SBP

Sustainable Biomass Program

SBP Guidance Document: Meeting SBP criteria in relation to protecting exceptional conservation values in the southern US

www.sbp-cert.org

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Contents

Foreword

At the end of 2016, SBP established the high conservation values Working Group (hcv WG or WG) with the objective of developing guidance to support Biomass Producers (BPs) in fulfilling SBP requirements relating to high conservation values in the southern US.

During 2017, an outreach programme was initiated by the WG extending to a wide range of stakeholders. Having established contact with parties willing to participate in identifying high conservation values and offering examples of best practice to protect high conservation values, evidence was gathered and used to inform the development of a draft guidance manual. The draft guidance was subject to further stakeholder consultation, and finalised and presented to SBP in early 2018. The final guidance submitted by the WG forms the basis of this SBP guidance document. More detail on the work of the WG can be found at: https://sbp-cert.org/about-us/working-groups/high-conservation-values.

About this document

This is a non-technical guidance document for US producers of wood pellets that sell pellets internationally and wish to be certified under the Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP).

The document contains informative guidance for the criterion 2.1 of SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard that address "***features and species of outstanding or exceptional value***", which are known by other terms, including "high conservation value forests" and "forests with exceptional conservation value". The purpose of the criterion is to ensure that wood sourced for the production of wood pellets is sustainable with respect to these exceptional conservation values, focusing primarily on:

1. identification of exceptional values and places; and
2. best practices for protecting them.

The document contains background discussion, examples and ideas, and references to expert and other useful opinions and resources.

SBP recommends that the appropriate and responsible person at the wood pellet plant, which is either already certified under SBP or is seeking certification, makes use of this guidance document for insight or references that may prove beneficial in improving operating policies/practice in this area. The document may also be of value to the Certification Bodies that audit against the SBP standard.

In addition, the document provides a useful reference for engaging appropriate resources and experts on an ongoing basis.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this guidance

The purpose of this document is to provide practical guidance to the producers of wood pellets in the US South who seek to achieve and maintain certification under the Sustainable Biomass Program (SBP). The SBP refers to these producers of wood pellets as “Biomass Producers” (BPs). The guidance is specifically focused on two indicators within the Feedstock Compliance Standard of the SBP that are related to forests with exceptional conservation values. This document is not intended to be an instruction manual but to provide helpful and informative guidance and references that expand upon what is already provided in the standard.

2 Definitions

The SBP criterion (2.1) and indicators (2.1.1 and 2.1.2) addressed in this document do not require an entity seeking certification to create its own definitions for areas with important conservation values. SBP Standard 1 uses multiple terms for concepts of "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value", and provides guidance and further sources of information (see Appendix 2). This document is intended to support the operational application of the requirements with specific reference to the southern US.

Criterion 2.1

Management of the forest ensures that features and species of outstanding or exceptional value are identified and protected.

- Indicator 2.1.1: The BP has implemented appropriate control systems and procedures for verifying that *forests and other areas with high conservation value* in the Supply Base are identified and mapped.
- Indicator 2.1.2: The BP has implemented appropriate control systems and procedures to identify and address potential threats to *forests and other areas with high conservation values* from forest management activities.

2.1 The criterion: "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value"

The text of criterion 2.1 uses the phrase "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value" to describe the resource that is to be identified and protected. This is taken directly from the UK Timber Standard for Heat and Electricity (referenced in the SBP Standard as CPET). Specifically, clauses S8a and S8c are referenced.

- S8a mentions safeguards for **"rare, threatened and endangered species"**
- S8c mentions protection of **"features and species of outstanding or exceptional value"**

This standard does not include a specific definition of "features"; however, it is clear that the intent goes beyond species specifically to include other characteristics of the landscape that should be considered for outstanding or exceptional value. This would include small/remnant patches of non-forest, which are embedded in the larger forest matrix, that are special or outstanding, such as granitic outcroppings or ephemeral ponds. This could also include remnant forests of high quality, such as an intact surrounding landscape and few invasive exotic species. "Outstanding or exceptional" are also based on the notion of uniqueness and irreplaceability, that there are a limited number of places where this value can be provided so additional care for its conservation is warranted.

Other criteria in Standard 1 (for example 2.2 and 2.4) cover the broader notion of stewardship of habitat and ecosystem function. These broader areas may not be "outstanding or exceptional", in fact they may be somewhat ordinary. Therefore, separating out those features and species that are outstanding or exceptional in this criterion indicates a subset that deserves greater attention.

2.2 The indicators: "forests and other areas with high conservation value"

Indicators 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 both use the phrase "forests and other areas with high conservation values". Although the phrase is not defined, there are two points to note: i) it refers to areas, locations that are mappable or otherwise identifiable spatially; and ii) that it supports and is an alternative to the phrase "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value".

In addition, the indicators are accompanied by examples of means of verification and guidance that provides reference links to supporting material. See Appendix 1 for the criterion and indicators, with means of verification and guidance, as extracted from SBP Standard 1.

From the guidance links within the SBP standard, definitions and terms are provided by two of the certification programs used in the US - FSC and SFI. ATFS also has a term and a definition, but it is not referenced in the SBP standard (it came after the standard). While indicators are for evaluating uncertified lands, certification programs provide clear insight on defining what forests and values qualify.

Table 1: Definitions of exceptional forests and conservation values under existing forest certification schemes.

Term used	Program	High level definition
High Conservation Values (HCV)	FSC	An HCV is a biological, ecological, social or cultural value of outstanding significance or critical importance. (From the HCV Resource Network's Common Guidance document: https://www.hcvnetwork.org/resources/common-guidance-for-m-m-2015
Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value (FECV)	SFI	Known sites of flora and fauna associated with viable occurrences of critically imperiled and imperiled species and communities also known as Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value. (From SFI Standard, Section 6, guidance: http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/2015-2019-standardsandrules-section-6-pdf/)
Forests of Recognized Importance (FORI)	ATFS	Globally, regionally and nationally significant large landscape areas of exceptional ecological, social, cultural or biological values. These forests are evaluated at the landscape level, rather than at the stand level, and are recognized for a combination of unique values, rather than a single attribute. (From ATFS Standard, glossary: https://www.treefarmsystem.org/stuff/contentmgr/files/2/b0872a8dc122128baacea886ebf468f1/pdf/final_standards_guidance_7.9.15_links.pdf)

These are summary definitions, but are all accompanied by more detail in the links provided in the table above. Note that the FSC and ATFS definitions both contain a reference to social and cultural values in addition to ecological and biological values. Because the SBP standard addresses social and cultural values separately, social and cultural aspects of those definitions are not addressed in this guidance.

While these definitions are not exactly the same, they have much in common:

- They address rare species and communities to be considered for protection, which include threatened or endangered animals and plants and as well as species and communities considered globally imperiled (for example, G1 and G2 under Nature Serve's broadly accepted G-ranking system, http://explorer.natureserve.org/granks.htm);
- They refer to exceptional conservation values themselves as well as specific areas that may be able to be identified spatially;
- They include "features" or other aspects of the landscape that have outstanding or exceptional value; and
- Their treatment often requires specialised expertise and support from appropriate resource professionals.

The reasons for addressing these forests separately from other forests is to apply an increased level of rigor due to their importance. Drawing a line between "special forests" and "very special forests" is somewhat arbitrary, which makes it difficult to have a single specific or "correct" definition, but the detail in the standards is intended to make this line as firm as possible for those certifying forests under these schemes so that a credible approach can be taken to identifying and applying greater rigor to these very special places. While some insist that a definition for "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value" must be precise, others are equally concerned that a precise definition increases risk through omission because of uncertainty.

2.3 Guidance for definition

BPs seeking certification under SBP are not expected to create their own definition for "features and species of outstanding or exceptional value" to reduce risk when purchasing forest fibre from uncertified lands. However, a clear understanding by the BP of all relevant existing definitions will significantly improve the development of processes that will effectively identify features and species of exceptional conservation value.

SBP recommends that:

- *BPs should become familiar with these existing definitions and the detail that supports them before preparing their supply base evaluation;*
- *BPs should also be prepared to seek out relevant expertise to assist with applying these definitions to their particular circumstances; and*
- *In the spirit of continuous improvement, it would be good for BPs who are already certified to revisit these definitions when renewing their certification.*

3 Identification

Indicator 2.1.1 specifies that the BP must implement "appropriate control systems and procedures for verifying that forests and other areas with high conservation value in the Supply Base are **identified and mapped**".

3.1 Available information and expertise

Where BPs (or other wood procurement operations that sell to BPs) lack the expertise or resources to conduct surveys for identifying features and species of outstanding or exceptional value they will need to rely on science-based information from agencies and other organisations to inform the development of their control processes and procedures, communications with logging contractors and landowners, and in some cases field surveys performed by experienced contractors or agency personnel. Examples of organisations and agencies with expertise and potentially useful information resources are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Organisations and online resources to support the identification of exceptional conservation values.

Potential Sources of Information / Expertise	Website	
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service; Endangered Species	https://www.fws.gov/endangered/	Quickly identifies federally listed animals and plants by state down to the county level and provides contact information for local FWS expertise.
State wildlife agencies	http://www.fishwildlife.org/index.php?section=social-media	Provides a quick link to the fish and wildlife agency in every state.
NatureServe Explorer	http://explorer.natureserve.org/	An authoritative source for text and tabular information on more than 70,000 plants, animals, and ecosystems of the United States and Canada. Explorer includes particularly in-depth coverage for rare and endangered species and upland and wetland ecosystem types.
NatureServe Element Occurrences data	http://services.natureserve.org/ipt/resource.do?r=occurrences	This dataset consists of "Element Occurrence" (EO) records for rare and endangered species of the United States and Canada that are managed by NatureServe's network of Natural Heritage Programs and conservation data centers. Since some data is sensitive because of concerns around exploitation, partners must contact the state/provincial program or NatureServe to access the most precise data or access the NatureServe screening tool to first identify whether species of concern are in the area of interest.
Landscope America	http://www.landscope.org/	Online access to maps of upland and wetland ecosystem types, managed and protected lands, and priority areas for biodiversity conservation.
IUCN Red List	http://www.iucnredlist.org/	Based on the assessment of the conservation status of species, subspecies, varieties, and even selected subpopulations on a global scale for the past 50 years in

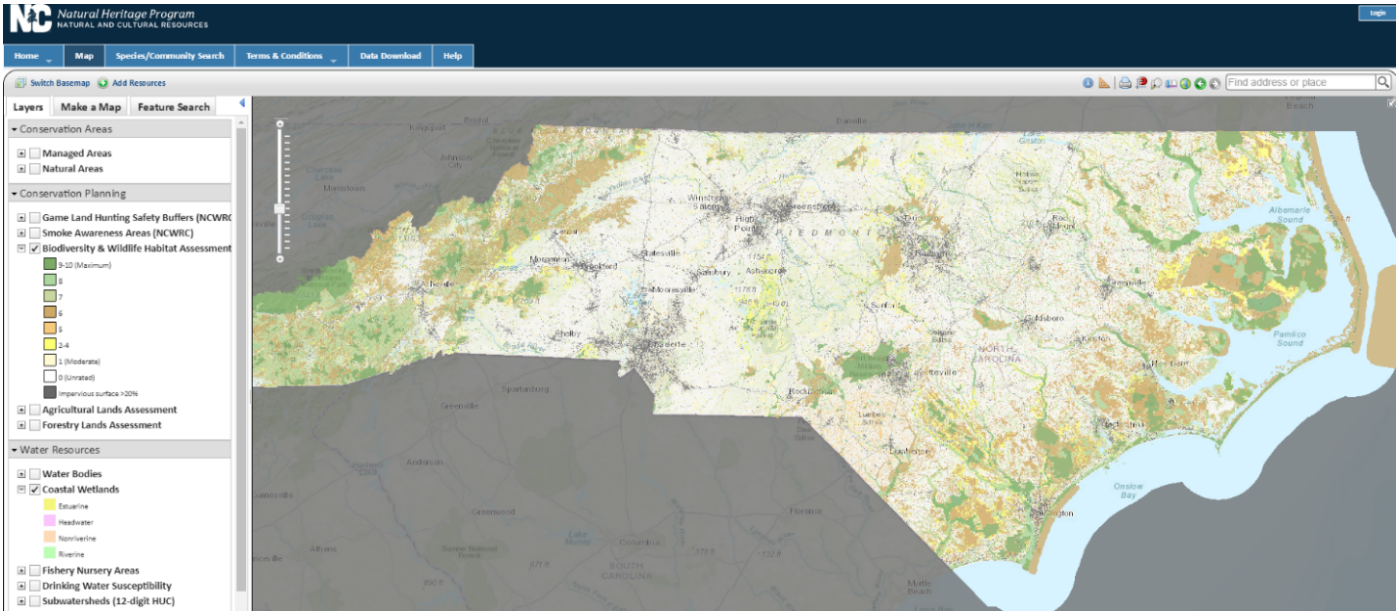
		order to highlight taxa threatened with extinction, and thereby promote their conservation.
State Forest Action Plans	http://stateforesters.org/regional-state	Every state has a strategic forest action plan to help "target limited resources where they are needed most." Each one is quickly accessed by this site.
State Wildlife Action Plans	https://www1.usgs.gov/csas/swap/	State Wildlife Action Plans exist in each state for conserving wildlife and habitat before they become too rare or costly to restore. Each plan includes the identification of Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) for that state.
The Nature Conservancy Ecoregional Plans	https://www.conservationgateway.org/ConservationByGeography/NorthAmerica/UnitedStates/edc/reportsdata/terrestrial/ecoregional/Pages/default.aspx	Ecoregional Plans by The Nature Conservancy identify high priorities for biodiversity conservation. The resulting plan identifies viable populations of at-risk species (for most urgent attention) and high-quality areas that represent characteristic natural communities (to keep additional species from declining), providing a regional blueprint for conservation success.
USGS Gap Analysis Program	https://gapanalysis.usgs.gov/viewers/	Online access to maps of upland and wetland ecosystems, distributions of vertebrates, and managed or protected areas.

3.2 Mapping

In addition to identification of exceptional conservation values, indicator 2.1.1 also specifies mapping. Mapping can be very technical and expensive. Fortunately, technology is bringing the costs down and support resources, such as various state Natural Heritage Programs, are making online mapping tools available. Other than using a traditional paper map, there are broadly two approaches that a BP can take:

1 Utilise online mapping tools
This opportunity is more available in some areas than others. Where available it is essentially free, but still requires some training or a learning curve. It also requires the user to specify the inputs that it desires.

2 Purchase its own GIS software
This option is more expensive and requires some internal company expertise, but it also can provide additional value in operational areas like logistics and planning. Some State Heritage Programs make their spatial data available digitally which can be imported into private software. Additionally, it affords the opportunity to visually layer procurement locations over the conservation data to zero-in on the most effective best practice opportunities.



Example: The North Carolina Natural Heritage Program provides a wide range of user directed options for displaying the location of exceptional resources with its online mapping tool.

3.3 Collaboration and the development of operational tools

The wide array technical resources and tools shown in this section demonstrate how ongoing scientific collaboration for identifying exceptional conservation values have now been built into practical operations tools for entities seeking to manage for these values. The SFI program, for example, endorses the use of NatureServe tools by SFI participants. The following case study highlights this development.

Case study: NatureServe and State Natural Heritage Programs

NatureServe is a non-profit NGO that serves as an umbrella organisation for State Natural Heritage Programs which exist within state agencies, universities, or other entities in each of the fifty states of the US. This is a success story of private-public partnership that dates back over forty years. The mission of NatureServe is “To provide the scientific basis for effective conservation action.” State Heritage Programs provide information, tools and expertise to make that happen.

This partnership began in 1974 when The Nature Conservancy, recognising that states were best positioned with local expertise and data, collaborated with two states to establish the first Natural Heritage Programs (South Carolina and Mississippi). Over the next two decades, The Nature Conservancy and a collection of public and private partners built a network of Natural Heritage Programs in the United States to collect and manage data about the status and distribution of species and ecosystems of conservation concern.

In 1994, this network became established as a private non-profit organisation, which later became known as NatureServe. It continued to expand the network to Canada and Latin America and in 2002, SFI adopted NatureServe conservation status assessments as a key part of its biodiversity standards, contributing to the

concept of “Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value” and the protection of imperilled species and ecosystems found on millions of acres of privately owned forestlands.

Today, the public-private partnership known as the NatureServe Network comprises more than 80 Network Programs throughout the Western Hemisphere, with over 1,000 conservation professionals and a collective annual budget of more than $45 million. This translates into available resources at the state level for providing BPs and other stakeholders with data about imperilled species in their supply base as well as assistance and training with using the mapping and data tools that they make available.

Ongoing scientific work

The development of scientific understanding and operational tools to identify and manage for exceptional conservation values continues in the US, and particularly in the US South, by a wide range of interests. For example, The Nature Conservancy (who spawned the establishment of the NatureServe Network) has just completed new work with the help of a broad collaboration that looks closely at the effect of climate change on the resiliency and connectedness of exceptional conservation values.

Similarly, NatureServe is partnering with the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI), the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Florida Natural Areas Inventory, the Maine Natural Areas Program, as well as several SFI Program Participants to test biodiversity, ecosystem, and landscape-conservation metrics on certain forestlands certified to SFI.

3.4 Guidance for identification

Numerous resources are available for identification and mapping of features and species of exceptional or outstanding value. Utilising those resources as a part of its control systems and procedures is the job of the BP, but SBP offers the following ideas for consideration by BPs as a part of this guidance:

- *Designate someone in the organisation to become familiar with the content of sources of information related to identifying features and species of exceptional value;*
- *Keep up-to-date with information sources - go back and look at resource information at designated intervals to stay fresh on the data and to see what may have changed;*
- *Meet personally with the Natural Heritage Programs/ conservation data centres in your supply base and request to be briefed on the information services and training that they provide;*
- *Document the actions you are taking in this area as part of your control systems and procedures so that CBs can be provided with a concise package;*
- *Consider designating forests which have never been harvested and also demonstrate a high level of ecological integrity to be features of exceptional conservation value, even if their G-rank is lower than G1-G2;*
- *Where new data is generated (including data from inventories where no target species are found), share with Natural Heritage Programs or other conservation data centres in your supply base to ensure data is in database for future use by partners; and*
- *Consider supporting targeted field surveys by Natural Heritage Programs or other conservation data centres to produce key data and maps, especially where adjacent populations or other research demonstrate a high probability of rare species or ecosystems.*

Indicator 2.1.1 specifies that BPs will have "implemented appropriate control systems and procedures" related to the identification of these important values and places. And then provides "examples and means of verification". The Certification Bodies (CBs) that audit BPs' Supply Base Evaluations will need to identify specific evidence that this has taken place in order to verify that the BP is in compliance. Therefore, SBP recommends that a BP consider making its evidence as clear as possible to the CB in two ways:

1. ***The control system being used**: This can be done by providing a clear description of the BP's control system and procedures, perhaps in a stand-alone document labelled as such; and*
2. ***The practices or actions implemented**: The practices and actions that were implemented to meet the indicator should be specifically identified, including dates and organisations. This could be done, for example, in tabular form and included in the document that describes the control system.*

4 Best practices

Indicator 2.1.2 specifies that BP must implement "appropriate control systems and procedures to identify and address potential threats to forests and other areas with high conservation values from forest management activities".

4.1 Red zones versus special practices

There is often the misconception that an area identified or mapped as having exceptional conservation value should be off limits for harvest – a "red zone". This would imply that any forest management is a threat to important conservation values. However, depending upon the nature of the conservation values or the threats to those values, forest management can indeed be a serious threat, simply a modest threat that is easily mitigated through a special practice, or even a benefit. The selection of an "appropriate" control system requires an understanding of the nature of the threat to conservation values, which is yet another reason that a good understanding of the expertise and resources available is important. Once the nature of the threat is understood, an appropriate practice can be identified to mitigate the threat.

The standards used to certify forests support this concept, for example:

- The FSC standard states, "High Conservation Value Forests are managed to protect and maintain their identified high conservation value attributes. In some cases, active management is consistent with these attributes…".
- The ATFS standard similarly states, "The presence of threatened or endangered species on the property is not considered a prohibition of management but may influence the timing or technique of management activities".

Active forest management techniques can enhance ecosystems and habitats for species of concern. Sometimes silvicultural practices, such as thinning and burning, are consistent with habitat requirements. In other situations, specialists may prescribe a set of actions specifically designed to restore an ecosystem. The latter, increasingly referred to as "restoration forestry," can be used to reestablish ecological functions which have been lost due to historical land use or other factors. Restoration forestry can be a particularly important and valuable part of the overall conservation portfolio in disturbance-dependent landscapes like the fire-dependent ecosystems of the Coastal Plain. Active management is often considered an essential component in the protection of specific conservation values.

4.2 Procurement practices versus landowner practices

When considering "appropriate control systems and procedures," actions that are appropriate, feasible or effective for minimising risk are different for a landowner who has direct control over their own actions may be different than for a BP purchasing from multiple family forest land owners who may not hold forest management certification. When a BP purchases wood fibre from a certified forest, it is relying on existing forest management certification programs that are approved by SBP to provide for and verify the control systems and procedures used. However, this SBP indicator applies to control systems and procedures for the purchase of wood from uncertified land, to provide assurance that this feedstock can also be considered sustainable.

Some examples of the kinds of measures BPs can take that are particularly effective or appropriate for procurement activities include:

- Choosing whether or not to buy wood from certain sites;

- Using trained loggers;
- Participating in programs that train loggers in basic stewardship, and in identification and management for features and species of exceptional or outstanding conservation value that are most likely to occur in the geographic area in question;
- Educating intermediary businesses who supply fiber such as wood dealers and mills;
- Educating landowners from whom the BP purchases wood fibre with specific information about the subset of species and ecosystems likely to occur in their area; and
- Using provisions in the wood purchase contract to express expectations or requirements of landowners, forestry consultants, or wood brokers, such as the use of trained loggers.

Fortunately, BPs do not have to invent their own control systems from scratch. Because the US forest products industry has sought to assure sustainable wood sourcing practices for decades prior to the recent growth in wood pellet production, certification programs used in the US have developed control systems for procurement that include consideration of exceptional conservation values.

SFI has its Fiber Sourcing Program and FSC has its Controlled Wood Program. While neither of these programs are approved by SBP as providing SBP-compliant wood fibre, they both represent well documented control systems with proven track records that are appropriate for wood procurement – and which require third party auditing for compliance. Both have been in use in the US for over 15 years and have undergone continuous improvement.

FSC Controlled Wood requires organisations to implement a due diligence system that is primarily focused on avoiding or mitigating the risk to HCVs when unacceptable wood is introduced into the supply chain. When the FSC US Controlled Wood National Risk Assessment is completed and in use within the next year, it will include control measures designed to avoid or mitigate any risk that is not considered to be low. FSC certified companies will be expected to incorporate these control measures into their due diligence system. A company that is certified to the FSC Chain of Custody standard can include Controlled Wood within the scope of that certificate.

SFI Fiber Sourcing is a standard that specifically governs how its participants procure fibre from non-certified forests. It includes control measures for procurement to increase assurance of responsible forestry overall, but specifically addresses Forests of Exceptional Conservation Value in its logger training and landowner outreach provisions. The program includes mandatory BMP compliance and auditing, logger training and landowner outreach, and participants fund and participate in training and outreach that goes beyond their suppliers.

4.3 Training and education

Procurement organisations are uniquely positioned to provide information on the identification and management of high conservation value areas through their day-to-day interaction with landowners and suppliers. Education and training materials tailored to regional conservation opportunities can be very successful conservation tools. Outreach which increases awareness and provides direction on how to best approach a species or habitat type of high conservation value can directly contribute to conservation. It is important to note here that while forest landowners are primarily responsible for the activities on their lands, some of these owners may only be involved in one or two forest harvest activities in their lifetime. Therefore, training and education should target loggers and wood brokers as well as the forest owner.

SFI State Implementation Committees (SICs) develop state level outreach materials and support logger training, which BPs certified to the Fiber Sourcing standard may take advantage of. Development of supply-

base level materials and training, informed by the BP's Supply Base Evaluation (a required part of the SBP Standard), is also a very effective approach.

4.4 Guidance for best practices

Best practices used as control measures are often very operations-dependent and tailored to a specific organisation's practices and capabilities. Having said that, SBP offers the following ideas as thoughts and suggestions to incubate innovative thinking for those developing best practices that fit their own organisation:

- *Develop and implement a landowner and supplier education program.*
- *Enrol in a procurement program such as SFI Fiber Sourcing or FSC Controlled Wood.*
- *If not enrolled in a procurement program, develop (in a document) your own "Due Diligence System" which includes the best practices you commit to for reducing risk to exceptional conservation values.*
- *Utilise procurement contracts to incorporate appropriate provisions for identified sites.*
- *Develop a "red zone" criterion for specific types of conservation value where risks are particularly high and benefits for wood pellet production are low. For example, if a BP knows that wood from a high-risk area would represent a negligible amount of total supply, it could simply choose not to purchase wood from those areas.*
- *Partner with groups that can provide information on the subset of key rare species and ecosystems that are most likely to occur in the sourcing area.*
- *Develop your own BP field audit program to target a more intense sample of field visits for areas with exceptional conservation value than for other areas.*
- *Develop a good system for tracking fibre to its source, which can be valuable for efficiently tying special practices to those sites that require them.*
- *Require management plans for certain critical areas with exceptional conservation value.*
- *Collaborate with a state agency, forestry consultant, or a stewardship program to identify areas for specific restoration harvests, where such harvests could benefit certain species or sites.*
- *Create procurement contract language that communicates expectations and requirements for those selling wood. An example would be a requirement that trained loggers be used.*
- *Participate in the SFI State Implementation Committee appropriate for the supply base.*

Appendix 1

Extract from SBP Standard 1: Feedstock Compliance Standard Version 1.0

Criterion 2.1	Management of the forest ensures that features and species of outstanding or exceptional value are identified and protected (CPET S8a; S8c)	
Reference	Indicator	Guidance
2.1.1	The BP has implemented appropriate control systems and procedures for verifying that forests and other areas with high conservation value in the Supply Base are identified and mapped. **Examples of means of verification:** • Internet research • GIS maps of HCV areas • Interviews • Regional, publicly available data from a credible third party • The existence of a strong legal framework in the region	**Sources of information include:** • The High Conservation Value Network http://www.hcvnetwork.org/ • IUCN http://www.iucnredlist.org/ • SFI Section 6: Guidance to SFI 2015-2019 Standard, January 6. 2014 Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/draftsfi-2015-2019-standard-section-6/ • NatureServe http://www.natureserve.org/ • The Global Forestry Risk Register http://www.globalforestregistry.org/
2.1.2	The BP has implemented appropriate control systems and procedures to identify and address potential threats to forests and other areas with high conservation values from forest management activities. **Examples of means of verification:** • Maps • Guidance provided by BPs to suppliers/forest operators, regarding threats to the identified forests and areas with high conservation values, and verification of conformance through field inspections • Regional Best Management Practices • Standard Operating Procedures • Codes of Practice	The potential impacts of management activities on forests and other areas with high conservation values and biodiversity should be evaluated, and BPs should have systems in place to verify that mitigation measures are implemented in the field. Forests and other areas with high conservation values include those habitats in which protected and endangered plant and animal species are found. There is communication with suppliers/forest operators, and they are provided with records of meetings, talks, workshops, etc. Impacts include those originating in the area of operation but impacting outside the area of operation, such as downstream. **Sources of information include:** • The High Conservation Value Network http://www.hcvnetwork.org/

	• Records of BPs' field inspections • Monitoring records • Interviews with staff • Publicly available information on the protection of the values identified • Regional, publicly available data from credible third parties • Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Risk Assessment Reports • The existence of a strong legal framework in the region	• SFI Section 6: Guidance to SFI 2015-2019 Standard, January 6. 2014 Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/draftsfi-2015-2019-standard-section-6/ • NatureServe http://www.natureserve.org/ • The Global Forestry Risk Register http://www.globalforestregistry.org/