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SFI Shows How Partnerships Yield Benefits for Forests and Communities

WASHINGTON – Non-profit Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Inc. released its latest progress report today, *Power of Partnerships*, which demonstrates how diverse partnerships can strengthen forest practices and deliver science-based actions that benefit forests and communities across North America and beyond.

The SFI progress report tracks the phenomenal growth of the independent third-party forest certification program in 2009 and early 2010, and shows the contribution of a variety of collaborative activities – including the new SFI Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant program and the open review process that led to the SFI 2010-2014 Standard.

“The SFI program has a diverse range of partners because we respect and value all contributions,” SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow said. “At a time when less than 10 percent of the world’s forests are certified, SFI Inc. builds on the power of partnerships to raise awareness of how forest certification can support responsible forest management. The SFI program is relevant and effective because our door is always wide open.”

Close to 200 million acres/80 million hectares are certified to the SFI forest management standard in North America – making it the largest single forest standard in the world. Its influence goes beyond certified lands with programming that includes landowner outreach, logger training, research activities, and conservation and community collaboration.

From the start of 2009 to the end of April 2010, the number of SFI chain-of-custody certificates, chain-of-custody certified locations and fiber sourcing label certificates more than doubled. “Our phenomenal growth reflects the confidence and respect we have earned by inviting others to work with us and delivering results together,” Abusow said. “This growth also places the SFI program in a leadership position to bring together people from different backgrounds and viewpoints to achieve a common goal – improved forest practices.”

The SFI program works with community organizations, companies of all sizes, government agencies, conservation groups, Aboriginal peoples, customers and family forest owners across the United States and Canada. More than 2,500 individuals and organizations are working with the SFI program – meeting its requirements and/or supporting its efforts to encourage and promote responsible forestry.

The SFI External Review Panel, a group of independent experts representing conservation, environment, professional, academic and public organizations, advises the SFI Inc. Board of Directors on ways to improve the SFI program. This includes reviewing the progress report and monitoring the standard review process.

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"The Panel can attest to the significant progress the SFI community has made over the past year and we've seen firsthand what the power of partnerships can do," said External Review Panel Chair Michael Goergen, Executive Vice-President of the Society of American Foresters. "A transparent revision process and new requirements set out in the SFI 2010-2014 Standard, as well as SFI's commitment to collaboration indicate the growing capacity and willingness of SFI program participants to achieve notably higher forestry standards and partnerships with each passing year."

Some of the collaborative activities featured in the SFI progress report include:

- **SFI 2010-2014 Standard** – An 18-month consultative process led to the new SFI 2010-2014 Standard – more than 2,000 people were invited to comment; and their contributions shaped the new standard. The standard is based on 14 core principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.
- **Conservation and Community Partnerships Grant Program** – This new initiative strengthens the SFI program's commitment to conservation research and community partnerships through grants for collaborative activities that complement government initiatives. In 2009, SFI program participants invested \$73.2 million for research activities that improve the health, productivity and responsible management of forest resources, bringing the total since 1995 to more than \$1.1 billion.
- **Habitat for Humanity** – The SFI program and its partners are investing time and resources to help several Habitat for Humanity affiliates transform lives by providing decent homes, and building them with forest products from responsible sources. SFI partners have helped build Habitat homes in Maine, Manitoba, Minnesota, Ontario and Tennessee.
- **SFI Implementation Committees** – A cornerstone to the SFI program since its start, the 37 grassroots committees involve close to 1,000 people, and in 2009 contributed \$3 million to support local programs such as education and training for loggers and foresters, and outreach to family forest owners. The total contribution since 1995 is \$55.1 million.

The progress report is posted on the SFI website at http://www.sfiprogram.org/files/pdf/SFI_AnnualReport10_FINAL_web.pdf. More information about the SFI External Review Panel can be found at www.sfiprogram.org/sustainable-forestry-initiative/external-review-panel.php.

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About SFI Inc.

SFI Inc. is a 501(c)(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 close to 200 million acres/80 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. SFI chain-of-custody certification tracks certified, uncertified, and recycled content as applicable in the 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.