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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SFI Recognizes Participants in Kentucky Elk Restoration

MILWAUKEE, WI – Three organizations that worked to restore herds of Rocky Mountain elk to their historic ranges in eastern Kentucky received a major conservation award from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) today.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, and Molpus Timberlands Management, LLC received the SFI Leadership in Conservation Award at SFI's annual conference, *The Future is Decided Now*.

Rocky Mountain Elk had virtually disappeared from their historic ranges in Eastern Kentucky until 1997 when Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, supported by the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation released seven elk and restored elk habitat on two million acres (800,000 hectares) in eastern Kentucky. Years earlier than expected, the goal of 10,000 animals in sustaining herds has been achieved, leaving a legacy for future generations. This year, as many as 50 of the elk were trapped and shipped to Missouri and Virginia for restoration projects in those states.

“When our client bought 55,000 acres (22,000 hectares) of timberland in eastern Kentucky in 2007, we certified our client’s land to the SFI Standard, which includes requirements for wildlife management and recreation access on our lands,” said Mark R. James, Property Manager for Molpus Timberlands Management. “That standard helped us enhance the land as high-quality habitat for elk and other species.”

“This is the kind of restoration effort SFI and its partners value and encourage,” said Eli Weissman, Senior Director of Conservation Partnerships for SFI. “Our standard requires that program participants promote and maintain wildlife habitat and support recreational opportunities. Many of the projects funded through our conservation grant program help forest landowners enhance wildlife habitat. We estimate three million hunters, anglers and outdoors enthusiasts enjoy access to nearly 200 million acres of SFI-certified forests across North America.”

“We are proud of the collaborative efforts that brought elk back to the hills of Kentucky, and are honored to be recognized by SFI for our work,” said Jonathan W. Gassett, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. “Forest certification programs like SFI make an important contribution to our efforts to conserve wildlife habitat and support recreation. Through this project, we have not only restored habitat to support sustainable populations of elk, but we have also restored an elk hunting tradition to eastern Kentucky.”

“Our goal is to leave an elk country legacy for future generations,” said M. David Allen, President and CEO of the non-profit Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. “We will succeed as long as we have partners like the State of Kentucky, and the support of companies like Molpus Timberlands, who are SFI-certified.”

Continued funding for the project comes from elk license lottery application fees, license fees and matching federal funds from license sales/hunting purchases. Owing to the success of the project, hunting provides critical benefits to the management of the elk herds, such as direct management for managing herd population and providing critical biological data on herd metrics, health monitoring, and disease testing. Last year, 800 elk hunting permits were issued in the 16-county restoration zone in southeastern Kentucky and 1000 permits will be offered in 2012.



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About SFI Inc. (www.sfiprogram.org)

SFI Inc. is an independent 501c(3) 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 190 million acres/77 million hectares are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single standard in the world. SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers how much certified, responsibly sourced and/or recycled content is in a product. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. The SFI is based on principles promoting sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.