

Performance Standard 6 Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Management

April 30, 2006

Introduction

1. Performance Standard 6 recognizes that protecting and conserving biodiversity—the variety of life in all its forms, including genetic, species and ecosystem diversity—and its ability to change and evolve, is fundamental to sustainable development. The components of biodiversity, as defined in the Convention on Biological Diversity, include ecosystems and habitats, species and communities, and genes and genomes, all of which have social, economic, cultural and scientific importance. This Performance Standard reflects the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity to conserve biological diversity and promote use of renewable natural resources in a sustainable manner. This Performance Standard addresses how clients can avoid or mitigate threats to biodiversity arising from their operations as well as sustainably manage renewable natural resources.

Objectives

- To protect and conserve biodiversity
- To promote the sustainable management and use of natural resources through the adoption of practices that integrate conservation needs and development priorities

Scope of Application

2. The applicability of this Performance Standard is established during the Social and Environmental Assessment process, while implementation of the actions necessary to meet the requirements of this Performance Standard is managed through the client's Social and Environmental Management System. The assessment and management system requirements are outlined in Performance Standard 1.

3. Based on the Assessment of risks and impacts and the vulnerability of the biodiversity and the natural resources present, the requirements of this Performance Standard are applied to projects in all habitats, whether or not those habitats have been previously disturbed and whether or not they are legally protected.

Requirements

Protection and Conservation of Biodiversity

4. In order to avoid or minimize adverse impacts to biodiversity in the project's area of influence (see Performance Standard 1, paragraph 5), the client will assess the significance of project impacts on all levels of biodiversity as an integral part of the Social and Environmental Assessment process. The Assessment will take into account the differing values attached to biodiversity by specific stakeholders, as well as identify impacts on ecosystem services. The Assessment will focus on the major threats to biodiversity, which include habitat destruction and invasive alien species. When requirements of paragraphs 9, 10, or 11 apply, the client will retain qualified and experienced external experts to assist in conducting the Assessment.

Habitat

5. Habitat destruction is recognized as the major threat to the maintenance of biodiversity. Habitats can be divided into natural habitats (which are land and water areas where the biological communities are formed largely by native plant and animal species, and where human activity has not essentially modified the area's primary ecological functions) and modified habitats (where there

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has been apparent alteration of the natural habitat, often with the introduction of alien species of plants and animals, such as agricultural areas). Both types of habitat can support important biodiversity at all levels, including endemic or threatened species.

Modified Habitat

6. In areas of modified habitat, the client will exercise care to minimize any conversion or degradation of such habitat, and will, depending on the nature and scale of the project, identify opportunities to enhance habitat and protect and conserve biodiversity as part of their operations.

Natural Habitat

7. In areas of natural habitat, the client will not significantly convert or degrade¹ such habitat, unless the following conditions are met:

- There are no technically and financially feasible alternatives
- The overall benefits of the project outweigh the costs, including those to the environment and biodiversity
- Any conversion or degradation is appropriately mitigated

8. Mitigation measures will be designed to achieve no net loss of biodiversity where feasible, and may include a combination of actions, such as:

- Post-operation restoration of habitats
- Offset of losses through the creation of ecologically comparable area(s) that is managed for biodiversity²
- Compensation to direct users of biodiversity

Critical Habitat

9. Critical habitat is a subset of both natural and modified habitat that deserves particular attention. Critical habitat includes areas with high biodiversity value³, including habitat required for the survival of critically endangered or endangered species;⁴ areas having special significance for endemic or restricted-range species; sites that are critical for the survival of migratory species; areas supporting globally significant concentrations or numbers of individuals of congregatory species; areas with unique assemblages of species or which are associated with key evolutionary processes or provide key ecosystem services; and areas having biodiversity of significant social, economic or cultural importance to local communities.

10. In areas of critical habitat, the client will not implement any project activities unless the following requirements are met:

- There are no measurable adverse impacts on the ability of the critical habitat to support the established population of species described in paragraph 9 or the functions of the critical habitat described in paragraph 9

¹ Significant conversion or degradation is: (i) the elimination or severe diminution of the integrity of a habitat caused by a major, long-term change in land or water use; or (ii) modification of a habitat that substantially reduces the habitat's ability to maintain viable population of its native species.

² Clients will respect the ongoing usage of such biodiversity by Indigenous Peoples or traditional communities.

³ Such as areas that meet the criteria of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) classification.

⁴ As defined by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or as defined in any national legislation.

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- There is no reduction in the population of any recognized critically endangered or endangered species⁵
- Any lesser impacts are mitigated in accordance with paragraph 8

Legally protected Areas

11. In circumstances where a proposed project is located within a legally protected area,⁶ the client, in addition to the applicable requirements of paragraph 10 above, will meet the following requirements:

- Act in a manner consistent with defined protected area management plans
- Consult protected area sponsors and managers, local communities, and other key stakeholders on the proposed project
- Implement additional programs, as appropriate, to promote and enhance the conservation aims of the protected area

Invasive Alien Species

12. Intentional or accidental introduction of alien, or non-native, species of flora and fauna into areas where they are not normally found can be a significant threat to biodiversity, since some alien species can become invasive, spreading rapidly and out-competing native species.

13. The client will not intentionally introduce any new alien species (not currently established in the country or region of the project) unless this is carried out in accordance with the existing regulatory framework for such introduction, if such framework is present, or is subject to a risk assessment (as part of the client's Social and Environmental Assessment) to determine the potential for invasive behavior. The client will not deliberately introduce any alien species with a high risk of invasive behavior or any known invasive species, and will exercise diligence to prevent accidental or unintended introductions.

Management and Use of Renewable Natural Resources

14. The client will manage renewable natural resources in a sustainable manner.⁷ Where possible, the client will demonstrate the sustainable management of the resources through an appropriate system of independent certification.⁸

15. In particular, forests and aquatic systems are principal providers of natural resources, and need to be managed as specified below.

⁵ As defined by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species or as defined in any national legislation.

⁶ An area may be designated as legally protected for different purposes. This Performance Standard refers to areas legally designated for the protection or conservation of biodiversity, including areas proposed by governments for such designation.

⁷ Sustainable resource management is the management of the use, development and protection of resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities, including Indigenous Peoples, to provide for their present social, economic and cultural well-being while also sustaining the potential of those resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations and safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water and soil ecosystems.

⁸ An appropriate certification system would be one which is independent, cost-effective, based on objective and measurable performance standards and developed through consultation with relevant stakeholders, such as local people and communities, indigenous peoples, civil society organizations representing consumer, producer, and conservation interests. Such a system has fair, transparent, independent decision-making procedures that avoid conflicts of interest.

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Natural and Plantation Forests

16. Clients involved in natural forest harvesting or plantation development will not cause any conversion or degradation of critical habitat. Where feasible, the client will locate plantation projects on unforested land or land already converted (excluding land that is converted in anticipation of the project). In addition, the client will ensure that all natural forests and plantations over which they have management control are independently certified as meeting performance standards compatible with internationally accepted principles and criteria for sustainable forest management.⁹ Where a pre-assessment determines that the operation does not yet meet the requirements of such an independent forest certification system, the client will develop and adhere to a time-bound, phased action plan for achieving such certification.

Freshwater and Marine Systems

17. Clients involved in the production and harvesting of fish populations or other aquatic species must demonstrate that their activities are being undertaken in a sustainable manner, through application of an internationally accepted system of independent certification, if available, or through appropriate studies carried out in conjunction with the Social and Environmental Assessment process.

⁹ See footnote 7.