patterns" in the landscape refers not only to the pattern of forest stands, but to the whole pattern of natural or cultivated vegetation, natural and man-made subdivisions, and other aspects of "landscape values", inside and outside the MU. [This change is especially necessary for landscapes which no longer contain forest stands, but do contain a valued pattern of landscape elements]
 - The concept of "natural landscape" refers to any existing areas of natural vegetation, and also to those elements of the man-made "cultural landscape" which are valued by local and regional stakeholders. This clarification is especially



needed for landscapes which are no longer pristine, ancient or undisturbed but are rich in landscape values. The concept of "natural landscape" has sometimes been interpreted to imply pre-historic, pre-conquest or pre-industrial landscape or forest structures, but this interpretation is not implied in the new criteria.

Revised Criterion 6.8 on mosaics and landscape values

In line with the above the P&C Review Working Group is proposing the following revised version of Criterion 6.8.

Criterion 6.8 (revised 10.2. and 10.3) The Organization shall manage the landscape in the MU to maintain and/or restore a varying mosaic of species, sizes, ages, spatial scales and regeneration cycles, appropriate for the landscape values in that region and for enhancing environmental & economic resilience.

Explanatory Notes

- 1. This criterion does not prevent the Management Unit from changing together with changes in the surrounding landscape.
- 2. Indicators may cover other elements of the "mosaic", including rotations, cutting cycles etc.
- 3. Compliance also requires that managers take account of local opinions and needs in evaluating landscape values (as defined) and in planning and executing management activities (cf. Criterion 7.6.). It is especially important here because local communities and individuals may have strong emotional attachments to existing landscape pattern arising from historical sequences of human interventions, even when these did not necessarily reflect best environmental and social land use practices. This is less important when existing landscapes are transitory and not particularly valued.
- 4. Landscapes, and perceptions of their values, constantly change and evolve, on all scales of time and space, and the MU landscape may also do so, but the changes in the MU caused by management activities should not impair these values. The Organization must implement measures to maintain these values, and to avoid or mitigate damage (caused by, for example, large clear-felling areas, intensive arboricidal or silvicultural treatments, large blocks of single species in an otherwise highly diverse landscape, etc.). It may also be expected to remedy past negative impacts, while recognizing that such measures may have to be spread over many years, and should not put at risk the overall goals of the FSC for social benefits and economic viability.
- 5. Improvement or enhancement of degraded areas is not prevented by the Criterion, while respecting environmental values and local opinions.
- 6. The greater the impact of management activities (e.g. new plantations in nonforested areas, intensive harvesting operations...), the greater the attention that must be paid to this Criterion.