



## Identifying common ground for criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in British Columbia

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Ensuring the future of British Columbia's forests is vital to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of our province. There has been much investment globally in developing criteria and indicators of sustainability through research, certification, performance audits, and sustainable forest management (SFM) planning. However, there is a need for efficiencies. One way to achieve greater efficiency is to develop common indicator sets that can be measured and reported on at appropriate levels, and for a common purpose.

Sets of values (called criteria) outline the elements of the forest ecosystems and related social and economic systems that British Columbians believe should be maintained or enhanced when it comes to achieving sustainable forest management. Indicators measure an aspect of a criterion and are used to assess the state of the forest, measure progress over time, and inform future decision making. Together, criteria and indicators (C&I) characterize some of the essential components of sustainable forest management. When added to a monitoring and information system, they provide a decision framework to assess progress and allow for adaptations to achieve desired goals.

The provincial government, forest industry, academia, and other key constituents are committed to collaborating on developing common criteria and indicators for measuring and reporting on sustainable forest management performance in British Columbia. These key constituents agree that a collaborative approach will improve communication, reduce duplication and redundancy, increase efficiency, and make more effective use of investment funds.

In April 2004, the Province of British Columbia, through the Forest Practices Board, engaged FORREX to collaborate with interested key parties



Jennifer Turner photo

*Spirited discussion among members of the Common Ground reference group in Vancouver.*

to identify work that needs to be done to complete sets of criteria and indicators for British Columbia's forests. The goal is to bring all of the key parties together to facilitate collaborative development

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## Common Ground Initiative:

# C&I about values, performance

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of scientifically sound, economically viable, and commonly accepted criteria and indicators, and to increase awareness of the need for working models with acceptable methods of measurement and practical application.

Research institutes, universities, and government research groups are investigating social, economic, and biophysical criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management at the international, national, and regional level. In response to, and in support of, international commitments, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) recently revised a national set of criteria and indicators for Canada's forests. Under the new *Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)*, the Province is setting objectives for 11 values and is looking for appropriate and meaningful science-based criteria and indicators for their effectiveness evaluation framework. Under the new *FRPA* legislation, licensees are defining results and strategies to achieve provincial objectives and are identifying meaningful local-level indicators. At the same time, the forest industry is seeking third-party certification that requires performance indicators and monitoring frameworks. Finally, the Forest Practices Board performs independent audits and reports on forest practices throughout the province. All parties seek an effective, efficient, and meaningful mechanism to assess and report on sustainable forest management performance as well as inform future decisions.

Since April 2004, constituents have been working to execute a comprehensive work plan. The foundation projects completed in April 2005 focused on three main areas:

1. Determining common scientifically sound, useful, and effective criteria and indicators, and monitoring systems for British Columbia's forests.
2. Assessing existing research, monitoring, modeling, and investment efforts.
3. Defining a framework to link criteria and indicators information to policy, management, and operational decisions.

You can search a comprehensive database of relevant literature on this topic and download published results from these projects at <http://bcciforrex.org> [www.forrex.org](http://www.forrex.org) and <http://nrin.forrex.org/servlet/bcci>

In the longer term, as a result of this initiative, we hope to create a Common Ground for Criteria and Indicators of Sustainability in British Columbia. This will mean the following:

- Efficient, effective, scientifically sound criteria and indicators at appropriate scales will be used by industry and agencies in planning, policy, implementation, monitoring effectiveness, and adjusting forest policy and practices.
- Investments in criteria and indicator research monitoring and modelling will be streamlined, increasing efficient spending and use of expert capital while reducing gaps and duplication of effort.
- Resource management, policy, and auditing practitioners understand and can use the criteria, indicators, monitoring, and modelling tools to assist them in their work.

Work on the Common Ground Initiative continues. Projects planned for 2005/06 include:

### SFM Criteria and Indicator Matrix On-line

A matrix of 3000 scientifically reviewed indicators related to British Columbia-relevant SFM criterion was prepared by **Dr. Gordon Hickey** and **Dr. John Innes** as part of the foundation project "Science Review and Gap Analysis." Project partners determined in February 2005 that this matrix may be useful to people in British Columbia who are developing forest management plans that require criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. Rather than publish the matrix as a series of tables, it was decided it would be most useful as a searchable, on-line database. This project will oversee the design and implementation of this searchable on-line Criterion and Indicators Matrix, which will be used in association with the final report from the foundation project.

### Establishment of British Columbia Case Studies for the Common Ground Project

This project will identify four potential areas for case studies in implementing criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management in British Columbia. A range of different sites will be chosen to reflect the geographic variety of the province and the different forms of tenure in British Columbia. Efforts will concentrate on (but not be restricted to) those areas where there are already substantial amounts of data. While major licensees have initiated the project, the case studies will include examples of

## Contributing Organizations

Individuals from the following organizations are providing valuable input into the initiative and we invite others from aboriginal organizations, non-government organizations, and municipal communities to participate:

- B.C. Ministries of Forests; Sustainable Resource Management; and Water, Land and Air Protection
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
- Council of Forest Industries (COFI)
- Forest Practices Board
- FORREX Forest Research Extension Partnership
- International Forest Products Ltd.
- Simon Fraser University
- Sustainable Forest Management Network of Centres of Excellence
- Tolko Industries Ltd.
- University of British Columbia
- Weyerhaeuser Company



# measures, and ability to adapt

small-scale forestry, since an increasing proportion of the allowable annual cut (AAC) is being devoted to alternative tenures. A feasibility assessment will be conducted on these four case studies using the 200 indicators. At the same time, the project will continue with progress made in identifying a short set of potential indicators. The use of each of the 200 indicators short-listed to date will be summarized, and this will be supplemented (where appropriate) with constituent input, which will involve a public-input process on the short-listed indicators.

## Constituent Input into British Columbia Common Indicators

In 2005, Dr. Gordon Hickey and Dr. John Innes worked with a team of scientists to review and prepare a set of sustainable forest management indicators for British Columbia. This scientifically prepared set of 200 indicators was presented in February at the Common Ground for Criteria and Indicators Forum and will soon be available in a published final report. The Forum served as a focus group for reviewing the work scientists, government officials, and the forest industry have done so far on criteria and indicators. Feedback from these focus groups recommended a more thorough review by key constituents of sustainable forest management. This project will oversee the design, implementation, analysis, and reporting of constituent feedback on the reduced set of scientifically prepared indicators. Feedback will be used, along with the results from the case studies (see above), to produce a common indicator set for British Columbia.

## Informing SFM and C&I Investment Strategies for British Columbia

The B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range, through the Forest Investment Account, contributes to sustainable forest management objectives through a variety of program investment. The Deputy Minister of Forests and Range and the Forest Investment Council are responsible for achieving these goals through a variety of program investments, notably the Land Base Investment Program and the Small Tenures Program. The B.C. Ministry of Forests and Range produces the *State of the Forest Report*, the B.C. Ministry of Environment contributes to the *State of the Environment Report*, and the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program (FREP) reports on progress against provincial objectives as stated in the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. The Forest Practices Board uses indicators to conduct and

report on forest practices audits, and the forest industry uses criteria and indicators to develop and monitor stewardship and forest management plans. The purpose of this project is to participate in and help inform the development of sustainable forest management as well as criteria and indicator investment strategies for British Columbia that will help improve both investment and management decisions.

## Extension and Communications

One objective of the initiative is to increase the understanding and use of criteria and indicator knowledge and tools. Through extension and education, existing information on this topic will be synthesized and provided in various extension formats, including niche libraries, written summaries, on-line tools, and educational formats. The focus for this year will be extending results from foundation projects.

## Governance and Program Management

Another objective of the initiative is to improve efficiency, collaboration, and co-ordination of the development of solutions linked to criteria and indicators. This project will oversee the co-ordination, financial management, communications, and knowledge management for the initiative. FORREX will co-ordinate the steering committee, communicate with various collaborators and interested parties, manage project funds, and facilitate the production of progress reporting. 🌲

To find out more about the Common Ground Initiative or to participate, contact:

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## Initial Funders

Initial funders for the initiative include:

- Forest Practices Board; B.C. Ministry of Forests; B.C. Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management; and the B.C. Ministry Water, Land and Air Protection
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
- International Forest Products Ltd.
- Riverside Forest Products Ltd.
- Tolko Industries Ltd.

## Web sites for more information

FRPA and FREP:  
[www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep)

<http://www.bcci.forrex.org>

[www.forrex.org](http://www.forrex.org)

<http://nrin.forrex.org/servlet/bcci>

Canadian Council of Forest Ministers:  
[www.ccfm.org/3\\_e.html](http://www.ccfm.org/3_e.html)

The *State of British Columbia's Forests Report*: [www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/sof/](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/sof/)

Canada's State of the Environment Infobase:  
[www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/default.cfm](http://www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/default.cfm)

British Columbia's State of Environment Reporting:  
<http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/soerpt/>

*State of the Fraser Basin Report 2004*:  
[www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/publications/indicators.html](http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/publications/indicators.html)