



March 20, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For additional information, contact St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson, at 218/749-7108; or Tim O'Hara, coordinator of the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Implementation Committee, at 218/390-7965.

*Another contribution to this first partnership of its kind in the U.S....*

**St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson donates wood to help Minnesota's Sustainable Forestry Initiative® build Habitat for Humanity home in Hibbing**

*Duluth, Minnesota – March 20, 2008* – A first-ever partnership between the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Implementation Committee, the North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity and various forest products companies has just added a new partner: St. Louis County Commissioner Keith Nelson, who is donating wood from his Tree Farm near Eveleth.

The project is the first of its kind in the United States to ensure a Habitat for Humanity home is built using products from well-managed forests. The project 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 by Ainsworth Engineered, which also donated its services.

Norway Pine from Commissioner Nelson's property will be harvested on Saturday, March 22, and made into structural lumber at Mountain Iron's East Dhu River Sawmill. Mill owner Conrad Jacobsen, a member of the Minnesota Timber Producers Association, is also donating his mill's services. The Maine-based Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, which is the grading authority for various species of softwood lumber, is donating its services to grade and certify this lumber for home building.

"The St. Louis County government and I are committed to sustainable forestry, so I'm pleased to assist with this worthwhile effort," said Commissioner Nelson, who noted that St. Louis was the first public land administrator in the U.S. to license its public lands with SFI in 1999. "The trees we're using are renewable, but the impact they have in helping provide an affordable home for a northern Minnesota family is permanent."

Tim O'Hara, coordinator of the Minnesota SFI Implementation Committee, said the next step in the project is to replant Sen. Bakk's property using seedlings donated by the University of Minnesota.

“After that replanting, SFI and other volunteers will begin work this summer on building a one-story, 1,100-square-foot home in Hibbing,” said O’Hara. “The home will be completed this fall, ready for Hibbing resident Kelli Ritz and her daughter to move into.”

O’Hara said that in addition to contributions from Commissioner Nelson, Sen. Bakk, Ainsworth Engineered, the East Dhu River Sawmill and the Northeastern Lumber Manufacturers Association, other donations of materials and cash are being provided by these other Minnesota forest products companies: Boise, Inc.; Forest Capital Partners, LLC; Louisiana Pacific; NewPage Corporation; Sappi Fine Paper North America; UPM, Blandin Paper Mill; and Verso Paper, Sartell Mill.

“SFI 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 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.

###