



**For Immediate Release
September 29, 2015**

Florida Forest Service Receives Prestigious Third-Party Forest Certification on 413,000 Acres of State Forests

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam announced today that the Florida Forest Service, a division of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, certified Blackwater River and Tate's Hell State Forests, covering 413,000 acres, through one of the world's most recognized, independent, third-party forest management certification standards, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

"We are proud of our efforts to ensure that the land and resources entrusted to the Florida Forest Service are managed responsibly and conscientiously. Thanks to certification programs, such as SFI, the public can remain confident that our state forests are managed in line with some of the highest standards in the nation and will remain healthy and productive for generations to come," stated Commissioner of Agriculture Adam H. Putnam.

SFI's 2015-2019 Forest Management Standard is based on principles, goals and performance measures that were developed nationally by professional foresters, conservationists and others with the intention of promoting sustainable forest management in North America. SFI and its many partners work together to balance environmental, economic and social objectives such as conservation of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, forest products, protecting water quality, forest industry jobs and recreation.

"We are thrilled that the Florida Forest Service has demonstrated their leadership and commitment to responsible forest management by getting these two beautiful forests covering more than 400,000 acres certified to SFI," said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of SFI Inc. "By doing so, they are doing a service to the forests, and the communities and markets that rely on the goods and services that flow from well managed forests."

Through the SFI Forest Partners[®] Program, the Florida Forest Service joined other public agencies to seek cost-effective and efficient methods to implement and achieve independent SFI certification on its two largest state forests.

The goal of the SFI Forest Partners Program, which was founded by Time Inc., the National Geographic Society, Macmillan Publishers, Pearson, and with support from Hearst Enterprises, is to increase certification throughout the supply chain which in turn enables current and future generations to enjoy America's forests for years to come.

"By participating in the SFI Forest Partners Program, we are helping infuse the forest products industry with an increased supply of certified timber. Although responsible forest management has been a priority of the Florida Forest Service since the beginning, this new certification provides conscientious consumers with the guarantee that our focus is on protecting, renewing and sustaining healthy forests," said Jim Karels, Florida State Forester.

To learn more about the SFI program, visit SFIProgram.org.

The Florida Forest Service manages more than one million acres of public forest land while protecting 26 million acres of homes, forestland and natural resources from the devastating effects of wildfire. To learn more about Florida Forest Service programs, visit FreshFromFlorida.com.



About Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Inc. (SFI)

SFI® Inc. is an independent, non-profit organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized SFI program. SFI works collaboratively with conservation groups, local communities, youth, resource professionals, landowners and countless other organizations and individuals who share our passion for and commitment to healthy forests, responsible purchasing and sustainable communities. Since 2010, SFI has awarded more than 60 Conservation and Community Partnership grants totaling more than \$1.9 million to foster education, research and pilot efforts to better inform future decisions about our forests. When leveraged with project partner contributions, that total investment exceeds \$7.1 million. Across the United States and Canada, more than 260 million acres (100 million hectares) are certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard. In addition, sustainable forestry is promoted through the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard and the SFI Chain-of-Custody Standard. SFI on-product labels help consumers make responsible purchasing decisions. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber [board of directors](#) representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at www.sfiprogram.org and www.sfiprogram.org/Buy-SFI.

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