SmartLogging
2021 Certification Reassessment
Report for:

The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands

in

Augusta, Maine, USA

Certificate code:	NC-SL-000001
Auditors:	Randy Coots, Lead Auditor
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AAC	Annual Allowable Cut
ALC	American Logging Council
BMP	Best Management Practice
CBM	Cubic Meter
CITES	Convention on Trade in Endangered Species
CW	Controlled Wood
FMP	Forest Management Plan
FMU	Forest Management Unit
FPR	Forest Practices Regulations
GM	Group Manager
HP	Harvest Plan
H&S	Health and Safety
ILO	International Labour Organization
MBF	One thousand board feet
ML	Master Logger
NIPF	Non-Industrial Private Forest
RT&E	Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species
SFI	Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SL	SmartLogging
US	United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of an independent SmartLogging certification assessment conducted by specialists representing Preferred by Nature. The purpose of the assessment was to evaluate the conformance of **The Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands (TCNEF or TCNF)**, hereafter referred to as the SmartLogging Operation (SLO), according to the SmartLogging standards.

This report contains four main sections of information and findings and several appendixes. The main report, <u>without confidential appendices or annexes</u>, will become public information about the operation that may be distributed by Preferred by Nature to interested parties. The remainder of the appendices are confidential, to be reviewed only by authorized Preferred by Nature staff and reviewers bound by confidentiality agreements. Confidential appendices may be distributed by the SLO, or Preferred by Nature, but only upon mutual agreement.

The purpose of the SmartLogging Program is to recognize good harvesting practices through independent evaluation and certification. Logging operations that attain SmartLogging certification may use the SmartLogging name for public claims off-product (i.e., not on actual wood products), but such claims must be reviewed for accuracy and approved in writing by Preferred by Nature prior to publication or public dissemination. A SmartLogging certification code number (e.g., NC-SL-###) can be used on product according to defined Preferred by Nature procedures.

Dispute resolution: If Preferred by Nature clients encounter organisations or individuals having concerns or comments about Preferred by Nature and our services, these parties are strongly encouraged to contact relevant Preferred by Nature regional office. Formal complaints and concerns should be sent in writing.

Impartiality commitment: Preferred by Nature commits to using impartial auditors and our clients are encouraged to inform Preferred by Nature management if violations of this are noted. Please see our Impartiality Policy here: http://www.preferredbynature.org/impartiality-policy

1. SCOPE OF THE CERTIFICATE

1.1. Scope of the certificate

TCNEF currently holds a SmartLogging certificate and has overall responsibility for ensuring conformance with the SmartLogging certification requirements. The SLO currently has 114 group members under this certificate.

See more detailed information about the SLO and areas covered by the certificate in Section 4 and Appendices I and V.

During logger visits, upon arriving at a location for a scheduled interview with a logger, auditor was notified that this logger had just that morning been hospitalized with Covid-19. An attempt was made to interview an individual with this company, but a decision was made to drop this logger from the list of those being visited.

2. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

2.1 Certification Standard Used

Standards Used:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; SmartLogging Group Certification Standard, Version 1

2.2 Audit Team and Accompanying Persons

Name	Role and qualifications
Randy Coots	Forester B.S. in Forestry from West Virginia University. Thirty-seven years' experience in the field of forestry, including positions with 2 state forestry agencies (FL & WV), 4 forest products companies, U.S. Forest Service, a surveyor, self-employed forestry consultant, and now currently employed by Preferred by Nature as a Forestry Specialist. Member of the Society of American Foresters and a Certified Forester (#1547), and a WV Registered Professional Forester (#266). Completed FSC COC Lead Auditor training Aug. 2018, and FM Lead Auditor training in May 2018. Completed 27 Chain of Custody audits (2 of which were Controlled Wood), 29 Forest Management audits (16 as lead auditor, 5 reassessments/2 as lead), 4 SAP (Smallholders Access Program) audits, and 5 Smart Logging audits.

2.3 Assessment Schedule

Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.

Site(s)	Date(s)	Main activities	Auditor(s)
Off site	12/6/21	Preparatory call	Coots
Off site	12/6/21	Review of evidence	Coots
Bangor, Maine	12/8/21	Opening meeting	Coots
Maine	12/8-10/21	Field Visits	Coots
Maine	12/8-10/21	Staff and Stakeholder interviews	Coots
Bangor, Maine	12/10/21	Closing meeting	Coots
Total auditing time used (number in person days based on 8 hour working days): 6.5 days			

2.4 Evaluation strategy

Harvesters were chosen based upon activity level and general location around Bangor, Maine. Eleven harvesters were chosen for this audit based upon sampling of 10% of the membership. The audit began with a short opening meeting at the hotel in Bangor, Maine. Over the next three days visits were made to all eleven of the harvesters. Due to some inclement weather conditions and harvest site locations the auditor was unable to visit every harvest site. Three of the audits took place at the harvesters office. A short closing meeting took place in the vehicle on the drive back to the hotel at Bangor, Maine, on the last day of the audit.

Note: The table below provides an overview of the audit scope and auditors. See standard checklist annex for specific details on people interviewed and audit findings per site audited.

Description of Subset	Minimum # members to sample	Actual # members sampled	Notes/Comments
114	11	10	Harvesters ranging in size from just a few employees to one company with over 100 employees. One sample dropped at the last minute due to unforeseen hospitalization.

List of harvest practice aspects reviewed by assessment team:

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction	1	Commercial thinning	4
Erosion control	5	Logging camp	0
Planned Harvest site	8	Bridges/stream crossing	2
Ongoing Harvest site	7	Chemical/Fuel storage	7
Completed logging	2	Wetland	2
Site Preparation	1	Stream management zones	4

Machine felling	7	Riparian zone	4
Worker felling	0	Steep slopes	1
Skidding/Forwarding	7	Endangered species	0
Skid trails	9	Wildlife habitat	2
Worker safety	7	Historical sites	0
Clearfelling	1	Cultural or archeological sites	1
Shelterwood	3	Unique environments	0
Selective felling	4	Special management area	1
Sanitary cutting	3	Recreational site	0
Pre-commercial thinning	0	Local community	2
Log concentration yard	1	Processing facility	0

2.5 Stakeholder consultation process

Stakeholder consultation in carried out during a SmartLogging assessment in order to gather evidence from different parties on the harvester's conformance with the SL standard. During the certification process stakeholders consulted may include, landowners, government agencies and regulatory personnel, log purchasers, workers, mills neighbors, community members, local businesses, and logger associations.

Stakeholder Type Interviewed (Government, Landowner, worker, etc.)	Number Interviewed
Contractors	10
Contractor employees	16
Landowner	2
Environmental NGO	0
Forest Industry	3
Forestry & Forest Products NGOs	2
Government	1
Other	0

Principle/Subject Area	Stakeholder comment	Preferred by Nature response
Subject Area 1: Legal Requirements	None received.	No response required.
Subject Area 2: Harvest Planning and Monitoring	None received.	No response required.
Subject Area 3: Harvesting Practices	BMPs are always followed.	No response required.
Subject Area 4: Community Values	None received.	No response required.
Subject Area 5: Occupational Health and Safety	Some of the larger contractors have been contracting 3rd party companies to handle safety training. It seems that this has added efficiencies in training	No response required.

	and record keeping.	
Subject Area 6: Business Viability	None received.	No response required.
Subject Area 7: Continuous Improvement and Innovation	None received.	No response required.
Subject Area 8: Silviculture and Reforestation	None received.	No response required.

3 ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

3.1. Main strengths and weaknesses

Subject Area	Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Legal Requirements	Group members were generally aware of and followed state and local regulations.	One group member stated that at times agreements are still made with a handshake. While commendable for developing such trust in the community, legal documentation is there to protect both the seller and purchaser.
2. Harvest Planning and Monitoring	All operations had harvest plans that addressed the financial, environmental, liability and legal aspects of operations.	None noted.
3. Harvest Practices	All harvest operations were well planned and conducted to minimize environmental impacts. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect soils and water quality are being used. Minimal impact strategies such as portable skidder bridge panels rather than temporary culverts are being routinely implemented by most group members.	At some locations it was found that the BMP manual was not kept onsite for reference in case of difficult situations.
4. Community Values	Group members are aware of historic cultural features such as stone walls and take steps to avoid damage. Loggers and foresters modify operations to address visual impacts.	None noted.
5. Occupational Health and Safety	All group members indicated that they had health and safety plans, trained workers, and required health and safety equipment.	While it was observed that all contractors were operating in safe manners, some did not have available during the audit their written safety plans for review. See NCR 04/21.
6. Business Viability	All group members sampled demonstrated a long-term, viable approach to business.	While each group member knows their business, having a written plan may aid them for future planning. See NCR 01/21.
7. Continuous Improvement and Innovation	Ongoing training is part of all operations audited. Group members had a variety of equipment to address different situations and developed creative	None noted.

	ways to solve problems. The demonstration of new technology of having maps and documentation on iPads in the field that are GPS capable to show harvesting locations and progress was very innovative.	
Group Certification Requirements	TCNEF's group member system meets the SmartLogging requirements for membership commitments and monitoring of member activities.	None noted.

3.2. Identified non-conformances and corrective actions

A non-conformity is a discrepancy or gap identified during the assessment audit between some aspect of the SLO operation and one or more of the requirements of the SmartLogging standard. Depending on the severity of the non-compliance the audit team differentiates between major and minor non-conformities.

- **Major non-conformances** results where there is a fundamental failure to achieve the objective of the relevant criterion. A number of minor non-conformities against one requirement may be considered to have a cumulative effect, and therefore be considered a major non-conformance.
- **Minor non-conformances** are a temporary, unusual or non-systematic, for which the effects are limited.

Major non-conformances must be corrected **before** the certificate can be issued. While minor non-conformances do not prohibit issuing the certificate, they must be addressed within the given timeframe to maintain the certificate.

Each non-conformance is addressed by the audit team by issuing a corrective action request (CAR). NCRs are requirements that candidate operations must agree to, and which must be addressed, within the given timeframe.

NCR: 01/20	**NC Classification: MAJOR**
Standard & Requirement:	6.1.1 - SL-02 SmartLogging Generic Standard
Report Section:	Appendix III
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
Requirement: "6.1.1 – Harvester has a written business plan." Finding: None of the group members interviewed had a current written business plan. However, it was obvious during the interviews that each had detailed knowledge of their businesses and has adapted to rapidly changing circumstances, (losses or changes to markets, changes to laws and regulations, changes to work forces, etc.) to ensure survival. Furthermore, most group members have a formal business structure, LLC, LLP, or Corporation; this requires an intimate understanding of their operations. While this is a technical nonconformity, given the nature of logging businesses in changing markets, group members' demonstrated adaptability outstrips the utility of a written plan. Nevertheless, a written plan is a requirement under this indicator.	

Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	NCR due prior to recertification (3/31/2022)
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	Written business plans for all visited sites. Verbal verification with the Group Manager of a change to internal monitoring to check for written business plans.
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	As stated in last year's audit and NCR related to this indicator, all harvesters interviewed know their business and costs inside and out. However, as stated, this indicator requires a written business plan. Last year's NCR was for some of those harvesters visited not having a written business plan. To close last year's NCR, at the time of this year's field visits no one had a copy of their written business plan with them in the field. Some were unsure if their plans were up to date. Given that this was a known issue, and this document should have been onsite for the reassessment, this NCR was upgraded to a major. Within a week and prior to this writing, all were able to produce written business plans. Interview with Group Manager confirmed that changes will be made to internal monitoring to check for written business plans in the future. Given that prior to report completion all were able to produce their written business plans, this NCR is now considered closed.
NCR Status:	**CLOSED**
Comments (optional):	This NCR was upgraded from minor NCR 01/20.

NCR: 01/21	NC Classification: minor
Standard & Requirement:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; Indicator 1.2.6
Report Section:	Appendix II
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:
1.2.6 Harvester has insurance in accordance with local legal requirements, which may include:
- General liability;
- Worker's comp; and
- Automotive liability.

Finding:	
Only 9 of the 11 companies visited provided proof of carrying required insurances. As the auditor has no doubt from interviews that all do carry all required insurance, there is still the need for documentation to prove such is the case. One of those missing this proof was in the hospital with Covid-19 at the time of the audit, (which as such is now overlooked), and another stated they are self-insured. Being that required insurance is such an important part of this business and the need for such proof as a minimum, an NCR is here issued. Due to the number of those missing documentation and the importance of this issue, this NCR is issued as a minor non-conformance.	
Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	**OPEN**
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 02/21	NC Classification: minor
Standard & Requirement:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; Indicator 2.4.1
Report Section:	Appendix II
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:
A post-harvest evaluation (i.e., checklist or close-out document) is completed by the harvester, preferably with the landowner or land manager, and follow-up actions are identified and conducted as necessary. Post-harvest inspection by jurisdiction agency is required where the service is available.

Finding:
There may have been some confusion in how the question was asked of the contractors as some stated that they were on an active site and a close out inspection would be completed at the time of close out. However, it is of note that of the 11 harvesters visited, only 2 were able to provide evidence of previous harvest close out forms being completed. Four of the harvesters stated that they are contracting to large landowners and the management companies they contract to do all of the post-harvest inspections. And some stated that while they do close out inspections, they do not document these inspections. Considering that this indicator does require a documented post-harvest inspection, a non-conformance is here issued.

Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	**OPEN**
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 03/21	NC Classification: minor
Standard & Requirement:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; Indicator 3.1.3
Report Section:	Appendix II
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:
BMP manuals are accessible to employees, contactors and employees.

Finding:
Interviews confirm that all have a good working knowledge of state BMPs. However, at 6 of the 11 harvester sites visited, a BMP manual was not onsite available to employees or contractors. As such a non-conformance is here issued.

Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☒ Desk Review ☐
Evidence Provided by Organization:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING

NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 04/21	NC Classification: minor
Standard & Requirement:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; Indicator 5.1.1
Report Section:	Appendix II
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:
5.1.1: A written safety & health plan that includes:
• An emergency response plan;
• Requirements for personal safety equipment;
• Policies for forest workers when working alone, including strategies for making their whereabouts known to others at prescribed times each day, which is verified as a daily procedure when in the forest; and,
• Periodic safety inspection of equipment.

Finding:
During interviews all harvesters stated that they had written safety plans and policies meeting the requirements of this indicator. Some use the Master Logger template and others use a custom plan tailored to their operation. However, for document review, 3 of the 10 were unable to produce their written documentation of a written safety & health plan. For this reason, a nonconformance is here issued. This NCR is considered to be a minor issue as observations of field operations showed a very high regard for safety.

Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	OPEN
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 05/21	NC Classification: minor
Standard & Requirement:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; Indicator 5.2.3

Report Section:	Appendix II
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	

Requirement:
5.2.3: Harvester evaluates and documents employee and sub-contractor safety performance.

Finding:
Interviews confirmed that all harvesters do some form of employee and sub-contractor safety performance evaluations. Three of the ten have the 3rd party safety trainer handle this documentation. However, several of the others did not produce any written documentation of safety performance, and one stated that he does not document his evaluations. As documentation is specifically mentioned as being a part of this indicator, and that this documentation was not presented, a nonconformance is here issued. This NCR is issued as a minor as this is just a documentation issue.

Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	PENDING
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	PENDING
NCR Status:	**OPEN**
Comments (optional):	

3.3.   Evaluation of Open Non-conformity Reports (NCRs)

Note: this section indicates the Organisation's actions to comply with NCRs that have been issued during or since the last audit. Failure to comply with a minor NCR results in the NCR being upgraded to major; the specified follow-up action is required by the Organization or involuntary suspension will take place.

Status Categories	Explanation
CLOSED	Operation has successfully met the NCR
OPEN	Operation has either not met or has partially met the NCR

☐ Check if N/A (there are no open NCRs to review)

NCR: 01/20	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	6.1.1 - SL-02 SmartLogging Generic Standard
Report Section:	Appendix III
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
Requirement: "6.1.1 – Harvester has a written business plan." Finding: None of the group members interviewed had a current written business plan. However, it was obvious during the interviews that each had detailed knowledge of their businesses and has adapted to rapidly changing circumstances, (losses or changes to markets, changes to laws and regulations, changes to work forces, etc.) to ensure survival. Furthermore, most group members have a formal business structure, LLC, LLP, or Corporation; this requires an intimate understanding of their operations. While this is a technical nonconformity, given the nature of logging businesses in changing markets, group members' demonstrated adaptability outstrips the utility of a written plan. Nevertheless, a written plan is a requirement under this indicator.	
Corrective action request:	Organization shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above. Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organization:	Pending
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	Pending
NCR Status:	Upgraded to a **MAJOR NCR** from last year's minor. See major NCR 01/20 above for closure.
Comments (optional):	

NCR: 02/20	NC Classification: Minor
Standard & Requirement:	SL-03 SmartLogging Group Certification Standard 03Mar09
Report Section:	APPENDIX V: Group Management Conformance Checklist
Description of Non-conformance and Related Evidence:	
4.1.vi – Requirement: "An annual summary of production, sales and forest product purchasers of all members." Finding: The summary provided by TCNEF includes the group annual production and amount of product sold. The summary does not include a list of purchasers (mills) of the harvested volume.	
Corrective action request:	Organisation shall implement corrective actions to demonstrate conformance with the requirement(s) referenced above.

	Note: Effective corrective actions focus on addressing the specific occurrence described in evidence above, as well as the root cause to eliminate and prevent recurrence of the non-conformance.
Timeline for Conformance:	Within 12 months from report finalization
NCR Evaluation Type	On-site ☐ Desk Review ☒
Evidence Provided by Organisation:	2020 MLC Annual Data
Findings for Evaluation of Evidence:	This document does give an annual summary of volumes harvested and has a listing of forest product purchasers for all members showing a percentage breakdown by purchasers. As such this information provided satisfies this non-conformance from last year it is now considered closed.
NCR Status:	**CLOSED**
Comments (optional):	

3.4. Actions taken by Organization Prior to Report Finalization

Prior to report completion, additional documentation was provided to close both of last year's NCRs.

3.5. Observations

Observations are very minor problems or the early stages of a problem which does not of itself constitute a non-conformance, but which the auditor considers may lead to a future non-conformance if not addressed by the client. An observation may be a warning signal on a particular issue that, if not addressed, could turn into an NCR in the future.

OBS: 01/21	**Standard & Requirement:**	6.1.1 - SL-02 SmartLogging Generic Standard; 2.1.1
	Report Section	Appendix II
Description of findings leading to observation:	Requirement: 2.1.1: If the landowner has a forest management plan and/or management and harvesting objectives, as described in or related to the written harvest plan, they are discussed with the landowner prior to harvest. Finding: During one interview it was stated that at times no contracts or plans were created for the harvesting and that everything was done on a handshake deal. While this is commendable to the trust this harvester has developed with the landowners he deals with, it is not in conformance to this standard. Since this was mentioned as not having been done recently it is only mentioned here as an issue to	

	be aware of. As such, it is here considered to be an observation.	
Observation:	FME should ensure continued conformance with Indicator 2.1.1.	

OBS: 02/21	**Standard & Requirement:**	6.1.1 - SL-02 SmartLogging Generic Standard; 2.3.1
	Report Section	Appendix II
Description of findings leading to observation:	Requirement: 2.3.1: The pre-harvest inspections are done by the harvester, preferably with the landowner or land manager. Finding: Interview with harvesters confirm that all sites audited were inspected prior to harvest by the harvester with the landowner or landowner's representative. However, four of the 11 sites visited did not have any form of pre-harvest inspection documentation. Those that did not have a documented pre-harvest inspection were working as service contractors to large landowners management firms. It was stated that they depended on the management firms to take care of these documents. An observation is here issued. As this indicator does not require a documentation of the pre-harvest inspection, it is a good opportunity, even for contractors, to document potential issues that may arise and head off those issues before they cause any problems.	
Observation:	FME should ensure continued conformance with Indicator 2.3.1.	

OBS: 03/21	**Standard & Requirement:**	6.1.1 - SL-02 SmartLogging Generic Standard; 6.1.5
	Report Section	Appendix II
Description of findings leading to observation:	Requirement: 6.1.5: Equipment is well maintained: • No oil or hydraulic leaks; • ROPS of machinery is in good condition; • Regular maintenance is performed and documented. Finding: Ongoing maintenance was observed. No leaks were observed, ROPS appeared to be in good condition. Most harvesters perform	

	their own regular maintenance and repairs or hire experts as needed. Most of the harvesters keep maintenance logs according to the manufacturer's recommendations. However, one harvester interviewed stated that while he does regular maintenance to his equipment, he does not document it. As this was a single event and not a systemic failure, an observation is being issued here.
Observation:	FME should ensure continued conformance with Indicator 6.1.5.

3.6. Certification Recommendation

Based on Organisation's conformance with certification requirements, the following recommendation is made:

☒   Certification approved:

Upon acceptance of NCR(s) issued below

☐   Certification not approved:

Conformance with MAJOR NCR(s) required

Additional comments, including issues identified as controversial or hard to evaluate and explanation of the conclusion reached:

Based on a thorough field review, analysis and compilation of findings by this Preferred by Nature auditor, TCNEF has demonstrated that their described system of management is being implemented consistently over the whole forest areas covered by the scope of the evaluation. Preferred by Nature concludes that TCNEF's harvesting practices, if implemented as described, is capable of ensuring that all the requirements of the certification standards are met across the scope of the certificate. A Preferred by Nature SmartLogging Certificate will be issued based upon agreement to the stipulated corrective action requests.

In order to maintain certification, TCNEF will be audited annually on-site and required to remain in compliance with the SmartLogging Standard as further defined by regional guidelines developed by Preferred by Nature. TCNEF will also be required to fulfil the corrective actions as described below. Experts from Preferred by Nature will review continued harvest practice performance and compliance with the corrective action requests described in this report, annually during scheduled and random audits.

4 CLIENT SPECIFIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1. Description of Harvesting Companies and Group Manager

The group manager, Trust to Conserve Northeast Forestlands (TCNEF), is a 501.c.3 non-profit organization that oversees all Master Logger certifications for New England. A subset of Master Loggers volunteered to enter into the SmartLogging Program. Currently there are 114 members. In addition to a SL Certificate, TCNEF also holds the following certificates through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):

> FSC Forest Management: NC-FM/CoC-001881
> FSC Chain of Custody: NC-CoC-001677

The group manager is well acquainted with Preferred by Nature procedures and well equipped to manage a SmartLogging Group.

The group members range from small hand-felling operations to large cut to length (CTL) operations with multiple crews from Maine to New York, which encompasses a variety of ecosystems and wood products companies, which purchase roundwood, chips and biomass. Each group member has adapted to their individual set of circumstances, markets and legislative requirements.

4.2. Legislative and government regulatory context

There are logging companies from six states included under the certificate; Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New York. Each state has some degree of forest management regulation pertaining to harvesting as summarized below.

- Maine has clearcut laws, regulations that affect harvesting near wetland and water bodies, near some important wildlife habitats, and at elevations over 2,700 feet. Harvest notifications must be posted, and the Maine Forest Service inspects harvested areas.
- Massachusetts requires licensing for logging companies a state-approved cutting plan in most cases. Regulations apply to harvesting near streams, wetlands, and important wildlife habitats.
- New Hampshire has regulations that restrict cutting near water bodies and roads and requires notification of harvesting activities near streams and wetlands.
- New York regulates stream crossings and has rules related to lopping of softwood slash for fire control. There are additional regulations within the Adirondack Park related to clearcutting, wetland crossings, and harvesting near rivers and lakes.
- Rhode Island requires that woods operators be licensed and that an Intent to Cut form be filed with the Department of Environmental Management.
- Vermont regulates harvesting near water bodies and wetlands and also regulates cutting over 2,500 ft. in elevation and "heavy harvests" over 40 acres in size.

Throughout the region, the group members have adapted well to their state forest management laws and conscientiously adhere to all requirements, although in some states this is becoming increasingly onerous.

4.3.   Environmental Context

The region covered by the SL Certificate contains a variety of ecosystems and forest types. These include Spruce-Fir and Beech-Birch Maple forests in the north to Oak-Pine and mixed hardwoods in central and southern New England/New York. The broad physiographic regions included are Hudson Valley, Appalachian Plateau, New England Province and Adirondack Province. There are regional harvesting considerations. The northern most areas are harvested most efficiently when the ground is frozen, further south, the periodic freezes are not as critical to environmentally sound harvesting practices. Most areas within the scope of the certificate will have a significant mud season each spring which, for all intents and purposes, halts harvesting operations for 4 to 8 weeks.

Exotic Insects of note include Emerald Ash Borer, Hemlock Wooly Adelgid, Gypsy Moth, and Winter Moth. Periodic outbreaks of Spruce Budworm and other native insects also impact forests. Exotic and native insects may result in more sanitation or salvage cuts, regardless of market conditions. Some invasive plant species are noted in the southern and central areas, especially on former agricultural lands.

4.4.   Socioeconomic Context

Logging in New England has proven economically viable for many generations. Recently, however, the economic conditions in the US have altered the markets available to the group members. Papermaking has taken serious hits in the past leading to loss of mill capacity, and overall wood products markets declining. However, more recently, markets for pulpwood have begun to rebound. While not yet considered strong, the markets have shown some improvement. The dynamic nature of wood markets is nothing new, and with projects on the horizon for biomass and biofuels, small increases in some markets could be realized.

APPENDIX I: Public summary of the harvesting practices

Harvesting Technique	% using this harvesting technique
Mechanical	85%
Feller buncher	%
Cut to length	%
Ground skidding	15%
Yarder	%
Whole tree skidding	%
Cut log skidding	%

Silvicultural System		% of forests harvested under this management
Even aged management	15%	
Clearcutting		5% of even aged mgt
Shelterwood/Seed tree		10% of even aged mgt
Uneven aged management	85%	
Individual tree selection		25% of uneven aged mgt
Group selection (group harvested of less than 1 ha in size)		60% of uneven aged mgt

Species and Log Production		
Latin Name	Common trade name	Actual harvest in last year (specify unit of measurement below)
Pinus strobus	Eastern White Pine	6 MMMBF
Picea rubens	Red Spruce	3 MMBF
Abies balsamea	Balsam Fir	3 MMBF
Tsuga canadensis	Eastern Hemlock	6 MMMBF
Acer saccharum	Sugar Maple	1.5 MMMBF
Acer rubrum	Red Maple	
Betula papyrifera	White Birch	
Betula alleghaniensis	Yellow Birch	1.5 MMMBF
Populus tremuloides	Aspen (Popple)	
Fagus grandifolia	American Beech	1.5 MMMBF
Quercus rubra	Northern Red Oak	1.5 MMMBF
Quercus alba	White Oak	
Prunus serotina	Black Cherry	
	Pulpwood/biomass - tons	3,397,304 tons
	Total	24 MMMBF
		3,397,304 tons

FOREST AREA CLASSIFICATION		
Total area		acres
Forest area that is:		
Privately managed	140,000 acres	
State managed	0 acres	
Community managed	0 acres	

Area classified as natural or mixed forest	140,000 acres
Area classified as plantations	0 acres

APPENDIX II: Certification standard conformance checklist (confidential)

APPENDIX III: Chain of Custody Conformance (confidential)

APPENDIX IV: Group management conformance checklist (confidential)APPENDIX V: Certified Group Membership List

Total # members in the certified group: 114

See Separate Excel Sheet for list of Group Members

APPENDIX VI: List of visited sites (confidential)

APPENDIX VII: List of stakeholders consulted (confidential)