



# The High Conservation Value Concept

- Background, Definitions and Key Aspects

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Original FSC Principle 9, Sept 1994:

"Primary forests, well-developed secondary forests and sites of major environmental, social or cultural significance shall be conserved. Such areas shall not be replaced by tree plantations or other land uses"



Revised draft, Dec 1996:

"Primary forests...(etc)...shall be maintained, conserved and/or restored. Management of such areas shall not result in major modification of the character and function of the forest, nor in a serious reduction of the structural complexity of the forest ecosystem"



Revised draft, Aug/Nov 1997:

"Primary forests...(etc)...shall be maintained, conserved and/or restored. Management activities shall not significantly [modify / degrade] the character and function of the forest, nor the structure or ecological complexity of the forest ecosystem"

"Logging in primary forests shall be generally avoided...and not result in major changes in species mix, biological diversity, age classes and forest structure at [either the stand] or the landscape level..."



Key points of controversy:

- Conservation vs. utilisation of primary / "old-growth" forests
  
- Conservation vs. forest simplification and conversion to plantations



- Three more drafts, increasingly complicated, the last Jan 1998
- Extensive rounds on consultations indicated no solution
- P9 Working group selected by FSC membership
- Meeting in Sept 1998 developed new approach to reconcile south-north views
- New Principle 9 endorsed late 1998 by large majority of FSC members



"High Conservation Value Forests" defined as:

- a) Globally, regionally or nationally significant:
  - *concentrations of biodiversity* (HCVF 1) ;
  - *large landscape-level forests* with viable populations of most naturally occurring species (HCVF 2)
  
- b) Rare or threatened forest ecosystems (HCVF 3)
  
- c) Forests providing basic services of nature in critical situations (HCVF 4)
  
- d) Forests fundamental to meet basic needs of local communities / critical to traditional cultural identity (HCVF 5,6)



P9 also states that:

'Management activities in HCVFs shall maintain or enhance the conservation attributes that define them and be characterised by a precautionary approach'



...and outlines a process for implementation based on:

- assessment of conservation attributes
- consultations on how to maintain them
- development of specific management plans
- monitoring to evaluate results



## HCVFs - key aspects:

1. Focus on conservation *attributes*, rather than forest structure
  - recognises a wide range of forest values and contexts
  - more flexibility in terms of management and utilisation
  - normally necessary to identify conservation attributes in the field
  - local, rather than top-down decision-making



2. Focus on areas of ***outstanding*** value and/or ***critical*** importance:

- biodiversity values judged at the '*global-national*' level (HCVF 1,2)
- providing '*basic*' services of nature in '*critical*' situations (HCVF 4)
- '*fundamental*' to meet '*basic*' needs of local communities (HCVF 5)
- '*critical*' to local communities traditional cultural identity (HCVF 6)



### 3. Different '*scales of reference*' for different HCVFs:

- HCV 1,2,3:
  - Global-national value / threat framework
  - Relates to 'nature'
  - Potential HCV 1,2,3 areas may be mapped based on existing information, remote sensing etc



- HCV 4,5,6:
  - Local value / threat framework
  - Relates to 'people'
  - More difficult to generalise – while some potential areas may be identified based on existing information it's necessary to talk to local people



4. ***Precautionary approach*** to implementation:

- Specific management plans based on consultations
- Various options for maintenance to be considered
- Transparency of measures taken - public summary
- Monitoring to assess maintenance of conservation attributes



Created for use within FSC, the HCV concept is increasingly applied outside the framework of forest certification



To safeguard HCV areas from intensive silviculture / agriculture:

- Non-certified forest plantations in Indonesia
- RSPO Criteria for Sustainable Palm Oil
- Draft RTRS Criteria for Responsible Soy



## To guide purchasers and investors:

- Responsible purchasing policies
  - GFTN members
  - FSC controlled wood standard
  - Individual companies
- Investment policies
  - Banks (JP Morgan Chase, HSBC)
  - Bilateral and multilateral donors



## Identifying and mapping intact forest landscapes (HCV 2):

- World Resources Institute, Greenpeace, WWF, TNC...
- Global, Russia, Canada, Cameroon...



## All this activity has raised:

- Needs to demonstrate that HCV is about management and monitoring – not only a tool to identify areas for protection
- An interest to extend the HCV concept to other ecosystems than forests



## Issues of consistency and credibility when applied outside FSC:

- Ownership and responsibility for the concept
- Scope and quality of individual projects
- 'Safeguards' for aspects covered by other FSC Principles



## And needs to:

- Support evolution and improvement without compromising the original intentions
- Resolve potential disputes and disagreements



- In short – a need for an HCV Network!