

Forest Certification Auditing An Overview


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Forest Certification Auditing An Overview

- How is an audit conducted
- What are the consequences
- Has it made a difference
- Opportunities




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Background

- B.S Forest Management-University of Missouri
- M.S. Forest Economics-Stephen F. Austin State Univ.
- Employed by forest industry for 22 years
- Involved primarily in wildlife management activities while employed by industry
- Chairman of the Black Bear Conservation Committee for 6 years
- Began forest certification auditing upon departure from industry in 2001
- Conduct audits to all forest management standards throughout the U.S; SFI, FSC, ATFS

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Forest Certification Auditing

- An evaluation, by an independent third party, of forest management activities against a set of requirements (criteria)
- Audit criteria-the requirements against which audit evidence is evaluated
 - Criteria as set forth by the Standard
 - The organization's own procedures

Forest Certification Standards

- Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- American Tree Farm System (ATFS)

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Forest Certification Auditing

- Does the organization have procedures in place that meet the requirements of the Standard?
- Does the organization follow its own procedures in the way in which it conducts management activities?
- Audit conformance, not compliance

Forest Certification Auditing

- An audit is an evidence-gathering process
 - Interviews
 - Document reviews
 - Observation of activities
 - Timber harvesting
 - Site preparation and regeneration
 - Road construction activities
 - Chemical use
 - Special sites
 - RTE sites

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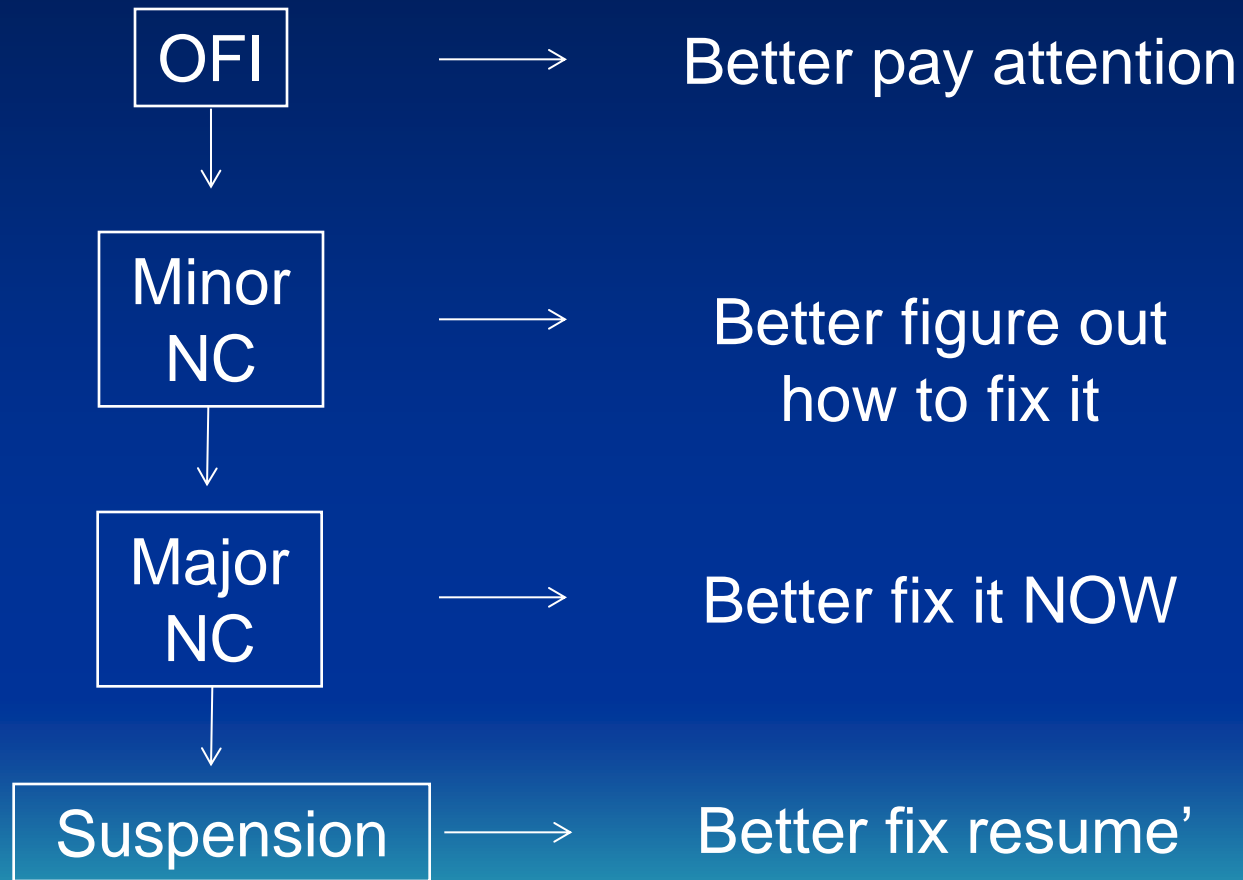
Forest Certification Auditing

- Audit findings-results of the evaluation of audit evidence against the criteria
 - Conformance: meets the requirement
 - Opportunity for Improvement (Close call)
 - Minor non-conformance: Deviation from a requirement that does not pose substantial risk
 - Major non-conformance: Significant deviation from a requirement that could pose substantial risk

Forest Certification Auditing

- Audits are based on a systematic approach
 - Isolated deviations from a requirement that do not pose risk to either the system or to the environment do not necessarily constitute a finding
 - Patterns of minor deviations, or a single instance that represents a risk to the system or the environment, will result in a finding

Forest Certification Auditing



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Forest Certification Auditing

- Initial audit followed by annual surveillance audits
- Renewal audit every 3 years (SFI, ATFS) or 5 years (FSC)
- All sites or regions covered during the certification cycle

Forest Certification Auditing


- Audits conducted under ISO requirements (19011, 17021)
- Audits only conducted by accredited certification bodies (CB)
- Auditors must meet qualification and training requirements established by the CB
- Strict oversight by accreditation bodies
 - ANAB (SFI, ATFS)
 - ASI (FSC)
- On-site witness audits

Has It Made a Difference?

➤ Major focus areas

- Chemical applications
- Soil productivity
- BMPs for water quality protection
- Stand- and landscape-level wildlife habitat
- Identification and protection of RTEs
- Petroleum spills
- SFI fiber sourcing standard requires compliance with BMPs and consideration of G1/G2 species when purchasing wood from private landowners


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Has It Made a Difference?

- Provides assurance
- Narrows sideboards and reduces outliers
- Creates internal accountability
 - Internal audit requirements
 - Personnel accountability for environmental performance and success of certification efforts
- Employee and contractor training
- Public input
 - SFI-Inconsistent practices programs
 - FSC-Stakeholder consultation

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Opportunities

- Since the audit process evaluates a company's own procedures, the development of procedures to protect a species or suite of species not specifically covered under the forest certification standard would be subject to third-party audit.