



## News Release

For Immediate Release

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### **Virginia Department of Forestry's Commitment to Sustainability Recognized by Certification**

The Virginia Department of Forestry today announced that it has certified all of Virginia's State Forests to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and American Tree Farm System standards. These certified forests cover more than 68,000 acres.

The state forests system is self-sustaining and receives no general funds, so they must support operations through timber sales like other private landowners. Certification of Virginia state forest lands demonstrates for Virginia landowners how certification can be part of their land management efforts while validating that working forests are sustainable.

"The commitment to sustainability within Virginia State Forests began in 1919 with the gift of 588 acres of land in Prince Edward County from Emmett D. Gallion for the purpose of advancing the cause of forestry in Virginia," said State Forests Manager Gary Heiser. "Since that time, the state forests have grown in acres, productivity and biological diversity through the dedication of many state forest employees committed to responsible forest management."

"The market for forest products is international, and consumers expect assurance that their products are produced sustainably and support a healthy environment," said Virginia State Forester Rob Farrell. "SFI and Tree Farm Certification provide an assurance that forest products from Virginia landowners are legally and sustainably harvested, giving our landowners an advantage over wood producers from many other parts of the world, where environmental protections may not be assured."

"We are thrilled Virginia is certifying its State Forests. Virginia's leadership has always helped advance sustainability across the forest sector. They join 14 other states that have certified their forests, along with eight more that are actively looking at certification," said SFI Inc. President and CEO, Kathy Abusow.

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## **Certification**

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The VDOF sought certification through the SFI Forest Partners<sup>®</sup> Program. The program works to develop innovative approaches to group and coordinated certification for medium- to large-forest ownerships and smaller and medium-sized mills. Four market leaders—Meredith (formerly Time Inc.), National Geographic, Macmillan Publishers, and Pearson—are SFI Founding Forest Partners. Together, they are investing in the future of forests by increasing the source of certified forest products. Hearst Enterprises and Boy Scouts of America also partner with the program.

Forest management encompasses how we use our forests, how we conserve our forests and how we sustain our forests for economic, environmental and community wellbeing into the future. “Our state forest lands exemplify that sustainability does, in fact, support each of those elements, and these certifications validate that fact,” said Farrell.

Farrell also recognized Gary Heiser and the State Forest team for their long history of demonstrating sustainable management for Virginia landowners, and for the significant achievement of certification.

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The Virginia Department of Forestry protects and develops healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. With nearly 16 million acres of forestland and more than 108,000 Virginians employed in forestry, forest products and related industries, Virginia forests provide an overall economic output of more than \$21 Billion annually. Headquartered in Charlottesville, the Agency has forestry staff members assigned to every county to provide citizen service and public safety protection across the Commonwealth, which it’s been doing now for more than 100 years. VDOF is an equal opportunity provider.