

FACT SHEET

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Timber & Timber Harvesting in West Virginia

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The Sustainable Forestry Initiative Program (SFI SM)

There is no single definition of sustainable forest management that satisfies everyone. It can mean sustainable cash flow for the landowner, sustained rate of timber growth for the mill, or stable socioeconomic conditions in the area for the activist. Defining forest sustainability is also complicated by the gap between the academic and/or environmentalist perspective and practical considerations of importance to the industry. It is usually accepted by all sides that a sustainable and well-managed forest is achieved when a compromise is reached between “nature first” and “people first” activities and the results are predicated on the basis of a long-term professionally-prepared forest management plan.

The SFISM program as practiced by members of the American Forest and Paper Association is one of the worlds' most rigorous and widely applied standards for judging sustainable forestry. It sets forth measures by which interested parties – customers, conservation interests, or members of the public – may monitor and evaluate the commitment of company participants. The program definition of sustainable forestry *is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs through the practice of a land stewardship ethic that integrates reforestation, managing, growing, nurturing and harvesting of trees for useful products with the conservation of soil, air and water quality, biological diversity, wildlife and aquatic habitat, recreation and aesthetics.*”

Program participants have to document their activities and report their performance annually. The following checklist is used in evaluating participant compliance.

- Broaden the practice of sustainable forestry.
- Ensure long-term forest productivity and conservation of forest resources.
- Protect water quality.
- Promote wildlife habitat diversity.
- Manage the visual impact of timber harvesting.
- Manage areas of significance on owned land in a manner that recognizes the special qualities.
- Promote the efficient use of forest resources.

- Cooperate with landowners, loggers and foresters in broadening the practice of sustainable forestry.
- Publicly report progress in fulfilling commitment to sustainable forestry.
- Provide opportunities for others to participate in the commitment to sustainable forestry.
- Promote continual improvement in the practice of sustainable forestry.

The dissemination of practical forestry applications to forest landowners and logging professionals is a critical component of the program. In West Virginia, a high percentage of the forests are owned by farmers, individuals and other non-industrial private landowners and these lands produce the bulk of the timber harvested in the state. For these reasons, the program has focused a large amount of its effort to the conduct of educational workshops, field tours and seminars on harvesting options and the importance of using silvicultural best management practices (BMP's).

Logger education is another key component of the program because they can function professionally only if they realize the true impact their actions have on the long-term health and productivity of the forest. The passage of the Logging Sediment Control Act in 1992 provided that the Division of Forestry provide for mandatory logger training. The beginning of the SFISM program in 1996 resulted in the intensification of efforts and continuing education programs on both safety and BMP's. Currently, nearly 800 professional loggers attend continuing educational programs annually.

At the present time, there are five program participants in West Virginia. These are Allegheny Wood Products, Inc., Georgia-Pacific Corporation, MeadWestaco, Plum Creek Timber Company and Weyerhaeuser. Questions or concerns regarding the professional activities of program participants that appear to be inconsistent with the above listed objectives can be addressed by calling toll-free 888-372-9663.

(Prepared by Cinda Francis)

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