



**Public Briefing Paper for**  
**FSC® Forest Management Certification Re-Assessment of**  
**Four States Timberland Owners Association**  
**in**  
**Ashdown, Arkansas USA**  
**July 25, 2022**

**Introduction** – Preferred by Nature is conducting Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®) Forest Management and Chain of Custody certification re-assessments of Four States Timberland Owners Association (FSTOA) with an office located in Ashdown, Arkansas. FSTOA has been certified by Preferred by Nature (formerly NEPCo) since November 28, 2012 (NC-FM/COC-006167). The re-assessment includes 260 properties in Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana, totaling approximately 255,276 hectares. The re-assessment will begin on 12 September 2022.

**Scope of the Certification Re-Assessment** – The forest management certification re-assessment will assess the environmental, silvicultural, and socioeconomic aspects of the certified forests managed by FSTOA, using the *FSC-US Forest Management Standard (v1.1)* and the *FSC Standard For Group Entities in Forest Management Groups (FM-STD-30-005)*. To obtain a copy of these guidelines, please visit the FSC-US website (at <https://us.fsc.org/en-us/certification/forest-management-certification>) or contact Preferred by Nature directly by telephone, fax, or e-mail as listed below. Preferred by Nature is accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC®)<sup>1</sup> and this re-assessment process must follow procedures which have been approved by the FSC.

**Re-Assessment Team Composition** – The re-assessment will be conducted by:

- Karen Brenner, Lead Auditor, Forestry
- Reed Rossell, Auditor, Forest Ecology

**Re-assessment Steps and Schedule** – Following is a short description of the certification process and a tentative agenda:

- ◆ Re-assessment organization – The Preferred by Nature auditors and FSTOA staff will meet at FSTOA's office in Ashdown, Arkansas on September 12, 2022.
- ◆ Field assessments – The auditors will visit properties managed by FSTOA that are included in the scope of the certificate from September 12 to 16.
- ◆ Re-assessment briefing – Prior to departure, the auditors will meet with FSTOA managers and other parties to finalize their data collection and present preliminary findings.
- ◆ Stakeholder consultation – The auditors will conduct interviews with stakeholders prior to, during, and after the re-assessment.
- ◆ Draft report production – The auditors will produce a confidential draft report that will be circulated for comment to FSTOA. This should occur 45 days after completion of the re-assessment field work.

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<sup>1</sup> FSC® A000535

- ◆ Certification decision – Upon receipt of comments on the draft report from FSTOA and other general stakeholder comments, Preferred by Nature will reach a certification decision. Barring unforeseen obstacles, this should occur by November 15, 2022.

**Your Input Sought** – As a part of the forest certification re-assessment process we invite stakeholders to offer comment and feedback on FSTOA's forest management in relation to conformance with the requirements of the forest management standard referenced above. We welcome input, either public or confidential, in whatever form is easiest and most secure for you. Your input will be valuable at any stage of the re-assessment process, but we would prefer to receive your comments either prior to the re-assessment, during the re-assessment, or prior to September 30, 2022, so that we can take them into consideration in reaching a certification decision by November 15, 2022. Your options for communicating your observations to us are as follows:

1. Meet with the Preferred by Nature audit team during or shortly after the fieldwork.
2. Call and give comments to Randy Coots, the Preferred by Nature staff person responsible for coordinating this certification re-assessment.
3. Submit written comments by mail, FAX or email to Randy Coots. Unless you request otherwise, these comments will be kept confidential and are solely for the purposes of auditing FSTOA as described in this briefing.

### **Contacting Preferred by Nature**

*Randy Coots, Forestry Specialist, United States*

- ◆ Email: [rcoots@preferredbynature.org](mailto:rcoots@preferredbynature.org)
- ◆ Website: [www.preferredbynature.org](http://www.preferredbynature.org)
- ◆ Telephone: 304-884-9364
- ◆ FAX: 802-434-3116
- ◆ Mailing address: P.O. Box 99, Richmond, VT 05477, USA

The source of any information provided will be kept confidential and will be available to only the FSC and Preferred by Nature staff.

Stakeholders who may wish to dispute any aspect of the forest certification process or decision can access Preferred by Nature's Complaints, Appeals and Dispute resolution procedures at <https://preferredbynature.org/certification/fsc/complaints-and-resolutions>.