

# **A Review of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) Assessments in intensively managed plantations**

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**Responsible Forestry Solutions**

# HCVF in intensively managed plantations

- A brief overview of the High Conservation Values Forest (HCVF) concept
- The results of the preliminary research commissioned by WWF- US
- The purpose of the study was to identify, analyze and provide a general understanding of the range of issues arising from the actual implementation of the HCVF concept in plantations.

# Overview HCVF

- A forest containing values that are considered to be of outstanding significance or critical importance can be defined as an HCVF.
- The key to the HCVF concept is the identification of critical or outstanding values.
- The focus on the values that make a forest particularly important
- The intent of Principle 9 is to manage HCV *Forests* in order to maintain or enhance the identified High Conservation *Values*.

# Overview HCVF

- High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) is a concept used in forest management (and increasingly beyond forestry) to identify and protect critical or outstanding ecological, social, and cultural values
- This concept has been developed by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in its Principle 9, and has been implemented primarily through the certification of forest operations.
- A forest area designated as HCVF is one that contains outstanding, exceptional or critical attributes (e.g. habitat for rare threatened or endangered species, protection of water/soil quantity and quality, sites of cultural and/or religious significance)

# Overview of HCVF

- HCV1. Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g. endemism, endangered species, refugia).
- HCV2. Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forests, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance.
- HCV3. Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened or endangered ecosystems.

# Overview HCVF

- HCV4. Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control).
- HCV5. Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health).
- HCV6. Forest areas critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities).

# Overview HCVF

- The HCVF concept has been implemented as part of the FSC certification process.
- Principle 9 and its 4 criteria require that an assessment of HCV attributes be conducted, that management strategies are developed to maintain them, and that the values be monitored. There is also consultation requirements.

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

- WWF is developing a project (New Generation Plantations Project) to establish a standardized approach to applying the High Conservation value (HCV) concept in plantations.
- The preliminary research presented here was commissioned by WWF as part of this project.

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

- Plantations are high yield, fast growing exotic species that provide principally economic benefits.
- Plantations can also play an important role in terms of decreasing pressure on natural forests while providing social and economic benefits.
- Many plantations-based forest companies have sought forest management certification to ensure their plantations mitigate environmental impacts, and provide the social and economic conditions for the conservation of natural ecosystems.

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

- The focus of the research was:
  - Exposing potential issues related to conversion to plantations, use of exotic species, control of invasiveness of plantations on adjacent natural areas;
  - The relationship between plantations and the six HCV categories;
  - Assessing the challenges faced by forest managers in the implementation of the HCV concept in plantation;
  - Tracking the most common HCVs identified either by the manager or through Corrective Action Requests (CARs) issued by the certification body;
  - Tracking whether management objectives and strategies addressed the HCV identified;
  - Whether non-forest HCVs were identified through the certification process including a description of the value identified.

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

- The basic source of information for this research was FSC certification Public Summaries
- The selection of the plantations was based on the following Criteria:
  - Large intensively managed plantations;
  - Include plantations certified by different Certification Bodies;
  - Include plantations in different countries/continents;
  - Include plantations of different species; and
  - Include special situations e.g. plantations as part of larger forest units, or plantations within national/state forests

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

- In order to capture a wide variety of different circumstances, the plantations selected covered different continents.
- The sample attempted to cover a balanced representation from different certification bodies
- The analysis covers the requirements of Principle 9 of the FSC as well as the identification of HCV attributes

# HCVF in Intensively Managed Plantations

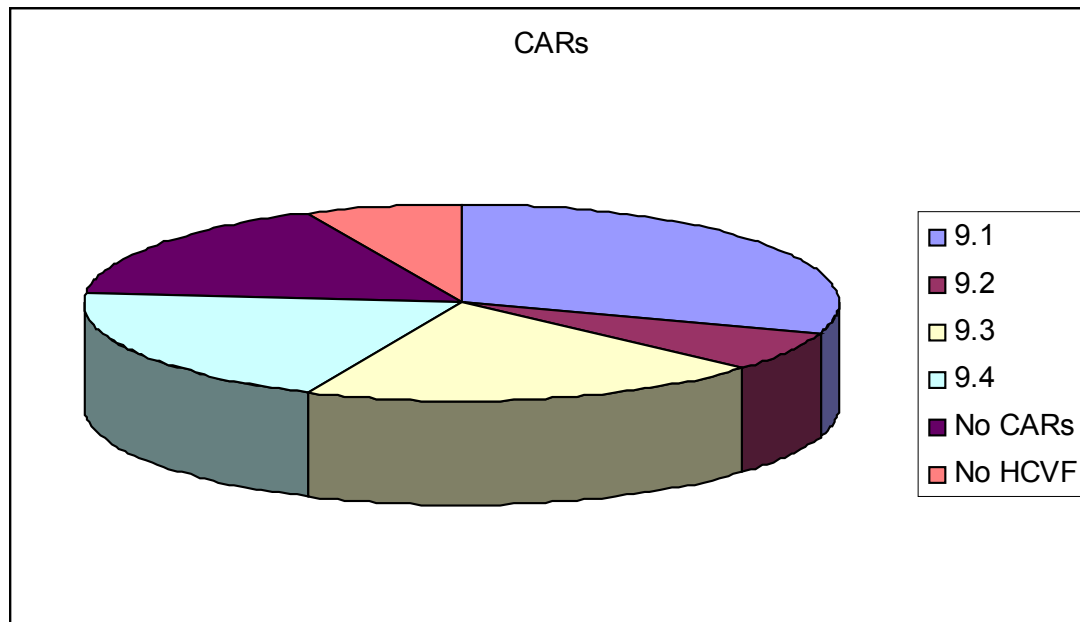
- Focus on intensively managed plantations in:
  - Australia/Pacific: Australia, New Zealand, and Solomon Islands;
  - South America: Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay
  - Europe: Ireland and Spain
  - North America: USA
  - Africa: South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda
- Size of plantations 12,000 hectares – 400,000.
- Tree species:
  - eucalyptus
  - pines
  - sitka spruce
  - oaks
  - teak

# Meeting Principle 9

- All plantations carried out HCVF assessments, and develop management strategies
- Reporting on P9 and HCVF assessment is an issue
- Some of the largest plantations included equally large natural areas within their management
- CBs working in different parts of the world provide different levels of information
- Some reports provide very little information and therefore it is hard to understand the rationale for the issuance and closure of CARs

# Meeting Principle 9

Criteria	9.1	9.2	9.3	9.4	No CARs	No HCVF
CARs	9	2	6	6	5	2

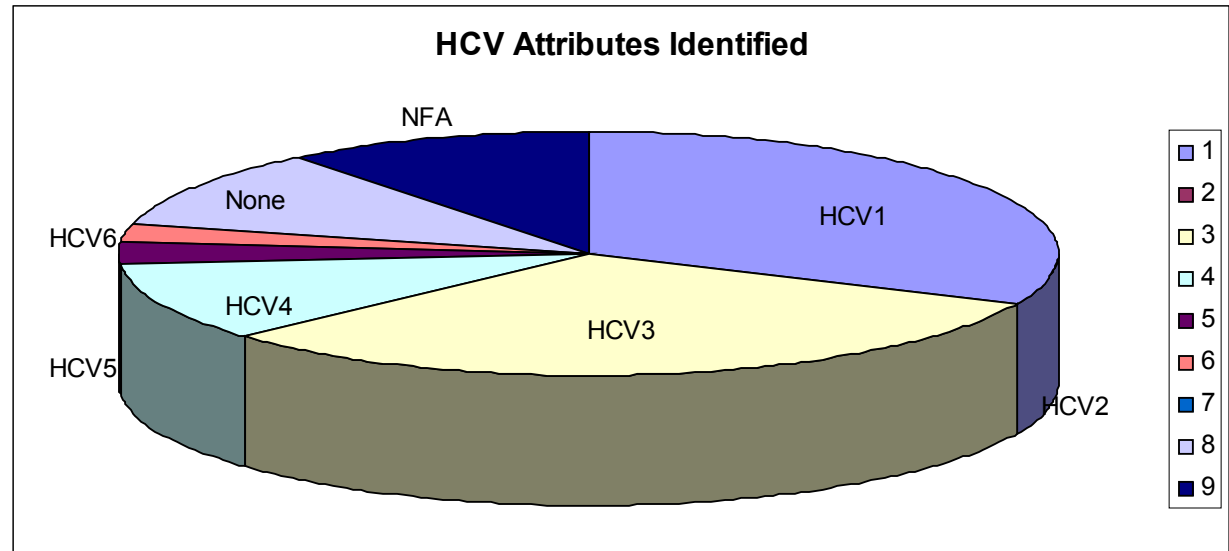


# HCVF Attributes

- The certification reports (for the most part) did not categorize the HCV attributes, they were assigned
- In general, the natural forest tended to be protected and excluded from the “production forest” (i.e. the plantation).
- Through the certification cycle, managers are not only setting aside natural areas but they are actively managing them for conservation (genetic reserves, wildlife corridors, monitoring invasiveness by exotic plantations, etc)

# HCVF Attributes

HCV Attributes Categories	Number of HCVs identified
HCV1	12
HCV2	0
HCV3	12
HCV4	4
HCV5	1
HCV6	1
None Identified	4
Non Forest Areas	4



# HCVF Attributes

- HCV1 included rare, threatened or endangered species and in a few instances references to endemic species
- HCV3 included remnants of virgin forests or existing natural vegetation
- HCV4 included the protection of watershed, water quality, and quantity
- Interestingly, HCV5 and HCV6 (community needs and sites of cultural significance) have only been identified once each

# Other Important issues Identified

- The HCVF assessment included non forest areas (i.e. HCV assessments used beyond forestry)
- Use of pesticides and monitoring/controlling invasiveness of exotic species is an issue of concern
- Lack of planning at a landscape level and relations with legally protected areas often resulted in CARs

# Food for Thought

- This preliminary study points to areas where further research is needed to better understand:
  - The prevalence of HCV1 and HCV3 as the most frequent attributes while other attributes are barely identified
  - Specific management actions implemented for the protection of identified HCVs
  - Impacts of the use of pesticides and the risk of invasiveness on natural ecosystems
  - The interplay between plantations and the natural environment