

Summary of Responses to Public Review Comments on the Draft Z809-16 Standard

Input from the general public and specifically targeted audiences was sought during the fourth revision of the CSA Z809 SFM standard. A draft containing proposed changes was posted for a 60 day public review period, from August 4 to October 4, 2015.

This document summarizes the process used to solicit feedback on that draft, the comments received, and the response of the CSA SFM Technical Committee to those comments.

Feedback Process

Information made available during the public review included links to the draft standard, a summary of the major changes being proposed, instructions on how to comment, who to contact with questions, and the schedule and milestones yet to come in the standard revision process.

Existing networks were used to spread information about the opportunity to comment as far as possible, by asking key people to distribute the information to their affiliates. Organizations reached included but were not limited to:

- Those directly involved in the CSA and PEFC certification processes (CSA certified companies, Public Advisory Groups, the CSA SFM Technical Committee, PEFC, PEFC logo users, Standards Council of Canada, certifying bodies)
- Forest Industry Associations (Forest Products Association of Canada, provincial associations)
- Forest Research & Professional Networks (Canadian Institute of Forestry, Canadian Model Forest Network, Global Forest Information Service, Canadian Federation of Professional Foresters Associations, Association of University Forestry Schools in Canada)
- Aboriginal people (Local Bands and individuals, communities and groups in or around the forests where practices are CSA certified, as well as organizations such as the Aboriginal Forestry Initiative, National Aboriginal Forestry Association, and First Nations Forestry Council).
- Governments (Canadian Forest Service, Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, provincial contacts)
- Environmental Groups (Canadian Environment Network, Canadian Parks & Wilderness Society, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Canadian Wildlife Federation, Friends of the Earth, various provincial groups).

Feedback was also gathered from the general public through social media (tweets) and access to the draft standard on the CSA website. CSA developed a unique landing page dedicated to Z809 standard revision and the public review process. A large network of CSA committees and affiliates was also reached through blogs and newsletters, and people were encouraged to share the information.

Summary of Feedback and Responses

Eighty three comments were received during the public review period. The CSA Technical Committee then revised the draft Standard over the course of a 2 day meeting, based on the comments received. The comments and responses are summarized as follows:

General /Editorial Comments

Definitions: Suggestions for adding several more definitions were made. Existing definitions for terms that were not actually used in the standard were also pointed out.

Response: A definition for “wetlands” was added, and definitions for terms not used in the standard were removed. For the most part other suggestions for additional definitions were declined because it was felt they would not add value to the standard, and the implied definitions of these terms may add flexibility to organizations and provinces who use the standard based on their conditions, circumstances and geography. There isn’t a need to define every term used, so the definitions were focused on words that it was felt could use clarification in the context of the standard.

Guidance Language: Re-write informative Annex A of the standard as a guidance document instead of the prescriptive style it is currently written in. This can be achieved by using terms such as “may consider” and “strategies include” instead of “should”, “will”, and “may proceed provided”

Response: Annex A has been reworded as appropriate for a guidance document.

Summary of Major Changes: Consider adding the summary of major changes made during this revision cycle to the end of this standard, as an informative Annex C, for user convenience.

Response: A summary of the major changes made during this revision will be posted alongside the final revised standard, as a separate document rather than an Annex.

Editorial: Several edits, inconsistencies, and formatting changes were noted.

Response: These corrections were all made.

Public Participation

Participation of Interested Parties: Enable organizations to document reasons for not including an interested party in the public process (e.g. if lobbying for self-interest and unwilling to come to consensus, which damages the process).

Response: Guidance was added in Annex A under “Basic Operating Rules for Advisory Groups (A.5.3.xiv)” that suggests the advisory group may want to include acceptable reasons excluding members in their operating rules.

Documenting Disagreements:

There was support for Indicator 5.1.2: “Evidence of open and respectful communications with forest dependent businesses, forest users and local communities to integrate non-timber resources in forest management planning”. However it was felt that the next sentence – “When agreement isn’t achieved, areas of disagreement and efforts towards conflict resolution are documented” – could lead to onerous documenting for the sake of documenting, that doesn’t add value.

Response: The second sentence was changed to specify this applies to significant disagreement, and to put the emphasis on documenting efforts towards resolution: “*When significant disagreement occurs, efforts towards resolution are documented.*”

Plantations / Afforestation / Conversion

Many concerns were raised about the way the terms plantation, afforestation and conversion were defined, and the related text under sections 4.2 Forest Land Conversion and 1.1 Ecosystem Diversity. Respondents recognized that the draft wording was comparable to wording in the PEFC International Standard for Sustainable Forest Management (including requirements around not converting primary forest to plantations) in order to support mutual recognition of the two standards. However it was pointed out that the draft text as proposed:

1. Could lead to the possibility that plantations may be confused with replanting after harvest, and
2. Implied that conversion of natural forest to plantations is deforestation.

Response: The following wording changes were made to meet the intentions of the CSA Technical Committee and be consistent with the PEFC standard and international definitions , while reducing the possibility of misunderstanding by users of the standard:

- The definition of **forest plantations** was retained, which reads: “Forest plantations – tree stands established by planting or seeding often with one or few species, intensively managed exclusively for wood production, and which lack most of the key characteristics of natural forests.” This definition helps reduce confusion between plantations and forests regenerated after harvest by planting.
- The definition of **forest land** was simplified to read: Forest land – land supporting a forest or capable of doing so.
- The definitions of **afforestation** and **deforestation** were cleaned up, as follows:
- “Afforestation: the conversion of land that has not been forested for a period of at least 50 years to forest land through planting, seeding or natural regeneration.”
- “Deforestation: the conversion of forest land to another land cover use. It does not include temporary tree-cover loss such as tree harvests followed by regeneration, or temporary loss resulting from natural disturbances such as wildfires, insect epidemics or wind storms.”
- The discussion item under Criterion 1 that included "plantation" was deleted
- The following text was added to Element 1.1 – Ecosystem Diversity: “Establish forest plantations only in afforestation projects”. This further clarifies that natural forests will not be converted to plantations. It does not limit afforestation projects to only being plantations.
- The description of Element 4.2 Forest Land Conversion was simplified to read: "Protect forest lands from deforestation. Encourage afforestation where ecologically appropriate." This allowed the concept of conversion, as it pertains to deforestation and afforestation, to be dealt with in the definitions portion of the standard. It also encourages the conversion of non-forest to forest.

Wetlands

Many suggestions were focused on waterfowl habitat conservation through functionally integrated landscapes (e.g. considering the impact of forest practices on, and interface with, wetlands as a component of forest ecosystems). Suggestions included:

- adding a definition of wetlands;
- adding discussion on the conservation of wetlands, identifying aquatic focal

species, identifying provincial wetlands of special significance, the ecological goods and services provided by forests in wetlands, conserving the ecological integrity of wetlands, and the role of wetlands in global carbon and methane cycles; and

- adding core indicators for wetland abundance and type, the proportion of forest management activities consistent with prescriptions to effectively protect sensitive soils including wetland soils, and the proportion of forest management activities consistent with prescriptions known to or expected to effectively protect identified water features, particularly wetlands systems.

Response: The Technical Committee had the task of balancing the many ideas for this aspect of SFM with finding the appropriate level of focus, and adhering to the non-prescriptive writing style of this standard that enables it to be widely-applicable across the variety of circumstances found in forest types across Canada. Wetlands are encompassed (even if not specifically mentioned) within the requirements, and the public has the opportunity to add additional mandatory core indicators for a specific forest if wetlands or watersheds are a particular issue in their area.

Water quality and quantity are covered in the discussion items "Management practices and regulatory requirements that conserve water and soil" and "Role and importance of wetlands." Guidance in A.6.3.3.2 identifies wetlands as an important component of forest ecosystems.

In response to these comments wetlands have now also been specifically mentioned in the definitions, added as a mandatory discussion item, and singled out as a consideration in the guidance.

A new core indicator for protecting water features (3.2.2) has also been added. While not specific to wetland soils, by its nature it would include the water feature and the sensitive (riparian) area surrounding it.

Watersheds

Community Watershed: Define community watershed (verses watershed)

Response: The concept of community watersheds was not added as it was felt to be quite specific to B.C., whereas Z809 is a national standard that is written with enough flexibility to accommodate all regional circumstances.

"Healthy Watershed": This discussion item is a very subjective term that is not used anywhere else in the standard. This is covered under other discussions items for 6.3.3 that address conservation of soil and water resources.

Response: "Healthy watersheds" was removed.

Water Quality:

Add a discussion item that is specific to "water quantity".

Response: This was not done, as the discussion items "Management practices and regulatory requirements that conserve water and soil" and "Role and importance of wetlands" encompass quality and quantity issues. The guidance under A.6.3.3.2 also specifically addresses water quality and quantity.

Pesticide Reductions:

Require companies to set targets and measures to reduce the use of pesticides over a period

of time.

Response: The use of herbicides is one tool (out of suite of silviculture tools) that is available in some areas for managing competing vegetation and ensuring harvested areas are regenerated with approved species and tree densities, within a specified time period. On some sites the application of a herbicide early in the reforestation process to set-back the grass competition, may be the only way to give conifer seedlings a chance at survival in the immediate years after planting. On other sites mechanical brushing will be effective, or no brush treatment at all is needed.

Regeneration strategies are aimed at sustaining a wide range of forest values with the support of all stakeholders. The issue of pesticide use remains as a discussion item in the CSA Z809 standard, providing an opportunity for Aboriginal individuals and communities and local advisory groups to engage in the topic. This enables each area to address what is best at that time, for their sites, to meet the reforestation objectives for a particular forest. (e.g. a pure conifer stand, a mixed conifer/hardwood stand, etc.)

Resilience:

Include an appropriate definition (as the term “resilience” has many definitions), or use alternate wording in the standard that removes the term but is consistent with the working in the definition of SFM. Consider referencing the concept of “adaptive capacity” instead.

Response: Agree that the term “resilience” has many definitions, is complex and not measureable. The term was removed from the text and replaced with alternate wording more specifically related to Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). The Element "Forest ecosystem resilience" was removed, and the Element "Forest ecosystem productivity" was expanded to "Forest ecosystem condition and productivity", with "Reforestation success" added as a core indicator. In the associated guidance (section A.6.3.1) the wording around resilience was also removed, and text about elements crucial to achieving the desired future forest conditions was added.

Residual Management:

Reference Harvest Residue: Include mention of the importance of leaving some proportion of harvesting residue on-site to ensure continued site productivity, specifically in the context of habitat for microbes, invertebrates and small vertebrates. Collect simple monitoring data on the fate of harvest residue, for full/better understanding of carbon cycling.

Response: This was not done, since a discussion items exists that covers biomass use with emphasis on the ecological and cultural impacts of biomass removals, as well as the need to develop operational guidelines for the sustainable removal of biomass from forest ecosystems.

The fate of harvesting residue is considered in how carbon emissions from forest operations are taken into account, e.g. # of burn piles are tracked.

Soil and Water:

Modifications to two sentences in guidance around discussions of soil and water quality and quantity were suggested to highlight infrastructure construction considerations.

Response: Adding mention of directly measuring soil condition to the sentence about soil disturbance was felt to be too prescriptive and limiting (technology is enabling some indirect measures). Examples of infrastructure construction that could affect water quality and quantity were added to the second sentence, as suggested. Also, there is now a core indicator (3.2.2) assessing conformance to plans that protect water features, and would

include the sensitive (riparian) area surrounding it.

Awkward wording of discussion items mistakenly indicates it is the soil (rather than the damage to the soil) that needs to be mitigated.

Response: Changed the wording of this discussion item to “soil disturbance prevention and mitigation measures”. Also added the concept of preventing damage in the first place.

Suggestion for a discussion item about identifying potential impacts to water quality and quantity, and best management practices to effectively minimize and mitigate those impacts.

Response: Discussion item was added as follows: “Management practices and regulatory requirements that conserve water and soil”

Safety:

One respondent liked the new, separate element for safety.

Response: Thank you.

Aboriginal Relationships:

Terms: Suggest using the term “First Nation” instead of “Aboriginal”.

Response: The term Aboriginal was maintained throughout the standard as it reflects the constitutional definition of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. However the definition of Aboriginal was revised to clarify that it includes First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples, which better reflects the preferences and rights of Aboriginal communities.

Suggest removing “willing” in text such as “Evidence of open and respectful communications with willing Aboriginal communities...” as it seems to provide an “easy out” for organizations.

Response: The word "willing" was removed from most places it occurred except in three instances (use of Aboriginal knowledge, identification and protection of site of cultural significance, and respect for Aboriginal forest values, knowledge and uses) where an Aboriginal community must be willing to participate for those things to occur.

Responsibility: Clarify whether it is the organization or the government that is responsible for obtaining "agreement of management plans" (Indicator 7.1.2)

Response: This indicator (7.1.2) was revised to focus on the communications process. It now reads as follows: Evidence of ongoing open and respectful communications with Aboriginal communities to foster meaningful engagement, and consideration of the information gained about their Aboriginal title and rights through this process. Where there is communicated disagreement regarding the organization’s forest management activities, efforts towards conflict resolution are documented.

Legal Compliance with Aboriginal title and rights

Is it wise to state that the Z809 Standard goes beyond legal compliance when the law regarding Aboriginal title and rights is a rapidly evolving field?

Response: Added the word “current” so that this statement refers to our present understanding of legal requirements. This sentence now reads as follows: This Standard goes beyond *current* legal compliance and includes other methods of respecting Aboriginal title and rights, such as...

Group Certification:

Wording was suggested to ensure the CSA standard aligns with requirements of the PEFC Group Forest Management Standard, to support mutual recognition of the two standards.

Clarification of this section was also requested.

Response: Wording of this section was reviewed but no changes were made, recognizing that PEFC Canada may need to provide additional information to PEFC International during the re-endorsement process.

Regarding clarity, this section provides an alternative approach to forest certification which allows multiple forest managers or owners to certify public or private forest land under a single certificate. The definitions associated with this section (copied below), as well as the guidance provided in Section A 7.7 should provide the clarity being sought:

- Group entity – an entity identified to represents the participants of a group organization. One or more group participants can be selected as the group entity.
- Group organization – a group of participants represented by the group entity for the purpose of adoption and implementation of this Standard.
- Group participant – a forest manager and/or owner and member of the group organization who has the legal right to manage a Defined Forest Area and the ability to implement the requirements of this Standard.

Defined Responsibilities:

Other Parties: There may be situations where aspects of activities carried out by other parties do not meet requirements of the SFM Plan. An example would be that a transmission line built by a third party may not meet requirements to avoid conversion of forest to other uses.

Response: The word "overall" was added to the last sentence, and the word "and" was changed to "or". The sentence now reads "Where there are parties operating within the DFA that are not interested in participating **or** are not necessary for the achievement of the SFM elements, the organization may proceed without their involvement provided that the **overall** objectives and targets can still be achieved."

Checking and Corrective Action

Monitoring and assessment: (Section 7.5.1) The standard should include the monitoring and assessment of indicators and the comparison of indicators to targets. The quality, validity, and meaningfulness of the indicators, targets and forecasts should be assessed at least annually where applicable. The removal of the requirement for internal audits should be reviewed.

Response: The wording of Section 7.5.1 was changed to include the monitoring of conformance with the SFM requirements on a regular basis, and the monitoring of indicators against targets/forecasts. It now reads as follows: "The organization shall

- (a) establish and maintain procedures to monitor on a regular basis progress towards conformance with the SFM requirements in the DFA;
- (b) record performance levels and monitor indicators for comparison against targets/forecasts;
- (c) periodically assess the quality and meaningfulness of the targets, forecasts and non-core indicators where applicable."

Redundant Wording: Point (b) reads: "periodically assess the quality, validity and meaningfulness of the targets, forecasts and non-core indicators where applicable." In this context "valid" and "meaningful" are synonymous - choose one.

Response: Removed "validity". This point now reads "(c) periodically assess the quality and meaningfulness of the targets, forecasts and non-core indicators where applicable."

Implementation of Procedures: Specify that the procedures for monitoring and corrective action must be implemented.

Response: No change was made, as it was felt that items (b) and (c) address the implementation concern, and that it is inherent that procedures will be implemented.

Adaptive Management Diagram (A.7.3.1): It was suggested that the diagram be changed to include detail such as forest inventories are inputs to forest models, meeting SFM requirements is dependent on government involvement, etc.

Response: This type of detail was not added, as it was felt to be too specific for an overarching illustration that must be broadly applicable for the different circumstances found across Canada.

Audits / Auditors

Consideration of First Nation Issues: Request that auditors be required to meet with First Nations representatives each year so any concerns, particularly those related to treaty rights or compliance with CSA, can be raised in a timely way. The audit team should include a person who understands and is considerate of First Nations treaty rights. Auditors should be appointed by CSA rather than the company.

Response: CSA Group is a standards development organization and it is outside CSA's mandate and responsibility to set the parameters for audits or appoint auditors.

However we can provide the following explanation about safeguards that are in place to ensure impartiality:

- Organizations are free to choose any qualified Certification Body (CB) to carry out an audit to Z809. As described in Clause 0.8, all CBs must be accredited by a full IAF member Accreditation Body (AB) such as the Standards Council of Canada. Part of that accreditation process is regular surveillance of the CB by the AB including witness assessments to ensure that the CB is properly assesses the organization for conformance to the standard. The organization may choose to change CBs for any reason but the accreditation process is intended to ensure that all CBs perform the same in assessing conformance to the standard. As part of the accreditation process the CB must have a mechanism to manage threats to impartiality including the threat of familiarity. One of the techniques for managing the threat of familiarity is for the CB to rotate the auditors assigned to a client so that the same auditors are not auditing the client year after year.
- There is an opportunity to raise concerns about a certification body's decision, and a process in place to do so, as described in Annex B: Appeals and complaints (2.9). There is also an option to change the Certifying Body every 3-5 years.

Additional detail was added to guidance around Certification Body Competence (B2.11), as follows:

- "The certification body should use auditors only for those certification activities where they have demonstrated competence with regard to the requirements of this Standard.", and
- "The certification body should assemble an audit team with the requisite expertise and appropriate knowledge and skills relevant to the scope and geographic areas of the audit."