



SFI Certification and the Boreal Region

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) is a non-profit, charitable organization that provides third-party forest certification in North America. The development of the SFI science-based forest standard involves many people, including professional foresters, conservationists, family forest owners, government officials, customers and scientists.

The standard is based on principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation



Value. The SFI program has achieved international recognition from governments, interest groups, stakeholders and consumers, and has been endorsed by the independent Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC).¹

THE BOREAL REGION

Worldwide, the boreal region makes up 10 percent of the earth's land, and almost one third of its forests. It produces oxygen, filters air and water, stores carbon and offers a biological reservoir with plant, animal and other species often unique to the region. Most of the boreal forest is in Russia, Scandinavia, Canada and Alaska.²

Canada has one third of the world's boreal forest, or about 765 million acres (310 million hectares). About half of Canada's boreal forest is productive forestland, of which a portion may be eligible for harvest — the rest is either protected or currently considered inaccessible. Less than one percent of this area, or about 1.8 million acres (750,000 hectares), is harvested each year. Another five to six million hectares are disturbed by wildfire, insects and disease.²

These frequent natural disturbances mean that while there are significant amounts of relatively undisturbed forest in North America's boreal region, the oldest trees are those that have escaped natural catastrophic disturbances that renew forests every 160 years or so.

CANADA'S FOREST MINISTERS BACK CERTIFICATION

Most of Canada's boreal forest is certified to one of three independent globally recognized forest certification programs, including SFI. In 2008, Canada's forest ministers released a statement about sustainable forest certification, which said:

"In Canada, each jurisdiction's forest laws, policies and administrative requirements comprise an over-arching framework that fully characterizes what sustainable forest management (SFM) means in that jurisdiction, and what actions may take place on public and/or private forest land. Governments in Canada support third-party forest certification as a tool to demonstrate the rigor of Canada's forest management laws, and to document the country's world-class sustainable forest management record.

"The forest management standards of the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) are all used in Canada. Governments in Canada accept that these standards demonstrate, and promote the sustainability of forest management practices in Canada."³

¹ SFI website www.sfi-program.org/join/recognition.php

² Natural Resources Canada. The State of Canada's Forests 2004-2005. A Global Endowment. <http://canadaforests.nrcan.gc.ca/articletopic/14>

³ Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Statement on Forest Certification Standards in Canada. www.sfmcanada.org/CMFiles/PublicationLibrary/CCFM_Statement_Forest_Certification_EN1KWA-24122008-5150.pdf

More than 160 million acres (65 million hectares) are certified to the SFI Standard across the United States and Canada. This includes lands in the boreal forest, which account for close to three-quarters of Canada's forest and other wooded land. The SFI Standard also includes unique fiber sourcing requirements that promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands, and chain-of-custody certification with an on-product label that tells buyers how much certified fiber is in a specific product.

Addressing the Unique Needs of the Boreal Forest

The SFI 2005-2009 Standard meets the unique management needs of the boreal forest in many ways. It calls for sustainable harvesting, based on the best scientific information available. Harvested areas must be

The SFI program recognizes the immense value of wetlands and water resources, and its standard includes objectives dedicated to the protection of water quality. This is especially important in the boreal region — where as many as five billion birds breed.⁶

In 2009, Ducks Unlimited Canada and Louisiana Pacific (LP) received an SFI Leadership in Conservation Research Award for promoting sustainable management of aquatic resources in watersheds of the Duck Mountains. Ducks Unlimited has been working with LP on several projects since 2001, including a boreal forest inventory project in Manitoba that involved extensive waterbird surveys and satellite mapping for approximately nine million acres (3.6 million hectares) in the west-central portion of the province.

promptly reforested by natural regeneration or by planting while considering potential ecological impacts of the resulting species mix.⁴

Program participants are expected to identify and protect ecologically significant forests, including old-growth forests and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value, and have programs to protect threatened and endangered species. They shall promote the conservation of native biological diversity, including species, wildlife habitats and ecological or natural community types at stand and landscape levels.⁵

Respecting the Many Values of the Boreal Forest

The SFI program was developed to meet the needs of communities and land managers in the United States and Canada, where laws and enforcement are in place to safeguard environmental and social values. A core SFI principle requires that participants comply with all applicable laws — including environmental laws and social laws related to the rights of Aboriginal peoples, workers and communities.⁷

Two-thirds of the lands certified to the SFI program in North America are publicly owned. The SFI Standard says program participants with forest management responsibilities on these public lands shall confer with affected Aboriginal peoples so they can understand and respect traditional forest-related knowledge; identify and protect spiritually, historically, or culturally important sites; and address the sustainable use of non-timber forest products on these lands that are of value to Aboriginal peoples.⁸

Most of Canada's forests, including the boreal forest, are publicly owned. The provinces, which are responsible for forest management,



⁴ SFI 2005-2009 Standard Objective 2, www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/sfi-standard-2005-2009-sept%2008%20update.pdf

⁵ SFI 2005-2009 Standard, Objective 4, www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/sfi-standard-2005-2009-sept%2008%20update.pdf, 2005-2009 SFI Standard Guidance Document, www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/2005-09SFIGuidance.pdf

⁶ Natural Resources Canada. The State of Canada's Forests 2004-2005. A Global Endowment. <http://canadaforests.nrcan.gc.ca/articletopic/14>

⁷ SFI 2005-2009 Standard Objective 11, <http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/sfi-standard-2005-2009-sept%2008%20update.pdf>

⁸ SFI 2005-2009 Standard Performance Measure 12.4



All third-party forest certification programs, including SFI, the Canadian Standards Association and the Forest Stewardship Council, accept clearcutting as an ecologically appropriate way to harvest and renew the boreal forest because it most closely resembles the large natural disturbances common in the region.

rely on integrated land use planning to protect the well-being of the forest while addressing the needs of multiple stakeholders.

The Canadian Constitution recognizes and affirms the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.⁹ Aboriginal involvement on the land is formally acknowledged through processes that include land claims, treaty making and treaty land entitlement.

SFI program participants are encouraged to support and promote mechanisms for public outreach, education and involvement related to forest management, and summaries of audit findings are posted on the SFI website.¹⁰ In addition, 37 state, provincial or regional SFI Implementation Committees across North America support logger training programs and landowner outreach, and offer a forum to provide information or answer questions or concerns about local forestry operations.

Inviting Public Involvement

The SFI Standard includes an objective related to community involvement in the practice of sustainable forestry, and the revised SFI 2010-2014 Standard — which is being developed through an open public process — strengthens this public outreach.

A proposed performance measure in the draft revised standard, currently being reviewed by the SFI Board of Directors, states: “Program participants shall support and promote efforts by consulting foresters, state, provincial and federal agencies, state or local groups, professional societies, conservation organizations, indigenous peoples and governments, community groups and the American Tree Farm System® and/or other landowner cooperative programs to apply principles of sustainable forest management.”

⁹ Part II Canada Constitution Act 1982 http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/annex_e.html#II

¹⁰ SFI website Audits and Report www.sfi-program.org/auditreports.cfm

¹¹ Growing Canada's Forests. Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. 2007. www.sfmcanada.org/english/pdf/Growing_FS_E_01.pdf

SUPPORTING RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Ongoing research and up-to-date science are important elements of responsible forest management. Since 1995, SFI-certified organizations have contributed close to \$1.07 billion (US) for research activities that improve the health, productivity and responsible management of forest resources in the United States and Canada.

SFI-certified organizations contribute financial or in-kind support for research activities on topics such as water quality, the impact of forest activities on woodland caribou, waterbird surveys and stand structural diversity. For example, LP Building Products, the Sustainable Forest Management Network, the University of Manitoba and l'Université du Québec are working on planning tools to help forest managers develop successional models that will project forest composition and structure into the future and improve understanding of stand structural diversity in Manitoba's boreal forest.

Choosing the Best Harvesting Method

All third-party forest certification standards in Canada accept clearcutting as an appropriate harvesting method. Natural Resources Canada says clearcutting is generally the most ecologically appropriate way to harvest and renew the boreal forest because it most closely resembles the large natural disturbances, which are common in the region. Tree species such as black spruce, jack pine, aspen, and birch germinate and grow best in full sunlight, resulting in natural, pure stands of trees of the same age.¹¹

Most of the boreal forest is in Russia, Scandinavia, Canada and Alaska — the boreal region makes up 10 percent of the earth's land, and almost one third of its forests.



Resource managers pay a great deal of attention to the aesthetic and environmental impacts of activities related to forest management, such as the protection of soils, water quality, wildlife habitat and other social and recreational values. They often plan harvesting activities in a manner that ensures individual trees and patches of trees are left throughout the harvest area to provide wildlife habitat and protect other forest values.

FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

When it comes to mitigating climate change, the world's forests and sustainable forest management are part of the solution. Forests remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store carbon in trees and roots, litter and soil.

Healthy, growing forests certified to a credible standard like the SFI Standard absorb more carbon, and are less susceptible to fire, insects and disease. Certification also ensures that harvested areas are promptly regenerated, that soil productivity is maintained and that forests are protected from wildfire and insect infestations.

The fact that the SFI program has strong acceptance in the global marketplace and can deliver a steady supply of third-party certified wood is important at a time when only 10 percent of the world's forests are certified and demand for green building and responsible paper purchasing is increasing.

For more information:

Sustainable Forestry Initiative
www.sfiprogram.org

Canadian Council of Forest Ministers Boreal Website
http://sfmcanada.org/english/bp_overview.asp

ABOUT SFI INC.

SFI Inc. is a 501c(3) non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program (www.sfiprogram.org), that is internationally recognized and among the largest in the world. It is one of the fastest-growing forest certification programs with more than 160 million acres (65 million hectares) of SFI-certified forests across North America. The SFI Standard also includes unique fiber sourcing requirements that promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands and a chain-of-custody certification, which can communicate to buyers how much certified fiber is in a specific product. The SFI forest standard is endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, a global umbrella organization that has strict requirements for endorsement. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally.



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