MA DCR FSC Group Certification
Description of System for Identifying and Maintaining High Conservation Value Forests on Member Properties

Identifying and maintaining High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) is a condition of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Forest Certification. HCVFs are forest areas that need to be appropriately managed in order to maintain or enhance identified High Conservation Values (HCVs).The definition of HCVs encompasses exceptional or critical ecological attributes, ecosystem services, and social functions. Under certification, areas identified as HCVFs may be harvested, but management activities must maintain or enhance the HCVs present.

Per the FSC US Forest Management Standard, version 1.0, dated July 8, 2010, High Conservation Value Forests are those that possess one or more of the following attributes:

- *HCV1*-Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant: concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia)
- *HCV2*-Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
- *HCV3*-Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.
- *HCV4*-Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).
- *HCV5*-Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g., subsistence, health).
- *HCV6*-Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

The standard operating procedures currently utilized by MA Department of Conservation and Recreation Bureau of Forestry, Service Forestry District Foresters, provide numerous opportunities for the identification and maintenance of the six categories of HCFVs. HCVF1 and HCV4 are clearly the most likely to occur; however all categories of high conservation value forests are recognized as a part of the group certification.

HCV1

In Massachusetts the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), which is a part of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, is responsible for the conservation and protection of hundreds of species that are not hunted, fished, trapped, or commercially harvested in the state. The Program's highest priority is protecting the 176

species of vertebrate and invertebrate animals and 259 species of native plants that are officially listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern in Massachusetts

In addition, through the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs unique and significant communities can receive a designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). These ACEC's are defined as places in Massachusetts that receives special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness and significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas are identified and nominated at the community level and are reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. A listing of the current ACEC in MA is provided in Appendix A.

With regards to forest management there are three opportunities to identify and protect these high conservation value forests; when a forest management is prepared, when a cutting plan is filed or when a landowner receives cost-share through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Management Planning

There are two ways that rare and endangered species information can be incorporated into a management plan; during plan preparation using the NHESP liaison process or after plan submittal.

If the plan preparer chooses to submit a plan without prior endangered species information then a "rare species habitat" assessment is done by the Service Forester accessing priority habitat information as provided annually by the MA Natural Heritage Endangered Species (NHESP) through a cooperative agreement. If the property does fall within a habitat polygon, it is noted as "yes" and the plan preparer is required to note the occurrence in the stand descriptions(s) if they have not already done so.

Forest Cutting Plans

When a new Forest Cutting Plan is submitted, the same NHESP assessment is undertaken by the District Service Forester. If the property does not fall within a habitat polygon, it is noted in an administrative box as "no". If the property does fall within a habitat polygon, it is noted as "yes". The Service Forester notifies the landowner and plan preparer of this and sends a copy of the plan to the NHESP offices for their review. Approval of the plan is withheld pending NHESP review. NHESP has 15 days to respond with a decision whether or not rare, threatened, or endangered populations would be impacted by the proposed timber harvesting and if so, how those species are to be protected during harvest operations. The written guidelines provided by NHESP to the District Forester and the landowner are incorporated into the cutting plan as conditions of approval.

USDA-NRCS Cost-Sharing

Per the 2008 Farm Bill, cost-sharing is available through the MA USDA-NRCS office for forestland owners to pursue forest and other natural resource management practices on their property. When a forestry practice is proposed, MA DCR Service Forestry provides technical assistance to NRCS staff and the landowner. A District Service Forester will review the practice, conduct a site visit and complete pre and post treatment documentation (see Appendix B) NRCS staff are required to conduct a NHESP review when formulating the Conservation Plan and Landowner Contract. Should the proposed management practice fall within a NHESP polygon, NRCS staff will share that information with the DCR Service Forester to assist in their assessment of the proposal.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

New Forest Cutting plans also trigger review of MA Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). ACEC designation creates a framework for local and regional stewardship of critical resources and ecosystems. If timber harvesting is proposed in or around an ACEC, resources are to be protected by adherence to the Forest Cutting Practices Act regulations and the latest version of the Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices Manual.

HCV1 decision making process

Positive or negative determinations will be made, after NHESP database review, by using the FSC-US High Conservation Assessment Framework,

https://us.fsc.org/preview.fsc-us-hcvf-assessment-framework.a-190.pdf

There are two guiding questions for HCV1. If the answer to either question is “yes”, the FMU will be considered a HCVF site. If the answer is “no” to both, the FMU will not be considered a HCVF.

HCV2

Given the forestland parcelization and ownership trends in MA, it is very unlikely that any property in the MA Private Lands Group will be large enough to meet the definition of a “large landscape-level forest”.

HCV3

Given the forestland parcelization and ownership trends in MA, it is very unlikely that any property in the MA Private Lands Group will contain “rare” communities greater than a 500 acre threshold. The MA NHESP database contains a listing of S1, S2, and S3 natural communities, see Appendix C.

HCV4

Upon receipt of a new Forest Cutting Plan, the appropriate District Service Forester processes the plan. The review includes an assessment of the harvest area's proximity to public drinking water supply areas. A map(s) are available in each regional office identifying the location of federal, state, and municipal water supply areas. If the harvest area abuts such an area, the administrative box is checked "yes" and a copy of the plan is sent to the manager of the water supply. The manager then has the opportunity to review the plan for water supply protection considerations. The Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices Manual requires use of a filter strip (required along all water bodies and certified vernal pools, no more than 50% of the basal area can be removed during any one cut, the landowner must wait 5 years before cutting in the same filter strip again, and the residual trees within the filter strip must be healthy growing trees well distributed over the area) and temporary bridge to complete any stream crossings within 1000' upstream of a public water supply reservoir. The property overview section of the MA Forest Stewardship Plan requires also a description of riparian zones and wetlands and where applicable, the public drinking supply reservoir(s) they discharge into.

HVC5

Given the forestland parcelization and ownership trends in MA, it is very unlikely that management practices utilized on any property in the MA Private Lands Group will result in impacts that would be significant enough to threaten "basic needs of local communities" or the "fundamental subsistence of local communities".

HCV6

The MA Private Lands Group Certification manager or designated forestry staff member conducts a review of the MA Historical Commission archives as described in the document entitled "Native American Group Engagement Protocol", which is attached as Appendix D.

MASSACHUSETTS AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN
June 2009

Total Approximate Acreage: 268,000 acres
Approximate acreage and designation date follow ACEC names below.

Bourne Back River
(1,850 acres, 1989) Bourne

Canoe River Aquifer and Associated Areas (17,200 acres, 1991) Easton, Foxborough, Mansfield, Norton, Sharon, and Taunton

Cedar Swamp
(1,650 acres, 1975) Hopkinton and Westborough

Central Nashua River Valley
(12,900 acres, 1996) Bolton, Harvard, Lancaster, and Leominster

Cranberry Brook Watershed
(1,050 acres, 1983) Braintree and Holbrook

Ellisville Harbor
(600 acres, 1980) Plymouth

Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog
(8,350 acres, 1992) Boston, Canton, Dedham, Milton, Norwood, Randolph, Sharon, and Westwood

Golden Hills
(500 acres, 1987) Melrose, Saugus, and Wakefield

Great Marsh (originally designated as Parker River/Essex Bay)
(25,500 acres, 1979) Essex, Gloucester, Ipswich, Newbury, and Rowley

Herring River Watershed
(4,450 acres, 1991) Bourne and Plymouth

Hinsdale Flats Watershed
(14,500 acres, 1992) Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, and Washington

Hockomock Swamp
(16,950 acres, 1990) Bridgewater, Easton, Norton, Raynham, Taunton, and West Bridgewater

Inner Cape Cod Bay
(2,600 acres, 1985) Brewster, Eastham, and Orleans

Kampoosa Bog Drainage Basin
(1,350 acres, 1995) Lee and Stockbridge

Karner Brook Watershed
(7,000 acres, 1992) Egremont and Mount Washington

Miscoe, Warren, and Whitehall Watersheds
(8,700 acres, 2000) Grafton, Hopkinton, and Upton

Neponset River Estuary
(1,300 acres, 1995) Boston, Milton, and Quincy

Petapawag
(25,680 acres, 2002) Ayer, Dunstable, Groton, Pepperell, and Tyngsborough

Pleasant Bay
(9,240 acres, 1987) Brewster, Chatham, Harwich, and Orleans

Pocasset River
(160 acres, 1980) Bourne

Rumney Marshes
(2,800 acres, 1988) Boston, Lynn, Revere, Saugus, and Winthrop

Sandy Neck Barrier Beach System
(9,130 acres, 1978) Barnstable and Sandwich

Schenob Brook Drainage Basin
(13,750 acres, 1990) Mount Washington and Sheffield

Squannassit
(37,420 acres, 2002) Ashby, Ayer, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, and Townsend

Three Mile River Watershed
(14,280 acres, 2008) Dighton, Norton, Taunton

Upper Housatonic River
(12,280 acres, 2009) Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, Washington

Waquoit Bay
(2,580 acres, 1979) Falmouth and Mashpee

Weir River
(950 acres, 1986) Cohasset, Hingham, and Hull

Wellfleet Harbor
(12,480 acres, 1989) Eastham, Truro, and Wellfleet

Weymouth Back River
(800 acres, 1982) Hingham and Weymouth

ACEC acreages above are based on MassGIS calculations and may differ from numbers originally presented in designation documents and other ACEC publications due to improvements in accuracy of GIS data and boundary clarifications. Listed acreages have been rounded to the nearest 50 or 10 depending on whether boundary clarification has occurred. For more information please see, http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/aboutMaps.htm.

Appendix B

Modified AD-862 form for Forestry Application Referrals

Name and Address			Telephone Number
Tract & Field Numbers			
Conservation Practices			Practice Description
Practice Code	Units	Extent Planned	
The practices shown above with the units shown are needed and practical for the forest.			
Signature of DCR Forester			Date
Performance Report			
Practice Code	Units	Extent Applied	
The practices have been performed to the extent shown above and meet the program requirements. If any practices do not meet practice standards and specifications, or if additional work is required, explain:			
Signature of DCR Forester			Date

Appendix C

NHESP Priority Natural Communities is Massachusetts and their ranks, S1-S4.

Terrestrial

Maritime Juniper Woodland/Shrubland S1
Maritime Oak - Holly Forest/Woodland S1
Maritime Pitch Pine on Dunes S1
Sandplain Grassland S1

Sandplain Heathland S1
Scrub Oak Shrubland S1
Serpentine Outcrop Community S1

Calcareous Forest Seep Community S2
Calcareous Rocky Summit/Rock OutcropCommunityS2

Dry Riverside Bluff S2
Hickory - Hop Hornbeam Forest/Woodland S2
High Elevation Spruce - Fir Forest/Woodland S2
Maritime Dune Community S2
Maritime Erosional Cliff Community S2
Maritime Rock Cliff Community S2
Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community S2
Ridgetop Pitch Pine - Scrub Oak Community S2
Yellow Oak Dry Calcareous Forest S2

Circumneutral Rocky Summit/Rock Outcrop Community S2S3

Calcareous Rock Cliff Community S3

Calcareous Talus Forest/Woodland S3
Circumneutral Rock Cliff Community S3
Circumneutral Talus Forest/Woodland S3
Coastal Forest/Woodland S3
Maritime Beach Strand Community S3
Maritime Shrubland Community S3
Rich, Mesic Forest Community S3
Riverside Rock Outcrop Community S3
Black Oak - Scarlet Oak Forest/Woodland S3S4

Palustrine

Calcareous Basin Fen S1
Coastal Interdunal Marsh/Swale S1
Estuarine Intertidal: Sea-Level Fen S1

Alluvial Atlantic WhiteCedar SwampS2
Atlantic White Cedar Bog S
Black Ash Swamp S2
Black Ash-Red Maple-Tamarack Calcareous Seepage Swamp S2
Black Gum Swamp S2

Black Gum-Pin Oak-Swamp White Oak "Perched" Swamp S2
Calcareous Pondshore/Lakeshore S2
Calcareous Seepage Marsh S2
Calcareous Sloping Fen S2
Coastal Atlantic White Cedar Swamp S2
Coastal Plain Pondshore S2
Cobble Bar Forest S2
High-Terrace Floodplain Forest S2
Inland Atlantic White Cedar Swamp S2
Kettlehole Level Bog S2

Major-River Floodplain Forest S2

NorthernAtlantic WhiteCedar SwampS2
Riverside Seep S2
Small-River Floodplain Forest S2
Spruce-Tamarack Bog S2
Transitional Floodplain Forest S2
Acidic Graminoid Fen S3
Acidic Shrub Fen S3
Alluvial Red Maple Swamp S3
High-Energy Riverbank S3
Kettlehole Wet Meadow S3
Level Bog S3
Riverine Pointbar and Beach S3
Spruce-Fir Boreal Swamp S3

Estuarine

Estuarine Intertidal: Brackish Tidal Marsh S1
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Tidal Shrubland S1
Estuarine Intertidal: Coastal Salt Pond Marsh S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Tidal Swamp S1
Estuarine Subtidal: Coastal Salt Pond S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Freshwater Tidal Marsh S1
Marine Intertidal: Rocky Shore S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Fresh/Brackish Flats S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Salt Marsh S3
Estuarine Subtidal: Fresh/Brackish Flats S2
Estuarine Intertidal: Saline /Brackish Flats S3

Appendix D

MA Private Lands Group Certification
Native American Group Engagement Protocol

The following steps will be taken to "engage the Nipmuc Nation and other Native American groups, as appropriate, in matters related to forest management planning and operation, and incorporate information and/or safeguards related to archaeological, cultural, and historical issues and sites into the MA DCR Service Forestry Program" per the June 2009 Rainforest Alliance/Smartwood Division audit.

1. Within three months of being accepted into the MA Private Lands Group Certification program, a DCR Service Forestry staff member, either the Group Manager or another District Service Forester, will consult the Native American archives housed at the MA Historical Commission 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, MA 02125.
2. The staff member will reference a copy of the forest stand map provided by the landowner in their forest management plan against the map of known Native American archaeological, cultural, and historical sites. If there are no known sites on the member's property it will be duly noted by the staff member, in writing, to the Group Manager who will file the communication and no further action is necessary.
3. If known Native American archaeological, cultural and historical sites are found on the member's property, the member will be informed, in writing, by the Group Manager who will provide a description of the artifacts and/or other features found on the property as provided by the MA Historical Commission. The member will then be required to supplement their existing management plan with this information and outline in their plan how the area will be protected from environmental impact if/when timber harvesting is proposed. The MA Historical Commission advocates adherence to "Best Management Practices", per the most recent copy of the Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices Manual, as an effective means to protect Native American resources.
4. When a group member wishes to conduct a timber harvest, they are required to file a Forest Cutting Plan, per MA General Law, Chapter 132-the Forest Cutting Practices Act, and will indicate their group enrollment status on the Forest Cutting Plan. When the plan is reviewed by the District Service Forester, he/she will inform the Group Manager and review the landowner's management plan for any identification of Native American archaeological, cultural, and historical considerations. The Service Forester will then use that knowledge in determining whether or not the Native American resources are to be sufficiently protected as outlined in the forest cutting plan and inform the plan preparer if adjustments to the Forest Cutting Plan are needed to do so.