

**ADV-STD-60-004\_02 V1-1**

## Enhanced HCV 2 management and monitoring of IFLs in Brazil, Canada, Peru, and the Republic of the Congo

**Normative reference**

FSC-STD-60-004, Principle 9

**Scope**

This Advice Note specifies requirements for organizations applying for or holding FSC Forest Management certification under the 2026 versions of Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS) in Brazil, Canada, Peru, or the Republic of the Congo and who seek to implement revised protection thresholds for Intact Forest Landscapes (IFL) core areas resulting from Motion 23/2020 pilots in these countries.

NOTE 1: Organizations choosing to apply previously approved protection thresholds are not required to apply this Advice Note.

NOTE 2: In accordance with Motion 45/2025, a second version (V2-0) is planned to further develop requirements and provide specific landscape guidance for enhanced High Conservation Values 2 (HCV 2) management and monitoring of IFLs in key IFL regions with the aim of facilitating implementation and auditability. Work on V2-0, including a public consultation, started in the second half of 2026 with publication expected by 1 January 2027.

**Approval date**

1 August 2026 (changes apply retroactively)

**Effective date**

1 July 2026

The requirements of this Advice Note version will be phased in following a two-step approach.

- 1) Over the first six months from the effective date of this Advice Note, The Organization undergoing the first evaluation against the relevant FSS specified in the Scope section above shall demonstrate conformity with Part I, Clauses 1 to 4.

NOTE: A corresponding phase-in approach is also foreseen for the second version (V2-0) of this Advice Note, which is planned to replace V1-0 by the end of this six-month period and become effective on 1 January 2027.

- 2) Over the period of 12 to 18 months from the effective date (1 July 2027 to 31 December 2027), The Organization undergoing the first or second evaluation against the relevant FSS as specified in the Scope section above shall demonstrate conformity with all parts and clauses of this Advice Note.

NOTE: Conformity with all clauses of this Advice Note from 1 July 2027 onward is expected to be demonstrated against V2-0. However, certificate holders are encouraged to apply all parts of this Advice Note, including of V1-0, as early as possible to avoid any harm to the ecological integrity and socio-cultural values inherent to IFLs.

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**Transition end date** Certificate holders specified in the Scope section above shall demonstrate conformity with the relevant parts of this Advice Note as listed in the Effective date section above when audited against a relevant FSS listed in the Scope section.

No later than by 31 December 2027, certificate holders shall demonstrate conformity with all parts and clauses of this Advice Note.

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**Period of validity** This Advice Note remains valid until the relevant FSS specified in the Scope section, based on FSC-STD-01-001 V6-0, becomes effective and until the end of its transition period.

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**Background** Over the last decade, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has progressively refined its approach to Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs).

In 2014, FSC initiated the integration of the IFL concept into the FSC normative framework, as mandated by membership decisions on Motion 7/2014 and Motion 65/2014. Since then, the FSC membership has discussed and proposed additional approaches, including Motion 34/2017, Motion 23/2020, and Motion 45/2025. Throughout this evolution, both the membership and the Secretariat of FSC have sought to balance the protection and the sustainable management of these areas, recognizing their essential role for biodiversity, for landscape-level ecosystems and for Indigenous Peoples' rights, livelihoods, and socio-cultural values.

The approval of Motion 45/2025, 'Moving beyond fixed thresholds to outcome-based conservation for Intact Forest Landscapes', in October 2025 marked an important milestone in the evolution of FSC's approach to IFLs.

Reflecting the latest decision of the membership at the General Assembly with the passing of Motion 45/2025, the FSC Board of Directors, at its 104th meeting in December 2025, decided that the motion shall be implemented through the revision of the Principles, Criteria and International Generic Indicators (PCI) before integration into national Forest Stewardship Standards (FSS). In parallel, the Board decided that interim measures shall be developed to accelerate implementation of Motion 45/2025 and gain initial experience, applicable in countries that have piloted the previous IFL motion, Motion 23/2020 (Brazil, Canada, Peru, and the Republic of the Congo), and potentially in other countries meeting agreed eligibility criteria.

To move in this direction, the FSC Secretariat formed a Technical Working Group to develop generic indicators for enhanced HCV 2 management and monitoring of IFLs. This initial set of requirements will first be implemented via an Advice Note, effective 1 July 2026 (Phase 1).

This Advice Note aims to establish enhanced provisions to ensure the responsible management and protection of IFL/HCV 2 areas, in addition to the requirements set out by the applicable FSS for identifying, managing and monitoring all HCV categories. These enhanced provisions will apply together with revised IFL indicators integrated into Forest Stewardship Standards of Motion 23 pilot countries (Brazil, Canada, Peru, and the Republic of the Congo) and they will possibly be expanded to additional countries (via Advice Note 2, ADV-STD-60-004\_03).

This first set of requirements implementing Motion 45/2025 complements (rather than replaces) the IFL requirements in the FSS of Motion 23 pilot countries and potentially other (opt-in) countries. As such, this Advice Note should be read as an add-on to current IGI regarding HCV 2/IFLs, with the objective of enhancing related management and monitoring.

A two-step approach is proposed for implementing Phase 1 of this Advice Note. This approach gives organizations time to adapt to the new concepts and requirements

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introduced, while also allowing them to become familiar with the basis for the full set of requirements that will take effect in Phase 2 (see the Effective date section above).

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**Version history** Version 1-0 was approved and made effective on 1 July 2026.  
Version 1-1 approved on 24 July by FSC Director General, clarifies that the Advice Note is not applicable in cases where the organization voluntarily decides to keep a previously approved IFL protection threshold.

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**Terms and Definitions** The following terms defined in the FSC-STD-60-004 V2-1 EN International Generic Indicators are applicable for the implementation of this Advice Note:

*Best Available Information (BAI)*  
*Culturally appropriate*  
*Degradation*  
*Engaging/engagement*  
*Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)*  
*Habitat features*  
*Indigenous cultural landscapes*  
*Indigenous Peoples*  
*Industrial activities*  
*Intact Forest Landscape*  
*Landscape*  
*Local communities*  
*Management plan*  
*Management unit*  
*Restoration/Ecological restoration*  
*Traditional knowledge*  
*Traditional peoples*

The following terms are newly defined by this Advice Note ADV-STD-60-004\_02.

***Bioindicator species***

Species whose presence, absence, abundance, or condition provides information on the state of the environment, ecosystem integrity, or environmental change.  
(Source: A Guide to the Assessment of Biological Diversity, the IUCN M&E Initiative and the IUCN Biodiversity Policy and International Agreements Unit, April 2000.)

***Cultural keystone species***

Plant and animal species whose presence is essential to the cultural identity, heritage, and subsistence of the Indigenous Peoples, traditional peoples, and local communities. The loss of these species would fundamentally disrupt their culture as they are essential to nutrition, medicine, shelter, tools, clothing, or ceremonies and rituals. No other species can fulfil the same cultural role.

(Source: adapted from Garibaldi and Turner, 2004. Cultural Keystone Species: Implications for Ecological Conservation and Restoration, Ecology and Society, 9[3]:1.)

Note: Examples of cultural keystone species might include the wild caribou and semi-domesticated reindeer in the boreal forests, the forest elephant in the Congo basin, or the peach palm and the Brazil nut in the Amazon basin.

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### *Culturally important non-timber forest products (NTFPs)*

Products other than timber derived from forests that hold cultural, spiritual, ceremonial, medicinal or livelihood significance.

(Source: adapted from Lake et al., 2018. Chapter 4 – Cultural dimensions of nontimber products.)

### *Cumulative impact*

Variously defined in the literature and by government agencies and financial institutions as impact that can result from the successive, incremental, and/or combined effects of an action:

- acting in combination with other relevant past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions;
- including individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time; and,
- focused on features and impacts that are generally recognized as important based on scientific considerations and/or concerns from directly affected local communities.

(Source: IUCN, 2024. Guidance on biodiversity cumulative impact assessment for wind and solar developments and associated infrastructure.)

### *Ecological integrity*

The ecosystem's dominant ecological characteristics of composition (biodiversity), structure, function and ecological processes occur within their natural ranges of variation and can withstand and recover from natural and human-induced disturbances.

(Source: adapted from the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2021.)

### *Ecological integrity features*

Specific attributes that describe the ecological integrity of an ecosystem, and characterize and/or are unique to specific ecosystems, landscapes or eco-regions in a reference state, including:

- a. Species that are specific to old-growth forests, species that are important for forest recovery or ecological functional processes, keystone species, and forest-dependent species.
- b. Structures: habitats and their attributes on which the species identified in point a. depend for breeding, nesting, foraging and dispersal, including forest areas with no sign of significant human activity; forest layer structural complexity; natural forest connectivity and continuous canopy cover; large mature and/or fruiting trees; standing and lying deadwood at different decay stages; healthy soil and watercourses.
- c. Functions: ecological processes including important and/or unique carbon pools and watersheds regulating climate and water respectively, and providing vital ecosystem services.

### *Expert*

The following are accepted definitions:

- a. An individual whose knowledge or skill is specialized and profound as the result of much practical or academic experience.
  - b. A recognized authority on a topic by virtue of the body of relevant material published on the topic, their stature within the professional community, and the broadly recognized accumulated related experience.
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- c. An individual who possesses a wealth of experience on a topic such as may be accumulated through practical means including the accumulation of traditional knowledge.

(Source: FSC Canada National Boreal Standard, 2004.)

#### *Keystone species*

Species that have an essential role in the structure, functioning or productivity of an ecosystem, exerting a disproportionately large influence on its environment relative to its abundance. Disappearance of such species may trigger significant ecosystem change or dysfunction. Examples include the role of elephants in maintaining habitat structure, bats and insects in carrying on pollination and predators regulating prey animal populations, such as wolves regulating ungulates.

(Source: adapted from Mills et al., 1993. The Keystone-Species Concept in Ecology and Conservation, Bioscience, 43[4].)

#### *Metric*

A system or standard of measurement that is quantifiable and is used to track, compare, and assess the ecological integrity features.

#### *Reference state*

Represents the state of an ecological integrity feature or a socio-cultural value that reflects high integrity and is representative of a natural undisturbed state. This reference state serves as a benchmark against which the past, present and future state of features or values is compared to measure change over time. The reference state is defined according to an undisturbed area away from industrial activities such as a habitat within the core zone of an IFL, or an empirical model built on scientific knowledge and/or knowledge from Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples. Specifically:

- a. for ecological integrity features, the reference state helps clarify what is generally defined by scientists, conservationists, practitioners and other experts as a 'good' or necessary state in light of scientific knowledge;
- b. for socio-cultural values, the reference state refers to their proper, intact and culturally appropriate state, as agreed with the affected Indigenous Peoples, traditional peoples and local communities. Where Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples are involved, the agreement shall be conducted according to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

(Source: adapted from United Nations et al., 2021. System of Environmental-Economic Accounting – Ecosystem Accounting.)

#### *Sampling design*

A structured plan or strategy that determines how a sample of individuals or units is selected from a larger population of interest. It defines the specific procedures and techniques for selecting units to ensure the sample represents the target population for valid inferences. The sampling design defines the location, time, and frequency for data collection.

#### *Socio-cultural values*

Sites, resources, ecosystem services, species, and landscape features that are fundamental to the identity, well-being, culture, and livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples

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and/or traditional peoples. Socio-cultural values include those recognized under HCV 5 (community needs) and HCV 6 (cultural values), as well as:

- a. cultural keystone species and culturally important non-timber forest products (NTFPs);
- b. sites or areas of socio-cultural significance, including water bodies, customary use areas, sacred and ceremonial sites, and areas of archaeological, historical or religious importance;
- c. traditional mobility routes, seasonal resource use areas, and culturally significant landscape features;
- d. ecosystem services on which Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples depend for their livelihoods, cultural practices, and well-being, including access to water, health and food resources.

(Source: adapted from FSC-STD-01-001 Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship, FSC-STD-60-004 International Generic Indicators, and the HCV Network's Common Guidance for the Identification of High Conservation Values.)

### *Sphere of influence*

The sphere of influence of The Organization usually\* refers to areas outside the management unit where decisions and actions of The Organization interact with those of other stakeholders to shape the landscape. The sphere of influence also refers to decisions and actions by stakeholders that influence what happens in the landscape. The influence can be over ecological processes (migration corridors, gene flows, watershed alteration), social processes (delivery of critical civil services, land tenure clarification) or economic processes (job creation, benefit sharing schemes, infrastructure development). Each of these processes will play out at different scales, so the boundaries of the sphere of influence may vary from one process to another.

\*In some countries, it is possible to have overlapping concessions within a same area, awarded to different organizations (e.g. timber and mining). In these situations, the sphere of influence will also include the management unit.

Note 1: Where there is an existing definition of the term 'sphere of influence' in the Forest Stewardship Standards, such existing definition takes precedence over the definition included in this Advice Note.

Note 2: The sphere of influence may include or be equivalent to the area of interest used in HCV Assessments (Source: HCV Assessment Manual, 2021).

### *State*

The state refers to the main characteristics describing the level of intactness of an environmental value, including the ecological integrity features and socio-cultural values. The state is usually used to assess how it differs from a reference state at a specific time and/or to assess its relative change over time.

In the case of the ecological integrity features, the state refers to various characteristics specific to the type of features being described. Notably:

- a. the state of species is described by the abundance of their population (i.e. how abundant a species is and whether its population is stable, declines, or increases over time), and their spatio-temporal distribution (i.e. how well spread its population is in space and how much its distribution differs from the past);
  - b. the state of structures is described by their prevalence and spatio-temporal distribution (i.e. how extensive or abundant a habitat or feature is; how persistent a feature or habitat is over time), their biophysical characteristics and range of variation (i.e. the extent to which the full range of natural
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- variation is present) and characteristics defining their quality and function as per the ecological needs of associated species;
- c. the state of functions is described by the capacity and speed of the associated habitats, features or species to perform ecological processes.

In the case of the socio-cultural values, the state refers to various characteristics specific to the types of values being described. Notably:

- a. The state of their extent and quality is described by the size, condition and physical integrity of the values (i.e. the surface area of a sacred lake, the coverage of a customary use area).
- b. The state of their accessibility is described by whether those values can be physically and culturally accessed by the Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples (i.e. whether traditional mobility routes remain open).
- c. The state of their cultural and livelihood functions is described by the degree to which those values continue to fulfil their role without decline (i.e. whether a river continues to provide fish for subsistence, whether a sacred site remains suitable for ceremonial use).
- d. The state of any FPIC-based access rights or conditions is described by whether access and conditions previously agreed through FPIC with the affected Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples remain in place.

#### *Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)*

Cumulative body of knowledge, practices, and beliefs about the relationships between living beings, including humans, and their environment, developed through adaptive processes and culturally transmitted across generations.

(Sources: adapted from Berkes, 2008. *Sacred Ecology*, Routledge; Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8[j], 1992.)

In the context of forest management in IFLs, TEK includes the knowledge, innovations, and practices of Indigenous Peoples and traditional peoples that are relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, such as knowledge of species distribution and behaviour, ecological processes, resource management systems, and culturally significant landscape features.

(Sources: Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 8[j], 1992; Ahammad et al., 2026, *Revisiting the Definition and Recognition of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities for Biodiversity Conservation, Ecology and Evolution*, 16[2].)

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**ADVICE NOTE: The below requirements complement and do not replace the IGI as per FSC-STD-60-004.**

#### **PART I: IDENTIFYING AND PLANNING**

- cf. IGI 9.1.2:**
- 1. The Organization shall identify the Intact Forest Landscapes (IFLs) overlapping the management unit (MU).

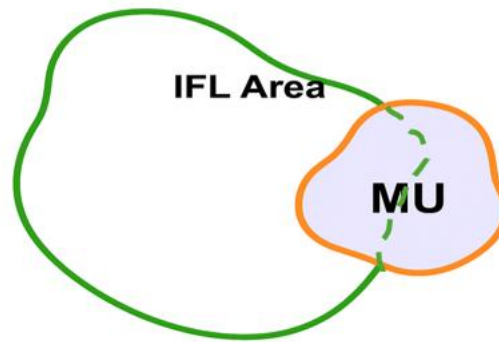


Figure 1. Representation of an IFL area overlapping the management unit.

NOTE 1: This is necessary to monitor that the status of the IFLs does not go below their defined minimum area of 50,000 ha, in accordance with current applicable FSS.

NOTE 2: The Organization may correct the IFL delineation as of 1 January 2017 based on Best Available Information evidencing that industrial activities occurring 30 to 70 years before that date resulted in lasting changes which would disqualify relevant IFL parts or the IFL as a whole from meeting the original IFL definition.

**cf. IGI 9.1.3:** [Explanatory Notes to IGI 9.1.3:]

NOTE: Indigenous Peoples and traditional peoples whose territories, cultural landscapes, or customary use areas overlap with or are adjacent to the identified IFL are always considered affected rights holders or affected stakeholders as referred to in IGI 9.1.3. The purpose of engaging with them is to:

- a. enable affected rights holders, including Indigenous Peoples and traditional peoples, to review the IFL boundaries in relation to their own territories and interests;
- b. collect traditional ecological knowledge relevant to the assessment of historical disturbance and current landscape condition; and
- c. identify any Indigenous cultural landscapes that overlap with or are adjacent to the IFL.

- cf. IGI 6.2.1 and IGI 6.8.1**
2. As part of forest management planning, The Organization shall identify the *ecological integrity features* in the reference state. These features shall include, but not be limited to:
    - a. species that depend on large, continuous, or old-growth forests to maintain viable populations such as large mammals, migratory species, species with extensive home ranges, species sensitive to forest fragmentation;
    - b. habitat features and habitats on which species identified in point a. depend for breeding, nesting, foraging and dispersal, and/or that characterize the IFLs

and large landscape-level ecosystems, such as large extents of continuous natural forest canopy cover;

- c. ecological processes that characterize the IFLs and large landscape-level ecosystems.

The identification of the ecological integrity features shall be done using Best Available Information, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples affected by management activities (see also: IGI 6.2.1 and IGI 6.8.1).

**cf. IGI 3.1.2 (7),  
7.6.1 (3),  
Annex E 1) iv.,  
among others**

- 3. As part of forest management planning, The Organization shall, through culturally appropriate engagement and, where required, through FPIC, identify and/or spatially delineate *Indigenous cultural landscapes (ICL)* and *socio-cultural values* in the MU and in areas outside the MU, including within the IFL, that may be affected by or relevant to management activities. Where Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples determine that physical identification in documentation or maps would threaten their value or protection, other means shall be used. This identification shall be done using Best Available Information, including Traditional Ecological Knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples affected by management activities.
- 4. The Organization shall identify and document in its management planning the risks and threats to the *ecological integrity features* and *socio-cultural values* identified under Clauses 2 and 3, both within the MU and within its sphere of influence. Such threats include those associated with the management activities of The Organization, as well as threats from other organizations.

The identification of risks and threats shall be based on Best Available Information, including:

- a. existing data on the vulnerability and sensitivity of ecological integrity features and socio-cultural values;
- b. the findings gained from monitoring activities conducted according to Clauses 10 and 11; and
- c. other relevant monitoring and evaluation initiatives, including those published by experts.

## **PART II: MANAGING**

- 5. The Organization shall implement and adjust forest operations addressing the risks and threats identified in Clause 4, in order to avoid cumulative impacts and maintain the ecological integrity features and socio-cultural values identified in Clause 2 and Clause 3 across the MU. This includes maintaining stand age variation that reflects natural patterns, such as the presence of old-growth forests, and ensuring viable populations of associated species.

Forest operations shall include adjusting harvesting cycle length and harvest intensity, as well as optimizing the spatial distribution and timing of operations.

- 6. The Organization shall implement and adjust forest operations to minimize site-level disturbances so that the ecological integrity features are maintained and retain their capacity to recover naturally. Where Best Available Information indicates that:

- a. the ecological integrity features can recover, recovery shall occur towards the reference state;
  - b. the ecological integrity features cannot sustain any level of disturbance, The Organization shall not conduct forest operations in those areas.
- cf. IGI 10.1.2** Forest operations shall ensure natural regeneration, including assisted natural regeneration, or other methodologies using native species as most effective and relevant for regeneration. The Organization may use artificial regeneration in view of restoring the species (see also: IGI 10.1.2).
- 7. The Organization shall implement and adjust operations to minimize site-level disturbances so that socio-cultural values are maintained and retain their capacity to recover naturally or with assistance. Where Best Available Information indicates that:
  - a. socio-cultural values can recover, recovery shall occur towards the reference state or desired long-term conditions agreed through an FPIC-based process with the affected Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples;
  - b. socio-cultural values cannot sustain any level of disturbance, The Organization shall not conduct forest operations in the relevant areas.
- cf. IGI 3.5.3** 8. Where socio-cultural values are newly identified by Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples, or by The Organization, during monitoring and operational activities, The Organization shall immediately suspend management activities in the affected area and implement interim protection measures to prevent harm. These activities shall not be resumed until appropriate protection measures have been agreed with the affected Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples, through FPIC-based processes, in accordance with local or national laws (see also IGI 3.5.3).
- 9. The Organization shall implement engagement measures to mitigate risks to *ecological integrity features* and *socio-cultural values* within its sphere of influence (as identified in Clauses 3 and 4). Such measures shall be:
  - a. proportionate to The Organization's scale and its capacity to influence external actors and processes;
  - b. based on a strategy with specific objectives, timelines, escalation steps, and on the identification of incentives for other managers or organizations in the sphere of influence;
  - c. reviewed periodically to determine the success of the measures; and,
  - d. adapted and/or strengthened if/as necessary to enhance The Organization's contribution to the protection of overlapping Intact Forest Landscapes.

### **PART III: MONITORING**

- 10. The Organization shall monitor the state of the ecological integrity features (identified in Clause 2) and the socio-cultural values (identified in Clause 3), including, but not limited to:
  - a. species and/or multi-species indices that provide information about the ecological integrity of the forest ecosystem in response to forest operations, such as bioindicator and keystone species;

- b. tree cover disturbances from forest operations and natural events including their spatial extent and the natural forest regeneration and recovery of the areas affected by disturbances; and
- c. changes in access and mobility of Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples.

11. The Organization shall conduct the monitoring activities mentioned in Clause 10, which should include but not be limited to:

- a. the use of spatially replicated sampling designs, data collection methods, and 'under the canopy' metrics developed by and/or well established in the scientific community and developed by practitioners (including national and non-governmental forest monitoring programmes), tailored to the risks to the *ecological integrity features* and *socio-cultural values* identified in Clause 4 being monitored, scalable and capable of generating credible data and insights;
- b. the use of monitoring time frames that are relevant to the *ecological integrity features* (identified in Clause 2) and the *socio-cultural values* (identified in Clause 3) that allow for adaptive management within the management plan;
- c. the use of spatially replicated monitoring designs to compare the state of the *ecological integrity features* and *socio-cultural values* in sites impacted by forest operations with their reference state and assess the relative contribution of forest operations to reported differences, including:
  - i. undisturbed control areas away from industrial activities and/or before forest operations to define the reference state; and
  - ii. areas impacted by forest operations to provide insights about the recovery trajectory of the *ecological integrity features* and *socio-cultural values* after forest operations and as regard to their reference state.
- d. the provision of support to strengthen the capacity of Indigenous Peoples and/or traditional peoples to effectively participate in the monitoring when relevant and required;
- e. the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and community-based monitoring data into analysis and decision-making, and the provision of meaningful access to monitoring data to Indigenous Peoples and traditional peoples.

**cf. IGI 7.4.1, IGI 8.3.1** 12. The Organization shall ensure that its management plan is updated and adapted to reflect the findings gained from monitoring activities conducted according to Clause 10, as well as other monitoring and evaluation initiatives or expert data relevant to forest operation practices, in order to maintain the ecological integrity features and socio-cultural values identified under Clauses 2 and 3.