

NSW Forest Certification Pilot

Guidelines



What is forest certification?

Forest certification provides independent assurance that farm forests are managed sustainably for long-term environmental, social and economic values.

Certification of farm forests increases access to additional timber markets, strengthens certified supply chains and improves the long-term sustainable management of farm forests.

The Forest Certification Pathway

To help address barriers to certification for landholders and small-medium forest managers, Local Land Services (LLS) has worked with Responsible Wood to develop a Certification pathway under the Sustainable Forest Management (AS 4708) standard.

The pathway includes a package of templates and guidance materials that helps simplify the certification process and reduce the administrative burden for landholders while adhering to the Program for Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and Australian Standard for Sustainable Native Forest Management (AS 4708) requirements.

The Certification Pathway complements the Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice. It supports landholders in developing a Forest Management System tailored to a landholder's property and business plan. The Forest Management System includes the procedures and documents that outline how the Forest will be managed sustainably and in line with certification.

LLS is also working closely with the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to include the FSC Australia Forest Stewardship Standard in the certification program in the near future.

The Farm Forestry Certification Pilot

Together with Responsible Wood, the Farm Forestry Certification Pilot will trial the Certification Pathway with up to 5 landholders, through to certification.

Landholders approved to participate in the Pilot will receive:

- Support from a forestry certification consultant to navigate the certification pathway and provide specialist advice on Forest Management Systems and business practices consistent with the Responsible Wood Standards.
- Certification assessment by an accredited Certification Body, including a 2-stage assessment that provides opportunities for the Forest Management System to be refined in line with Certification requirements.
- Continued annual audit costs and notification fee covered for a maximum of 3 years.
- The opportunity to work closely with LLS to improve the Certification Pathway and ensure it adequately supports landholders in NSW.

The Pilot aims to refine the pathway and aligns with the NSW Forest Management Framework, which establishes a comprehensive system for delivering ecologically, culturally and socially sustainable forest management.

As part of the Pilot, LLS will work closely with independent auditors to ensure the Certification Standards are applied practically and consistently. LLS will also commission a feasibility study and options analysis to administer a Group Scheme certification for landholders in NSW. The feasibility

study will consider the economic barriers to certification and investigate whether using a group scheme can help lower the administrative costs of certification.

LLS will open applications to participate in November 2022. The Pilot will commence in January 2023 and it is expected to run over 12 months.

Why should landholders consider participating in the Pilot?

Certification provides independent assurance to consumers and suppliers of timber products that forest management is consistent with independent standards and the principles of ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM). As a result, forest certification improves market access and demand for products produced by landholders and will help ensure the long-term sustainability of the Farm Forestry sector in NSW.

However, landholders often experience financial and administrative barriers to achieving forest certification, given these schemes are typically designed for medium-to-large commercial enterprises.¹

In response to these issues, LLS developed a pathway to help landholders become certified under the Responsible Wood Certification Scheme by streamlining the administrative process for Farm Forestry Certification. The pilot program will test and refine this pathway.

Who can participate in the Pilot?

Forest managers will need to meet the following eligibility criteria to apply:

- an existing Private Native Forestry (PNF) Plan
- ability to undertake forest management in line with Responsible Wood Certification Standards
- willingness to work with LLS on reviewing the Certification Pathway
- commitment to maintain Certification once the Pilot has ended
- agreement for LLS to host field days in their forest to inform other farm forest managers about the Certification pathway.

¹ In addition, several submissions in response to Private Native Forestry Terms of Reference recommended training and advice to help landholders achieve Forest Certification. Plus, a number of submissions to the NSW Timber Inquiry called for more widespread forest certification in NSW, particularly of landholders and small-medium forest managers.

How do landholders apply?

Landholders are invited to submit an Expressions of Interest (EOI) to be part of the Forest Certification Pilot to ffp@lls.nsw.gov.au or Local Land Services, 117 Bull Street, Newcastle West 2302. EOIs are published on the LLS website.

EOIs open on Thursday, 17th November 2022 and **close Friday, 9th January 2022, at 5pm.**

To participate, landholders will need to meet the eligibility criteria and provide information about their property and interest in participating in the Pilot.

Eligible landholders will have the opportunity to seek advice from Local Land Services on their application during the assessment process.

How are applications assessed?

LLS assesses applications against the assessment criteria to ensure they meet the Pilot's objectives. Applications must include a clear commitment to forest management in line with certification standards and the maintenance of certification for a minimum of 3 years. Landholders who submit an EOI will receive a phone call from LLS to discuss their application further.

Applications will be ranked based on this assessment, and Local Land Services will decide on the successful applicants and provide notification of the outcomes of the evaluation via email.

How do successful applicants participate in the Pilot?

Successful applicants will need to co-sign a letter of offer that sets out the terms for participating in the Pilot.

Following the LLS Certification Pathway, participants will work with an expert forest consultant to develop their Forest Management System and prepare the required documentation and evidence for their certification audit.

A Responsible Wood accredited certification auditor will initially assess the participants' forest management system and advise on any required changes to align the system with the certification standard.

A second audit will be conducted approximately six months later, with certification awarded if successfully attained.

LLS will cover the ongoing Responsible Wood membership and audit fees for up to 3 years so long as certification standards are maintained.

How is the Pilot monitored and evaluated?

Pilot participants will be encouraged to explore further involvement in LLS Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting programs.

LLS will also work closely with participants to gather feedback on participant experiences throughout the Pilot. LLS want to understand better what works well and what doesn't when using the Forest Certification Pathway and their experiences in achieving certification.

LLS will use the pilot and landholder feedback results to refine the LLS Forest Certification Pathway to support private forest landholders in NSW to obtain forest certification.

If you have any questions about the Pilot or EOI process or require further assistance, please contact:

E: ffp@lls.nsw.gov.au

P: 1300 795 299

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Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing December 2022. However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Local Land Services or the user's independent adviser.