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SFI HOSTS SCIENCE CONFERENCE TO HELP MEASURE THE CONSERVATION IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE FORESTS

WASHINGTON, DC — The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) convened researchers, conservationists, academics and government officials from across North America this week for the first full-scale meeting of the SFI Sounding Board to provide guidance for the SFI Conservation Impact Project. This project, [launched by SFI in September](#) at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress, is a large-scale effort to quantify conservation benefits of well-managed forests stretching across North America from British Columbia to Florida. Forests certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard cover more than 280 million acres/113 million hectares. Millions more benefit from the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard.



Sierra Pacific Industries land in California certified to SFI. Photo: Mark Lathrop

"There's great value in having this group of experts come together to improve understanding of the cross-benefits of managed forests for water, biodiversity, and climate change mitigation," said Dr. Che Elkin, Associate Professor of Ecosystem Science and Management at the University of Northern British Columbia, and a participant at the sounding board meeting.

The SFI Conservation Impact Project comprises a suite of projects that are conducting simultaneous investigations at a variety of scales. Researchers include grantees and partners of SFI's Conservation and Community Partnership Grants Program, as well as other researchers with compatible interests. The project focuses on developing metrics for climate change mitigation, water quality and biodiversity, to encourage forest health, conservation and sound management, and to facilitate continual improvement.

"SFI brought together a diverse group of practitioners and scientists to discuss ways to quantify conservation benefits and their importance. Our team at Oak Ridge National Laboratory is working to define what sustainability really means in particular contexts. The effects of forest management on water, climate and biodiversity are not always apparent to diverse stakeholders. The activity of the SFI Sounding Board is a useful step towards quantifying the benefits of proactive forest management," said Dr. Virginia Dale of Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Landscape Ecology and Regional Analysis Group.

The sounding board is an informal group of scientists, drawn from academia, public agencies, and the non-profit conservation community, that SFI convened to identify specific ways to clarify the contribution of SFI-certified forestlands to conservation goals that are of broad interest to conservationists and consumers alike. Their input will help ensure credibility and transparency, and provide direct input into project development.

The participants, many of whom are the foremost experts in their field, serve voluntarily, and additional participants will be sought and added to ensure expertise on relevant issues. Thirty-seven people attended. Some of the participating organizations at the conference included: Virginia Tech, Nature Conservancy of Canada, American Forest Foundation, Ducks Unlimited Canada, American Bird Conservancy, Saskatchewan Research Council, American Institute of Biological Sciences, NatureServe, U.S. Forest Service, and Canadian Forest Service.



“Developing robust data regarding conservation attributes and outcomes will help stakeholders and users of sustainably sourced forest products to understand these values, and to promote their management,” said Paul Trianosky, Chief Conservation Officer at SFI. “The experts on our sounding board help to ensure that our measures are reliable, and that the results are relevant. The future of our forests depends on this work.”

About the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Inc. (SFI)

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) stands for future forests. SFI® is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting forest sustainability and supporting the links between sustainable forests and communities through grant programs, carefully targeted research, direct leadership of critical initiatives, and partnerships that effectively contribute to multiple conservation objectives. SFI’s Forest Management, Fiber Sourcing and Chain of Custody Standards work to ensure the health and future of forests. Through application of these certification standards, SFI’s on-product labels help consumers make responsible purchasing decisions. SFI Inc. is governed by an independent, three-chamber [board of directors](#) representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at sfiprogram.org.

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