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**Honey Bee Forest Habitat Research Earns SFI® Conservation Leadership Award for
Soterra, LLC and Pollinator Partnership**

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS – Honey bees are in sharp decline in North America and Europe, jeopardizing their crucial role in pollinating crops that in the United States amount to about one-third of the nation's domestic food supply. Today, new research led by SFI program participant [Soterra LLC](#) and the [Pollinator Partnership](#) on the habitat of honey bees and other native pollinators in forested ecosystems was recognized by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®), earning the annual *SFI Leadership in Conservation Award* at the nonprofit's annual conference this week in San Antonio.

"When we think of bees, we think of their role in our backyards or on farms – this innovative study shows that bees are also vital to other ecosystems, including forests," said SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow. "The leadership demonstrated, the quality of the forest bee research conducted and the range of partners engaged makes Soterra and the Pollinator Partnership wholly deserving of the 2013 SFI Leadership in Conservation Award."

"Our study found that managed forests are good for bees and bees are good for managed forests," said Matt Bonham, Vice President of Soterra LLC. "Bee colonies were healthier in managed forests than in the other forests we studied, and the bees help create more fruit in managed forests, which means more food for deer and other wildlife. At a time when beekeepers face the challenges of colony collapse disorder it is valuable to encourage the expanded use of timberlands for healthy bee habitat."

Soterra LLC and the Pollinator Partnership were recognized for the [Tiger Swamp Pollination Study](#) and their overall commitment to the Pollinator Habitat Improvement project, which found that bees thrive in managed forests while helping local wildlife and plant populations. Portions of Soterra's more than 250,000 acres in three U.S. Southeastern states were involved in this study that explored different forest management techniques and their potential to improve pollinator habitat. Other project partners included the U.S. Forest Service, Mississippi State University, NASA, the University of New Orleans, Sandhill Crane Refuge and Allen Farms and Hines Honey.

According to Soterra's mission for the Tiger Swamp Pollination Study, honey bees provide more than \$15 billion in agricultural pollination services, yet these bees are also struggling. One factor is that beekeepers are having difficulty finding appropriate feeding and resting sites for their colonies outside of pollination contracts. The study showed privately managed forest systems are an ideal solution, as they can provide understory plants for bees to feed on and, in turn, pollinating bees increase production of blueberries, blackberries, and other fruit-bearing plants such as holly, gallberry and leatherwood.

SFI Inc. introduced its conservation research leadership award in 2007 to recognize program participants involved in strong partnership activities achieving ongoing and far-reaching benefits.

About Sustainable Forestry Initiative

SFI Inc. is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program. Across the United States and Canada, more than 240 million acres/100 million hectares are

certified to the SFI forest management standard. In addition, the SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI chain-of-custody (COC) certification tracks the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and post-consumer recycled content. SFI on-product labels identify both certified sourcing and COC claims to 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 <http://www.sfiprogram.org/> and <http://sfiprogram.org/BuySFI>.

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Media Contact:

Monique Hanis, COO and VP Marketing & Communications
Sustainable Forestry Initiative
202-596-3457
monique.hanis@sfiprogram.org