

# The Value of an ISO 14001 Certificate: an Auditors' Perspective

## Consent Form

You are invited to be part of this research study on Environmental Management Systems' certification. You were chosen as a possible participant because this research aims to give voice to experienced environmental auditors and consultants regarding their perceptions about ISO 14001 certification. I encourage you to read this document and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study.

This research is being conducted by Joao Mil-Homens in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Design and Planning at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

### Background Information

The purpose of this research is to promote a better understanding of the value of an ISO 14001 certificate. As several studies have attempted to evaluate the outcomes of ISO 14001, the uniqueness of this research lays on the insiders' perspective of US environmental auditors. Questions focus on auditors' interpretations of the goals and requirements of ISO 14001, their perceptions on the major accomplishments and limitations of certification, and their opinion regarding the threats to the integrity of the certification process.

### Procedures

Participants will be asked to engage in one interview. Interviews will be scheduled at a time convenient to the participant and should last approximately forty-five minutes. Interviews will take place over the phone or in a location suitable to the participant. Upon participant's permission, interviews will be audio recorded. The principal investigator will be responsible for the transcription of the interview, after which the audio recording will be destroyed and the transcript shared with the participant.

### Risks and Benefits for Participants

This research will involve no more than minimal risk to the participants. This study focuses on participants' perceptions regarding industry's adoption of environmental management standards and in any way does it look for personal information regarding participants' actions or behaviors. Nevertheless, confidentiality is assured to all participants. Pseudonyms will be assigned to protect their identity, as well as organizations they may be associated with.

This research will benefit the field of environmental management by enhancing our understanding of certification instruments. This research can be particularly beneficial for its participants as it will provide a venue for them to share their 'real life experience' regarding industry's adoption of environmental certificates across the environmental policy community.

Subjects will not be compensated for their participation. If they so desire, they will be offered a copy of the final report.

### Confidentiality

Confidentiality is assured to all participants. Only the principal investigator will have access to the audio recordings, that will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigator's house. As soon as interviews are transcribed, audio recordings will be immediately destroyed. The transcripts (as well as any publications associated with this study) will omit any references that may allow the identification of the participants. Pseudonyms will mask the identity of individuals and organizations where necessary. A code-sheet matching real names with pseudonyms used will be kept in a locked cabinet in the investigator's home. It is possible that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view this study's collected data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study**

Subjects that agree to participate in this study are free to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. Participants also have the right to refuse to answer any questions that are asked during interviews.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Should you have any questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, you may contact:

- |                 |  |               |               |
|-----------------|--|---------------|---------------|
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