

Custom Built for Canada: CSA Certification for Canadian Forests

THE CANADIAN STANDARDS ASSOCIATION (CSA) was founded in 1919 to develop standards that improve the lives of Canadians and people worldwide. Today there are over 3,000 CSA standards that cover everything from specifications for hockey helmets to providing assurance of the sustainable management of Canada's forests.

There are two CSA sustainable forest management (SFM) standards. One is used primarily in larger industrial forests (CSA Z809) and the second is for smaller forests and private woodlots (CSA Z804). CSA Z809 is the largest national standard in the world with over 60 million hectares of Canadian forests certified to CSA. It is also the dominant forest certification program used in British Columbia where over half of forests certified are to the CSA SFM Standard.

Developed for Canada

Both Z804 and Z809 are national standards of Canada, written specifically for the Canadian context and built on top of existing, strong legislative frameworks. They follow the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers' framework for sustainable forest management, which is in turn based on international agreement on the many environmental, economic and social factors that need to be taken account when forests are harvested. These include using sustainable harvest levels, conserving biological diversity, protecting soil and water, and incorporating the rights of Aboriginal peoples—to name just a few. Independent auditors assess forestry activities against these requirements and, if they conform, issue a certificate indicating that the practices used in a given forest area meet the established requirements.

The content of the CSA SFM Standard is the responsibility of a multi-stakeholder technical committee made up of forest producers, scientists, academics, government representatives, Aboriginal people, labour unions, consumers and environmentalists. The technical committee is currently led by Dr. Peter Duinker of Dalhousie University. Dr. Duinker is a distinguished professor

and scientist, known and respected across Canada and internationally as a leader of environmental science. In 2010, he received the Canadian Institute of Forestry's Canadian Forestry Scientific Achievement Award.

Important firewalls are in place. The CSA forestry standards are accredited by the Standards Council of Canada, and the system provides independence and transparency between the process of developing the standard, the approval of the standard and accreditation of the certifiers.

Explaining Public Advisory Groups

Because 93% of Canada's forests are publicly owned, the Z809 standard demands active public involvement by local residents in a way that no other standard does. From coast to coast, roughly 40 public advisory groups (PAGs) are involved in frequent discussion with forest managers. One example is Western Forest Products' public advisory group, in this case called a community advisory group (CAG), at its Stillwater Operation in Powell River.

There are 19 members in the Stillwater CAG. They represent a wide range of interests including tourism, environment and local business. Western Forest Products is responsible for maintaining this group and provides meeting room space, dinner, a secretary to keep minutes and guest speakers as requested by the CAG on any topic related to the indicators—guidelines that help the CAG measure if its sustainable forest management plan is effective.

Jane Cameron has sat on the Stillwater CAG since 2001. "We're a fairly active group," said Jane. "We have a dinner meeting once a month. Things change so rapidly in the forest industry our indicators need frequent review with an eye to updating."

The Stillwater CGA uses over 40 indicators in their sustainable forest management plan. Jane explained that the CSA Z809-08 standard includes 26 core indicators that must be used in each SFM plan. The others indicators were developed by the Stillwater CAG themselves in

conjunction with Western. An example of an indicator is "Proportion of the calculated long-term sustainable harvest level that is actually harvested."

Stuart Glen, RPF, the Western employee who supports the CAG, attends the monthly meetings and provides an operations report for the following month and a map to show where Western plans to harvest. The CAG discusses the plans and addresses any concerns like road placement or community impact.

For example, just a little while ago Stuart had a cut block where the Sunshine Coast Trail ran through part of it. "Stuart works with the trail builders," said Jane. "He'll tell us, 'This is what I plan to do for the trail.' And then we'll tell him whether we think that's enough. We expect the company to work with the community regarding the trail and they are very good about doing so." To learn more about the Stillwater CAG, visit their website: www.cagsta.org.

Recognized Internationally

Both CSA SFM standards are endorsed as meeting the requirements of the global Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC). This endorsement verifies that the standards meet or exceed an internationally established performance level and were developed in a multi-stakeholder process.

Forest Products with Integrity

The CSA forest certification program includes using the PEFC Chain of Custody standard and PEFC product labels to link the CSA forest management standard to forest products and consumers. This shows consumers how much of a wood product has been sourced from a certified forest and assures them that any uncertified portion is from legal and non-controversial sources.

The CSA SFM standards help ensure Canadian forests continue to provide future generations with the benefits we enjoy today. And they mean customers can count on Canada for a substantial supply of responsibly-sourced building products. 🌲