

CASESTUDY04

Mendocino, USA

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE FSC

#04

FSC AT WORK

**MENDOCINO REDWOOD COMPANY, USA:
SHOWING HOW FSC FOREST MANAGEMENT
CAN WORK**

April 2014

GREENPEACE

Established nearly 20 years ago, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is widely recognised as the highest global certification standard for forest management. Nonetheless, with the FSC's rapid growth, there is growing concern with the increasing number of certificates being awarded to controversial forest management operations that do not meet the standards of the system.

To keep FSC certification as a credible tool to help protect forests, Greenpeace International is publishing a series of case studies exposing controversial operations that are posing the greatest risk to the FSC's integrity. We will also be highlighting best practice operations that are meeting and/or exceeding the FSC's principles and criteria. These case studies will show the standards that must be consistently met if the FSC is to maintain its credibility.

Increasingly, the poor performance of some companies holding FSC certificates is beginning to overshadow the cases where the FSC has led to a substantial improvement from status quo logging practices and supported the increased on-the-ground protection of forests. These "bad apple" FSC-certified operations present a reputational liability to the FSC brand, and will likely undermine consumer trust of the label.

The FSC needs to be strict with these "bad apple" operations by removing them from the system until they sufficiently reform their practices to meet FSC standards. FSC must also strengthen the certification process to prevent any more certificates from being awarded to operations that fail to meet the standards. Furthermore, the FSC needs to apply its world-leading criteria consistently in order to maintain the integrity of the FSC brand. Members of the FSC's economic, social and environmental chambers have worked hard for two decades to maintain the value of the FSC as a validator of responsible forest management, and as a tool for the marketing of responsible forest products. As a result, both the system and the availability of FSC-certified products have grown by leaps and bounds.

Now FSC supporters need to work together to keep the FSC strong as it continues to grow.



image: Giant redwood in Mendocino Redwood Company managed forest area, 2012.
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OTHER CERTIFICATION SYSTEMS

Greenpeace does not believe that other forest certification systems, such as PEFC (The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification), SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) and MTCS (Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme), can ensure responsible forest management. While the FSC faces challenges, we believe that it contains a framework, as well as principles and criteria, that can guarantee socially and ecologically responsible practices if implemented correctly. The other systems lack robust requirements to protect social and ecological values.

image: Abiding by FSC's Principle 6, Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC)'s forest management plan prohibits logging of the endangered northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) habitat, and only in exceptional cases allows for selective single tree logging where this practice enhances the forest's conservation values.

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SHOWING HOW FSC FOREST MANAGEMENT CAN WORK

Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) is situated 185km north of San Francisco, California, in the northern pacific coastal redwoods region of the US. This region, which includes Humboldt and Mendocino counties, was the site of iconic confrontations between forest conservation advocates and timber companies in the 1990s.¹ During this time, the region experienced waves of civil disobedience such as 1990's "Redwood Summer."² Tensions in the region were peppered with incidences of violence, such as the death of an activist and the car bombing of Mendocino-based Earth First! activist Judi Bari.³ Today, in Mendocino, MRC operates with a strong social licence, and has a robust dialogue with stakeholders that did not exist previously. MRC's implementation of FSC Principles and Criteria (P&C) today represents a positive example of the FSC at work. Especially notable are MRC's culture of proactive stakeholder engagement, particularly of local stakeholders, and the company's high levels of transparency.

In 1998, when MRC took over 92,592 hectares of land that had been overlogged by its previous landowner, Louisiana Pacific, tensions between timber companies and local activists still ran high, and many local critics were initially skeptical of MRC's claims that it would usher in a new era of forest management into its lands.⁴ Today, 13 years since MRC earned its FSC certification, the dynamic between MRC and local stakeholders is considerably healthier, as are the forests. In addition to being very open and consultative with local stakeholders, MRC has used the FSC framework to develop robust plans that factor in long-term forest management and restoration, and that pay special attention to high conservation value forests and landscape-level planning.

MRC did not earn its FSC certificate during the first application in 1999, but after MRC addressed outstanding issues, it became certified in 2000. Since 2000, MRC has maintained its certificates and used two different auditors, Rainforest Alliance and Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), to monitor performance and compliance with FSC's P&C.⁵

**KEY FSC
VALUES
PROTECTED
BY
ECOTRUST
PRACTICES**

**HIGH CONSERVATION
VALUE (HCV) FORESTS
RARE, THREATENED,
AND ENDANGERED
SPECIES**

**RESPECT FOR
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES'
RIGHTS**

MENDOCINO REDWOOD COMPANY (MRC)

image: Mendocino Redwood Company sawmill. Its timber carries the FSC pure label, indicating the content of the timber is 100% from FSC-certified forest management. 2012
© Greenpeace



Case study FSC certificates #	FSC-C019948, FSC-C004495
FSC licence codes	SCS-FM/COC-00026N, SW-FM/COC-000128
Certifying bodies	Rainforest Alliance and Scientific Certification Systems
Country of operations	US
Total FSC forest management (FM) area certified	92,592 hectares (ha)
Number of FSC chain-of-custody (CoC) facilities	2 members: 1 sawmill and 1 distribution centre
FSC area covered by this case study	Mendocino & Sonoma
FSC products	Lumber - W1 rough wood, W1.1 roundwood (logs)
Markets for FSC products	North America
FSC complaint(s) on certificate(s) by stakeholders	None
FSC corrective action requests filed	Yes
Public availability of permits, forest management plans, detailed maps	Yes

image: Arrowhead remnant found in MRC's managed forest area. MRC has a good relationship with neighbouring local indigenous communities and provides access to local tribes for hunting, gathering, and restoration of sacred sites as required under FSC's Principle 3.
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FSC PRINCIPLE 3: INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS⁶

The FSC framework helped MRC strengthen its relationship with nearby indigenous communities for its treatment of historical artifacts found on the property. This includes consultation and for pursuing cultural heritage projects on MRC lands that are of mutual interest. Following FSC's Principle 3.3, forest management companies like MRC are obliged to identify and protect sites of significance to indigenous peoples.⁷ Reno Franklin, from the nearby Kashia Pomo community that has engaged with MRC for around 8 years, is generally critical of industrial logging but nonetheless characterises MRC as a role model for the timber industry. He also affirmed that MRC was a good neighbour to local indigenous communities and provides access to local tribes for hunting, gathering, and restoration of sacred sites – other criterion required by FSC to demonstrate good forest management. He found that MRC demonstrated a firm commitment to protecting old growth forests. MRC allows frequent access to tribes beyond legal requirements, in a policy of free and frequent consultation.⁸

FSC PRINCIPLE 4: FOSTERING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS AND TRANSPARENCY

The FSC also helped MRC improve its relationship with local stakeholders. In its first years as the owner of the property, local activists campaigned against MRC and its owners, the founding family of the apparel company Gap, Inc., for continuing the logging practices of the lands' previous owner.⁹ The FSC provided a framework for stakeholder input on MRC's forest management plans. On its website, MRC comprehensively implements FSC Criteria 7.4,¹⁰ and makes it easy for stakeholders and the wider public to access permits, management plans, detailed maps of the lands, reports on its FSC certificates, waterways, watersheds, chemical use, economic impact, logging methods, and forest inventories.¹¹ This year, in seeking public comment for new forestry and conservation plans, MRC held more public hearings than legally required, and also supported giving an extension for the comment period to give stakeholders enough time to input on a new long-term plan.¹²

FSC VALUES: AREAS OF GOOD COMPLIANCE

PRINCIPLE 3:
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES'
RIGHTS

PRINCIPLE 4:
FOSTERING COMMUNITY
RELATIONSHIPS AND
TRANSPARENCY

PRINCIPLE 6:
ENVIRONMENTAL
IMPACT

PRINCIPLE 7:
MANAGEMENT PLAN

PRINCIPLE 9:
HIGH CONSERVATION
VALUE (HCV) FORESTS

Aside from featuring substantive information on environmental performance, FSC audit reports, and logging plans, MRC's website includes an archive of letters and articles about the company dating back to its founding in 1998, including the most vocal criticisms.¹³ Local stakeholders, and even the most vocal critics of the company, cited instances in which MRC proactively shared plans, encouraged input, or invited dialogue. Today, even though MRC's practices still receive some criticism, community relationships between MRC and local residents appear to be strong, and it seems that this improved dynamic is due to strong third party verification and improved transparency.

FSC PRINCIPLE 6: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND PRINCIPLE 9: MAINTAINING HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES (HCVs) FORESTS

Under FSC principles 6 and 9, forest management companies are required to set aside and strictly protect representative forest ecosystems and adopt management practices that ensure the maintenance of HCV forests. MRC's forest management plans reflect thorough consultation with biologists. The redwood ecosystem, where MRC's forest management lands are located, is found only on the northern California and southern Oregon coast, and is rare and globally important.

This ecosystem is host to a number of threatened and endangered species – including the coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), and northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) – that have been at the centre of forestry controversies along the west coast of the US.¹⁴ The habitats of these species are mapped and monitored, to ensure MRC's management is conserving them.¹⁵

Abiding by FSC's HCV requirements for the US Pacific Coast,¹⁶ MRC's management plan recognises several HCVs, including aquatic management zones (forest buffers for watercourses), unique habitats, buffer with a neighbouring state park, and intact old growth.¹⁷ MRC set aside 40 hectares over 7 units of old growth stands that have never been harvested, and also has special restrictions for 210 hectares that contain residual old growth trees.¹⁸ Over 14,973 hectares are classified and mapped as either HCV or Representative Sample Areas – just over 16% of MRC's total forest management FSC-certified area – and receive additional care to ensure their values are maintained as required by FSC's Principle 9.¹⁹ The categories of these areas include two types of old growth, pygmy forest, oak woodland, coho salmon (riparian areas), conservation easements, significant archaeological sites, hardwood stands, and core areas for spotted owls, mountain beavers and marbled murrelets. For most of these areas, MRC's plan prescribes that the operations avoid them altogether. In the other areas that aren't off-limits, selective single tree logging is allowed, but only in cases in which removing portions of the area would enhance the areas' conservation values.²⁰

Under FSC's Principle 6, forest management operations are required to conserve and/or restore important ecological features and functions, including conserving forest soils. MRC is recovering roads on its lands left over from the previous forest manager. This includes decommissioning and improving roads as well as removing or converting culverts into bridges to restore ecologically important forest and aquatic habitats. MRC estimates that over \$18m US dollars have been spent on preventing almost 687,291 cubic metres of sediment from eroding into the streams.²¹ Sediment control and water quality are key for the recovery of the endangered coho salmon.

image: MRC selectively-logged forest area, including grey tanoak treated with Imazapyr. As required by FSC Principle 6, MRC explored alternatives to a minimal use of Imazapyr, and carefully weighed environmental concerns including not using the herbicide in watercourse protection zones. MRC plans to phase out the use of the chemical by 2020. © Greenpeace



HERBICIDE-USE AND TANOAK UNDER FSC PRINCIPLE 6.6 – CHEMICAL USE

The most common critique of MRC is its use of the herbicide Imazapyr to remove tanoak. Areas that were clearcut by MRC's predecessor now have excessive amounts of tanoak, a fast-sprouting species that competes with redwoods and Douglas fir, and is not commercially viable for MRC as a wood product. MRC, in order to restore the "original conifer balance" on the lands, manually applies Imazapyr, allowable under the FSC, in relatively small amounts (2ml per tree via syringe) to remove tanoak.²² The decision to use Imazapyr came after the company had first invested heavily to explore alternatives and ways to commercialise tanoak.²³

The use of this herbicide today has been the subject of criticism by local stakeholders,²⁴ but MRC argues that other methods of removal of the tanoak, such as manual control with chain saws, could introduce greater amounts of chemicals in the ecosystem. MRC lists the amount of chemical usage on its website, monitors chemicals in the water table, doesn't use the herbicide within the watercourse protection zones, and plans to phase out the use of the chemical by 2020.²⁵ As a result of local concerns, certifying body SCS published a thorough discussion of the use of Imazapyr and found that MRC retained adequate levels of tanoak in areas treated with the chemical and that, for the most part, MRC's use of the chemical did not present a non-conformance with relevant FSC indicators. The certifying bodies did, however, issue a Minor Corrective Action request to ensure that a MRC employee with a chemical application licence would be present during the Imazapyr applications 100% of the time, and that MRC provides additional training to ground crews.²⁶ Although there is room for improvement in this area, MRC invested substantially in exploring alternatives, made its decisions carefully weighing environmental concerns and MRC uses the herbicide in minimal amounts and in a transparent manner.

image: Logs intentionally left in the stream to create a pool necessary for coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) to spawn. FSC Principle 6 requires MRC to conserve/restore important ecological features and functions. Sediment control and water quality are key for the recovery of the endangered coho salmon. © Greenpeace



OVERALL INVENTORY: FSC'S PRINCIPLE 7 — APPROPRIATE SCALE AND INTENSITY

Dating back to 1840, multiple landowners on the property relied on extractive forestry, using mainly clear-cutting and fire. Since taking over the property and achieving FSC certification, "MRC's conifer inventory has increased by 41% over the initial inventory in its 15 years of operation."²⁷ Today MRC uses a "variable retention" method, which retains 10% to 50% of the original stands. MRC estimates that it has planted an additional six million redwood and Douglas fir on its lands.²⁸ The certifying body SCS found that over the last 10 years, MRC's harvest rates were substantially less than allowed under California forest law and complied with FSC criteria 5.6 that requires that: "The rate of harvest of forest products shall not exceed levels which can be permanently sustained."²⁹ MRC's FSC-certified forest management demonstrates that well-managed forests can be more productive while protecting the ecological and social values of the forests.

image:

The “R” on the tree demarcates “retention” tree in a forest stand under MRC’s management. To meet FSC’s requirement for well managed forests, MRC uses a silvicultural method called “variable retention”, which retains 10% to 50% of the original tree stands.
© Greenpeace



CONCLUSION

MRC’s level of engagement with stakeholders, transparency and sophistication in its forest management plans make it a positive example of the FSC at work. Here, the framework of the FSC has buttressed the company’s efforts to bring responsible forest management to its lands.

Unfortunately, MRC’s excellent example of forest management meeting or exceeding FSC Principles is increasingly an exception, compared to the norm of what one could expect under FSC certification. To ensure more organisations are performing to the same standards as MRC, FSC needs to urgently produce a toolkit for forest managers on how to protect high conservation values. This guidance must include identifying clear rules for where industrial logging and roadbuilding is appropriate or where it is completely off limits, so that we don’t lose any more species, the last remaining intact large forests are not fragmented, degraded and deforested, and forest dependent communities can continue to thrive.

Strengthening FSC Quality Control, Monitoring and Enforcement

The forest managers at MRC tend to err on the side of transparency when determining how and what to publish about its operations, and have developed robust forest management plans. Nonetheless, MRC has been required by its certifiers to make further improvements to keep its certification. FSC can affirm and reward good practices as well as find room for improvement, particularly when the CB applies the proper interpretation of the regional standard. Over the last 12 years MRC has consistently been able to address corrective action requests in a timely manner in order to maintain its certificate.

KEEPING THE FSC CREDIBLE

While Greenpeace continues to support the FSC, we cannot indefinitely endorse a system that is not globally consistent in its certification of forest management and controlled wood.³⁰ Along with other FSC members across its chambers, we are working to achieve the following key improvements in FSC operations and procedures so that the environmental and social values of forests are maintained under the FSC seal of approval.

FSC members, certification bodies, stakeholders and consumers must hold FSC accountable to ensure its standards and policies are strengthened, consistently applied and met to ensure that the ecological and social values of forests managed under the FSC seal of approval are maintained.

FSC must:

- 1) Support the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) and other HCVs via the International Generic Indicators (IGI) process, and provide guidance on HCV identification and on their maintenance and enhancement.
- 2) Establish safeguards for FSC certification in “high risk” regions facing rampant social conflict and human rights violations, including prioritising the development of a robust Policy for Association due diligence approach – which ensures the disclosure of a company’s ownership, including parent, sister and subsidiary companies – and compliance guidance.
- 3) Tighten the controlled wood system by: increasing the scope and rigour of National Risk Assessments (NRAs) and its control measures, requiring field verification in the absence of a NRA, and implement measures for transition to full forest management certification including a phase-out of CW by 2018;
- 4) Improve on the ground performance by holding certification bodies (CBs) accountable for meeting the FSC’s standards. Also, increase FSC’s level of transparency by requiring that Accreditation Services International (ASI) and CBs publish all assessment reports, including the location of forest management units, HCVs and protected areas.
- 5) Increase its support for smallholders and community forest managers to achieve FSC certification across the FSC network, including swiftly implementing the Modular Approach Programme standard.

To review the FSC’s progress on Greenpeace’s recommendations, please visit: www.greenpeace.org/international/FSC-at-risk

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image: Mendocino Redwood Company managed forest area.
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