



# Ecosystem Restoration Verification

## Provide credibility to your restoration efforts

Ecosystems support all life on Earth. The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier the planet and its people.

The world has set a goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030, and that year is fast approaching. This is a pivotal moment for nature conservation and restoration. There is an urgent need to effectively monitor impacts and share the results of ecosystem restoration projects to ensure they achieve the intended effect and keep up resources & interest.



Aimed to support the global ecosystem restoration efforts worldwide, we have developed the [Standard for Field Verification of Ecosystem Restoration \(ER\)](#) to evaluate the performance of the restoration process.

If you are a project manager, the verification against this Standard can guide you to identify potential gaps in your project, even by using the standard yourself as a checklist (first or second-party evaluations). Conducted by an independent third party, the verification helps bring the external perspective and increase the chances of obtaining funding for your activities and confidently communicate the project results to interested stakeholders and the public. If you are an investor, this verification helps you verify the impacts of your investment.

According to the United Nations, worldwide ecosystem restoration must be undertaken at the immense scale of hundreds of millions of hectares to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030.

<https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/strategy>

Ecosystem degradation has reached the far corners of our planet, from our precious rainforests to our priceless reefs. A recent UN report found that more than 75% of the earth's terrestrial areas are substantially degraded. This has had a huge impact on biodiversity, human health and economic well-being.

But there is hope. There has been widespread discussion on the importance of ecosystem restoration and investment on that.

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With growing relevance and the initiatives like UN Decade for Restoration and others - including the Bonn Challenge, the Aichi Targets, the New York Declaration on Forests - that have been commenced towards ecosystem restoration, there is an increasing demand from funders, investors or other stakeholders seeking to monitor the progress.



## The approach to Ecosystem Restoration Verification



### The verification process in brief

- 1 **Identification of Restoration Manager.** The individual/group responsible for implementing restoration and meeting verification requirements at the field level is identified.
- 2 **Stakeholder engagement.** Primary stakeholders are consulted prior to or during the field verification.
- 3 **Performance review.** An effectiveness review is conducted adapted to risk, scale and intensity for Smallholders and Communities (SH&Cs) and medium projects and annually for large projects.
- 4 **Audit report.** The auditor prepares a draft, which the Restoration Manager then reviews. Any major non-conformity reported shall be closed before verification is granted.
- 5 **Public summary and claim.** A public summary of the report is made available on the Preferred by Nature website. For public claims to be made, they must first be reviewed and approved by our auditor or accountability system.

Verification against the ER Standard is an excellent way to communicate the efforts and demonstrate that resources are invested in the right direction. By combining technical, environmental, social and economic attributes, the Standard provides a structured approach and detailed checklist for verifying ecosystem restoration practices.

The ER Standard focuses on assessing the performance of ecosystem restoration at the field level, in tropical, temperate and boreal biomes. It allows the project owners to assess the actions taken against climate change by applying the Climate Change Module and already be able to make public summary and claims towards positive climate impacts. Furthermore, being aligned with the basic requirements of the standards producing carbon credits, this module can also serve to scope if projects are well-suited to move forward to the next step in that sense. Unlike plenty of projects focusing exclusively on the environmental aspects of ecosystem restoration, in the ER Standard, local communities and cultures are at the centre, which is crucial for ecosystem restoration projects to be successful. This unique Standard, so “social” in its nature, has been designed to be useful for Smallholders and Communities (SH&Cs) but also encompasses some crucial aspects, such as Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), stakeholder engagement, social benefits and impacts, along with workers’ conditions and rights.

### Experience and proven expertise

Preferred by Nature is an international non-profit organisation working with projects, farmers, foresters,

businesses, NGOs and governments to support better land management and business practices that benefit people, nature and the climate in more than 100 countries.

For nearly 30 years, we have certified over 80 million ha of forests and over 800,000 farmers and foresters worldwide against international sustainability standards. Having 270+ staff with combined field and sector experience and a vast network of hundreds of local organisations and experts, our know-how and capacity let us carry out more than 5,000 audits annually.

We offer our [certification services](#) under well-recognised schemes, such as [the Forest Stewardship Council™ \(FSC™\) Forest Management](#), [FSC Chain of Custody](#), [Sustainable Biomass Program](#), and we focus on providing high-quality services.

### Always ready for your next step

Based on our innovative approach and proven technical expertise, we can help you understand the Standard’s requirements and build trust between you and your stakeholders.

Contact us to learn more or arrange for an Ecosystem Restoration Verification.



### Contact us

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The **Ecosystem Restoration** verification programme has been developed by **Preferred by Nature** and launched in 2020 as an assessment framework applicable at most levels, from Smallholders and Communities (SH&Cs) to larger management units, at any time point in an ongoing restoration process or project, for different restoration approaches - from tree planting to agroforestry, grazing management, or natural regeneration.

Unlike most other ecolabels, the Ecosystem Restoration Standard does not rely on market 'pull' from consumers willing to pay a premium for sustainable products.

In many cases, ecosystem restoration projects are financed by local or international funds, which want to see proof that their money has been well spent.

The verification is to help communities and project managers to direct the efforts and show that everything has been verified by independent auditors. It lends credibility to restoration projects.

As an independent third-party certification/verification body, we are conducting evaluations against the requirements set by the Ecosystem Restoration Verification for projects around the world.



## Ecosystem Restoration Verification Q&As

### Why is the Standard well-suited for Smallholders and Communities (SH&Cs)?

The Standard is based on continuous improvement – SH&Cs have sufficient time to fully prepare their operations to meet all requirements set by the Standard. Continuous Improvement (CI) criteria need to be completed by the end of the period and a plan to meet the outstanding criteria is to be presented at the next field audit (e.g. if happening after three years).

There are also reduced documentation requirements for SH&Cs in the verification process, a reduced number of audits are required, and SH&Cs can use a local expert in their ecosystem restoration efforts.

### What if I feel my project is not ready for verification but I still want an independent review?

A validation option is designed for these cases where the project is more in a planning stage. In the validation stage, the plan and potential management activities recently started for a restoration project will be checked against the Standard, allowing for good design in the early phases and also providing confidence to potential investors and funders.

### Why does the Standard not have Principles & Criteria?

Instead of several multiple requirement levels, we have kept the Standard structurally simple and included all normative requirements on one level as indicators. Therefore, the Standard is simple enough to be used as a first step to then move forward to other standards, like the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) or carbon standards by using the carbon module.

### What is the cost structure?

The performance review fee depends on the size and complexity of the verified company. Upon evaluating these aspects, your Preferred by Nature contact person will provide you with a proposal specifying the cost structure. You can initiate the evaluation process by contacting us through the application form [here](#).

### What about impartiality and confidentiality?

Preferred by Nature's Quality Management System includes several [policies](#) that allow our organisation to provide assurance services credibly in compliance with accreditation requirements. These include the [Impartiality Policy](#), which ensures impartiality, transparency and independence in all of our activities, and the [Confidentiality Policy](#), describing our rigorous approach to safeguarding confidential data and information provided by our clients.





- ✓ The restoration of ecosystems and forest landscapes is crucial to keeping the temperature within the 2-degree increase set out in the Paris Agreement.
- ✓ The United Nations has declared 2020-2030 the 'Decade on Ecosystem Restoration', underlining not only the benefits to the climate, but also to the communities and businesses involved. 'Between now and 2030, the restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems could generate USD9 trillion in ecosystem services,' reads a statement on the UN homepage for the campaign.
- ✓ By choosing the Ecosystem Restoration Standard for your reporting, you can show your accountability to stakeholders and lend credibility on your restoration projects.

### Can I change the scope of the verification status?

You may expand or change the scope of your verification status in conjunction with your performance evaluation (annual for large projects and at least every three years for small and medium projects) audit or in between audits. You need to notify us about any of the following situations which may require formal changes in the scope of your verification status: • Additional areas in which you wish to make claims as verified, • The use of new types of inputs not covered by your current scope of verification, • Changes in the system used for controlling claims, • Expansion or removal of sites covered by the verification scope.

### What is the procedure for complaints and appeals?

Disputes are divided into two broad categories: complaints and appeals. All complaints and appeals will be processed using the [Preferred by Nature's Dispute Resolution Policy](#) for complaints management.

### What information is provided to third parties?

Our auditors will need access to confidential information to check the organisation's compliance with the standards set in evaluation schemes, including the Ecosystem Restoration Programme. All public claims would typically have to be reviewed and approved by the verifier and/or the accountability system. A public summary of the projects that have been verified is posted on the [Preferred by Nature website](#) so that the broader stakeholder community can keep engaging and providing feedback as the projects evolve.

