

Accounting for Nature[®] Standard

Version 4.1



Develop a Certified Environmental Condition Account
under the Independent Accounting for Nature[®]
Framework to measure and report the state of nature
with trust and credibility.

accountingfornature.org

VERSION CONTROL

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The operating language of the Accounting for Nature® Standard and associated documents (Process and Guidance documents, Methods, Method Guidelines, and Forms) is English. If there are differences between the English and other language versions, the English language version shall prevail.

DATA LICENCE AGREEMENT

By registering an Environmental Account with AfN, Proponents agree to AfN's Data License Agreement which sets out the terms on how the information and data contained in the Environmental Account, including any ancillary information, is used by AfN. The Data Licence Agreement is available on the AfN website.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

AfN is committed to protecting participant privacy in accordance with its Privacy Policy which can be accessed on the AfN website.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

From 2008 to 2018, the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists developed the Accounting for Nature® model. The model sought to establish a practical, cost-effective, and scientifically robust methodology for creating a common unit of measurement to describe the Condition of environmental assets and measure any change in the Condition of those assets over a period of time.

Since December 2018, the Wentworth Group has not taken part in any further development of, or application or implementation of, the Accounting for Nature® model. The Wentworth Group is not responsible for the use of or implementation of the Accounting for Nature® model or any associated services provided by AfN.

CONSULTATION AND REVIEW

AfN is committed to the development, review and implementation of a comprehensive Framework that directly impacts Users' credibility, effectiveness, and impact of Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts.

To help achieve this, stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the Accounting for Nature® Standard during a review period, which will commence on 20 July 2023 and conclude on 31 January 2024.

This six-month timeframe allows stakeholders to review the Standard and submit their feedback. The feedback obtained during this period will be considered for potential revisions and improvements to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of the Standard.

All stakeholders are requested to submit their feedback via email to feedback@accountingfornature.org.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Accounting for Nature® Standard 4.1 is effective from 22 December 2023.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Origins

The Accounting for Nature model¹ was originally developed by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists² between 2008 and 2018. The model sought to establish a practical, cost-effective, and scientifically robust approach for creating a common unit of measurement to describe the Condition of Environmental Assets (or 'state of nature') and measure change in the Condition of those Assets.

Accounting for Nature Ltd ('AfN') was established in 2018 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation exclusively licensed by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists to operationalise the Accounting for Nature model globally. The original model has since been expanded by AfN to incorporate the broader Accounting for Nature® Framework ('the Framework'), which provides a basis for measuring, verifying, certifying, and publicly reporting Environmental Condition Accounts ('Environmental Accounts').

The Framework has been developed to complement existing international standards, certification systems, and sustainability reporting models. These include systems for developing and verifying co-benefits for carbon offset projects, financial reporting frameworks, tools for assessing impact investment opportunities, and global goals such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Framework is consistent with the United Nations Standard for Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)³ and is progressively expanding to align with emerging markets and incorporate traditional ecological knowledge from Indigenous Peoples.

1.2 Vision



Value nature, everywhere.

Nature underpins life on Earth. For too long, many societies have failed to recognise and value the benefits provided by nature. The Framework provides a vital link so that nature can be measured and accounted for and impacts and investments better understood – to better inform decision-making.

Through the Accounting for Nature® world-leading global Standard for environmental accounting, the state of nature can be properly incorporated into decision-making using trusted, best-practice science. AfN's vision is to provide the tools to inspire this change and support transparent accountability. To value nature everywhere. To make nature count.

¹ Wentworth Group (2016) Accounting for Nature. A scientific method for constructing environmental asset condition accounts, Sydney. <http://wentworthgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Wentworth-Group-2016-Accounting-for-Nature.pdf>

² <https://wentworthgroup.org/>

³ <https://seea.un.org>

1.3 Values

Accounting for Nature's values reflects ideas seeded by scientists and leading experts in economics and statistics. They inform the organisations' integrity, accountability, and quality. The approach AfN takes is one of imaginative forward-thinking through collaboration.



Integrity

Integrity is at the centre of everything we do. We firmly believe that operating with integrity is crucial in earning and maintaining the trust of our users, stakeholders, and the wider community. It is of utmost importance to our Standard as we strive to uphold ethical decision-making, adopt best practices, and seek continuous improvements to build and maintain trust. We are transparent, honest, and accountable in our actions, ensuring that our users, stakeholders, and supporters can trust our expertise and advice in applying our Standard.



Inspiration

Inspiring leadership and creative forward-thinking are critical as we value innovation, constantly seeking new ways to incorporate the value of nature and people into environmental accounting practices. We embrace innovation through emerging technologies and leading scientific methodologies to enable users to accurately measure and report on environmental condition, inspiring leadership through informed decision-making.



Accountability

By empowering accountability, we drive responsibility through real, measurable, and verifiable outcomes with full transparency. We not only hold our users accountable to our rigorous Standard but also ourselves by participating in industry discussions, collaborating with experts, and contributing to thought leadership. We actively seek feedback and engage in continuous improvement, embracing accountability as a process of learning and growth. We strive to shape a collective accountability framework that integrates nature into the nature of business, inspiring us all to be accountable to contribute to a healthier planet. Accountability is at the core of what we do, as it underpins the trust we strive to establish under our Standard.



Collaboration

Collaboration is vital to maintaining our integrity and accountability, reflecting our belief that solving complex environmental challenges and the role that environmental accounting can play requires collective efforts, thinking and doing, and shared expertise. Collaboration plays a crucial role in addressing the inherent complexities of accounting for nature. We actively collaborate with environmental organisations, government agencies, businesses, academic institutions and leading Scientists to foster knowledge sharing and enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of our Standard to develop and evolve a robust environmental accounting framework. We can harness collective intelligence and drive transformational change by actively collaborating with stakeholders, sharing knowledge, and engaging in cross-disciplinary partnerships, whilst applying independence to maintain the integrity of our Standard.

1.4 Theory of Change

The Theory of Change explains the intended logic of how the Framework is expected to lead to specific outcomes that align with AfN's vision. It describes the pathway from the problem statement to achieving AfN's vision through identifying specific actions, outcomes, goals and intended impact.

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

THE PROBLEM

You can't manage what you haven't measured.

Without measuring and monitoring environmental condition, nature is not appropriately considered in decision-making. The environment needs to be measured in a way that is a repeatable, scientifically rigorous, fit-for-purpose, at any scale and anywhere. Nature needs a common unit - a common currency - so that investors and policy makers can understand the condition of different assets in different places, at different times, and at different scales, can be easily understood, compared, and communicated.

OUR VISION

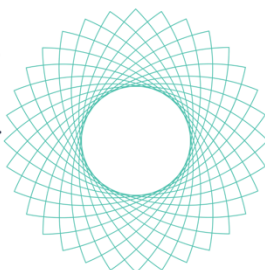
Value nature, everywhere.

AfN values nature and believes that nature can and should be considered when making economic and policy decisions. AfN intends to inspire leadership in the relationship between nature and the economy and advocate for integrity through delivering a scientifically credible, evidence based and verifiable Environmental Accounting Standard to the world.

Improve accountability and transparency by bringing nature into decision making.

Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts can support or underpin claims on the state of and trends in the state (condition) of nature. This will help individuals, organisations, and governments track progress towards goals and targets, underpin financial estimates of the value of nature, improve decision-making, and provide rigour to environmental markets and transparency for nature positive claims.

GOALS & OUTCOMES



High integrity, transparent, and verifiable metrics for environmental asset condition.

Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts indicate that the condition of environmental assets have been measured in a scientifically rigorous and accurate way. Through an audit process, the Accounts have high integrity, transparency, and traceability through the Accounting for Nature® Environmental Account Registry.

OUR IMPACT

Practical, scientific and cost-effective measuring, reporting, and verifying of environmental condition changes over time.

Under the Framework, Environmental Accounts are created at various scales and for various purposes and are used to measure and track the condition of environmental assets – such as soil, native vegetation, native fauna, and water, within three realms- land, ocean, freshwater. Central to the Framework and Environmental Accounts is the Econd® – a simple yet scientifically robust metric to communicate the condition of an environmental asset over time.

2 The Accounting for Nature® Framework

2.1 Structure of the Framework

The Accounting for Nature® Framework consists of a system of rules and processes that ensure the integrity and transparency of Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts. The Framework includes core criteria (contained in this Standard), and supporting process, rules and guidance documents that ensure the integrity and transparency of resulting Environmental Accounts. The Framework also requires the governing bodies, and the associated Accounting for Nature® Accredited Experts and Auditors to operate.

2.2 Governance

The Framework is supported and implemented by various governing bodies. The following sections detail the division of responsibilities between the AfN Board, the AfN Audit & Risk Committee, the AfN Executive, the Independent Science Committee, and the Technical Advisors.

2.2.1 The AfN Board of Directors

AfN is governed by a Board of Directors, which sets the company's strategic direction and oversees the Executive. Under the Framework, the Board's primary role is to approve this Standard, including material changes introduced with future updates. The board can also assist in resolving disputes arising over the administration of the Standard.

2.2.2 The AfN Executive

The AfN Executive is responsible for the operations of the company and the administration of the Framework. The key responsibilities of the AfN Executive under the Framework are to:

- prepare (and update) the Standard for approval by the Board of Directors;
- prepare (and update) Process Documents and Rule Documents for approval by the Board of Directors;
- approve Methods and Guidelines based on advice from the Independent Science Committee;
- accredit Experts and Auditors and maintain the Expert and Auditor Registry;
- Certify Environmental Accounts and maintain the Environmental Account; and Registry.
- due diligence.

2.2.3 The AfN Audit & Risk Committee.

The AfN Audit & Risk Committee (the 'ARC') is a specialised committee formed from selected members of the AfN Board and the AfN Executive. The primary purpose of the ARC is to provide independent oversight and guidance on key matters related to potential material risks to the Accounting for Nature® brand, internal controls, systems of risk management and oversight, and compliance.

2.2.4 Independent Science Committee

The Independent Science Committee (the 'ISC') is a technical body established by AfN that advises the AfN Board and Executive on whether it should accredit Methods and applicable Guidelines. It is responsible for ensuring that Methods are scientifically robust and meet the criteria presented in this Standard.

The ISC is comprised of an independent chair and at least six independent members, all of whom must have expertise in a relevant scientific discipline. The main functions of the ISC are to:

- review and recommend the accreditation of scientific monitoring Methods;
- review technical Guidelines; and
- provide ad-hoc advice to the AfN Board and Executive on technical matters related to the Framework.

2.2.5 Technical Advisors

AfN Technical Advisors comprise several world-leading experts in their fields. AfN engages Technical Advisors for counsel on key areas of environmental science, law, finance, climate change and indigenous knowledge. AfN Technical Advisors help ensure the Framework incorporates the latest scientific and technical developments.

2.3 Framework Documentation

The Framework consists of a system of core criteria (contained in this Standard) and supporting process, rules, and guidance documents that ensure the integrity and transparency of Environmental Accounts (Figure 1). All documents are available to download from the Accounting for Nature® website.



Figure 1. Accounting for Nature® Framework Documentation

Table 1 describe each of the Process and Rules documents, respectively. In addition to the Process and Rules Documents listed below, AfN provides Guideline Documents that explain various components of the Framework, these are listed in Table 2. These documents can be viewed and downloaded on the Accounting for Nature website, [key documents, rules and guidelines page](#).

Table 1. Description of Accounting for Nature® Framework Rules documents

Rule Document	Description
Audit Rules	The Audit Rules describe the procedures and process that support the auditing requirements outlined in the Accounting for Nature® Standard. There are two options for audit when seeking Certification under the Accounting for Nature® Standard: 1) Independent Audit; and 2) AfN Verified.
Carbon Offset Credit Linking and Labelling Rules	<i>To be advised</i> , these Rules will provide the: 1) criteria for when Proponents can link carbon offset units with Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts; 2) the standardised format for labelling carbon offsets projects and (where possible) respective units in registries; and 3) process for gaining approval to link and label from AfN.
Claims Rules	These Claims Rules are intended for Proponents, partners, supporters, and consumers to accurately and appropriately communicate Claims associated with an Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Account.
Complaints Process	This document outlines the complaints process for users of the Accounting for Nature® Framework and the public.
Environmental Account Rules	This document outlines the formal processes associated with Developing Environmental Accounts and having them Certified under the Accounting for Nature® Framework.
Expert Accreditation Rules	These rules outline the process and requirements for applying for and maintaining Expert Accreditation under the Accounting for Nature® Framework.
Method Rules	This document outlines the formal processes associated with the development, approval, update, and use of Accredited Methods under the Accounting for Nature® Framework. It also provides guidance and discussion on key concepts that Methods must consider to be eligible for approval under the Framework.
Nature Credit Issuance Rules	<i>To be advised</i> , these Rules will provide the: 1) criteria for when Proponents can use Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts to underpin standalone biodiversity/nature-credit issuance; and 2) the process for gaining approval to do so from AfN.

Table 2. Description of Accounting for Nature® Framework Guideline documents

Guideline Document	Description
Materiality Guidelines	These Guidelines help Proponents undertake a Materiality Assessment to assist with identifying and prioritising what Assets and locations should be included in an Environmental Account.
Method Guidelines: Guideline for Developing Native Vegetation Methods	These Guidelines are designed to assist in the development of Methods to assess the Condition of native vegetation. The Guidelines discuss the various approaches that can be taken and explore what types of Indicators could be included in a native vegetation Method.
Method Guidelines: Provisional Guidelines for Developing Bird Methods	These provisional Guidelines are designed to assist in the development of Methods that use bird presence/absence surveys to produce Environmental Accounts.
Screening Guidelines	These Guidelines provide high-level advice on how to conduct a preliminary Screening Assessment before developing an Environmental Account with respect to nature-related risks and opportunities.
Trustmark Guidelines	These Guidelines are designed to ensure correct application of Accounting for Nature® Certification Trustmarks and other Accounting for Nature® branded assets.

2.4 Key Concepts

2.4.1 Environmental Asset

Environmental Assets ('Assets') are any biophysical feature in nature that can be measured within the three Realms⁴ of land, ocean, and freshwater or the three transition realms (land/ocean, freshwater/ocean, land/freshwater). Environmental Assets can be specific, such as an individual fauna species, or broad such as a group of fauna species or an ecosystem. Environmental Assets generally fall into one of the following asset classes that comprise broad components of the environment and are used for reporting and aggregation purposes.: fauna, vegetation, soil/sediment, water, and ecosystems.

2.4.2 Econd[®]

The Econd[®], short for "Environmental Condition Index", is the core metric used in all Asset Accounts. It is an index between 0 and 100, where 100 represents the Condition of an Environmental Asset in its undegraded (natural or best-on-offer) state – its 'Reference Condition Benchmark'.

The Econd[®] index is unique to the Accounting for Nature[®] Framework. It allows different Environmental Assets, in different places, at different times, and scales to be easily understood, compared, and communicated.

Each Econd[®] is constructed using an accredited Method that outlines a set of measurable and scientifically-robust indicators that together represent the Condition of an Environmental Asset. Each indicator is scored separately to produce an Indicator Condition Score (ICS). The ICS is also an index between 0 and 100, where 100 describes the reference state of the Indicator. ICSs are then combined to calculate the Econd[®].

Methods and the resulting ICS and Econd[®] calculations, differ between Environmental Assets, biomes, Scales, and geographies. The approach to generating an Econd[®] is explained in detail in each Accredited Method (Section 4). The change in the Econd[®] through time allows for the trend in the Condition of the Environmental Asset to be assessed and clearly communicated.

Interpreting an Econd[®] depends on how it was constructed. Key considerations that influence how an Econd[®] should be interpreted include the:

- Accuracy Level of the Econd[®];
- area and Scale the Econd[®] represents;
- Reporting Period that the Econd[®] represents; and
- Condition Target of the Econd[®] (if relevant).

2.4.3 Pcond

The Pcond, or "Production Condition Index" is an optional metric for inclusion in Asset Accounts. It is also an index between 0 and 100 that describes the Condition of an Environmental Asset relative to its potential to produce a defined set of goods or services e.g. a crop, or pasture.

⁴ IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology

The key difference between the Econd[®] and the Pcond is that the Reference Benchmark of the Pcond (Pcond of 100) is based on the optimal productive Condition, i.e., the maximum potential of the Asset to produce food and fibre, while the Reference Benchmark of the Econd[®] is based on an 'undegraded' environmental Condition. The same indicators can often be measured to generate both the Econd[®] and Pcond scores.

The Pcond can be applied to describe the Condition of agricultural (horticulture and cropping) soils and productive vegetation Conditions in grazing lands and must always be accompanied by an Econd[®].

2.4.4 Environmental Account

The Accounting for Nature[®] Framework is used to produce Certified Environmental Accounts, which are used to underpin credible public or confidential claims in the market regarding the state of nature.

An Environmental Account is a single registered environmental accounting project that reports on the Condition of one or more Environmental Assets. Environmental Accounts are comprised of individual Environmental Asset Accounts ('Asset Account') which individually reflect the Condition of one Environmental Asset as specified by a single accredited Method.

Environmental Accounts are spatially explicit and cover a discrete area of any size, from tens of hectares to millions of hectares. Under the Framework, each Environmental Account is categorised as either a Project-, Property-, Aggregate-, or Regional-scale. The Asset Account(s) must be contained within the Boundary of the Environmental Account, but they each can be a smaller area. The area of the Asset Accounts depends on the Purpose of the Environmental Account and where the Asset exists within the Environmental Account Boundary.

Asset Accounts can be designed to measure Condition at a single point in time, monitor the change in Condition over time, or monitor the change in Condition over time and attribute the cause of change to a specific management action. For Asset Accounts that monitor change over time, the Framework allows proponents to define a custom Reporting Period (from less than a year, up to five years). This means that an Econd[®] can represent a month, a year, or multiple years. Once nominated, this Reporting Period must be kept consistent for the lifetime of the Asset Account.

For Asset Accounts that aim to attribute the cause of change, there are additional criteria to ensure that a robust approach such as Counterfactual Analysis is undertaken to confidently understand the cause of change.

Asset Accounts can be developed to produce an Econd[®] at the following Accuracy Levels – 95%, 90%, or 80%. These levels describe how accurate the Account is at describing the Condition of the Environmental Asset. Econd[®] accuracy is important because it:

- describes how accurate a Method is at measuring the Condition of the Environmental Asset;
- helps determine whether a change in Condition is significant; and
- enables readers to easily assess and compare the robustness of different Methods to determine which is most appropriate for their Purpose.

2.4.5 Condition Targets

Condition Targets can be used to describe the intended or desired Econd[®] or Pcond for a particular Environmental Asset. This is often the realistically attainable Condition for the given Asset when considering, for example, existing infrastructure or land-use which may be used to produce food and fibre.

In some instances, the 'target Condition' might be the same as the Reference Benchmark, where the goal is to fully restore an Asset to its original Condition (for example, in a nature reserve). However, for most Accounts, the Condition Target will be less than the Reference Benchmark. An Econd[®] of 100 is often not realistically achievable for all Environmental Assets, especially when Environmental Accounts have multiple functions or stakeholders.

Often the entire Environmental Account area will have multiple uses and can't be solely dedicated to conservation. Additionally, the cost of restoring an Asset to a fully undegraded Condition (i.e., Econd[®] 100) might be significantly more than restoring the Asset to a lower Condition (i.e., Econd[®] 80), with potentially only marginal benefits. In some cases, it may be impossible to restore some Assets to an undegraded state (e.g. due to extinctions or the time required for an Asset to recover).

The setting of Condition Targets as part of an Environmental Account is optional but can help provide context for the Account (and resulting Econd[®]), assist with conveying the Purpose of the Account by giving Proponents a target to aim for, and can help the audience and public interpret and understand the results of the Account.

Condition Targets can be set for both the Econd[®], Pcond and specific Indicators.

2.5 The 5-step process to build, certify and maintain Environmental Accounts

Under the Accounting for Nature® Framework, Proponents must undertake five steps to develop their Environmental Accounts, have them Certified, and achieve access to the **Certified – AfN Verified** or **Certified – Independent Audit** Trustmarks. The 5-step process is outlined below Figure 2 and is described in further detail in the **Accounting for Nature® Environmental Account Rules**.



Figure 2. The 5-step process.

3 Purpose, application, definitions, and revision of this Standard

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Standard is to provide the criteria around key components of the Accounting for Nature® Framework for developing and certifying Environmental Accounts.

Criteria are provided for the following key components that contribute to Certified Environmental Accounts:

- Method development and accreditation
- Setting of Reference Condition Benchmarks
- Registration of Accounts and Portfolios
- Environmental Account Certification
- Environmental Account Registry
- Expert Accreditation
- Auditor Accreditation
- Adherence to Claims Rules
- Carbon offset stapling
- Nature credit issuance

3.2 Application

This Standard is globally applicable and can be applied to any Environmental Asset, in any country, at any scale.

3.3 Definitions

A full list of definitions used in the Standard is available in the **Accounting for Nature® Glossary**.

3.4 Standard revision

The AfN Executive review the Standard at least once every five years in line with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code of Best Practice⁵. The Standard undergoes reviews to ensure it remains a global leader in environmental Condition accounting.

Any updates to the Standard reflect the evolution and uptake of best practices in environmental Condition accounting. Updates typically improve the implementation of the Standard and address stakeholder concerns.

Starting on 20 of July 2023 and continuing until the 14 December 2023, AfN extends an invitation to stakeholders to examine and offer their input on Version 4.0 of this Standard. During this six-month testing and consultation phase the revised Criteria in the New Standard will be effective. We do not anticipate conflicts to arise but will work with users if a non-compliance is identified.

⁵ <https://www.isealalliance.org/defining-credible-practice/iseal-codes-good-practice>

4 Method Development and Accreditation

Methods provide specific detailed instructions on how to measure and monitor the Condition of a specific Environmental Asset in a consistent and comparable way to produce an Econd[®].

The Independent Science Committee (Section 2.2.4) is responsible for reviewing Methods (including confirming the Accuracy Level(s) of the Method) and providing a recommendation to the AfN Executive (Section 2.2.2) as to whether a new Method, or update to a Method is suitable for accreditation under the Framework. The AfN Executive are responsible for the final accreditation of a Method. Both the Independent Science Committee and AfN Executive review and assess Methods within the context of the below criteria.

The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature[®] Method Rules**.

Important: Accredited Methods can only be used for creating Accounting for Nature[®] Environmental Accounts and cannot be used to make claims without a Certified Environmental Account.

4.1 Method approval criteria

The below criteria apply to all Methods developed for accreditation under the Framework.

4.1(a)	The Method must state what Purpose(s) the Method can be (or not be) used to support.
4.1(b)	The Method must clearly state what Environmental Asset it measures, and how to define and classify Sub-assets (where relevant – for example soil orders within the soil asset, or vegetation classes within a vegetation asset).
4.1(c)	The Method must state what expertise is required to implement it, such as specialist knowledge required to implement various components of the Method.
4.1(d)	The Method must nominate, explain, and justify an Econd [®] Accuracy Level(s) in the context of the Purpose it is designed for.
4.1(e)	The Method must describe if it can be used to attribute the cause of change to a particular management action or activity, such as by using Counterfactual Analysis. If the Method includes attribution, then it must also adhere to criteria in Section 4.1.1 and/or Section 4.1.2.
4.1(f)	The Method must clearly state at what Scale it can be applied by describing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the size range at which it can be applied (in hectares); and(ii) what Scale classifications it is appropriate for.
4.1(g)	The Method must describe where it can be applied in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) geographic region (e.g., country, state, or other jurisdiction);(ii) Realm¹; and(iii) biomes and/or functional ecosystem groups (using the IUCN Global Ecosystem Typology).

4.1(h)	The Method must contain a relevant and appropriately comprehensive set(s) of Indicators to measure the Condition of the Environmental Asset. The Indicators and the techniques to measure these must be appropriate for the chosen Accuracy Level(s) of the Method. The Indicators should be independent and when aggregated appropriately represent the Condition of the Environmental Asset. Any Methods that include modelled Indicators, must adhere to Additional Criteria for Models in Section 4.1.2.
4.1(i)	The Method must contain appropriate guidance on how to determine either static or dynamic Reference Benchmarks and adhere to Reference Benchmark criteria in Section 5.
4.1(j)	The Method must contain appropriate rules to ensure results are comparable and consistent over time. Methods must consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) seasonality and natural variation; and (ii) what reporting period is appropriate for the asset (i.e., minimum, and maximum time period an Econd[®] can represent).
4.1(k)	The Method must contain repeatable instructions for the collection (stratification and a representative data collection plan), analysis (laboratory and/or spatial), and storage and management of data that are appropriate for the chosen accuracy(s).
4.1(l)	The Method must clearly explain how to calculate Indicator Condition Scores, which are on a scale of 0 to 100 (where 100 represents the Reference Benchmark).
4.1(m)	The Method must clearly explain how to calculate Econd [®] and Pcond (if relevant), that are on a scale of 0 to 100 (where 100 represents the Reference Benchmark). If the Method includes Pcond, the Method must ensure the Pcond is always accompanied by an Econd [®] .
4.1(n)	The Method must contain a worked example.
4.1(o)	The Method must include a checklist that outlines what documentation, data, or other supplementary information is required for an Account developed using the Method to be audited.

4.1.1 Additional criteria for Methods that attribute change using physical control sites

Method Authors have the option to incorporate additional sampling requirements, such as physical control sites, as a way of controlling for variables and attributing change in Condition to specific management activities/interventions. The following criteria apply to Methods that include additional sampling requirements for attributing change.

4.1.1(a)	The Method includes rules on how to establish paired 'control' areas (areas that do not experience the specific management activities or intervention) and 'intervention/management' areas (areas that experience the specific intervention or management action) that are the same in all regards with the exception of the intervention/management action (to be confirmed through an initial survey(s)).
4.1.1(b)	The Method includes specific instructions on how to sample 'control' and 'intervention/management areas.'

4.1.2 Additional criteria for Methods that include models

To reduce sampling effort and improve cost-efficiency of environmental monitoring, some Methods may elect to include scientific conceptual or mathematical models. The following criteria apply to Methods that include models.

4.1.2(a)	The Method must provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of the model's construction and how it is applied.
4.1.2(b)	The Method includes instructions on how to and when to calibrate the model to the site.
4.1.2(c)	The Method describes what independent variables the model draws on, and how these are measured/sourced.
4.1.2(d)	The Method clearly outlines the assumptions associated with the model. The assumptions must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) logical/conceptually sound;(ii) based on science; and(iii) can be empirically tested.
4.1.2(e)	The Method describes the possible error of the model and how this can impact the results.
4.1.2(f)	The Method describes possible biases that may impact the results of the model.
4.1.2(g)	The Method ensures that the model is applied consistently over time. If the model changes, any impacts due to changes in the model can be quantified.

5 Reference Condition Benchmarks

Reference Condition Benchmarks ('Reference Benchmarks') are an integral part of the Framework. They represent the Condition state against which past, present and future measures are compared to.

The Reference Benchmark facilitates standardised scoring of each indicator on a scale of 0 to 100 which enables the ICS and Econd® to be compared for any Environmental Asset, in any location in the world, at any scale, and at any time.

The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Accounting for Nature® Method Rules** and **Accounting for Nature® Environmental Account Rules**.

5.1 Econd® Reference Benchmark criteria

The below criteria apply to Econd® Reference Benchmarks.

- 5.1 (a) The Econd® Reference Benchmark must represent or be a reasonable and justified estimate of the environmental Condition of the asset in its natural 'undegraded' or 'best possible' state. The Econd® Reference Benchmark must be fit-for-purpose, robust, and verifiable.

5.2 Pcond Reference Benchmarks

The below criteria apply to Pcond Reference Benchmarks.

- 5.2 (a) The Pcond Reference Benchmark must represent or be a reasonable and justified estimate of the optimal productive Condition of the environmental asset. The Pcond Reference Benchmark must be fit-for-purpose, robust, and verifiable.

5.3 Criteria for all reference benchmarks

The below criteria apply to Econd® and Pcond Reference Benchmarks.

- 5.3(a) A Reference Benchmark for each Indicator must be static or dynamic.
A static Reference Benchmark:
(i) can be used for any Environmental Asset and Indicator.
A dynamic Reference Benchmark:
(i) can be used for Assets and Indicators that have high natural variability; and
(ii) must be designed in a way to appropriately reflect the natural variability within a system.
- 5.3(b) Where a Reference Benchmark is updated or changed as a result of new research, the whole Asset Account (past and present) must be recalculated with the new values, or a new Account started.
- 5.3(c) Existing records or datasets that are used to establish Reference Benchmark must be:
(i) appropriate; and
(ii) most recent (i.e. not superseded with a newer version).

5.3(d)	<p>Local reference sites may be used to determine the Reference Benchmark. Local reference sites must be confirmed by a suitably qualified person as being an appropriate representation or estimate of the Asset/Sub-asset in an undegraded or best possible state. Evidence required for this can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) evidence of no recent major management interventions; and/or (ii) evidence of no or minimal historical or recent disturbance – natural or anthropogenic (e.g., change in management, natural disasters, disease, flooding, invasive species, or any other asset-specific negative impact). <p>At least three local reference sites must be established per Asset/Sub-asset (in the case where fewer sites are required, this must be appropriately justified) and must contain the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) have similar environmental context (e.g., climate, disturbance) to the accounting area; (ii) have similar positional context (e.g., slope, depth) to the accounting area; (iii) comprise the same Asset/Sub-asset (i.e., vegetation type, soil type, water type, etc.) as the accounting area (where required); (iv) be suitably separated from areas of disturbance or edges; and (v) where possible, be located in the largest area available of the undegraded asset.
5.3(e)	<p>Models may be used to determine Reference Benchmarks. Where a model is used to determine Reference Benchmarks it must adhere to the Additional Criteria for Models in Section 4.1.2.</p>
5.3(f)	<p>Where criteria 5.3(c), 5.3(d), and/or 5.3(e) cannot be met, expert opinion may be used to determine Reference Benchmarks. Where expert opinion is used to determine reference benchmarks, it must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) sourced from an individual or a panel who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) experienced and familiar with the chosen assets and sub-assets; and b) able to demonstrate their expertise (i.e., publications, field experience etc). (ii) informed by any available data; (iii) endorsed through an independent review (if possible).

6 Registration

The Framework requires that Environmental Accounts are first registered with AfN. Proponents also have the option of registering a Portfolio of Environmental Accounts. The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Environmental Account Rules**.

6.1 Environmental Account Registration criteria

Environmental Account Registration acts as a checkpoint to assess whether the planned Environmental Account is appropriate given the Proponents intended Purpose, prior to the Proponent commencing data collection.

The criteria below apply to Environmental Accounts that are undergoing Registration.

6.1(a)	The Proponent ⁶ has Operational Control across the entire account area or permission from the entity with Operational Control.
6.1(b)	The Authorised Representative has written permission to develop an Environmental Account for the Proponent.
6.1(c)	The Proponent and/or the Authorised Representative have completed the online Accounting for Nature® Accredited Expert course.
6.1(d)	The Proponent meets the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the Proponent (if applicable) and/or the Proponent's entity is legitimate and correctly registered;(ii) the Proponent and/or the Proponent's entity is not under investigation for any legal or regulatory issues; and(iii) the Proponent and/or the Proponent's entity has no prior negative findings or current investigations with regards to exploitation of human rights, animal welfare or the environment.
6.1(e)	The registration must provide an accurate description of the Proponent (or the Proponents' entity), a logo, and account photo provided in correct format (if applicable).
6.1(f)	The registration must include a list of the team involved in developing the Environmental Account. Where a Method requires specific expertise to implement, the expertise of the appropriate team members is to be clearly disclosed and justified.
6.1(g)	The registration must clearly articulate the Purpose, including the intended Claim that the Environmental Account is designed to support (if applicable). It must include reference to the target audience and the decisions the account is intended to inform.
6.1(h)	If the Purpose of the Environmental Account is to support unitisation, the Proponent must nominate the scheme they are intending to use it for.

⁶ The Proponent can be an individual or an organisation, where it is an organisation they must nominate a key contact, which is the person who has authority to sign the required agreements. The Authorised Representative is the project lead (either internal or external to the organisation, and often an Expert) and in some cases the Authorised Representative is the key contact for an organisation.

6.1(i)	The registration must detail the Environmental Asset(s) and locations that are intended to be included in the Environmental Account. The Environmental Assets and locations must be appropriate for the Purpose of the account and may be supported by a Materiality Assessment (if applicable).
6.1(j)	The registration must outline what Methods have been selected for each Asset Account. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The Method(s) selected must be accredited by AfN and are appropriate for the Purpose of the Environmental Account. (ii) Where the purpose is to attribute change in Condition to management activities the proposed approach must be described either in the Method chosen or as per criteria in Section 7.2.2.
6.1(k)	The registration must clearly outline the Reporting Period for each Asset Account (the nominated Reporting Period will be consistent for the lifetime of the Account, i.e., if a three-year Reporting Period is chosen, then every account must represent a three-year period). The Reporting Period must not exceed five years and must be appropriate to the Purpose of the Account and supported by the chosen Methods. For Accounts with multi-year Reporting Periods, a schedule for data collection across the Reporting Period is required, which must be consistent with the requirements of the chosen Methods.
6.1(l)	The registration must include the spatial boundaries for the Environmental Account area provided as GIS file in a commonly applied datum. It must also disclose what its intended scale is: Project, Property, Regional, or Aggregate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) If Project, or Regional Scale, the Environmental Account area must also be accompanied by a percent that describes what area the Account represents of the larger management area (for example, the project is 10% of a property).
6.1(m)	For each Asset Account, the registration must include the initial stratification and data collection plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a shapefile in a commonly applied datum of the Assessment Units; (ii) a description of how the Assessment Units were determined including data sources and ground-truthing (if relevant); and (iii) a table of the Assessment Units, which includes the name, area (ha), data collection plan per Assessment Unit (if relevant) and expected data collection schedule.
6.1(n)	For each Asset Account, the registration must include a description of how the Reference Benchmarks will be determined, as per the Method requirements and Reference Benchmark Criteria (Section 5).
6.1(o)	The registration must nominate whether the Environmental Account is intended to be a Public or a Private account (see Section 6.1.2).
6.1(p)	The Proponent must agree to the Accounting for Nature® Data Licence Agreement.

6.1.1 Additional Criteria for Regional Account Registration

The following additional criteria apply to Regional-scale Environmental Accounts.

6.1.1(a)	The Proponent is a recognised entity that has oversight across the region's boundaries.
6.1.1(b)	The Regional-Scale Environmental Account boundaries have been defined, including all areas recognised as being within the governance of the Proponent's entity.
6.1.1(c)	The Method(s) selected are appropriate to the scale and accessibility constraints for the Proponent's entity.

6.1.2 Additional Information on Private Environmental Accounts

Proponents who do not wish to disclose their Environmental Accounts publicly have the option to privately register and certify an Environmental Account. Proponents who choose this option must still abide by all Certification requirements outlined in this Standard. However, the Environmental Account Registry page will not be made public for these Environmental Accounts.

Proponents of Private Accounts are not authorised to use the Accounting for Nature® Trustmark (except for internal, peer-to-peer, business-to-business confidential purposes) or make any Confidential Claims regarding their Environmental Account until such time that the Account is activated as a public account on the Environmental Account Registry. Refer to Section 10 for associated Claims criteria.

6.2 Portfolio Registration criteria

A Portfolio consists of multiple separate Environmental Accounts that are individually registered but grouped under the management of a single entity (the Portfolio Administrator) and linked in the Accounting for Nature® Registry under the name of that entity. Individual Environmental Accounts in a Portfolio may have different Environmental Assets, Methods, and Baselines. Claims can be made by the individual Environmental Account Proponent and by the Portfolio Administrator. The following criteria apply to the Registration of Portfolios.

6.2(a)	The Portfolio Administrator must have permission from each Proponent to include the Environmental Accounts in the Portfolio.
6.2(b)	The Portfolio Administrator meets the following requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the Portfolio Administrator is legitimate and correctly registered;(ii) the Portfolio Administrator is not under investigation for any legal or regulatory issues; and(iii) the Portfolio Administrator has no prior negative findings or current investigations with regards to exploitation of human rights, animal welfare or the environment.
6.2(c)	The Environmental Accounts to be included in a Portfolio must have active Registration or Certification status in the Registry.

7 Account Certification



Under the Framework, Environmental Accounts that are submitted to AfN and meet the Certification criteria are eligible to be Certified by AfN.

The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Environmental Account Rules** and **Accounting for Nature® Audit Rules** documents.

7.1 Certification pathways

Under the Accounting for Nature® Framework, there are two pathways to Certification: 1) Independent Audit; and 2) AfN Verified. These audit processes are based on a risk-based audit approach which is designed to maximise the integrity of the Framework while balancing the need for a cost-effective, streamlined Certification and compliance regime. Information on rules and requirements for each audit option and the engagement process for Auditors can be found in the **Accounting for Nature® Audit Rules**.

Table 3 Overview of the Certification pathways under the Accounting for Nature® Framework

Certification pathways	
CERTIFIED - Independent Audit	CERTIFIED - AfN Verified
	
<p>The Independent Audit Certification pathway requires the engagement of an Accounting for Nature® Accredited Auditor to obtain either a Limited or Reasonable Assurance audit for the associated Environmental Account and the Claims it is being used to support.</p> <p>The Independent Audit option provides third-party assurance as to whether an Environmental Account and associated claims comply in all material aspects with the specified requirements of Accounting for Nature® Standard and Method-specific criteria. It is most suited to Environmental Accounts where the intention is to underpin credits and green claims.</p>	<p>The AfN Verified Certification pathway requires AfN (not an independent auditor) to verify each environmental account through its standardised Technical Assessment process (charged as per AfN’s Fee Schedule) against the Certification criteria in the Accounting for Nature® Standard and relevant Method-specific criteria.</p> <p>The AfN Verified option provides a pathway for organisations and individuals seeking to inform management activities and not seeking direct monetisation from their Environmental Account through biodiversity credits or carbon offset co-benefit linking.</p>

7.2 Environmental Account Certification criteria

The following criteria apply to Environmental Accounts that are undergoing Certification.

7.2(a)	The Environment Account must comply with all Environmental Account validation criteria in Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 and/or 7.2.3 (if required).
7.2(b)	The Proponent must select a Certification pathway that is appropriate for their Purpose and intended Claims. An Independent Audit Report or AfN Technical Assessment (according to the chosen Certification pathway) must be completed and determine (within the scope of the audit process) that the Environmental Account contains no material non-compliance or misstatements.
7.2(c)	The Environmental Account must include an Information Statement that complies with Information Statement Criteria and 0 and has been audited in accordance with the selected audit approach as detailed in the Audit Rules.
7.2(d)	The Proponent must submit a signed Compliance and Good Faith Statement
7.2(e)	The Proponent must sign all applicable Licence Agreements which have been countersigned by an authorised AfN executive.
7.2(f)	Where the measurements or data inputs for an account represents a point in time greater than 24 months before Certification, the account must be accompanied with an Annual Certification Compliance Report.

7.2.1 Environmental account validation criteria

All Environmental Accounts (regardless of whether they are Independently Audited, or AfN Verified) are assessed against the following criteria to determine if the account is valid and eligible to proceed with Certification under the Framework.

7.2.1(a)	The Environmental Account must have a clear description of the Purpose, with regards to the intended Claims, its target audience, and intended decisions it is to inform.
7.2.1(b)	The Scope of the Environmental Account must be appropriate for the Purpose of the Environmental Account.
7.2.1(c)	The Environmental Account must contain an appropriate set of Environmental Assets, each of which are defined in accordance with the applicable Method(s) and are appropriate for the intended Purpose of the Account.
7.2.1(d)	The Environmental Account must be developed with appropriate expertise, as required by the applicable Method(s).
7.2.1(e)	Each Asset Account must use Indicators that are prescribed in the applicable Method(s) and in accordance with the chosen Accuracy Level.
7.2.1(f)	Each Asset Account must have determined appropriate Reference Benchmark values in accordance with the applicable Method(s), and as per Section 5

7.2.1(g)	<p>Each Asset Account must adhere to the data requirements in the applicable Method(s) and use robust and unbiased data to measure or estimate the Condition of the Environmental Asset. The following additional points are applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The data must be collected and analysed using approaches prescribed in the applicable Methods. (ii) Where multi-year data collection is appropriate for the Reporting Period, a schedule must be approved by AfN (as part of registration) and adhered to for the life of the account. Where the data collection schedule cannot be adhered to, refer to Criteria in Section 7.2.3. (iii) All data sources are retrievable, accessible, disclosed and appropriately referenced.
7.2.1(h)	<p>Each Asset Account must adhere to time-series consistency criteria outlined in Section 7.2.3.</p>
7.2.1(i)	<p>The Indicator Condition Scores and the Econd[®] (or Pcond) in the Asset Accounts must be calculated in accordance with the applicable Method(s). Evidence for this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Providing the workbook (or equivalent) for data storage, analysis and calculations (e.g., an excel workbook with formulas and cell references, or an R script and associated datafiles). (ii) Providing access to all raw data (e.g., photos and data for field work and editable files for any relevant desktop analysis). (iii) All sources used to support the calculations are provided and appropriately referenced.
7.2.1(j)	<p>Where the Asset Account attributes the Condition of the Environmental Asset to management activities, it must do so using a robust attribution approach as set out in the criteria in Section 7.2.2.</p>
7.2.1(k)	<p>Environmental Accounts (through their Information Statements) must be transparent and disclose all material uncertainties to ensure intended users, including third parties, have adequate information to make decisions with reasonable confidence. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) The account must provide sufficient information to enable third parties to comprehend how the data was collected and analysed, and the Econd[®], Pcond and ICS were calculated. (ii) The account must provide sufficient information to enable third parties to comprehend (and where possible access), how all the resources, references and experts contributed to the construction of the Econd[®], Pcond and Indicator Condition Scores. (iii) The Account must provide sufficient information about any material uncertainties and limitations to enable third parties to judge the reliability of the information in the account.
7.2.1(l)	<p>Where an Asset Account deviates from the Method or any other Criteria, for any reason, it must be fully disclosed and justified in the Information Statement, and where appropriate a course of corrective actions presented.</p>

7.2.2 Additional validation criteria for environmental accounts that attribute change

Accounts may choose to undertake further analysis to attribute any changes in Condition to specific management actions or interventions. This is commonly done through Counterfactual Analysis. The following criteria apply to Asset Accounts that are developed in a way to specifically attribute change in Condition to management actions or interventions.

For physical control sites	
7.2.2(a)	Physical control sites must be located in areas where the same asset/sub-asset is not the subject of the management intervention that the change is being attributed to. They must be established in accordance with the Method, OR if the chosen Method does not include specific provisions for attribution (using physical controls), then it must meet criteria 7.2.2(b) and 7.2.2 (c) below.
7.2.2(b)	The Asset Account must include paired 'control' areas and 'intervention/management' areas that are the same in all regards with the exception of the intervention/management action that the change is being attributed to (to be confirmed through an initial survey(s)).
7.2.2(c)	The 'control' and 'intervention/management' areas must be sampled at the same frequency and with the same indicators as dictated by the Method.
For modelled attribution	
7.2.2(d)	The modelled attribution must be conducted in accordance with the Method.

7.2.3 Time-series consistency criteria

The following criteria apply to all accounts to maintain time-series. In the event that a time-series cannot be maintained, this will likely result in a 'break of the time-series'.

Methods, Accuracy Level, Asset Mapping and/or Reference Benchmarks	
7.2.3(a)	Where an Asset Account has changed the Method, Asset Mapping (e.g. changed Sub-asset mapping), Accuracy Level, and/or Reference Benchmarks, the time-series must be maintained through either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Full recalculation, which involves recalculation of the past Econd[®] and Indicator Condition Scores using the new Method, new Asset mapping, or Reference Benchmarks to ensure time-series consistency.(ii) If (i) is not possible, the account must break the time series, where the past Econd[®] and Indicator Condition Scores are not recalculated, but the Accounts fully disclose the changes and their effects on interpreting the trends in the Econd[®] and Indicator Condition Scores.

Boundaries

- 7.2.3(b) Where an Asset Account Boundary changes, the Proponent must disclose the changes and provide clear justifications for the change in boundaries. Changes less than 5% compared to the Baseline Asset Account Boundary are permitted. Changes greater than 5% must adhere to the following:
- (i) If expansion of the Asset Account Boundary is greater than 5%, and
 - (a) If new sample sites are required (i.e., either expansion of an existing assessment unit requiring more sites and/or a new assessment unit), the new area representing the expansion of the boundary must be established as a new Assessment Unit or a new Account.
 - (b) If no new sample sites are required (i.e., extension of existing assessment unit that already has sufficient sample sites in accordance with the Method), the whole account must be recalculated with new boundaries, and the old account archived.
 - (ii) If subtraction of Asset Account Boundary is greater than 5%, and
 - (a) If required sample sites are removed:
 - i) new sample sites must be established, and the change must be disclosed in the Information Statement; and
 - ii) the new boundary must be established as a new account, and the old account archived.
 - (b) If the sample intensity maintains compliance:
 - i) The whole account must be recalculated with the new boundaries, and the old account archived.

Reporting Period

- 7.2.3(c) An Asset Account must not change its Reporting Period.
- If a new Reporting Period is required, the account must break the time-series, where the past Econ^d® and Indicator Condition Scores are not recalculated, but the changes and their effects on the trends in the Econ^d® and Indicator Condition Scores, is fully disclosed in the Information Statement.

Data collection schedule

- 7.2.3(d) In the event that the data collection schedule was not adhered to, the data collection schedule must be adhered to as closely as practically possible, and any deviations must be fully explained and disclosed in the Information Statement.

7.3 Information Statement criteria

The Information Statement is a document that summarises the purpose, Method(s), and results of the Environmental Account and is required to accompany all Environmental Accounts. The following criteria apply to all Information Statements.

For the environmental account	
7.3(a)	The Information Statement must describe the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Proponent, team, and report authors; (ii) Purpose of the Account including the intended audience; (iii) the Environmental Account area and Scale (project, property, regional, or aggregate); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) If a project, or regional scale, the area must also be accompanied by a percent that describes what area the account represents of the larger management area (for example, the project is 10% of a property). (iv) the area and percentage (of Environmental Account area) of each Asset Account; (v) whether each Asset Account aims to assess the Condition of the Environmental Assets at a point in time; the change in Condition over time; or attribute management activities on the Condition; (vi) a clear explanation of why the selected Asset(s) and Scale are appropriate for the Purpose of the Account; (vii) the chosen Certification pathway (Independent Audit or AfN Verification); (viii) the Reporting Period; (ix) current and historic land uses; and (x) whether there are any stapled/issued environmental products, subject to signing Unitisation License Agreement with AfN.
7.3(b)	The Information Statement must include an Environmental Account summary that includes AfN approved devices to summarise each Asset Account, including the Econd®/Pcond, the Accuracy Level and if applicable the change in Condition and Condition Target.
7.3(c)	If the Environmental Account shows trend, the Information Statement must include an approved graph(s) that represents the Condition of the Environmental Asset(s) since the Baseline, and clearly defines any time-series breaks in the trend. If applicable the Condition Target can be included in this graph.
7.3(d)	The Information Statement must include a description of the significant outcomes with regards to the Condition of each Asset Account.
7.3(e)	Any opinions within the Information Statement that describe the Condition of an Asset in a qualitative manner must be attributed to the author (or third party) and does not misrepresent that the Econd® (or Pcond) confirms that opinion.
7.3(f)	The Information Statement fully references all data sources.
7.3(g)	The Information Statement has correctly displayed data without any transcription errors.
For Each Asset	
7.3(h)	The Information Statement must detail the Method name, and Accuracy Level.
7.3(i)	The Information Statement must describe the data sources and how they were used to generate the Account.

7.3(j)	<p>The Information Statement must include a description (where possible with supporting maps) of the Asset Account area, stratification, and data collection schedule, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Sub-asset areas (where relevant); (ii) broad Condition state and/or management activities; (iii) Assessment Units; and (iv) sample site allocation and timing.
7.3(k)	<p>The Information Statement must include sufficient information to enable third parties to understand how the Indicator Condition Scores and Econd® (and Pcond) were calculated. Including a description of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the indicators and how each was measured/estimated; (ii) the Reference Benchmarks and how each was determined; and, (iii) an overview of the Indicator Condition Score and Econd® (and Pcond) aggregation.
7.3(l)	<p>The Information Statement must include an asset table that summarises the sub-assets and assessment units (where applicable), Indicators, Reference Benchmarks, Indicator Condition Scores, and Econd® (and Pcond) scores over a defined Reporting Period.</p>
7.3(m)	<p>The Information Statement must disclose all material uncertainties and limitations to ensure intended users, including third parties, have adequate information to make decisions with reasonable confidence.</p>

7.4 Certified Account maintenance criteria

The following criteria apply to the maintenance of Environmental Accounts.

7.4(a)	The Annual Certification Compliance Report (ACCR) must be submitted to the AfN Certification team on or within four weeks before the due date (12 months after Certification or the previous ACCR).
7.4(b)	All material changes must be declared in the ACCR.
7.4(c)	The information disclosed in the ACCR must align with the findings of the AfN satellite-based due diligence.
7.4(d)	In the event of an extreme event (e.g. weather) or significant management/land use change, resulting in a significant material change to the Environmental Account, these events must be disclosed when (or as soon as reasonably possible after) the event occurred.
7.4(e)	The next Reporting Period of the Environmental Account must be re-certified (including Technical Assessment or Independent Audit) within five years from the previous Certification.
7.4(f)	The Proponent must pay all applicable fees.

7.5 Portfolio Aggregation Criteria

The Portfolio administrator may generate average Econd® scores that represent Environmental Assets from Certified accounts within the Portfolio. When doing so, the following criteria applies.

7.5(a)	Econd® scores within a Portfolio can only be aggregated into an average Portfolio Econd® where the following characteristics of Environmental Accounts are consistent: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) common Environmental Assets across Environmental Accounts in all accounts in the portfolio; and(ii) at the same Accuracy Level. Note. Regional-scale accounts cannot be aggregated with other scales.
7.5(b)	Average Portfolio Econd® must represent a well-defined time period.
7.5(c)	When calculating the average Portfolio Econd®, there should be no double counting/spatial overlap of Accounts. If there is spatial overlap of Environmental Accounts, the Econd® scores for the overlapping areas should be averaged first before being included in the average Portfolio Econd® score.
7.5(d)	Average Portfolio Econd® should be aggregated using area (or length) weighted averages. Where an area or length weighted average is not appropriate, the unweighted average should be used.
7.5(e)	Any other groupings and averaging of Econd® scores must be meaningful, explained and justified.

8 Experts

Accounting for Nature® Accredited Experts ('Accredited Experts') can help Proponents develop Environmental Accounts. The assistance provided by Experts can include, but is not limited to, assisting users in their materiality assessment, planning, and carrying out fieldwork to collect environmental Condition data, calculating the Econd®, and/or writing an Information Statement.

Experts can be accredited either as Asset Experts or as General Experts. Asset Experts have applied scientific expertise relevant to an environmental asset(s), whilst General Experts have experience in fields relevant to environmental accounting.

All Experts (General and Asset) without previous demonstrated experience in applying the Framework receive Provisional Accreditation status.

Accredited Experts are not employees of AfN. The views, advice and conclusions reached by Accredited Experts do not constitute an endorsement or reflect the view of AfN or any of its employees. No representation, warranty, or guarantee, express or implied, is made by AfN that the information provided by an accredited Expert is accurate, current, or complete.

The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Expert Accreditation Rules**.

8.1 General Expert eligibility criteria

Accounting for Nature® General Experts ('General Experts') have demonstrated experience in a field relevant to environmental accounting and meet the General Expert Criteria.

8.2(a)	Relevant vocational or tertiary-level qualifications in natural sciences, environment, sustainability management or other related disciplines.
8.2(b)	A minimum of three years of work experience in a related field, such as the application of environmental accounting, natural resource audits, environmental impact studies, monitoring & management of environmental assets etc.
8.2(c)	Knowledge of the Framework and account development process, gained through successful completion of the Accounting for Nature® Accredited Expert Course.
8.2(d)	For an Accredited Expert to have their Provisional status removed, they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) demonstrate experience in applying a Method to collect field data for a Certified Environmental Account;(ii) demonstrate significant involvement in the stratification of an Environmental Account, involvement in the Econd® calculation; and/or(iii) lead the writing process of an Information Statement.

8.2 Asset Expert eligibility criteria

Accounting for Nature® Asset Experts ('Asset Experts') have demonstrated experience in their field of expertise and meet the Asset Expert Criteria.

8.3(a)	Relevant vocational or tertiary-level qualifications in natural sciences, environment, sustainability management or other related disciplines.
8.3(b)	A minimum of three years of work experience in their nominated field of expertise.
8.3(c)	Knowledge of the Accounting for Nature® Framework and account development process, gained through successful completion of the Accounting for Nature® Accredited Expert Course.
8.3(d)	For an Accredited Expert to have their Provisional status removed, they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) demonstrate experience in applying a Method to collect field data for a Certified Environmental Account;(ii) demonstrate significant involvement in the stratification of an Environmental Account, and involvement in the Econd® calculation; and/or(iii) lead the writing process of an Information Statement.

8.3 Maintaining Expert accreditation

Accredited Experts can renew their Accreditation annually by meeting the following criteria.

8.4(a)	The Accredited Expert has confirmed that the details on in the Expert Directory are up to date.
8.4(b)	The Accredited Expert has provided evidence of meeting the requirements outlined in the Continual Professional Development (CPD) section of the Accounting for Nature® Processes: Experts document.
8.4(c)	The Accredited Expert has paid the renewal fee.

9 Auditors

Accounting for Nature® Accredited Auditors ('Accredited Auditors') are experienced auditors who possess the skills to audit and verify the rigour and accuracy of Certified Environmental Accounts.

An Accredited Auditor must be engaged by a Proponent for the purposes of certifying a Certified – Independent Audit Environmental Account. All Auditors without previous experience in certifying Environmental Accounts under the Framework receive Provisional Accreditation status.

Accredited Auditors are not employees of AfN. The views, advice and conclusions reached by Accredited Auditor do not constitute an endorsement or reflect the view of AfN or any of its employees. No representation, warranty, or guarantee, express or implied, is made by AfN that the information provided by Accredited Auditor is accurate, current, or complete.

The criteria in this section should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Audit Rules**.

9.1 Auditor eligibility criteria

Prospective Auditors must meet minimum eligibility criteria to demonstrate their experience in conducting environmental (and/or other) audits and their knowledge of the Accounting for Nature® Framework.

9.1(a)	Relevant tertiary-level or specific auditor qualifications (e.g., accounting, finance etc).
9.1(b)	Minimum experience in preparing audits (1000 hours).
9.1(c)	Demonstrated audit, assurance, and audit team leadership experience.
9.1(d)	Knowledge of the Accounting for Nature® Framework and account development process, gained through successful completion of the Accounting for Nature® Accredited Expert Course.
9.1(e)	Confirm they are a 'fit and proper person', as per the criteria outlined in the AfN Auditor Application Form.
9.1(f)	For an Accredited Auditor to have their Provisional status removed, they must demonstrate substantial involvement in an Independent Audit of an Environmental Account.

9.2 Maintaining Auditor accreditation

Accredited Auditors can renew their Accreditation annually by meeting the following criteria.

9.2(a)	The Accredited Auditor has confirmed that the details on in the Auditor Directory are up to date.
9.2(b)	The Accredited Auditor has provided evidence of meeting the requirements outlined in the Continual Professional Development (CPD) section of the Accounting for Nature® Audit Rules.
9.2(c)	The Accredited Auditor has paid the renewal fee.

10 Claims

Proponents who have had their Environmental Account Certified by AfN are only permitted to make Public Claims after their Environmental Account is made public on the Environmental Account Registry.

This section lists the general claims criteria which must be adhered to when making Claims about a Certified Environmental Account and/or when using the “Accounting for Nature” and “Econd” registered Trademarks.

These criteria should be read in conjunction with the **Accounting for Nature® Claims Rules** which lists further criteria for making claims and using the Trustmark and associated brand assets.

10.1 General Claims Criteria

The following criteria apply to all Proponents with a Certified Environmental Account (both public and private).

10.1(a)	Claims must pertain to and be supported by an Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Account that is underpinned by an Accounting for Nature® Accredited Method that is fit-for-purpose and that allows for meaningful comparison of the environmental Condition over time.
10.1(b)	Claims must be accurate, detailed, and scientifically supported (i.e., any figures must be the same as evidenced in the Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Account) to ensure the measurement of and trend in environmental Condition, Accuracy Level, and Certification pathway (etc.) are not misrepresented.
10.1(c)	Claims must refer to a specific purpose and not be open to broader interpretation, e.g., using the Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Account to evidence environmental co-benefits.
10.1(d)	Claims must be articulated in line with the level of understanding of the intended audience and in a manner that outcomes, attributions, and benefits are not misrepresented.
10.1(e)	Written/published Public Claims must always include the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) the Account ID of the Environmental Account either in the text of the claim or via the supplied QR code, Certification Passport, or a footnote;(ii) the Certification Type (i.e. Certified – Independent Audit or Certified – AfN Verified), either as text or with the approved Trustmark; and(iii) a link to the Environmental Account Registry webpage either in the text of the claim, via the supplied QR code, Certification Passport or a footnote.

10.1.1 Additional Criteria for Private Environmental Account confidential claims

10.1.1(a)	Private Accounts must not make public claims, or publicly use the Accounting for Nature® Trustmark.
10.1.1(b)	Private accounts must only be used for confidential reporting/disclosure purposes e.g., internal, peer-to-peer, and/or, business-to-business communications.

10.2 Claims non-compliance

AfN reserves the right to review Public Claims to determine if they meet the above criteria, the requirements of the **Accounting for Nature® Claims Rules**, and other relevant Accounting for Nature® documents, to ensure there is no breach of the **Accounting for Nature® Certification License Agreement** and **Accounting for Nature® Standard**.

If AfN identifies any non-compliant Claims or the use of the Accounting for Nature® Company Logo, Accounting for Nature® Trustmark, trademarks and associated marketing assets, the Approved User (or responsible party) will be notified of the breach in writing, in accordance with AfN's claims non-compliance process, and required to amend the non-compliant claim or marketing collateral accordingly. In serious cases of non-compliance, AfN may ask the Approved User (or responsible entity) to issue a public statement informing the market of the error in the claim or marketing material being made.

Should the Approved User (or responsible entity) fail to comply with AfN's requests to rectify the claim or marketing material, AfN reserves the right, under the Accounting for Nature® Certification Licence Agreement, to undertake one or more of the following:

- Issue a public statement informing the market of the unauthorised claim or use of Accounting for Nature® Trustmark, trademarks, and associated marketing assets.
- Decertify the Approved User's Certified Environmental Account to which the non-compliant claim or marketing material relates to; and potentially,
- Issue a public statement informing the market that the Certified Environmental Account to which the non-compliant claim/marketing material relates to has been "decertified due to non-compliance".

11 Carbon offset linking and labelling to support environmental co-benefit verification

Rules relating to the stapling of Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts to carbon offset units, to support environmental co-benefit verification (for example), are currently under development. These rules will provide:

- 1) the criteria for when Proponents can link/staple carbon offset units with Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts (to be included in this Standard);
- 2) the standardised format for labelling carbon offsets projects and (where possible) respective units in the respective registries; and,
- 3) the process and fees for gaining approval to link and label from AfN.

12 Nature credit issuance

Rules relating to the issuance by third-parties of Nature/Biodiversity Credits using Certified Environmental Accounts are currently under development. The rules will provide:

- 1) the criteria for when Proponents can use Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts to underpin standalone nature-credit issuance (to be included in this Standard); and,
- 2) the process and fees for gaining approval to do so from AfN.

13 Feedback process

13.1 Feedback process

AfN welcomes feedback from users of the Framework, stakeholders and the public on the Standard and any components of the Framework.

Feedback will be considered and, where appropriate, incorporated into the relevant Standard requirements or process to enhance the transparency and credibility of Accounting for Nature® Certified Environmental Accounts.

Feedback can be communicated to AfN via feedback@accountingfornature.org or through the feedback form on the website.

13.2 Complaints Process

To ensure the integrity of the Accounting for Nature® Framework and Certification system, AfN has developed procedures to welcome, investigate, and resolve complaints and appeals.

Proponents are invited to review the **Accounting for Nature® [Complaints Process](#)** for further options if they are not satisfied with the outcome of the Environmental Account Registration, Certification or Maintenance process.



Accounting for Nature™

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