

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SFI and U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities Spur Collaboration
Among Water Utilities and Forest Landowners to Protect Watersheds**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Experts acknowledge the important role of forestlands in protecting our nation’s water quality. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that about two-thirds of our nation’s freshwater resources originate in forests. Water utilities are increasingly taking responsibility for the health of local watersheds as the best way to ensure a long-term supply of clean water for the community. A [new project](#) managed by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities (the Endowment), and supported by a grant from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®), will engage forest landowners and water utilities to support innovative ways to promote watershed protection and maintenance on privately owned forest lands.

“The most cost-effective way for a community to ensure clean water is to maintain their watershed in a healthy, forested area,” said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of SFI. “We’re excited to support new tools that encourage forest owners and water utilities to work together to conserve watersheds. This project will provide us with a greater understanding of what is needed to advance watershed protection and management.”

“Developing collaboration between water utilities and forest landowners is a unique approach to protecting our nation’s water quality,” said Carlton Owen, President and CEO of the Endowment. “We welcome SFI’s leadership and support helping us to link stakeholders and communities to promote innovative new clean water programs.”

The SFI Conservation Grant will help the Endowment educate community stakeholders, water utilities and landowners and ultimately develop a financial instrument that will compensate forest landowners for protecting and maintaining the health of the watershed they manage. One example of this approach has been implemented in Raleigh, North Carolina. In 2011, Raleigh established a “watershed protection fee” of 1 cent/100 gallons, included in customers’ monthly water bills. The fee costs homeowners an average of 40 cents/month and generates about \$1.8 million annually for land protection and management to protect drinking water quality. This project was supported by a grant from the Endowment and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

This grant builds on SFI’s commitment to water resources through conservation grants awarded in 2012 to the [World Resources Institute](#) to examine how SFI requirements related to best management practices result in improvements in water quality, and to the [National Association of State Foresters](#) to assess development and implementation of best management practices in all U.S. states and territories.

In 2010, SFI Inc. first invested \$400,000 to create the [SFI Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant Program](#) to foster partnerships and conservation research that improve forest management in the United States and Canada, and responsible procurement globally. In a few short years, by leveraging partner contributions, SFI has achieved a total investment of \$4.8 million in conservation partnerships and research, supporting more than 40 grants with 150 partners across North America.

The SFI program is the only forest certification standard in North America that requires participants to support and engage in research activities to improve forest health, productivity and sustainable management of forest resources.

About the U.S Endowment for Forestry and Communities

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry & Communities, Inc. (Endowment) is a not-for-profit corporation established September 21, 2006, at the request of the governments of the United States and Canada in accordance with the terms of the Softwood Lumber Agreement (SLA) between the two countries. The Endowment is one of three entities designated to share in a one-time infusion of funds to support "meritorious initiatives" in the U.S. It has been endowed with \$200 million under the terms of the SLA.

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, 240 million acres 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>.

- 30 -

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