



## SFI External Review Panel — Expert, Independent Oversight

The SFI External Review Panel is an independent panel of experts that provides diverse perspectives and expertise to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program while contributing to quality assurance and continuous improvement. Panel members make sure SFI public documents, including the annual progress report and data, are objective and credible; facilitate public input into the program; and identify emerging issues and opportunities.

### **External Review Panel Membership**

The volunteer External Review Panel is made up of 15 external experts. Its membership maintains a balance of technical skills and organizational experience, with four to six members from each of the following categories — environmental/conservation groups, professional/academic groups, and public agencies (local, state, provincial, tribal or federal governments).

The panel, which has advised the SFI program since 1995, became an independent organization in 1997 with its own charter. A membership committee representing the different categories proposes a slate of candidates from individuals nominated by organizations, agencies, SFI program participants and individuals. Nominees are selected for their individual expertise and experience and, if elected, are eligible to serve for two three-year terms.

Current panel members come from universities, government agencies, the Society of American Foresters, the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

SFI Inc. may name one program participant as its liaison to the panel. This individual has no voting rights, and is not subject to panel term limits and election processes.

### **Activities and Responsibilities**

The External Review Panel provides an ongoing, independent, quality-oriented review of the SFI program and advises the SFI Inc. Board of Directors on appropriate changes to help the program achieve its mission. It also ensures the SFI Inc. annual progress report and the data in it are objective, meaningful, credible, and fairly state the status of program implementation.

The panel ensures that the development and revision of the SFI Standard embodies an open, fair and inclusive process that addresses the ideas forwarded through comments submitted.

If panel members feel there is potential to improve the SFI program or implementation, they can undertake studies, either in partnership with SFI Inc. or funded through other sources. They can also arrange field visits of SFI-related forestry operations to obtain information, review operations and address issues related to the implementation or reporting of accomplishments and progress indicators in the SFI program.

In 1999, the panel established a program, based at the Izaak Walton League of America, to monitor SFI program implementation, with random field reviews.

A three-member management committee, chosen by panel members, provides leadership during the year's activities. Among other things, this committee leads the development and provides oversight on the execution of the annual work plan and budget, and negotiates agreements with SFI Inc.

### **Provide Information and Input**

While the External Review Panel can provide information and input on any aspect of the SFI program, its focus has generally been to ensure:

- The current SFI Standard represents the best forest management that can reasonably be expected from private and public landowners in the United States and Canada.
- The SFI program is effectively pursuing its goal of continual improvement.
- Claims by SFI Inc. and program participants are backed by on-the-ground performance, and are valid in light of emerging public expectations and forest science.
- Individuals and organizations are given ample opportunity to comment on, contribute to, participate in, or challenge any aspect of the SFI program.
- There is an appropriate process for considering any claim that an SFI program participant is conducting operations that are inconsistent with obligations under the SFI program, and that there are appropriate sanctions if such claims are found to be valid.

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## From the External Review Panel comments in the 2006 SFI Inc. Progress Report

***“(The SFI 2005-2009 Standard) is a sustainable forestry standard that can be fairly compared against any in the world. Forests managed to this standard will be environmentally protected or improved while also providing our society with forest products and economic returns to the people who depend on them.”***

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### SFI EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL OPERATING CHARTER

#### **Mission:**

The External Review Panel provides an ongoing, independent, quality-oriented review of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program, and advises the Board of Directors of Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program Inc. (SFI Inc.) on making the program more effective.

#### **Purposes and Objectives:**

The objectives of the External Review Panel are to:

- Bring diversity of perspectives and expertise to the SFI program;
- Contribute to quality assurance for the SFI program;
- Evaluate progress on continuous improvement of the SFI program;
- Review SFI program public documents for objectivity and credibility;
- Facilitate public input into the SFI program;
- Identify emerging issues and opportunities for the SFI program; and,
- Respond to requests from the Board of Directors of SFI Inc. and the Resources Committee.



[www.sfiprogram.org](http://www.sfiprogram.org)



#### **External Review Panel website:**

[www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/erp.htm](http://www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/erp.htm)

#### **Current members:**

[www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/panel.htm](http://www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/panel.htm)

#### **Former members:**

[www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/past\\_erp\\_members.htm](http://www.sampsongroup.com/sfi/past_erp_members.htm)

#### **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](http://www.sfiprogram.org)), a sustainable forestry certification program that is internationally recognized and among the largest in the world. Across North America, more than 150 million acres (more than 60 million hectares) are certified to the SFI 2005-2009 Standard, which is based on principles and measures that promote sustainability, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and forests with exceptional conservation value. The SFI Standard includes unique fiber sourcing requirements that promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI Inc. also has chain-of-custody certification, which is used to tell buyers how much certified fiber is in a specific product.