



NORTHWEST CERTIFIED FORESTRY IN THE USA

January 2013

This US case is an example of a successful group FSC forest management model designed to support family forest owners and small forests access a growing market for FSC certified products. The group, run by Northwest Certified Forestry, has grown from an initial 7 members in 2005 to 100 members in 2012, and has expanded from Washington into Oregon.

Northwest Certified Forestry has worked hard to make certification as simple and affordable as possible for its members. They offer a suite of services designed to help landowners manage their forests for ecological and economic diversity, including: marketing assistance for certified products, help with identifying financial aid programs, and more recently, ecosystem service market development.

Background

Originally founded in 1992, The Northwest Natural Resource Group (NNRG) aims to “promote innovative forest management strategies that improve the health of forest and freshwater ecosystems while increasing economic development in rural communities” throughout the Pacific Northwest of the US.

As a core part of this mission, and through its Northwest Certified Forestry (NCF) program for small landowners, NNRG supports the growth of a profitable, sustainable, and environmentally sound timber industry. Through its membership of landowners, and the active support of staff in developing new supply chains, NCF is creating a growing network of landowners, manufacturers and distributors that specialize in locally produced forest products certified to FSC standards.

Accessible & Affordable Certification

NCF is building a community of landowners and individuals who are pursuing innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to forest management. NCF uses a group certification model to provide low cost certification services, and has made the process of becoming FSC certified as simple as possible.

Currently, 100 landowners are members of the group which totals 53,626 ha of certified forestland: members average 1,325 acres in size, with a median size of 54.5 acres. The program is open to many types of landowners in Washington and Oregon including: family forests, small forestry companies, tribes, conservation groups and public agencies.

NCF provides a suite of services that enable small landowners to take a more proactive approach to managing their woodlands and marketing their forest products. NNRG and its NCF program have been active in developing national support networks to help assist with overcoming the challenges of pursuing FSC certification.

NNRG was one of seven organizations that formed the FSC Family Forests Alliance (www.familyforestsalliance.org) in 2006: this works at a national level to assist group managers, and to implement strategies and priorities for advancing family forest certification. NNRG also participates in the Healthy Forests, Healthy Communities Partnership (HFHC), a program managed by Sustainable Northwest. HFHC maintains a group CoC certificate that currently has 72 members offering lumber, flooring, cabinets, windows, doors, furniture and other FSC-certified products.

FACTS

Certificate details

SA-FM/COC-001394, for group of SLIMFs, issued for round wood, sawlogs, pulpwood, firewood, sawn wood, timbers, furniture, flooring, and mouldings on 7 January 2005

Area

1109 ha in 2005, 53626 ha in 2012

Membership

7 members in 2005, 100 members in 2012

Quantities

7.75 million board feet



“FSC offers us an opportunity to distinguish our products in the marketplace and NCF group certification cut our costs by more than half.”

- Richard Pine, O’Neill Pine Company

Lessons Learnt

> For group certificates to work efficiently and effectively, it has been important to develop documents that identify the purposes of the group and to create a list of member services with tangible outcomes that benefit a large number of member landowners. Various examples of documents developed for these purposes are available through the NNRG website.

> Although there is growing demand for FSC-certified products, the region suffers from a lack of supply because most of the large public and private landowners have not had their forests certified. This has resulted in relatively few sawmills getting certified because of supply concerns. This has been addressed by NNRG’s efforts to educate and advocate for greater participation in forest certification throughout the region, and this year the Washington State Department of Natural Resources achieved FSC certification for a portion (145,000 acres) of their state-managed lands.

> It is vital to maintain frequent communications among group members - via field days, newsletters and other events – as these are essential for maintaining linkages and reporting progress towards outcomes. In-person meetings are also important to develop relationships among geographically dispersed members.

> For operations to run smoothly, it is valuable to identify an individual who will be responsible for coordinating activities and tracking the group certificate, and can also serve as a single point of contact for group members and potential supporters or funders.

> There are challenges related to serving a large geographic area (two states), and NNRG has responded by establishing satellite offices to serve specific areas and building contract auditor networks in areas too distant from staff.

“NCF is one of the best models I’ve seen for connecting small landowners to markets and services.”

- Joe Kane, Executive Director, Nisqually Land Trust



Cedar trees at the Evergreen Land Trust forest, Deming, Washington.

The Future

Northwest Certified Forestry completed a strategic planning process to address goals and milestones for the continued growth of the certification program.

> The primary remaining challenge is to grow the group to a size that is economically viable and self-sustaining, and NNRG aims to certify an additional 50,000 acres bringing the group total to 190,000 certified acres in NCF.

> To maintain management of such a large number of group members, NNRG is developing database software and member management systems that will support record keeping needs and auditing requirements.

> Creating more landowner value, diversification of program revenue, and increased operational efficiency are all critical for the program’s continuing success.

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