

Forest Certification Re-registration Audit Report

Prepared by:

Cindy Hutchison, Lead Auditor
SAI Global
20 Carlson Court, Suite 200
Toronto, Ontario, M9W 7K6
CANADA
Tel: (416) 401-8700
1 800 465-3717
www.saiglobal.com

for:

Aspen Planers Ltd. Woodlands Department
c/o Trevor Ball
2399 Quilchena Ave.
Merritt, British Columbia
(250) 378-9266
trevorball@apgroup.ca

for the following certified forest area(s):

Forest Licences (FL) A18695, A75062, A18700, A18701, A81042, A81043, A92671, A84760, and A73249. Also for A65006, all cutting permits managed by Aspen including all those under the authority of Aspen's FSP ID# 76 (as opposed to those managed independently by Stuwix). Aspen also manages numerous Forestry Licences to Cut and Non-Replaceable Forest Licences which are identified within one of two Forest Stewardship Plans – FSP ID#76 (Merritt TSA) and FSP ID#379 (Lillooet TSA).

File Number: 1066463

Date of Evaluation: 2017-12-19 to 2017-12-21

Date of Report: 2018-01-02

Certificate Registration Date: 2005-11-29

Certificate Expiry Date: 2017-09-17

SECTION 1 – ORGANIZATION

Certification type

Group certificate	
Single certificate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Name and Description of the certified organization

Aspen Planers is a family owned integrated woodlands and sawmilling business. The woodlands operation participates in the Sustainable Forest Management Plan along with four other licensees. The woodlands operation feeds the mills producing over 200,000 mbf lumber annually as well as plywood and veneer, chips, post and rails, and hog fuel. The combined employment of manufacturing facilities is over 400 direct employees.

List of co-applicants

There are no co-applicant(s) on this certificate

SECTION 2 - DESCRIPTION OF THE DEFINED FOREST AREA

Legal Tenure / Licence Description

Forest Licences (FL) A18695, A75062, A18700, A18701, A81042, A81043, A92671, A84760, and A73249. Also for A65006, all cutting permits managed by Aspen including all those under the authority of Aspen's FSP ID# 76 (as opposed to those managed independently by Stuwix). Aspen also manages numerous Forestry Licences to Cut and Non-Replaceable Forest Licences which are identified within one of two Forest Stewardship Plans – FSP ID#76 (Merritt TSA) and FSP ID#379 (Lillooet TSA).

Geographic Locations

The Nicola Thompson Fraser SFM Plan area is situated in the southern interior, east of the Coast Mountains and encompassing the Thompson-Okanagan Plateau. The area extends south to the Canada-USA border and northward to Wells Gray Provincial Park. The overall Plan area follows the administrative boundaries of the Cascades Forest District (Merritt TSA and Lillooet TSA) and the Thompson Rivers Forest District (Kamloops TSA).

DFA description – Area and Forest types

The topography of Nicola Thompson Fraser is one of sharp contrasts, from dry, hot grasslands to large lakes and rugged mountains. The Nicola and Thompson Rivers join the Fraser River in the western section of the Plan area while the Similkameen River flows through the southern portion. The Plan area encompasses a wide range of Biogeoclimatic zones and subzones that reflect the complexity of the landscape and the different topographical conditions in each TSA.

In the north, the North Thompson River is bounded by the high peaks of the Monashee and Cariboo Mountains. Cool, wet conditions, with high snowfalls and dense spruce and cedar forests, are reflective of the Engelmann Spruce Subalpine Fir zone. In the central and southern portion, the mountains give way to high plateaus dissected by steep valleys and dotted with lakes and rivers. Moist and dry subzones of the Montane Spruce and Interior Douglas-fir zones, with mixed pine and pine-fir forests, reflect the differences in climate between east and west sides of the major valleys.

The landscape continues to become drier and gentler towards the south, with rolling uplands and numerous lakes. The driest Interior Douglas-fir subzones occur on the uplands, with the grasslands of the Bunchgrass subzones in the river valleys. The western boundary is influenced by the Coastal Mountains, where cool, wet coastal conditions predominate. Extensive areas of alpine and sub-alpine conditions limit forests to the middle and lower slopes of the deep valleys and wide river junctions. Engelmann Spruce-Subalpine fir, Montane Spruce and Interior Douglas-fir subzones closely follow the topography.

The diverse ecology of the area provides habitat for a wide range of fish and wildlife species including moose, mule deer, elk, mountain goat, and over 200 bird species. Predator species such as black bear, marten, cougar and coyote are also found. Many wildlife species range over large areas and some have specific habitat requirements at different times of the year. The area is also home to a number of wildlife species identified as Species at Risk, including spotted owl, American badger, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear and wolverine.

The numerous lakes and watercourses within the area are home to many fish species, including all five species of salmon, steelhead, rainbow trout, kokanee, brook trout, bull trout, and white sturgeon.

The forests of the Nicola Thompson Fraser provide numerous natural resource values, including forest products, minerals, fish, wildlife, and recreation and tourism opportunities. Extensive grassland and forested areas provide forage for both livestock and wildlife.

Major highways pass through areas of exceptional natural scenery, providing easy access to a number of communities ranging from the City of Kamloops with over 80,000 people to smaller towns such as Merritt with a population of 7,000, Lillooet, population 2,324, Cache Creek, population 1,037, and many smaller communities with populations of 200 or less. Other highways and hundreds of kilometres of unpaved roads provide access into the extensive grasslands, forested lands and backcountry areas.

A number of significant provincial parks, such as Wells Gray Provincial Park, Manning Provincial Park, Cathedral Provincial Park, Stein Valley Nlaka'pamux Heritage Park and Spruce Lake Protected Area are situated in the Plan area. Numerous smaller provincial parks, recreation sites and other Crown lands provide the setting for a host of activities including camping, hiking, wildlife and scenic viewing, fishing, hunting, hang-gliding, boating, river rafting, mountain-biking, four-wheel driving, ATV use, snowmobiling, and downhill, helicopter and cross country skiing.

SECTION 3 – AUDIT PROCESS

Process

All audit activities are planned with the Lead Auditor prior to the audit. An audit plan is provided detailing the scope and objectives of the audit, the audit team members, the processes to be audited and the timelines. While onsite the audit team will work to verify that the management system meets the requirements of the standard and your system documentation by assessing objective evidence. The verification is done through interviews, documentation review and observation. This verification occurs in the office as well as in the field. For the field portion a sample of active and closed operations are selected. Auditors use a detailed checklist to document evidence of compliance.

As the audit is based on a sampling of the available information there is always a level of uncertainty that exists, non-conformity can go undetected as well as good practices.

Audit Objective

To verify the company's documentation and the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of the organization management system in meeting the requirements of the CSA Z809-16 National Standard of Canada Standards for the declared scope of registration and

- To confirm that the organization complies with its own policies and procedures;
- To confirm that the management system is suitable for the organization;

Audit Criteria

CAN/CSA-Z809-16 National Standard of Canada (Approved September 2016)
Sustainable forest management

Scope of the audit

Facilities/organizational units/functional units audited include the woodlands office at 2399 Quilchena Avenue, Merritt, British Columbia and licences in the Merritt and Lillooet Timber Supply Areas (TSA) within the Nicola Thompson Fraser (NTF) Defined Forest Area as described in the NTF Sustainable Forest Management Plan.

Certificate scope

Forest management activities - planning, harvesting, transportation and silviculture on the Nicola Thompson Fraser DFA.

Combined, joined or integrated audit

This audit is not a combined, joined or integrated audit.

Description of SAI Global and the SAI Global Audit Team

SAI Global is a third party management system certification Registrar. Established in 1984, SAI Global has worked with thousands of organizations in North America and around the world, issuing registration certificates to those that meet international and national management system standards.

The SAI Global Sustainable Forest Management audit team members bring with them considerable experience in the area of sustainable forest management and environmental management systems auditing. Audit teams are comprised of certified

auditors and registered professional foresters. All audit team members are subject to strict confidentiality and conflict of interest agreements.

Audit Team

Lead auditor:
Cindy Hutchison, RPF (British Columbia)
Auditor:
Dave Barker, RPF (British Columbia)
Technical expert:
N/A
Observer:
N/A

Audit time and dates

Evaluation dates:	2017-12-19 to 2017-12-21
Tasks	Hours (excluding travel)
Pre and Post-audit work (audit plan and report writing)	4.0
Audit time (Documents, Records, Fieldwork)	48.0
Stakeholders Consultation	3.0
TOTAL	55.0 hours or 6.875 person days

Review of Changes since last audit

Aspen Planers upgraded to the CSA Z809-16 standard during this audit. The licences managed no longer include area in the Kamloops Timber Supply Area. Aspen Planers continues to expand partnerships with First Nations.

Significant issues impacting on the audit programme

A snowstorm made travel difficult, slow, and dangerous. Operations in the Merritt TSA were substantially shut down during the audit. Travel to the Lillooet TSA was determined to be un-safe, and the highway to Lillooet was not consistently open or maintained during the audit period.

Noted deviations from the audit plan and their reasons

The audit was originally scheduled in October, prior to snowfall. Due to circumstances, the auditor was no longer available at that time and the audit was re-scheduled to mid-December. Temperatures ranging from above to just below freezing at this time of year, along with heavy snow falls, made travel conditions dangerous. As a result, the field audit days were reduced and the audit focused on office interviews and requirements of planning and harvesting contractors. Despite the weather, the auditors were able to visit operations of two harvesting contractors.

Description of operations (Day shift, Night shift)

The operations visited included a woodlands office working day shifts, and operations working a shift from early morning to early afternoon. All interviews could be completed during normal business hours.

Operations visited during the field audit include

Site identification	Type of Operation Observed
A94244 Coldwater Indian Band	Piling woody debris for the post-harvest fireproofing operation near the residential reserve.
A18695 CP393-2	Active harvesting operations.

Interviews

Personnel (i.e. Staff/contractors)	
Position	Number
Staff Chief Forester	1
Staff Planning Manager	1
Staff Silviculture Planner	1
Staff Operations Supervisor	2
Staff GIS Specialist	1
Contract First Nations Liaison	1
Contract Planning Forester	2
Contract Site Supervisor	3
Contract Operator	5
Contract Layout Technician	1
Contract Health and Safety Supervisor	1
Contract Company Owner	1

Members of the public participation process	
Position	Number
Public Advisory Group Facilitator	1

Provincial Government	
Position	Number
Declined interview	

Aboriginal People	
Community and position	Number
Lillooet Tribal Council member	1

Concerns relevant to the Standard and SAI Global's response

In this section - discussion of any significant concerns relevant to the Standard, made during the audit by public participation members, aboriginal communities, government officials, DFA workers or other interested parties and the conclusions reached by the audit team in relation to them.

Concerns received

Licensees should make further effort to recruit new Public Advisory Group (PAG) members.

SAI Global's response

This was given as an opportunity for improvement. The PAG requirement is to have ratings of 3 or more on the annual questionnaire. The rating on the question "Licensees have made an effort to recruit new members" has been 3.1/5 which meets requirements, but could be improved.

Concerns received

1. Concerns raised regarding management of cultural heritage resources in specific cutblocks.
2. Implementation of a First Nations Land Use Plan in Lillooet area.
3. Site Plans not available for review.

SAI Global's response

- Aspen Planers has identified non-conformances with commitments for specific cutblocks.
- Aspen Planers has completed root cause analysis and planned corrective actions which will improve internal and external communications and desired outcomes on CHRs both prior to and during harvesting. Additionally the corrective actions should address issues related to implementation of specific First Nations land use planning requirements, and make Site Plans available for review (subject to interaction and discussion with an Aspen Planers staff member).
- The corrective actions will be reviewed at the next audit for effectiveness as noted in the section "Any unresolved issues, if any identified."

Overview of elements audited off-site and on-site

See Annex 1.

SECTION 4 - AUDIT FINDINGS

Status of non-conformances (NC) from the previous audit

No previously recorded or outstanding non-conformances.

Non-conformances (NC) identified during this audit

NC#	2017-01	Grade :	Minor NC
Requirement:			
7.4.6 Operational Procedures and Control The organization SHALL ...maintain the operational procedures and controls needed to meet the SFM requirements; and communicate relevant procedures, controls, and requirements to employees, suppliers, and contractors working on behalf of the organization.			
Non-conformance:			
EMS Manual sections have outdated personnel, titles, and administrative information; Jaden Logging is using the 2010 Emergency Response Plan contact numbers. Contractors are not cognizant if their procedures are the most current.			
Justification for Major or Minor:			
Minor: Does not result in fundamental failure to meet the requirement			
Evidence provided to close the non-conformity:			
This is an outstanding non-conformance from the current audit.			
Status:	Open		

Opportunities for Improvement (OFI):

Consider

- including a discussion of the SFM policy as an annual item on the internal audit.
- further efforts to recruit new PAG members.
- documenting roles and responsibilities if site plan commitments to First Nations cannot be met.
- indicating on the Aspen Training requirements matrix a frequency for training (determine “periodic” and “as needed”) and adding TDG (specifying when it is required) to the “Contractor Employee List Training Matrix CL4-OH”.
- strengthening efforts to enter road status information into a geographical data base.
- reviewing Targets 11 (reporting on road seeding) and 38 (on-the-ground contractor SAFE certification) for target vs reporting consistency.

Positive Aspects of the Management System and Best Practices

- Inviting First Nations to participate in the harvest pre-work.
- Proposed response drill for a previously unidentified CHR.
- Planning due diligence is very thorough.
- It was noted that there was a significant increase (35%) in working relationships with First Nations over 2015 to 2016, and Aspen Planers has put in much effort to improve on this during 2017.

Key focus areas/topics to be assessed during next audit

The audit will be planned entirely in the Lillooet office with a focus on operations in the Lillooet area.

Follow-up will occur for “unresolved issued” identified in the current audit.

Any unresolved issues, if any identified

- Grass-seeding for management of invasive plants in CP 393-2 and CP 393-3 as per (legal) FSP requirements will be reviewed at the next audit.
- Internal non-conformance action plans to be completed by December 31, 2017 for management of CHRs; and reporting in 2017 monitoring report. Non-conformance action plans will be reviewed at the next audit for effectiveness of meeting standards requirements.

SECTION 5 - GENERAL ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the company's SFM program, and the audit results, the following recommendation is made:

Re-assessment Audit

Below are the results of the non-conformances identified during the previous cycle:

Audit Type (I/RR/S)	NC #	Grade Major - Ma Minor - Mi	Standard clause	NC Description
RR	None			
There were no surveillance audits in the previous audit cycle. The 2016 and 2017 audits were both re-registration audits.				
In preparation for the audit the lead auditor reviewed previous audit non-conformances. This review allowed focusing the present audit on the weakness previously identified. The reregistration audit did not find reoccurring NCs identified in the previous cycle.				

The company conducted an internal audit August 24 and 25, 2017 and identified no non-conformances. Non-conformance, when identified, are being managed and evaluated in a corrective action system by completing root cause analysis and planning and implementing corrective actions. Root cause analysis and corrective actions have been completed whenever non-conformances to CSA Z809 requirements have been determined.

A management review was conducted August 2017 where the following agenda items were reviewed and discussed with the management team:

- 2017 Internal audit results and actions (including the needs for changes to the policy);
- 2016 External audit results and actions;
- Conclusions and Effectiveness of the 2017 SFMP;
- Continual Improvement SFMP and PEFC;

The results of the re-assessment including the review of the performance of the management system over the past cycle indicate the capability of the management system to meet applicable requirements and expected outcomes, that the scope remains appropriate and that the audit objectives have been fulfilled with the exception of the non-conformance identified during this audit.

As discussed during the closing meeting, a root cause analysis with an action plan must be submitted within 30 days for the minor non-conformance for approval by the Lead Auditor.

Implementation of the corrective actions for minor non-conformance will be verified at the next surveillance audit

A recommendation for the registration to the CSA Z809-16 standard requirements and to the scope of registration identified in this report is on hold pending the receipt, review, and acceptance of the corrective action plan for the minor non-conformance.

The certification decision is confirmed with the issuance of the new CSA Z809-16 certificate.

Next Scheduled Audit:

Date(s): October 24 and 25, 2018

Type of Audit: Surveillance audit to CSA Z809-16 or Registration to SFI 2015-2019; to be determined.

Cindy Hutchison
SAI Global
Team Leader

Date: 2018-01-02

ANNEX 1

Standard requirement	Audited on-site	Audited off-site
4.1 General requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
4.2 Required activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.1 General requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.2 Interested parties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.3 Process: Basic operating rules for advisory groups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.4 Work of the advisory group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
5.5 Public communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.1 DFA-specific performance requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.2 SFM criteria — General	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.1.2 Discussion items for Criterion 1- Biological diversity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.1.3 Element 1.1 — Ecosystem diversity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.1.4 Element 1.2 — Species diversity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.1.5 Element 1.3 — Genetic diversity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.1.6 Element 1.4 — Protected areas and sites of special biological, geological, heritage, or cultural significance (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.2.2 Discussion items for Criterion 2 - Ecosystem condition and productivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.2.3 Element 2.1 — Forest ecosystem condition and productivity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.3.2 Discussion items for Criterion 3 - Soil and water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.3.3 Element 3.1 — Soil quality and quantity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.3.4 Element 3.2 — Water quality and quantity (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.4.2 Discussion items for Criterion 4 - Role in global ecological cycles	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.4.3 Element 4.1 — Carbon uptake and storage (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.4.4 Element 4.2 — Forest land conversion (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.5.2 Discussion items for Criterion 5 - Economic and social benefits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.5.3 Element 5.1 — Timber and non-timber benefits (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.5.4 Element 5.2 — Communities and sustainability (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.6 Criterion 6 — Society's responsibility		
6.3.6.2 Element 6.1 — Fair and effective decision-making (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.6.3 Element 6.2 — Safety (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.7 Criterion 7 — Aboriginal relations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
6.3.7.2 Element 7.1 — Aboriginal and treaty rights (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.3.7.3 Element 7.2 — Respect for Aboriginal forest values, knowledge, and uses (VOITS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.1 General	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.2 SFM policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.3.1 Defined forest area	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

7.3.2 Defined responsibilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.3.3 Rights and regulations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.3.4 Incorporation of public participation requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.3.5 SFM plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.4.1 Structure, responsibility, and resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.4.2 Competence, training, and knowledge	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.4.3 Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.4.4 SFM documentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.4.5 Document control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.4.6 Operational procedures and control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.4.7 Emergency preparedness and response	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.5.1 Monitoring and measurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.5.2 Corrective action	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.5.3 Records	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
7.6 Management review	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	