

## **A Common Ground for Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forests for British Columbia**

### **The Issue**

The sustainability of British Columbia's forests is vital to the economic, social and environmental well being of our province. Over the years, there has been much investment in developing criteria and indicators of sustainability through research, certification, performance audits and sustainable forest management planning. However, there is a great need for efficiency through development of common indicator sets that can be measured and reported at appropriate levels and for a common purpose.

### **Background**

Sets of values (called criteria) outline the elements of the forest ecosystems and related social and economic systems that British Columbians believe should be maintained or enhanced when it comes to sustainable forest management. Indicators measure an aspect of a criterion and are used to assess the state of the forest, measure progress over time and inform future decision-making. Together, criteria and indicators characterize the essential components of sustainable forest management. When added to a monitoring and information system, they provide a decision framework to assess progress and adapt to achieve desired goals.

Over the past 10 years, much work has been done to develop criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. However, efforts continue to be somewhat isolated and disparate – resulting in lack of common ground and the need for collaboration.

Research institutes, universities and government research groups are investigating social, economic and biophysical criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management at the international, national and regional level. In response to, and in support of, international commitments, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) also recently revised a set of national criteria and indicators for Canada's forests. Under the new Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA), the Province of British Columbia is currently setting objectives for 11 values outlined by the CCFM and is looking for appropriate and meaningful science-based criteria and indicators for their effectiveness evaluation framework. Under the new FRPA legislation, licensees are defining results and strategies to achieve provincial objectives and seek meaningful local-level indicators. At the same time, the forest industry is also seeking third party certification that requires performance indicators and monitoring frameworks. Finally, the Forest Practices Board retains its role of performing independent audits and reporting on forest practices throughout the province. All parties seek an effective, efficient and meaningful mechanism to assess and report on sustainable forest management performance as well as inform future decisions.

The BC Government, forest industry, academia and other key constituents are committed to collaborating on developing common criteria and indicators for measuring and reporting on sustainable forest management performance in British Columbia. These key constituents agree that a collaborative approach will improve communication, reduce duplication and redundancy, increase efficiency and make more effective use of investment funds.

### **Developing Common Ground for Criteria and Indicators**

In April 2004, the Province of British Columbia, through the Forest Practices Board, engaged FORREX Forest Research Extension Partnership to collaborate with interested key parties to identify work that needs to be done to complete sets of criteria and indicators for British Columbia's forests. The goal is to bring all key parties together to facilitate collaborative development of scientifically sound, commonly accepted criteria and indicators and to increase awareness of the need for working models with generally acceptable methods of measurement and practical application.

Initial funders for the initiative include:

- British Columbia's Forest Practices Board, Ministry of Forests, Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
- International Forest Products Ltd.
- Riverside Forest Products Ltd.
- Tolko Industries Ltd.

Individuals from the following organizations are providing valuable input into the initiative and we anticipate that others from Aboriginal, non government and communities will benefit from this initiative:

- BC Ministries of Forests, Sustainable Resource Management and Water, Land and Air Protection
- Canadian Forest Products Ltd.
- Council of Forest Industries (COFI)
- Forest Practices Board
- FORREX Forest Research Extension Partnership
- International Forest Products Ltd.
- Riverside Forest Products Ltd.
- Simon Fraser University
- Sustainable Forest Management Network Centre of Excellence
- Tolko Forest Products Ltd.
- University of British Columbia
- Weyerhaeuser Company

Since April, constituents have been working to execute a comprehensive work plan. The initial, or foundational, projects that will be completed by the end of 2005 are focused in three main areas:

1. Determining common scientifically sound, useful and effective criteria and indicators and monitoring systems for British Columbia's forests.
2. Assessing existing research, monitoring, modelling and investment efforts.
3. Defining a framework to link criteria and indicators information to policy, management and operational decisions.

In the end, the long-term outcomes of creating a Common Ground for Criteria and Indicators of Sustainability in British Columbia will mean that:

- Efficient, effective, scientifically sound criteria and indicators at appropriate scales will be used by industry and agencies in planning, policy, implementation, monitoring effectiveness and adjusting forest policy and practices.
- Investments in criteria and indicator research monitoring and modelling will be streamlined, increasing efficient spending and use of expert capital while reducing gaps and duplication of effort.
- Resource management, policy and auditing practitioners understand and can use the criteria, indicators, monitoring and modelling tools to assist them in their work.

**For more information on this important initiative, please contact:**

Chris Hollstedt (Coordinator)  
Chief Executive Officer  
FORREX Forest Research  
Extension Partnership  
Suite 702, 235 – 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.  
Kamloops, BC V2C 3J4  
Tel: 250-371-3929  
[chris.hollstedt@forrex.org](mailto:chris.hollstedt@forrex.org)

Bruce Fraser (Co-chair)  
Chair  
Forest Practices Board  
P.O. Box 9905  
Stn Pro Gov't  
Victoria BC V8W 9R1  
Tel: 250 387-7009  
[bruce.fraser@gems9.gov.bc.ca](mailto:bruce.fraser@gems9.gov.bc.ca)

Bill Bourgeois (Co-chair)  
Vice President –  
Environmental Affairs  
Riverside Forest Products Ltd.  
Suite 1200  
1090 West Georgia Street  
Vancouver, BC V6E 3V7  
Tel: 604 687-2425  
[wwb@riverside.bc.ca](mailto:wwb@riverside.bc.ca)