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# SmartLogging 2022 Certification Reassessment

Report for:

Louisiana Forestry Association

in

Alexandria, Louisiana USA

Certificate code:	NC-SL-002480
Auditors:	John Auel, Lead Auditor
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## 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 **Louisiana Forestry Association (LFA)**, 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, without confidential appendixes or annexes, will become public information about the operation that may be distributed by Preferred by Nature to interested parties. The remainder of the appendixes are confidential, to be reviewed only by authorized Preferred by Nature staff and reviewers bound by confidentiality agreements. Confidential appendixes 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-002480) can be used on product according to defined Preferred by Nature procedures.

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# **1. SCOPE OF THE CERTIFICATE**

## **1.1. Scope of the certificate**

LFA currently holds a SmartLogging certificate and has overall responsibility for ensuring conformance with the SmartLogging certification requirements. The SLO currently has 3 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.

## 2. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### 2.1 Certification Standard Used

Standards Used:	SmartLogging Generic Certification Standard, Version 6; SmartLogging Group Certification Standard, Version 1
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### 2.2 Audit Team and Accompanying Persons

Name	Role and qualifications
John B. Auel	Forester. John B Auel, MS RF# 1892, completed a BS and MS in Forestry with an emphasis on Industrial Forest Operations from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. He completed a PhD in Forestry from Mississippi State University in 2016. He is the Coordinator for Mississippi's Professional Logging Manager Program and is the MS Tree Farm State Administrator. He has taught Best Management Practices, Certification, and Logging Safety for 25 years. He has been an auditor for 14 years and is certified to the ISO 9001:2008 standard for Quality Management Systems for Lead Auditors. He has completed Rainforest Alliance Lead Auditor Training for Forest Management, Chain of Custody, and SmartLogging. He has completed dozens of FM, SmartLogging and CoC audits.

## 2.2 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)
Remote/Onsite	February 14 – 24, 2022	Review of evidence	Auel
LFA Office, Alexandria, LA	February 23, 2022	Opening meeting	Auel
Winnfield and Haughton, LA	February 24, 2022	Field Visits	Auel
LFA Office Alexandria, LA Site Visits	February 23 & 24, 2022	Staff and Stakeholder interviews	Auel
Haughton, LA	February 24, 2022	Closing meeting	Auel
Total auditing time used (number in person days based on 8 hour working days): 6.5 days			

## 2.3 Evaluation strategy

Two of the three group members were scheduled for site visits during this reassessment. The first location of each was their main office, to interview owners and review relevant documentation not normally available at the logging sites. Logging site selections were based on locations of current operations. Weather was a factor during this reassessment, therefore one group member was only able to show completed harvest sites as opposed to active sites. There are three (3) members in this group certificate. Their operation areas are south, north central and northwestern Louisiana. The proximity of the north central and northwestern Louisiana members allowed site visits to both during this reassessment.

*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
3	1	2	

### List of harvest practice aspects reviewed by assessment team:

Type of site	Sites visited	Type of site	Sites visited
Road construction	2	Commercial thinning	3
Erosion control	3	Logging camp	0
Planned Harvest site	0	Bridges/stream crossing	2
Ongoing Harvest site	1	Chemical/Fuel storage	0
Completed logging	2	Wetland	0
Site Preparation	0	Stream management zones	2
Machine felling	3	Riparian zone	2
Worker felling	0	Steep slopes	0
Skidding/Forwarding	3	Endangered species	0
Skid trails	3	Wildlife habitat	0
Worker safety	2	Historical sites	0
Clearfelling	0	Cultural or archeological sites	0
Shelterwood	0	Unique environments	0
Selective felling	0	Special management area	0
Sanitary cutting	0	Recreational site	0
Pre-commercial thinning	0	Local community	0
Log concentration yard	0	Processing facility	0

#### 2.4 Stakeholder consultation process

Stakeholder consultation is 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	2
Contractor employees	3
Landowner	1
Environmental NGO	0
Forest Industry	1
Forestry & Forest Products NGOs	0
Government	0
Other	0



### 3 ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

#### 3.1. Main strengths and weaknesses

Subject Area	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>1. Legal Requirements</b>	All meet legal requirements.	None
<b>2. Harvest Planning and Monitoring</b>	Good communication with landowners and responsive to goals.	None
<b>3. Harvest Practices</b>	Good.	None
<b>4. Community Values</b>	Excellent community relationships with all three members. One member is a member of the state legislature.	None
<b>5. Occupational Health and Safety</b>	State OSHA partnership is mandatory for group members. Good program to ensure safe practices.	None
<b>6. Business Viability</b>	Each group member has a healthy business with a plan for succession.	None
<b>7. Continuous Improvement and Innovation</b>	Good.	None
<b>Group Certification Requirements</b>	Well organized and capable of expanding the group.	None

#### 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.

No NCRs were issued as a result of this reassessment.

### 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)

### 3.4. 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.

No observations issued as a result of this reassessment.

### 3.5. Certification Recommendation

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

Certification approved:  
 No NCRs issued

Certification not approved:

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

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## **4 CLIENT SPECIFIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **4.1. Description of Harvesting Companies and Group Manager**

The group manager is the Louisiana Forestry Association, a statewide non-profit association made up of landowners, foresters, researchers, loggers, and forest products industries. Founded in 1947, the association worked to reforest the cutover lands of the state and to become a voice for the forest landowner.

The mission of the Louisiana Forestry Association is to promote the health and productivity of Louisiana's forests through the practice of sustainable forestry, by integrating the growing and harvesting of trees for useful wood products with soil and water quality, wildlife and aesthetics for the benefit of people today and in the future.

The loggers, members of the Louisiana Logging Council, who are participating range in size from single crew companies that log exclusively to multiple crew businesses where logging is only one part of their enterprise. The equipment used is traditional mechanized harvesting equipment, feller-bunchers, skidders, loaders, de-limbers and in some cases trucks. Some of the loggers contract their trucking. One company has two in-woods chipping operations, consisting of feller buncher skidder, flail and chippers. These operations produce clean chips in the woods for pulp mills. All of the operations are able to thin or clearcut depending on landowner needs. Most of the companies operate under cut and haul contracts while a couple of companies will buy timber on occasion. Some also operate on a pay as cut basis working directly with the landowner.

All of the loggers have substantial investments in their businesses and have long-term employees (over 15 years).

### **4.2. Legislative and government regulatory context**

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are voluntary and loggers do not have to be licensed in Louisiana. The only regulations relate to road permits and load tickets. Many parishes in Louisiana require a road permit for hauling logs and the loggers are required to have a load ticket for each load of logs showing source and ownership of the logs. To date there are no national logging regulations that apply to LFA membership, other than federal, state, and local regulatory laws for business operations.

### **4.3. Environmental Context**

The forestlands in which the group members will harvest are in the temperate forest biome and contain areas dominated by either coniferous or deciduous trees. Sites in this area are generally classified as either upland or bottomland. The bottomland sites occur on the floodplains of major and minor streams in the area and the broad forest associations are classified as either Cypress-Tupelo on the very wet areas or Mixed Bottomland Hardwoods on other areas. These hardwood stands are second or third growth stands that naturally regenerated following timber harvests or abandonment of agricultural lands. Logging on these sites is generally restricted to late spring/early winter because of the wetness of the soils.

Most of the harvesting by group members is on the upland sites. Forest stands on these sites are classified as naturally regenerated pine, naturally regenerated pine/hardwood mixtures, or pine plantations. Virtually all of these sites were in row crops or pasture at one time. After abandonment for agriculture, most regenerated to pine stands which have been harvested and regenerated at least one time and more likely two times. After the first harvest, most stands regenerated to a mixture of pine and hardwoods. Establishment of pine plantations has been very common on these sites by industry, which was very active in this area, and by private individuals. Sites on these upland areas vary greatly as a result

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of soil type and drainage conditions. Some sites are very stable with good drainage and can be logged most seasons of the year while others have poor drainage or are relatively unstable, such as those in the Loess hills along the eastern side of the Mississippi River.

Weather is a big factor determining operability of logging in this area. On upland areas, weather is generally favorable for logging from about early April until November. However, rainfall can shut down logging operations at least for a few days at any time of the year.

#### **4.4. Socioeconomic Context**

Forestry is an extremely important part of the economy in Louisiana. For example, in Louisiana, forestry is the number one agricultural crop. Logging has long been a very important source of employment in the state. However, the profession of logging has changed dramatically over the last 15-20 years. In the past, much of the work such as felling, topping, delimiting, and bucking, was done by hand with chainsaws. Now almost every operation is mechanized, and the workers must be adept at using mechanical harvesting equipment.

Mechanization of logging operations has meant that the contractor must invest much more in the necessary equipment and in the people to operate the equipment. That in turn has placed much more emphasis on higher rates of production and as little down time due to weather conditions as possible. Therefore, the potential for adverse environmental impact has greatly increased, and that is happening at the same time the public is taking a harder look at logging practices and environmental impacts, especially as it relates to water quality.

Louisiana has developed Best Management Practices (BMPs) that relate to logging practices. They are voluntary and usage, as determined by respective State Forestry agencies, exceeds 95%. With BMP acceptance so high, it is not necessary for BMPs to be mandatory. Loggers are under strong public pressure, as well as landowner concerns, to comply with the BMPs. Therefore, they must seek methods of work and equipment that will provide a livelihood for them and their workers and at the same time be acceptable to landowners and the public by doing as little damage to the environment as possible.



**APPENDIX V: Certified Group Membership List**

1. Total # members in the certified group: 3

**GROUP MEMBERSHIP TABLE**

Name of Member	Registration Subcode assigned	Address	Type of Equipment	Date of entry
Aucoin, Dennis		PO Box 8815, Clinton, LA 70722	Conventional	2006
McFarland, Jack		156 Douglas Garrett Rd, Winnfield, LA 71483	Conventional	2014
Keith, John		7333 Hwy 157, Haughton, LA 71037	Conventional and Chipping	2016
<b>Total number in certified group.</b>			<b>3</b>	