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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SFI Conservation Grant Helps The Nature Trust of BC Protect Unique Ecosystems

PENTICTON, British Columbia – The Nature Trust of British Columbia has been awarded a Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) conservation grant to find the most effective way to reduce the spread of invasive plants in vulnerable ecosystems in British Columbia's southern interior.

The project will receive a total of \$50,000 over three years through the SFI Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant Program. In addition to The Nature Trust of British Columbia, partners include Weyerhaeuser Co. Ltd., South Okanagan-Similkameen Invasive Plant Society and the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

"More than 200,000 hectares (500,000 acres) of publicly owned grassland and open forest in British Columbia have been infested with 56 different invasive plants and noxious weed species," Carl MacNaughton, conservation land manager for the Nature Trust of British Columbia, said today. "The SFI grant means we can identify and map priority locations, then test grass seed mixes and management techniques to learn how best to reduce invasive plants to a level where they are no longer an environmental threat."

Alien invasive species such as tansy ragwort and spotted knapweed are a significant threat to biodiversity in British Columbia, especially in the province's interior grasslands and dry forests. They can affect the survival and growth of planted conifers; accelerate soil erosion and stream sedimentation; consume critical water resources and negatively impact water quality; increase the wildfire hazard; interfere with regeneration of forests; and destroy or otherwise alter critical natural habitats required by species at risk or other high valued wildlife.

The project will take place on about 5,000 hectares (12,000 acres) of SFI-certified forested lands managed by Weyerhaeuser in south-central British Columbia. The operating area includes important wintering grounds for ungulates such as elk and mountain goats; fish-sensitive and community watersheds; and habitat for seven federally-listed species at risk – all of which are potentially at-risk of impact from invasive species.

"SFI certification contributes to the conservation of biological diversity, the protection of critically imperiled and imperiled species and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value by requiring that program participants limit the introduction, impact and spread of invasive species," SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow said. "This partnership will help companies by pinpointing infestation locations and recommending management options. It will protect native or naturalized species in the Okanagan-Similkameen region – and have broad application throughout dry forests across western North America."

Last year, SFI Inc. created the Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant program to build on the more than \$1.1 billion SFI program participants have contributed for research activities since 1995, including forestry research, science and technology. The Nature Trust of British Columbia project is the fourth conservation grant awarded for 2011, and brings the total for all of the grants awarded to date to almost \$1 million. Through the involvement of partners, these forestry research projects will leverage additional resources, achieving a total investment of over \$3 million.

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard is based on 14 core principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, and encourages community involvement. The SFI program is the only forest certification standard in North America that requires participants to support and engage in research activities to improve forestry forest health, productivity and sustainable management of forest resources.



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About SFI Inc. (www.sfiprogram.org).

SFI Inc. is an independent non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program. Across North America, more than 73 million hectares/180 million acres are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single standard in the world. SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers the percentage of fibre from certified forests, certified sourcing and/or post-consumer recycled content. The SFI program's unique fibre sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally.

About The Nature Trust of British Columbia (www.naturetrust.bc.ca)

The Nature Trust of British Columbia is a leading non-profit land conservation organization dedicated to protecting BC's natural diversity of plants and animals through the acquisition and conservation of critical habitats and other areas of ecological significance. Along with our partners, The Nature Trust has invested more than \$71 million to secure over 61,000 hectares (150,000 acres) throughout British Columbia. The Nature Trust is a founding partner in the South Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Program, and has implemented a broad range of projects including land acquisitions, riparian fencing, and invasive plant management.

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