



Sustainable Forest Initiative® helps keep province a global leader in SFM

by Gerry Fraser, RPF, Manager, Sustainable Forestry, Interfor

British Columbia is a global leader in independent Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) certification, with more than half of the allowable harvest being certified under one of three programs: the Sustainable Forest Initiative® (SFI), the Canadian Standards Council (CSA), and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Currently, about 23.4 million hectares are third-party certified to CSA, 18.4 million are certified to SFI, and 176,000 are certified to the FSC. The only place in the world that has more certified forest than British Columbia is Canada as a whole. British Columbia's certified forests account for 40% of the national total.

Sustainable Forest Management seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It does this by regenerating, managing, and harvesting trees for useful products, while conserving soil, air, and water quality; biological diversity; wildlife and fish habitat; cultural resources and uses; and aesthetics. Third-party certification to recognized standards gives the assurance that forest resources are being managed sustainably.

The SFI Program was developed in the United States in the mid-1990s in response to public concerns about SFM in American forests. Since then, SFI has grown to be amongst the world's largest sustainable forestry programs, with over 61.5 million hectares enrolled in North America. The SFI Program is a comprehensive set of principles, objectives, and performance measures developed by experts such as professional foresters, conservationists, and scientists. It combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with SFM principles, commitment to continual improvement, and regular tracking and reporting on progress.

Governance of the SFI Standard (SFIS) is managed by a non-profit Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) comprised of environmental, academic, and forest industry leaders. During 2004 the SFB completed a comprehensive review of the SFIS and associated auditing procedures. The new 2005-2009 SFIS came into effect in January 2005. British Columbia is fortunate to have UBC's **Dr. John Innes**, FRBC Chair of Forest Management, on the SFB.


Local maintenance of the SFI Program in British Columbia is provided by the SFI Implementation

Committee (BC SIC), which is currently made up of representatives from companies in British Columbia (and one member from Alberta) with lands enrolled in the SFI Program and the Private Forest Landowners Association. Formed in 2001, the BC SIC is responsible for developing policies dealing with logger training, inconsistent practices (practices that are covered under the SFI label), outreach and promotion of SFM and the SFI Program, and reporting on progress.

Since 2000, many forest products companies operating in British Columbia with large customer bases in the United States have chosen SFI certification to give customers assurance that products they buy come from well-managed forests. SFI-certified companies in British Columbia include Canfor, Dunkley Lumber, Hancock, Husby, Interfor, Island Timberlands, LP, Terminal, TimberWest, TRC Cedar, Pope and Talbot, Tolko, West Fraser, and Witherby Tree Farm. Sundance Forest Industries from Alberta is also affiliated with the BC SIC until there is a sufficient number of SFI Program participants for Alberta to form its own SIC. The BC SIC is one of five implementation committees in Canada and 44 in North America.

To achieve its outreach and SFM promotion goals, the BC SIC has formed two formal partnerships. The first, with the Province of British Columbia, sees SFI-certified companies, through the BC SIC, provide funding to the Conservation Data Centre (CDC) for a multi-year project to update plant community descriptions in British Columbia to an international classification level. This project will facilitate, among other objectives, the identification and protection of globally rare and endangered plant communities and species.

The BC SIC recently signed a partnership agreement with FORREX Forest Research Extension Partnership. FORREX's goal of providing resource users with access to the best available science, and local and traditional knowledge for the appropriate management of natural resources, fits well with the mandate of the SFI Program and the BC SIC.

Currently, discussions are underway to have FORREX, with financial and technical support from the BC SFI SIC, revive the Small Woodlands Program Web site as a resource for promoting sustainable forest management. Other initiatives may be considered in the future. 

More Information

More information on the SFI Program can be found at these Web sites:

www.aboutSFI.org

www.aboutSFB.org

For more information, contact the BC SFI SIC at bcsm@canada.com, or write to:

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