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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information, contact Tim O'Hara, coordinator of the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee, at 218/390-7965.

*Minnesota Sen. Tom Bakk and St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson will also participate...*

## **Girl Scouts, Tree Farmers and others to replant land and view timber being processed, as second steps in unique housing partnership between Minnesota's Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and Habitat for Humanity**

Step 2 in a first-ever partnership between the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Implementation Committee, the North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity, forest products companies and Tree Farmers will take place on Tuesday, June 3, when recently harvested land will be replanted and donated timber will be processed into materials for a Habitat home to be built in Hibbing.

The project, the first of its kind in the United States to ensure a Habitat for Humanity home is built using products from well-managed forests, began in January, when timber donated by Minnesota State Sen. Tom Bakk was harvested from his Tree Farm near Cook. That wood was made into oriented strand board (OSB) by Ainsworth Engineered, which also donated its services. Two months later, St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson donated additional wood from his Tree Farm near Eveleth, which was used to make structural lumber.

At 10:00 a.m. on June 3, seedlings donated by the University of Minnesota will be replanted on Sen. Bakk's land by volunteers that include local Girl Scouts, Tree Farmers and foresters.

At 1:00 p.m., participants will tour Mountain Iron's East Dhu River Sawmill, which donated its processing facilities to saw lumber and trim for the Habitat home. During the tour, donated ash will be sawed into interior trim.

The Maine-based Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, which is the grading authority for various species of softwood lumber, is also donating its services on June 3 to grade and certify the lumber for home building.

This summer, members of the Minnesota SFI Implementation Committee and other volunteers will build a one-story, 1,100-square-foot Habitat for Humanity home in Hibbing using these materials, as well as others donated by Louisiana Pacific, Marvin Windows and other Minnesota SFI program participants. Later this year, Hibbing's Kelli Ritz and her daughter will move into the home.

Other Minnesota forest products companies are also contributing, in the form of cash donations to help fund the Habitat for Humanity project. Those companies are Boise, Inc.; Forest Capital Partners, LLC; NewPage Corporation; Sappi Fine Paper North America; UPM, Blandin Paper Mill; and Verso Paper, Sartell Mill.

"This Habitat for Humanity project is a great way to demonstrate how Minnesotans come into contact with practices that promote responsible forestry every day," said Tim O'Hara, coordinator of the Minnesota SFI Implementation Committee. "More and more people are realizing the importance of responsible forestry, and SFI is pleased to be a leader in that area."

Nathan Thompson, executive director of the North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity, said his organization is proud and grateful to be the first Habitat organization in the country to team up with a state SFI committee.

"We're appreciative of all volunteers who put so much time and effort into building affordable homes with deserving families, but it's especially gratifying to have the people who supply home building materials taking on a project for us," said Thompson. "Like the SFI program, Habitat for Humanity is a great believer in the importance of promoting sustainability."

"SFI Inc. is proud to be a partner in this project and support the work of the Minnesota SFI Implementation committee on this incredibly important project," said SFI Inc. President and CEO Kathy Abusow. "This is another example of how our 37 implementation committees across North America are making real, positive differences, not just at the forest management level but also at the community level."

The SFI program is one of the largest forestry certification programs in the world, using measurements that include protection of water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat and more. There are more than 150 million acres certified to the comprehensive SFI standard across North America. In Minnesota, there are nearly 6.5 million acres of forestlands certified, making Minnesota the leader in the United States in the amount of acres enrolled in the SFI program.

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