

*Georgetown, Guyana, 12th January 2024*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Iwokrama Forest retains coveted Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) Certification for the Iwokrama Forest.**

*Georgetown, Guyana.* The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development (*Iwokrama*) today announced that it has received confirmation that the Iwokrama Forest has retained its Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) Certification for Forest Management following an annual surveillance audit in October 2023.

Iwokrama's Certificate for Forest Management was renewed in October of 2022, confirming that the Iwokrama Forest has maintained its certification uninterrupted since October 2016 (the Iwokrama received initial certification in 2008). The Iwokrama Forest was the first forest to have maintained this certification in Guyana and has raised the bar for forest management in Guyana and we are pleased to note that other forest managers have followed suit so that there now two other forest management certificates and three chain-of-custody certificates in Guyana.



The mark of  
responsible forestry

FSC™ certification is the highest international accolade that Forest Managers can receive, and it is testament to the Centre's application of international social, ecological and environmental best practices in its management of the Iwokrama Forest. Iwokrama's forest management procedures and policies were rigorously measured against the Interim National Standard for Guyana (FSC-STD-GUY-01-2020) which includes 10 principles, 70 criteria and 213 indicators. Key to the adherence to FSC™ guidelines is that forest managers must follow all national rules, laws and guidelines including the GFC's comprehensive Codes of Practice.

The assessment team evaluated all elements of Iwokrama's operations applicable to the standard to determine compliance against national and international benchmarks. Non-compliances are categorized as "observations", "minor corrective actions" or "major corrective actions".

During the recent surveillance audit, Iwokrama received only 1 observation. Non-compliances are a normal part of any assessment / audit process and based on the severity of the non-compliance with the standard, it could prevent the applicant from being certified.



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The Iwokrama International Centre for Rain Forest Conservation and Development is an autonomous non-profit institution established by Guyana and the Commonwealth. The Centre manages the nearly one million acre (371,000 hectare) Iwokrama Forest in central Guyana to show how tropical forests can be conserved and sustainably used for ecological, social and economic benefits to local, national and international communities.

In recent years many international buyers and consumers have increased demands for proof of forest products being sourced from well-managed forests. Currently, many of the major global markets require some sort of certification for wood imports. To this end the European Union and the Government of Guyana are also pursuing a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) which will allow more access of Guyana's wood to EU member countries. The FSC™ brand is highly recognized globally for its independent assessment, and for its opinion on products that have been produced in a more environmentally friendly manner. Iwokrama is also working closely with the Guyana Forestry Commission to develop the Guyana National Standard based on the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Systems' (PEFC) requirements to ensure that more and more of Guyana's forests can be certified.

The Centre is grateful to the Government of Guyana for their valuable ongoing support to the Centre. Special thanks are extended to the certification team of the Centre and our local community partners, the North Rupununi District Development Board (NRDDB), for their unwavering support.

*Photo: Certification auditors with Iwokrama forestry staff*



## **Notes to the Editors:**

### **1. About Iwokrama**

The Iwokrama International Centre (IIC) was established in 1996 under a joint mandate from the Government of Guyana and the Commonwealth Secretariat to manage the Iwokrama forest, a unique reserve of 371,000 hectares of rainforest “in a manner that will lead to lasting ecological, economic and social benefits to the people of Guyana and to the world in general”.

The Centre, guided by an international Board of Trustees, is unique providing a dedicated well managed and researched forest environment. The forest is zoned into a Sustainable Utilization Area (SUA) and a Wilderness Preserve (WP) in which to test the concept of a truly sustainable forest where conservation, environmental balance and economic use can be mutually reinforcing. The IIC collaborates with the Government of Guyana, the Commonwealth and other international partners and donors to develop new approaches and forest management models to enable countries with rainforests to market their ecosystem services whilst carefully managing their resources through innovative and creative conservation practices. In more recent years, the Centre has received support from corporate partners such as Exxon Mobil (Guyana) Limited who has funded the development of its Science Programme and continues to provide an annual contribution to the implementation of this Programme.

Iwokrama brings together:

- 20 local communities (approximately 7,000 people) who are shareholders and participants in the IIC’s sustainable timber, tourism, research operations and forest management activities through complex co-management and benefit sharing arrangements;
- Scientists and researchers engaged in ground breaking research into the impacts of climate change on the forest and measuring the scope and value of its ecosystem services; and
- A portfolio of sustainably managed and certified business models using innovative governance systems which include participation of the private and public sectors and the local communities, earning income from the forest and its natural assets whilst employing international social, environmental and economic best practice, whilst still keeping abreast of the ever changing thinking on funding for environmental projects in the face of climate change and the perennial scarcity of international finance.

This alliance and the Centre’s work programmes are committed to showing how a rain forest can be used for real sustainability, real climate change protection and real community benefit.

For further details about the Iwokrama International Centre please visit [www.iwokrama.org](http://www.iwokrama.org) , [www.iwokramariverlodge.com](http://www.iwokramariverlodge.com) or contact Dane Gobin, Chief Executive Officer on [dgobin@iwokrama.org](mailto:dgobin@iwokrama.org).

## **2. About Forest Stewardship Council Certification**

The Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™) is a global, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of responsible forest management worldwide. FSC™ Certification ensures that products come from well managed forests that provide environmental, social and economic benefits.

- **Environmentally Appropriate:** Protecting and maintaining natural communities and high conservation value forests.
- **Socially Beneficial:** Respecting the rights of workers, communities and indigenous peoples.
- **Economically Viable:** building markets, adding best value, and creating equitable access to benefits.

The FSC™ Principles and Criteria set out best practices for forest management.