

**SECTION 8.**  
*SFI STANDARD DEVELOPMENT AND  
INTERPRETATIONS PROCESS*



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SUSTAINABLE  
FORESTRY  
INITIATIVE

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# SFI STANDARD DEVELOPMENT AND INTERPRETATIONS PROCESS

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## 1. PROCEDURES FOR SFI STANDARD REVISION

### 1.1 Actors and Responsibilities

The SFI Board of Directors is responsible for standard development and revision. The SFI Board of Directors, Resources Committee and the External Review Panel (independent oversight role) constitute the Forum and ensure that the revision process includes economic, environmental and social representation equally. Any individual can suggest candidates to the nominations committee. The nominations committee considers suggestions and invites individuals to be considered by the Board. The Forum follows the procedures outlined in this document for SFI Standard Revision<sup>1</sup>.

#### 1.1.1 SFI Board

SFI Board members include representatives of environmental, conservation, social professional and academic groups, independent professional loggers, small family forest owners, public officials, labor and the forest products industry. The 18 member SFI Board of Directors include:

- Six directors from non-profit environmental /conservation organizations representing the environmental sector;
- Six directors from community or social interest groups such as universities, labor, independent professional loggers, family forest owners or government agencies representing the social sector; and
- six directors from the forest, paper and wood products industry or other for-profit forest ownership or management entities representing the economic sector.

SFI Board members are invited by the Board Nominations Committee to participate as directors and must be approved by the full Board. The Board is a voluntary Board.

#### 1.1.2 SFI Resources Committee

Each SFI Inc. Board member appoints one person from their organization (or other organization they may choose) to serve on the SFI Inc. Resources Committee (RC) or the Board member may choose to represent themselves on the Resources Committee. As such, the Resources Committee has the same equal representation of social, environmental and economic interests as the SFI Inc. Board.

#### 1.1.3 SFI External Review Panel

The SFI External Review Panel is an independent panel of experts that provides diverse perspectives and expertise to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program while contributing to quality assurance and continuous improvement. As part of the Forum, Panel members provide external independent oversight to ensure the standard revision process is

objective and credible and that all comments are treated equally and fairly. The volunteer External Review Panel is made up of 15-18 external experts. Its membership maintains a balance of technical skills and organizational experience, with four to six members from each of the following categories — environmental/conservation groups, professional/academic groups, and public agencies (local, state, provincial, tribal or federal governments). Panel members come from universities, government agencies, foundations, professional associations, and landowner/conservation organizations. The SFI External Review Panel selects its own members based on their individual expertise and experience, following an election process set out in its charter. It develops its own agenda to represent the public interest as an outside observer of the SFI program. All stakeholders can suggest candidates to the SFI External Review Panel for consideration.

### 1.2 Procedures

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative Standard setting process shall be on a five year cycle, which is consistent with international protocols for forest certification standard revision cycles. The SFI Standard development process is open, transparent and consensus based and shall be consistent with PEFC ST 1001:2010 for consensus<sup>2</sup> based decision making. The revision process shall begin in the first quarter of the year prior to the year the existing standard expires. The *SFI Standard* setting process shall begin with a public notice to all stakeholders prior to the start of the process. The start of the process will be communicated on the SFI website, in newsletters and emails to all stakeholders inviting comments. SFI shall identify stakeholders relevant to the objectives and scope of the standard-setting work<sup>3</sup>. The process shall include an initial 60 day public comment period, a second 30 day public comment period and a final consultation period of at least 60 days (See Figure 1).

The External Review Panel shall independently monitor the entire process including a review of all comments received on draft standards and their disposition.

<sup>1</sup> Section 8 SFI Standard Development and Interpretations Process is publicly available and can be found on the SFI website.

<sup>2</sup> Consensus defined: General agreement, characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments. NOTE - **Consensus** need not imply unanimity. Item 1.7 in *ISO/IEC Guide 2:1991* and item 3.1 in *PEFC Standard Setting Requirements PEFC ST 1001:2010 dated 2010-11-26*. *PEFC ST 1001:2010* and *ISO Guide 59:1994, Code of Good Practice for Standardisation* are normative references.

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders can be identified by doing a stakeholder mapping exercise that includes defining which interest sectors are relevant and why, and for each sector what are likely to be the key issues, who are the key stakeholders, and what means of communication will best reach them.

Broad public and stakeholder involvement is important to the SFI program. The *SFI Standard* review process shall be conducted on a national level in Canada and in the United States. Stakeholders, including disadvantaged and key stakeholders and those from the environmental community, forest products industry, private forest landowners, customers, local and federal government agencies, trade associations, landowner associations, academia and all other stakeholders shall be invited to participate in the review process.

The start of the standard review process and all subsequent public review periods shall be communicated publicly to all interested stakeholders with an invitation to provide comments on the standard and standard setting process.

The first draft of proposed changes to the *SFI Standard* shall be released and published to the *SFI* website during the first quarter of the second review year, followed by an additional 30 day public comment period to allow all stakeholders an opportunity to provide additional comments regarding proposed changes.

This first draft will also be presented and discussed with *SFI Program Participants* and all other stakeholders at regional workshops conducted by the Forum and SFI, Inc. throughout the U.S. and Canada. All stakeholders who have commented on proposed changes or who have proposed changes to the *SFI Standard* shall use this opportunity to raise any concerns regarding their comments and the manner in which the *SFI Standards Review* task group addressed their comments or suggested changes.

Formal complaints regarding the disposition of comments shall be submitted in writing to the External Review Panel Secretariat (<http://www.sfiprogram.org/sustainable-forestry-initiative/external-review-panel.php>) for review. The ERP shall acknowledge receipt of all complaints, impartially and objectively review all complaints and provide feedback to the Forum regarding complaints where additional review and potential action by the Forum is warranted. Once resolved, the decision on the complaint and the complaint process shall be communicated to the complainant<sup>4</sup>.

A second draft of the proposed changes to the *SFI Standard* shall be delivered to the *SFI Inc.* Board of Directors during the second quarter of the final review year and posted to the *SFI* website. The *SFI, Inc.* Board bylaws require a 45-day advance notice to review proposed changes to the standard before Board action can occur. The *SFI Inc.* Board will meet in third quarter of the final review year to discuss the third *SFI*

*Standard* draft and approve moving the proposed changes forward for a final consultation period of at least 60 days following the SFI annual conference in September.

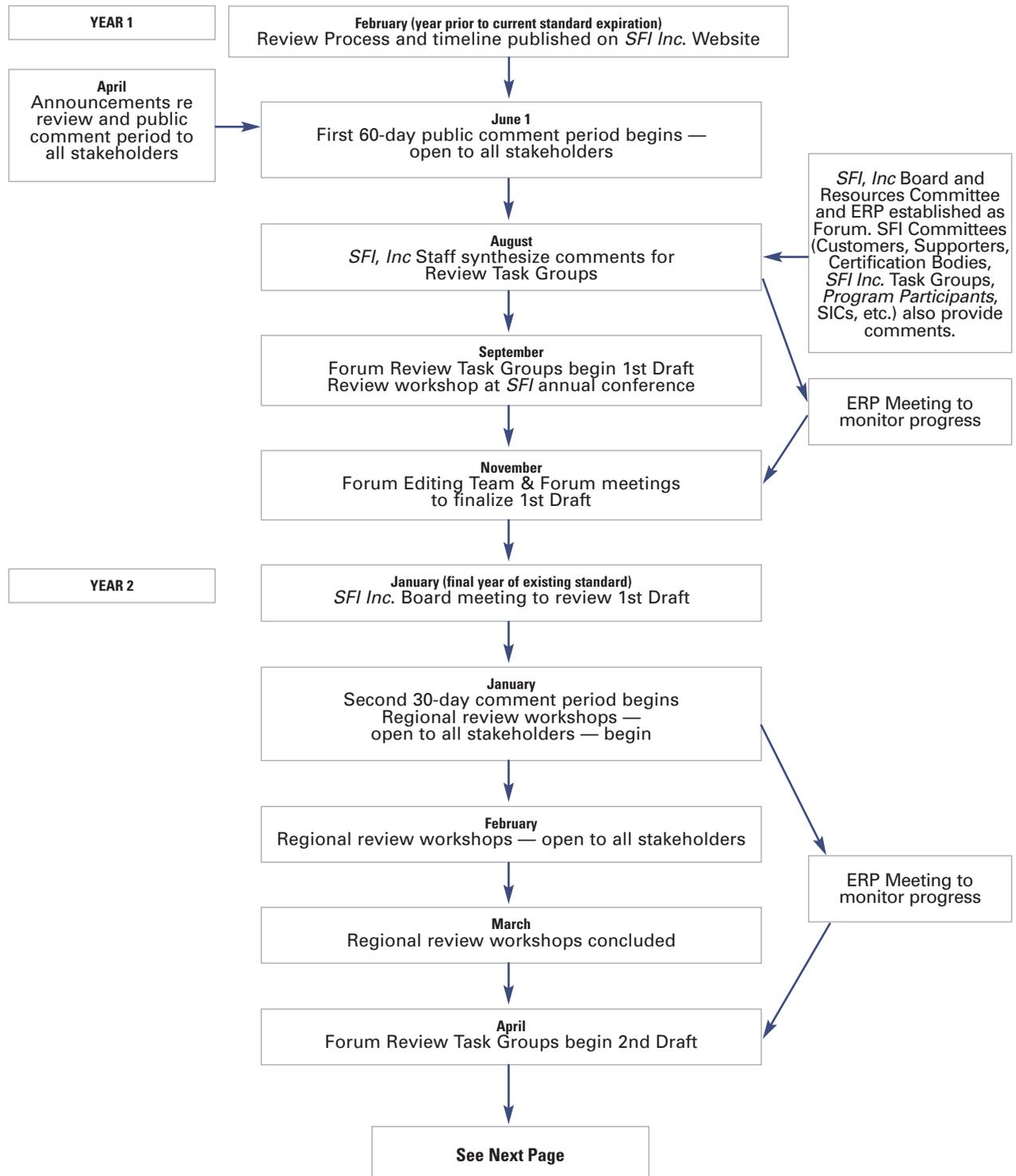
Following the consultation period of at least 60 days, the revised *SFI Standard* shall be finalized by the Forum and approved by the SFI Board and published to the *SFI* program website by December 31 of the review year. Printed copies will be available during the first quarter of the following year. All program participants have one year to fully implement new and revised *SFI Standard* elements adopted by the Forum.

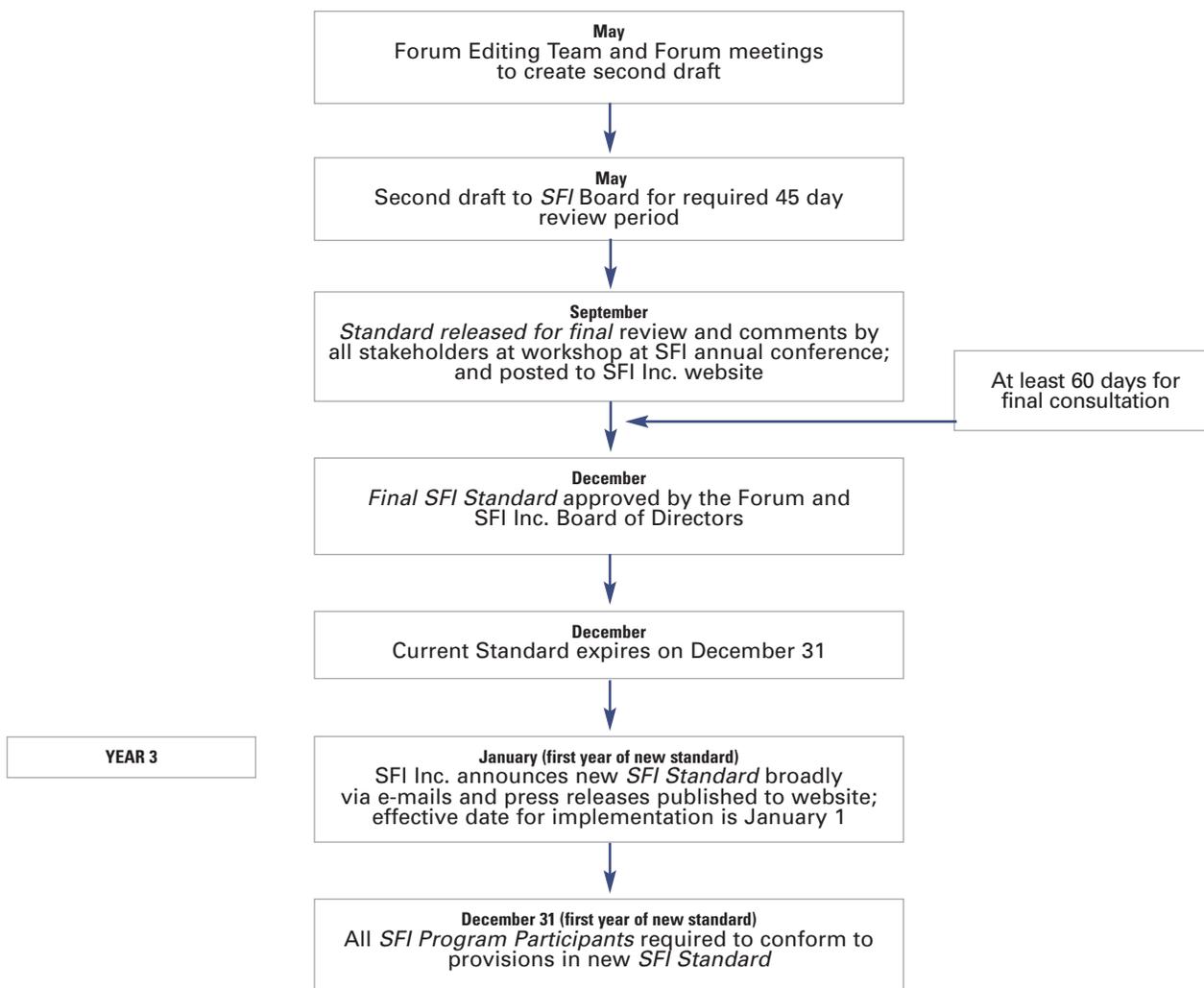
The Forum shall maintain records regarding all comments and their disposition for review by the independent External Review Panel. All comments will be considered carefully and records of their disposition maintained for a minimum of 5 years and posted to the SFI website. As in any review process, it is not necessary to agree to every suggestion, but it is important that all comments be given consideration.

These written procedures shall be publicly available to all interested parties. Additional information on the SFI Standard Development process, regional workshop reports and stakeholder comments submitted during both public comment periods and how they were addressed shall be publicly available.

<sup>4</sup> Section 11. Public Inquiries and Official Complaints cover official complaints and public inquiry procedures. Section 11 is publicly available on the SFI website.

FIGURE 1. PROCESS USED FOR SFI STANDARD DEVELOPMENT





## 2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SFI 2010-2014 STANDARD

The *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* setting process (the SFI 2005-2009 Standard expired on December 31, 2009) began with a public announcement detailing the review process on February 1, 2008. This was followed by additional announcements on April 15th, 2008 and the beginning of a 60-day open comment period on June 2 of 2008 (See Figure 2).

During the open comment period, the SFI Inc. Board also convened the Forum which consisted of members of the Board and Resources Committee and the External Review Panel (independent oversight role) ensuring balanced representation of all stakeholder groups. SFI Board members

includes representatives of environmental, conservation, social professional and academic groups, independent professional loggers, small family forest owners, public officials, labor and the forest products industry. The 18 member SFI Board of Directors include:

- Six directors from non-profit environmental/conservation organizations representing the environmental sector;
- Six directors from community or social interest groups such as universities, labor, independent professional loggers, family forest owners or government agencies; and
- Six directors from the forest, paper and wood products industry or other for-profit forest ownership or management entities representing the economic sector.

Each SFI Inc. Board member appoints one person from their organization to serve on the SFI Inc. Resources Committee (RC) or the Board member may choose to represent themselves on the Resources Committee. As such, the Resources Committee has the same equal representation of social, environmental and economic as the SFI Inc. Board.

The Forum actively solicited comments from over 2,000 individuals throughout the United States and Canada, including SFI customers, SFI Supporters, environmental groups, professional societies, forest products and paper companies, chain of custody certificate holders and many others to provide input into the review process. At the close of the 60-day initial comment period, SFI Inc. organized the comments and presented them to the Forum and published them to the SFI website. The Forum established several working committees to review the comments received during the open public review process. The Forum, in all phases of the standard review, operated using a consensus based process.

The independent ERP which is part of the Forum (independent oversight role) and has representation from environmental groups, professional societies, academics, state and federal forestry and other public agencies, forest landowners, and others, met and reviewed all comments received as well to ensure that all were given appropriate consideration.

The first draft of the proposed changes to the *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* were released in the January of 2009 and published to the SFI website. An additional 30 day public comment period allowed all stakeholders additional comment from the Forum and input into the proposed changes. The Forum maintained records regarding all comments and their disposition for review by the independent External Review Panel. All comments and their disposition were posted on the SFI Inc. website.

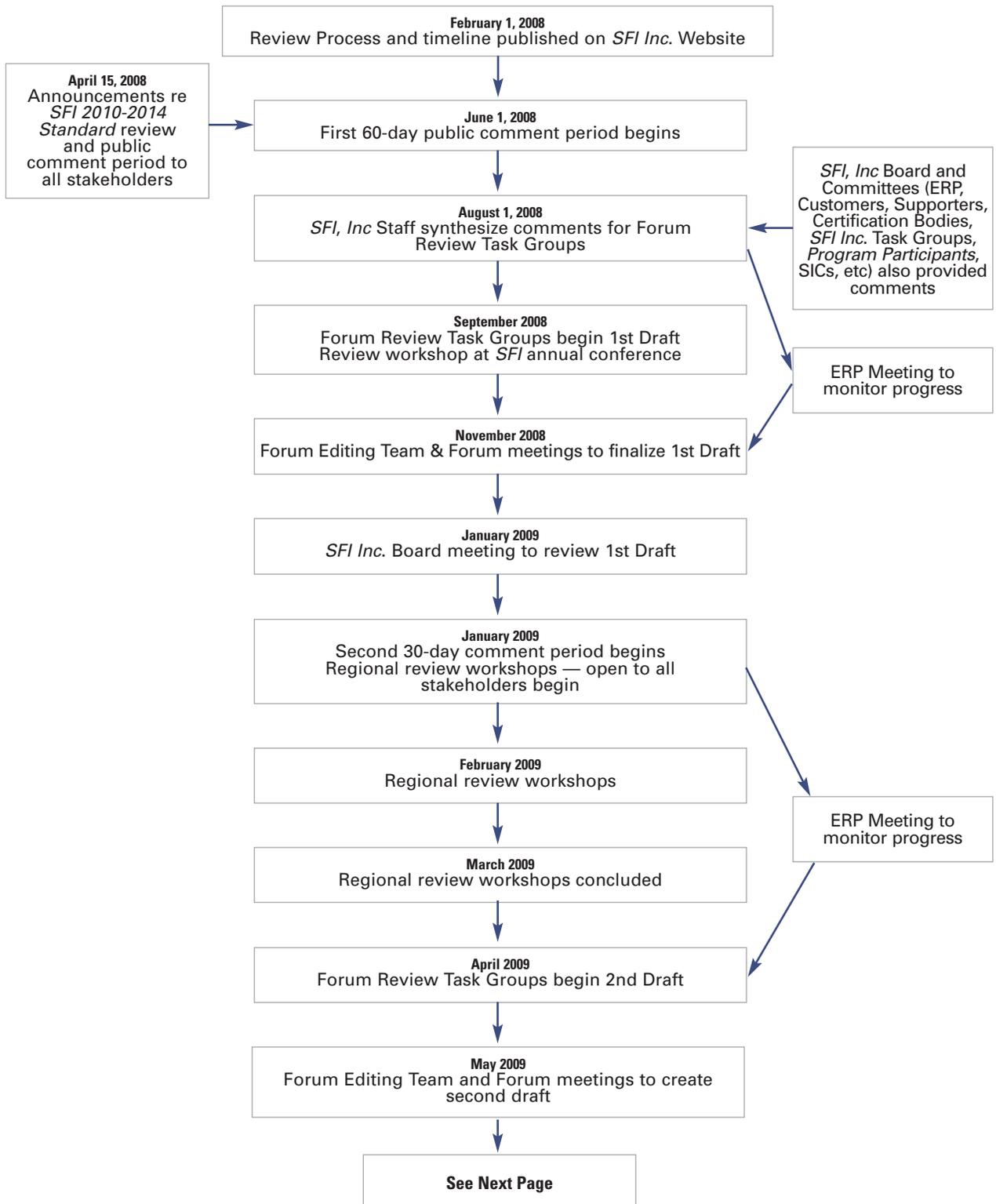
The first draft was then presented and discussed with *SFI Program Participants* and all other stakeholders at regional workshops conducted by SFI Inc. throughout the U.S. and Canada. All stakeholders of the Forum who commented on proposed changes or who had proposed changes to the *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* used this opportunity to raise any concerns or complaints regarding their comments and the manner in which the *SFI Standards Review* task group addressed their comments or suggested changes. There were no formal complaints raised regarding the treatment of comments at any time during the *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* review process.

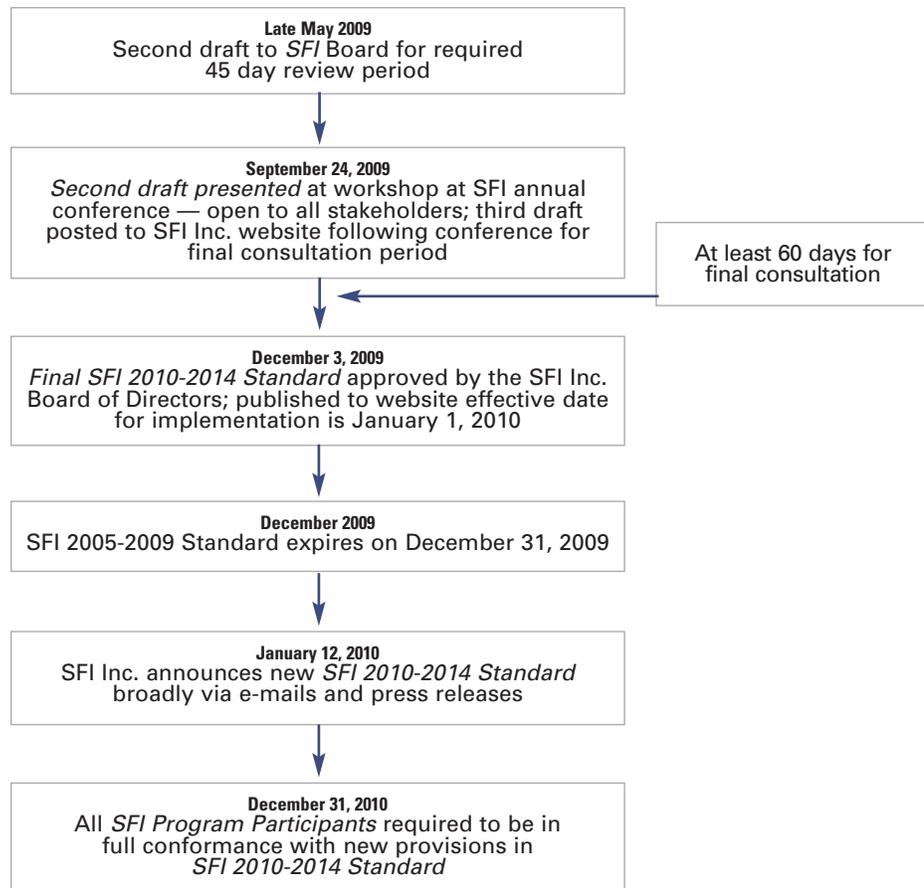
Following the workshops, the second draft of the proposed changes to the *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* was delivered to the SFI Inc. Board of Directors by late May and posted to the SFI website. The SFI Inc. Board bylaws require a 45-day advance notice to review proposed changes to the standard before Board action can occur. The SFI Inc. Board met in July of the review year to discuss the second draft *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* and approved moving it forward for the final consultation period. All comments were considered carefully by the Forum before draft changes were submitted to the Board and records of their disposition maintained and SFI Inc. responded to those who commented as resources allowed. As in any review process, it is not necessary to agree to every suggestion, but it is important that they be given consideration. SFI Inc. did seek consensus in the standards setting process consistent with PEFC Guideline GL5/2006 (*Interpretation of the PEFC Council Requirements for Consensus in the Standard Setting Process*).

The second draft of the proposed changes to the *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* was also reviewed by all stakeholders at the SFI annual conference in September and the final draft (third) was then posted to the SFI Inc. website for the final consultation period of 72 days. Additional comments were received and considered by the Forum prior to the SFI Inc. Board formally approving the new *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* in on December 3rd, 2009.

The revised *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* was published to the SFI program website on December 31 of the review year (in effect as of January 1, 2010) and printed copies were available during the first quarter of 2010. All program participants had one year to fully implement new and revised *SFI 2010-2014 Standard* elements approved by the Forum and the SFI Inc. Board.

FIGURE 2. PROCESS USED FOR THE 2010-2014 SFI STANDARD DEVELOPMENT





### 3. INTERPRETATIONS

From time to time, a formal process may be needed to interpret the *SFI Standard* and its supporting documents. As part of SFI Inc.'s commitment to continual improvement of both the SFI certification process and the *SFI Standard*, such concerns shall be submitted promptly to the SFI Inc. Interpretations Committee by contacting staff at SFI Inc. The SFI Inc. Interpretations Committee shall respond within 45 days of receipt.

It is neither the intent nor the responsibility of the SFI Inc. Interpretations Committee to resolve disputes arising through certification; nevertheless, the committee will provide opinions and direction to assist parties in answer-

ing interpretive questions. Through this process, the SFI program shall maintain a record of opinions and concerns available to both *Program Participants* and *certification bodies* to assist with certification planning. SFI Inc. shall periodically review this record and, where appropriate, recommend changes for inclusion in the *SFI Standard* or SFI audit procedures.