

The Future of Forest Certification in Virginia

A Roundtable Discussion by Forest Stakeholders

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Virginia Department of Forestry Training Room
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Organized by

The Virginia Conservation Network's
Forest Issues Working Group

<http://www.vcnva.org/>

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Executive Summary

Forests contribute, perhaps now more than ever, to the Commonwealth by moderating climate, cleaning and storing water, creating jobs and economy, and provided both scenery and solace. Yet our forests are changing in ways that have profound and long term impacts: urbanization consumes tens of thousands of acres a year, profits from timber management rarely match profits from development, large vertically integrated forest products corporations have sold most forest holdings, state agencies trying to service the increasing number of forest landowners are under pressure to trim budgets, and forest health is threatened by climate change, invasive species, and spreading impervious surfaces.

In the face of these trends, Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) embarked on efforts to sustain forests, the goods and services that flow from them, and the people and communities that depend upon them. One strategy is forest certification.

Certification of forests and forest products is touted as a strategy for sustaining forests and the life support services they provide. Rather than remain mired in win-lose debates over whether trees should be harvested, certification asks win-win questions about how, when, and where to harvest trees in ways that sustain forests. It is a big-tent issue that engages diverse stakeholders in productive discussions about how Virginia can sustain forests and forestry. On Friday Sept 21 2007 an invited group of 36 stakeholders gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia to spend the day discussing certification and its impact on sustainability.

Some of the major findings include:

- Certification is a strategy that works in a variety markets for a variety of products. Well known certification systems include “organic” for vegetables, “dolphin safe” for tuna, “energy star” for appliances, and “no animal testing” for cosmetics.
- Certification strategies for forests and forest products strive to inform consumers that forests were managed and products processed in ways that sustain forest health, minimize energy wastes, follow local laws, and respect people’s rights.
- Multiple forest certification strategies exist and are competing for acceptance. Confusion and misunderstanding among affected parties are rife, while the general public is largely unaware.
- Verification by a respected third-party is critical. It adds credibility for consumers and purchasing agents too busy to investigate further. Third-party verification minimizes the risk of “green washing,” which is a ploy to exploit consumer good intentions with deceitful marketing tactics that harm all sincere efforts to build a green economy.
- Relatively few forested acres are certified in Virginia, and supplies of certified forest products are scarce.

- Demand for certified product is increasing, with growing pressure from big-box retailers to “green” their supply chain, with a thriving European market, and with interest from environmentally aware architects and developers. Little awareness in certified forest product has been evidenced by retail home-improvement consumers or by purchasing agents that affect the supplies used to run state and local agencies.
- Currently, forest landowners seeking certification must bear the expense of becoming certified, which is discouraging participation. The cost can be particularly onerous on owners of small acreage, who do not enjoy the economies of scale that allow them to distribute expenses over large areas and multiple projects.
- Certification may have the perverse affect of discouraging forest ownership if it financially penalizes ownership,
- Certification may have the perverse affect of decreasing Virginia’s important forest economy if it raises costs without compensation.
- Virginia should focus on certification strategies that support Virginia’s forest economy and Virginia forest landowners. “Virginia grown” may be as important as “sustainable.”
- Great opportunities exist for leadership by state natural resource agencies and state purchasing agents to help negotiate and motivate a thriving market of certified forest products that achieves the goal of sustaining Virginia’s forests.
- Better integration is needed among green building certification standards that reward use of certified forest product and the competing forest certification systems that supply these products.
- There are tremendous opportunities to integrate forest certification with “smart growth” development strategies that promote sustainability of Virginia’s forests and their life support services that sustain the Commonwealth.

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INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, globalization, market restructuring, industry relocation, agency funding, consumer demand, state purchasing, and public expectations are just some of the factors reshaping forests and forestry. Despite these pressures, our goal remains unchanged: sustaining forests, the goods and services that flow from them, and the people and communities that depend upon them.

Certification of forests and forest products is one strategy touted as achieving this goal. Rather than remain mired in win-lose debates over whether trees should be harvested, certification asks win-win questions about how, when, and where to harvest trees so as to sustain forests. It is a big-tent issue that engages diverse stakeholders in productive discussions about how we sustain forests and forestry. On Friday Sept 21 2007 an invited group of 36 stakeholders gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia to spend the day discussing certification and its impact on sustainability. Consensus was not sought. Instead, information and opinions were shared, and opportunities explored for common ground where progress towards our shared goal might occur.

This report begins with some guiding comments offered to the Roundtable by Dr. Dave Smith, past President of the Society of American Foresters and Professor Emeritus at the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech. The next section summarizes issues raised during the morning session of the meeting, where participants shared their expertise and opinions about questions and issues raised by other participants. The next section summarizes the results of break-out groups that sought to identify strategies to address specific questions about certification. An appendix includes the invitation describing the Roundtable's purpose and planning committee, as well as a participant list.

These summary notes of the meeting are respectfully submitted on behalf of the Virginia Conservation Network's Forest Issues Working Group and the Certification Roundtable Planning Group by R. Bruce Hull, Professor at the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech, who moderated the meeting. Special thanks to the Virginia Department of Forestry for providing the facilities and coffee, and to Virginia Conservation Network and the Landcare Center for lunch.

CERTIFICATION AS A *MEANS* OF ACHIEVING FOREST SUSTAINABILITY

Invited Opening Comments

by

David Wm. Smith

Past President of the Society of American Foresters and Professor Emeritus at the
College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech.

As a nation and as a responsible global partner, it is essential that we maintain, in perpetuity, the sustainability of our forests. The *a priori* component, that part that is the underpinning for sustainability, is the biological and ecological integrity, and associated functions in space and time of our forested systems. However, these biological and ecological components of sustainability are only part of what constitutes the “concept of sustainability. Integral to any discussion about forest sustainability are the social, political, and economic conditions at any given place and point in time. **KEEP IN MIND THAT IF YOU DO NOT GET THE BIOLOGY RIGHT THE REST WILL NOT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE.**

Any decision related to the management of forests will be “value laden”. The values placed on a given forest system will be influenced by the social, political, and economic nature of the “landowner.” The purpose of forest certification is to provide a set of standards and associated conditions that will ensure that, given the “values or objectives” placed on the resource, the management techniques, or silviculture, required to meet the objectives, will result in the sustainability of the forest in perpetuity. In other words, certification is a means to an end - that end being forest sustainability. It is imperative that we keep this point clearly in mind.

Forest sustainability and potential certification systems are far reaching and touch virtually every part of our social, political and economic structure – with local, national and international implications. It is for these reasons, that we have gathered such a diverse group of stakeholders for this “Round-Table Discussion”.

The idea of forest certification is not new. In Europe the concept of sustainable forest management can be traced back to the Middle-Ages in Germany and France. In the US, concerns about the sustainability of our Nations forests were aired in the late 1800s. The American Tree Farm System, established in 1941, was the forerunner of today’s certification schemes. While not initially having the rigor of the more modern systems, the concept of setting standards with a goal of sustaining the quality of the Tree Farm, was definitely the intent. It must also be understood that the perceived social and known scientific values of forests at that time were relatively simple compared to the very complex values and services that are in place today. The values and services provided by forests in the future will only increase as our knowledge and understanding becomes more complete, and the competition for land resources increases.

Certification entities in the U.S include:

- American Tree Farm System
- Forest Stewardship Council
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative
- Green Tag Forest Certification
- International Organization of Standardization –
Series 14000 – USFS Adaptations
- Scientific Certification System

Each is different, but the ultimate goal is forest sustainability. Sustainability includes considerations for soil loss and degradation, water quality, air quality, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, invasive species, biological diversity, ecological integrity, aesthetics, and a host of other ecological services, values and uses. And then there are the social, political and economic implications. We cannot think about sustainable forests without considering sustainable development. Our population continues to grow, competition for resources increases, and forest land is converted to other uses. In this context, arguments about what certification system is best are for the most part, time consuming and diversions from the real issues – sustainable forests and sustainable development.

Forest Certification in the U.S as we know it today is relatively new, having its roots in the early 1990s. I believe that the certification process has resulted in better forest management on the ground. It has shed light on a much broader array of forest values and uses, and therefore paved the way for a more comprehensive view of forest management. By endorsing the concepts of certification we are demonstrating that we are taking more responsibility for ensuring forest sustainability in the long term. I might add that I believe that third-party certification promotes a high level of accountability, especially if the certification process remains voluntary.

Certification costs money to implement. For the small non-industrial forestland owner this is a very important issue, and in Virginia this ownership dominates. If there is little or no premium being paid for “certified products”, how can you justify or offset the cost of certification? These small landowners are often unable to satisfy all the requirements of achieving “sustainability” as it is defined because of the many values that are embedded in the certification protocols. Every acre cannot contain all of the potential forest resource values and uses – but that does not mean that every acre is not sustainable. With this in mind we are now embracing such terms as “stewardship” or “good forest management” in a context similar to “sustainability”.

Ask the question: How do you know when you have achieved “sustainability” or a “sustainable forest”? In a forest stand evaluation at any point in time, you only have a snapshot; can you really determine whether it is “sustainable”? Herein lies one of our major challenges. If I were to ask each of you to write down your definition, I think you

would be surprised at the array of thoughts that would emerge. Do most certification approaches actually evaluate sustainability? Intrinsic in the metrics of “sustainability” is a “time” factor – since all forest systems are in a constant state of change. The point is to not get caught up in the “means” to the “end” and forget about the real problem of sustaining our forests in perpetuity.

Each day brings new challenges. What are the most recent trends in “chain of custody” issues? To what degree is the marketplace demanding “certified products”? Is “green” building really taking hold? Is the U.S. Green Building System / LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system the wave of future? The area of Urban forests is growing rapidly – so what “forest services” can they provide? Are there parameters for urban forests that can be used as guides for “sustainable urban forests?” I believe that these questions are very relevant and that these topics are going to be at the forefront as we move forward. So, where do we go from here? It is absolutely essential that we maintain the economic viability of our Nations forests for all ownerships. This means that there must be an on-going effort to maintain balance and harmony among the biologic, social, political and economic components of forest sustainability.

We have many in our audience who can shed light on many of these issues. Let us make sure that we take advantage of this outstanding opportunity to tap so much knowledge and good thinking. We have many challenges and it is up to us to turn them into opportunities.

NOTES FROM MORNING SESSION: PARTICIPANTS SHARING EXPERTISE, OPINIONS, AND QUESTIONS.

What Makes a Forest Sustainable?

Precise, workable definitions of sustainable forests are elusive, but two conditions seem necessary to all possible definitions: 1) that we keep forests from being converted to other land uses and 2) that we sustain the soil on which forests grow. Other key aspects of sustainability include biodiversity, the capacity to prudently manage forests, and a thriving forest economy on which families and communities depend.

What type of Certification is Best?

The different certification systems were not specifically compared or contrasted by the Roundtable, but many people noted that there were more similarities than differences and that any of the major certification systems would likely sustain forest health as long as conversion to other land uses was avoided. It was also suggested that most of Virginia's private and public forests—whether or not they are certified—are managed in ways that protect the soil and other qualities that sustain forest health. Most of the concerns about certification seemed to focus on impacts to forest landowners, managers, and forest products consumers. These impacts are significant because they affect profitability of forest management, the conversion of forests to other real estate uses, the vitality of forest industry, and the capacity to manage forests.

Buyers of certified forest products—green builders, architects, and purchasing agents—described the difficulties they face when purchasing products that promote forest sustainability. These buyers of forest products often do not have the skills to assess whether the products they purchase promote or degrade forest sustainability, and are particularly sensitive to charges of green-washing that further confuse and hinder informed purchasing decisions. They explained that third party verified certification adds tremendous value because it provides some measure of credibility.

Thus, an important function of certification seems to be providing a trusted and verified source of information about forest sustainability, information that is otherwise impractical to obtain by people without professional education and training in forestry. Purchasing decisions by institutional buyers (government or large companies) can, but currently do not, have large impacts on Virginia grown and certified forest products. Institutional purchasing agents are increasingly participating in “environmentally preferred purchasing programs” that require some form of certification, such as Governor Kaine's Executive Order 48 (2007): Energy Efficiency in State Government. The forestry community should continue to influence these purchasing programs in ways that promote sustainable forests.

Demand:

Conflicting opinions were offered about the demand for certified forest products. Research suggests that many retail customers do not understand the meaning of forest certification labels, and that demand for certified product from these home-improvement buyers, although growing, comprises a small part of the larger retail market. Some concern was expressed that certification should be resisted on the principle that such

efforts subvert the free market and by-pass the democratic process by which forest policy and regulations should be set.

A possible market for certified product may come from Green Building initiatives, but these systems currently focus on commercial buildings that use minimal wood and emphasize energy conservation more than forest sustainability. Currently little demand of this type exists, but new markets for certified and Virginia grown wood for Green Building may be realized as Green Building certification expands to home building (such as Earthcraft) and as state and institutional purchasing priorities align themselves to forest sustainability needs (such as Governor Kaine's 2007 executive order 48).

The potential of imminent and significant change in demand for certified product was reported, with rapidly increasing calls for certified wood coming from large corporations (such as Target and Wal-Mart) and processors (such as paper and packaging). The motivations for these institutional purchasing decisions are many and varied, and most extend well beyond meeting retail consumer demand to include corporate responsibility, a growing awareness that sustainable practices are good business practices, and being able to satisfy the standard business practices operating in other countries, especially those in Europe.

We did hear from retailers of certified and local forest products that demand for these products is sufficient to support a profitable niche that they wish to fill. These businesses find that a "local" label is at least as appealing as a "certified" label and that a "local" label generates a positive price differential whereas a "certified" label typically does not generate higher prices, even though some "certified" labels may provide access to more markets. Perhaps a unified system of local labeling should be pursued—such as "Virginia Grown."

Supply:

Buyers of certified stumpage expressed concern that few acres in Virginia are certified. Thus, a perverse outcome of certification may be that local buyers in need of certified raw materials are turning to other states, and even to other countries, for their products. So, in at least some cases, certification potentially reduces forest sustainability in Virginia by reducing the use of local wood, which reduces profits to forest owners and potentially reduces the incentive for forest ownership.

Owners of Small Forests:

Considerable discussion focused on the potentially perverse impacts of certification on landowners, especially owners of small acreages, which are increasingly the norm. Responsible landowners practicing sustainable forestry may be unable to afford the cost of becoming certified by one or more of the available systems (membership fees, inspection, paperwork, etc.). Without being able to get more money for certified products, certification can end up decreasing the profits to landowners, professionals, processors, and/or retailers, thereby discouraging forest ownership and forest management.

It was also suggested that the requirements certification imposes on landowners might not match the desires of landowners, forcing them to manage for forest attributes they might not otherwise desire. These problems are likely to increase, as land holdings

get smaller, ownership numbers increase, and new landowners have ever more diverse values.

It was argued that Virginia's forests are sustainable on a landscape scale because, among other things, the amount and growth of forests continues to exceed loss and removals; so by implication, most of Virginia forest owners are already managing their forests responsibly and sustainably. Perhaps one solution to the cost of certification is that landowners with a state sponsored Stewardship Plan could be certified "sustainable" by the state. Such certification might attract consumers who have proven responsive to marketing of Virginia-grown agricultural products. However, it is unclear whether such a state-sponsored system would satisfy institutional and international buyers seeking third-party verification. Also, it is not clear that the state could afford to implement such system.

A major concern that most people recognized is making certification affordable to non-industrial private landowners so they can continue to contribute to and profit from the local forest economy—this challenge must be met if certification becomes the norm so as to not exclude owners of small forests from the market. State resources, however, are already stretched thin and the expense of a state sponsored system may be unaffordable given current budget conditions and other obligations. Also, it is not clear that such a strategy would be the most effective use of scarce tax dollars if the goal is sustainability; other Department of Forestry conservation programs may be more effective.

This topic was the focus of significant discussion in the break-out groups held later in the day and discussed below.

Green Building

Considerable discussion revolved around green building programs and the degree to which they emphasize wood, renewable products, and sustainable forests. Concern was expressed that some green building certification systems such as LEED do not give wood enough emphasis and that they are unnecessarily restrictive to one type of forest certification system (i.e., FSC) when other forest certification systems may also promote sustainable forests. The local green architect community admitted having limited influence over national standards, but seemed sympathetic to these concerns. We were given a report of a recent meeting with the U.S. Green Building Council that this message/concern might finally be recognized, and although not yet addressed, things might be changing, albeit too slowly in eyes of some Roundtable participants.

RESULTS OF AFTER LUNCH BREAKOUT GROUPS

Moderated and reported by Nathan Lott, David Robertson, Andrew Predmore, Katie Nelson

The breakout groups generated spirited discussion on a variety of topics. Participants were asked to both articulate a concern that needed to be addressed and to suggest a strategy for addressing that concern. The discussions that ensued are organized below into five themes:

- 1) Helping forest certification programs to better sustain Virginia's forests.
- 2) Addressing the special needs of private forest owners, especially owners of small forests, which represent an increasing segment of Virginia forest ownership.
- 3) Helping green building and institutional purchasing programs better sustain Virginia's forests.
- 4) Helping smart growth land use development programs better sustain Virginia's forests.
- 5) Evaluating how certification programs compare to other programs and strategies promoting forest sustainability

HELPING FOREST CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS SUSTAIN FORESTS

- **Concern:** Participants have different understandings of the purpose of certification and the outcomes it achieves. Forests and forest sustainability are complex things. A purchasing agent looking for “sustainable” products needs a certification system with third-party verification in order to know what they are purchasing and how it contributes to sustainable forests. Conversely, certification systems may be overly simplistic to professional foresters who have a more intimate understanding of forest and forest sustainability. The pros and cons of forest certification (or any specific certification system) are a matter of perspective and desired outcome.
 - **Strategy:** *Improved communication among stakeholders, with events such as this roundtable.*
 - **Strategy:** *State-wide conference on certification.*
 - **Strategy:** *Education for all stakeholders. Extension and education mechanisms are already in place, they just need to form a unified vision for education on certification. All forest stakeholders should engage in outreach.*
 - **Strategy:** *Diversify stakeholders represented at events such as this roundtable or any certification conference.*
- **Concern:** Certification systems don't transfer from current landowner to the next owner, or across generations.
 - **Strategy:** *Develop certification system that are transferable when ownership changes (otherwise new landowner has to re-certify even if continuing previous mgmt).*

- **Concern:** Forests and forest sustainability are complex and often dependent upon local conditions, culture, and economy. Certification is not landowner driven and may not reflect their values or needs.
 - *Strategy: Certification systems need to be flexible*

- **Concern:** Third-party verification is important for architects, consumers, and purchasing agents that have neither the time nor expertise to assess forest sustainability. Third-party verification reduces time and costs for purchasing agents, increasing likelihood that certified product will be purchased in significant amounts
 - *Strategy: Require third-party verification of any certification system.*
 - *Strategy: Purchasers need to specify standards they need so forest products, certification systems, and forest owners can match what they supply with what is demanded.*

- **Concern:** Third-party involves more cost.
 - *Strategy: Develop and apply across the board standards for wood and non-wood products to help absorb and distribute costs.*

- **Concern:** Current certification systems are value-laden with values beyond the biological dimensions of sustainability.
 - *Strategy: Certification could focus only on biological dimensions of sustainability*
 - *Strategy: Certification could focus on more than biological needs, if these dimensions are meaningful to purchasers and influence purchasing decisions.*
 - *Strategy: Certification could focus only on water quality (flow, sedimentation, nutrients, biocides) as the primary biological goal and still achieve many sustainability goals. If we get the water right, everything else will follow.*
 - *Strategy: Germany might be an example, e.g., river water cleanup*

- **Concern:** It is a “Logistical nightmare” to track certified and uncertified forest products through harvest, processing and distribution, especially with rapidly changing land ownership.
 - *Strategy: none suggested*

CERTIFICATION AND PRIVATE FOREST OWNERS

- **Concern:** Certification currently involves real costs. These costs may have perverse impacts on sustainability by decreasing profits for ownership and incentive for management, diminishing forest economy and management capability, and increasing motivation for real-estate development. Who bears these costs?
 - *Strategy: Develop equitable pricing systems, as owners of small forests can be disadvantaged because of lost economies of scale.*
 - *Strategy: State assistance to landowners seeking certification. This could take the form of a tax credit equal to the average cost of certification per acre, with a possible acreage cap to target smaller, non-corporate landowners. These*

tax credits could be justified by benefits to Commonwealth of ecosystem services and forest sustainability.

- **Strategy:** *Explore using EQIP funds or related strategies to fund certification costs.*
 - **Strategy:** *Develop marketing programs that promote certification so that consumers willingly pay more, which in turn helps landowners afford added costs.*
 - **Strategy:** *Certification needs to be inclusionary rather than the current exclusionary system, which has barriers such as paperwork and payment to join. All landowners should be included by default and excluded from certification only if they have an infraction of best management practices.*
 - **Strategy:** *Get companies doing the timber extraction to pay the cost of certification. Columbia is an example of a company that has done this.*
 - **Strategy:** *Promote group certification systems. For example, 50 small landowners may bear the cost of certification together. Aggregated lands are viewed as one landholding by the certification group, and as a result, only a few of the tracts would be audited thus decreasing the certification costs. Tree Farm and FSC were identified as having group certification schemes.*
- **Concern:** Many forest owners do not own forest primarily for income, but some income may be crucial if they are to maintain or properly manage it long-term. Unfortunately we do NOT understand the effects forestry profit margins have on land owner decisions to convert their forests to other real estate uses. We assume that marginally higher profits will reduce conversion rates and thus worry that certification or other added costs will hasten conversion. But little evidence exists that refutes or supports this assumption, or, more importantly, identifies the break point where forestry profits start to influence real estate conversion.
 - **Strategy:** *Research needed.*

GREEN BUILDING AND PURCHASING

- **Concern:** Green building and purchasing will continue to grow, possibly dramatically in the near term. Sustaining forests is a minor component of green building certification and green purchasing systems, not the driver. Other concerns, especially energy efficiency, are fueling the trend. The result may be some perverse impacts on forests.
 - **Strategy:** *Influence construction practices through programs such as “green building” certification standards that emphasize forest products. Help inform and develop these certification standards so that forest sustainability is encouraged and correct current certification systems that have perverse impacts on sustaining local forests.*
 - **Strategy:** *Cities and counties could request green building as proffer from developers, perhaps even specifying a rating system or use of local building materials.*

- **Concern:** Wood/forest are unduly burdened by certification when other similar products are not subject to certification standards
 - *Strategy: Develop educational programs that promote wood/forest products as sustainable.*
 - *Strategy: Lobby US Green Building Council, purchasing agents, and other systems so that wood is not held to a different/higher standard than other products.*

- **Concern:** Third-party verification is important for architects, consumers, and purchasing agents that have neither the time nor expertise to assess forest sustainability. Builders and purchasers have limited time and a limited knowledge base, hence they desire a widely recognized certification or label, preferably one that does not discriminate against owners of local, small forests.
 - *Strategy: The development of a state “verification” for smaller landowners as an alternative to certification that would validate many of the practices already in place in Virginia. Such a system may have appeal to well-meaning builders not confined by the LEED rating system as well as to LEED builders who are more interested in the credit for locally produced products.*
 - *Strategy: Require third-party verification of any certification system.*

- **Concern:** There is need for a meaningful “local” sustainable wood label.
 - *Strategy: Architects, developers, consumers should help develop mechanisms to identify product.*
 - *Strategy: State and roundtable partners should collaborate to develop such a program.*

- **Concern:** There is currently a gap between commercial and residential building sectors in the awareness of and demand for green building. This is slowly changing as residential green building becomes more common.
 - *Strategy: A targeted (possibly public-private) education and media campaign to celebrate the use of sustainable forest products. This could involve using green buildings as an educational vehicle with signage and tours highlighting the renewable nature of forest products. One logical target of this outreach is the growing class of residential green builders, who represent the outset of a trend with the potential to significantly impact lumber consumption.*

SMART GROWTH AND FOREST FRIENDLY DEVELOPMENT

- **Concern:** Development and land conversion will continue for the foreseeable future. The inclusion of land use and location efficiency as a criterion in green building rating systems is on the near-term horizon.
 - *Strategy: Influence development patterns through programs such as LEED’s “neighborhood design” certification standards. Help inform and develop*

these certification standards and local land use ordinances so that forest sustainability is encouraged.

- **Concern:** Some real estate developers want to develop green communities that sustain forests, but they face regulatory barriers from the community governments and financial institutions that limit innovative development patterns that promote forests and forestry.
 - **Strategy:** *Developers and other roundtable partners work with land use planners to tweak regulations and find spaces in the development to include functioning and even working forests; such strategies include but are not limited to cluster developments and conservation designs.*
 - **Strategy:** *Forest cover mandates could be developed, revised, and enforced region-wide to provide local governments a tool to maintain forest cover and provide developers incentives (or at least not penalize them) for keeping forests and promoting forest sustainability.*

HOW DOES CERTIFICATION IMPACT AND COMPARE TO OTHER STRATEGIES PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

- **Concern:** “Ecosystem services” increasingly dominate the discussion of forests. Landowners and the public intuitively grasp the role of forests in providing society with water, carbon sequestration, wood production, habitat, and other services.
 - **Strategy:** *Need research to demonstrate link between certification and delivery of ecosystem services.*
 - **Strategy:** *Need public compensation for ecosystem services delivered by private lands*
 - **Strategy:** *Local taxes returned to landowners who produce public ecosystem services*
 - **Strategy:** *Need institutional mechanism to facilitate the buying and selling of ecosystem services/credits (water, carbon, etc.)*
 - **Strategy:** *Linking ecosystem services and certification may provide a tool to fund certification costs.*
- **Concern:** We don’t know whether certification helps maintain/keep forest as forest nor do we know how certification systems compare to other conservation strategies as means to sustain forests, forest economies, and forest communities.
 - **Strategy:** *Policy research and lessons learned from other states.*
- **Concern:** Is local wood always more sustainable regardless of the management practices used?
 - **Strategy:** *Research*
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- **Concern:** Are forest co-ops a viable alternative to achieve the same ends as certification?
 - **Strategy:** *Explore whether co-ops can develop a demand for their product and market it locally such that local forests become valuable and are sustained.*

Participant Contact Information and Bios

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Forest landowner and manager of family owned timber land in Virginia, known as Burke Woodlands. Attorney in Richmond, Virginia in the areas of technology, business and corporate law, with clients in the forest products industry. Active in numerous forestry groups and associations including the National Operating Committee of the American Tree Farm System and past President of the Virginia Forestry Association. jburke@mcguirewoods.com

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President and Chief Staff Executive of the Virginia Forest Products Association, which represents approximately 300 companies involved in the Commonwealth's \$25 billion forest products industry, including all regions of Virginia and the entire spectrum of the forest products industry (i.e. sawmills, planing mills, timber harvesters, paper mills, pallet plants, etc.) Although the Association has both large and small producers, the typical company can be characterized as small business, with the overwhelming majority being family owned and operated. Previously chaired the Advisory Board of Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources, Virginia's Reforestation of Timberlands Board, the Forest Council of Virginia, the Virginia Construction Industry Council, and the Virginia Motor Vehicle Conference. Past President of the National Council of Forestry Association Executives and the Virginia Society of Association Executives. vfpa.randy@att.net

Joel Cathey

Resource Manager for Ontario Hardwood Co. Inc., a grade hardwood sawmill that procures wood over a large part of Virginia and North Carolina. Employed for 21 years by Chesapeake Corporation, St. Laurent Forest Products, and Smurfit-Stone Container with numerous wood procurement and land management responsibilities in Virginia.

President, Virginia Forestry Association, and Past Chairman of the Appalachian Technical Division of Forest Resources Association. Instructor for Sustainable Forestry Logger Education and Landowner Education classes.
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Bryna Cosgriff Dunn, AICP, LEED@ap

Vice President, serving as the Director of Environmental Research and Planning, for Moseley Architects (www.moseleyarchitects.com). Works with architectural staff, engineering staff, and clients from the early planning and design phases through building construction to ensure that the most energy efficient and environmentally responsible design solutions are considered and implemented where feasible. Bryna studied Biology and Environmental Science at the University of Virginia, and she earned her Master's Degree in City Planning (specializing in Environmental Issues) at Georgia Tech. Prior to joining the staff at Moseley Architects, Bryna worked as the Director of Environmental Research and Planning at William McDonough + Partners. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners and an Associate Member of the American Institute of Architects. In addition to being on the Boards of Directors for both the Virginia Sustainable Building Network and the James River Green Building Council, she is currently part of the LEED Faculty, serves as the Chair for the Sustainable Sites Technical Advisory Group and sits on the LEED Steering Committee for the US Green Building Council. 'bdunn@moseleyarchitects.com'

Gary Fenchuk

President, East West Partners of Virginia (<http://www.ewpartners.com/aboutus.aspx>), a family of related but independent companies devoted to building, selling, managing and supporting high-quality real estate in the communities in which they operate.

Bill Edgerton, AIA

A professional architect focusing on Sustainable Design for nearly 20 years,
President and ESAD Program Officer, The Oak Hill Fund (<http://www.oakhillfund.org/>).

Jerry Gray

President of Virginia Forest Watch (www.virginiaforestwatch.org), and Chair of the Forest Issues Workgroup. A private attorney (J. D., UVA, 1973) practicing in Clintwood, Virginia (www.gglfpc.com), where I own a small farm with about 60 acres of timber. Served as Commonwealth's Attorney for Dickenson County (84-91), and am currently vice-chair of the Dickenson County Industrial Development Authority, and chair of the Ralph Stanley Traditional Mountain Music Center. Secretary and Executive Committee member of the Board of Virginia Conservation Network. (www.vcnva.org).. gerald.gray@verizon.net

Jennifer Gagnon

Extension forester at the Virginia Tech Department of Forestry where she coordinates the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, which aims to provide forest landowners education about forest land management within the framework of sound stewardship and sustainability. She received her B.S. (1998) and M.S. (2001) in Forest Conservation and Management/Silviculture at the [University of Florida](http://www.ufl.edu). Prior to moving to Virginia, she worked at the [J.W. Jones Ecological Research Center](http://www.jwjonesecologicalresearchcenter.com) in Newton, GA where she studied longleaf pine and fire ecology.
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Charles Green (invited)

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Harry Groot

CEO Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative, Inc. Involved in three SARE producer grants as a participant and provided oversight for two others working with the Virginia Association of Biological Farming. He has also had management responsibility for grants from the Alfred P Sloan Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Appalachian Regional Commission, and Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology. Mr. Groot, a registered Professional Engineer in Virginia and Ohio, spent the first 22 years of his career in engineering and management positions in industry, private practice, and public

service. In private and public practice he completed competitiveness enhancement projects for over 150 manufacturers. In 1998 he founded Next Generation Woods, Inc., formerly an FSC certified producer. Mr. Groot has held the rank of Assistant Professor in the Virginia Community College system, served four years as Virginia's Director for the Consortium for Manufacturing Competitiveness, and has served on Virginia's Industrial Competitiveness Task Force. Mr. Groot and his wife operate a diversified family farm that has marketed value added agricultural and forest products since 1977. harry@nextgenwoods.com

Paul Howe

Executive Vice President of the Virginia Forestry Association, an organization comprised of 1,500 landowner and forestry business members promoting stewardship and wise use of sustainable forest resources for the economic and environmental benefits of all Virginians. VFA programs focus on government relations, public outreach, and current issues impacting the forestry community. Currently serves as Secretary and administrator for the Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation, administrator for the Virginia Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee, moderator of the Forest Council of Virginia, and on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Society of Association Executives and Strategies to Elevate People. phowe@verizon.net

Bruce Hull

Professor of Social Ecology in the Department of Forestry in the College of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech. Previously on the faculty at University of Melbourne (Australia) and Texas A&M University. Works towards collaborative conservation and advises public and private forest-focused groups, including the Model Forest Policy Program, Southern Group of State Foresters, Forest Issues Working Group, Southern Forest Roundtable, and the LandCare Center. He is author of numerous publications, including the recent book, *Infinite Nature*, by University of Chicago Press. hullrb@vt.edu; 540 231 7272

Joseph C. Lawson

Certified forester and graduate of Ohio State with 24 years experience at MeadWestvaco Corporation, currently the Director of Sustainable Forestry (<http://www.meadwestvaco.com/sustainability.nsf>). Also serves as chair of Sustainable Forestry Initiative's Interpretation Committee. Leadership positions in numerous national and international organizations such as World Business Council for Sustainable Development and American Tree Farm. Actively engaged with large institutional buyers of certified forest products. jcl@meadwestvaco.com

Nathan Lott

Executive Director, Virginia Conservation Network; www.vcnva.org. VCN is devoted to advancing a common, environmentally sound vision for Virginia. Created in 1990, the Network's membership is comprised of more than 100 groups committed to protecting Virginia's natural resources. VCN is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization supported by membership dues and grants. nathan@vcnva.org

John Meggs, PE

President and owner of Nature Neutral®, a green building supply company based in Charlottesville, Virginia. Founded in 2003, Nature Neutral serves the Mid-Atlantic region with a full line of high quality, green building products, such as Aquatherm Pipe, FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified lumber, plywood and flooring, EnviroSafe Plus™ treated lumber and non-toxic paints, stains and sealers. Mr. Meggs has a BS in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Tennessee, and is a registered professional engineer. Prior to founding Nature Neutral, he spent over 15 years as an engineer in the HVAC and manufacturing industries, including almost 10 years with Johnson Controls, before co-founding his own engineering firm, Piedmont Automation. www.natureneutral.com

Jim Mooney, EC

Executive Director of Virginia Logger's Association (<http://valoggers.org/v1/index>). The VLA is comprised of logging contractors throughout the state. Its goals are to provide an information network for Timber Harvesting Professionals and to be a voice for the Timber Harvesting Industry in Virginia; to improve the image of the Timber Harvesting Industry; to improve workers safety in the Timber Harvesting Industry; to improve and expand the use and quality of professional logging practices responsive to the needs of customers, employees, landowners and the general public; and to provide, promote, and facilitate Educational Training for members within the Timber Harvesting profession. VaLoggersAssoc@aol.com.

Katie Nelson

Graduate student: Human Dimensions. Department of Forestry, Virginia Tech. Katie will be one of the scribes helping keep our discussions recorded and on target. knels07@vt.edu

Richard Poindexter

Richard Poindexter is the Specialty Products Manager for Columbia Forest Products covering the Southeastern United States (www.columbiaforestproducts.com). In this capacity Richard conducts training seminars for architects, designers, as well as CFP distributors throughout the southeast. Richard graduated from North Carolina State University in 1995 with a B.S. in Wood Products and a minor in Business Management. Richard is a LEED Accredited Professional, and earned this designation August 19, 2004. Richard is also a member of the organizing committee for the USGBC Piedmont Triad chapter. Richard resides in Greensboro, NC with his wife Leann and daughter Reagan. rpindexter@cfpwood.com.

Andrew Predmore

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David P. Robertson, PhD

Director of the Landcare Center, teaches graduate courses in the Master of Natural Resources Program and Department of Political Science, and conducts interdisciplinary research and outreach projects in the Department of Forestry and College of Natural Resources. David has also served on the faculty at Boston University, Lynchburg College, the International Honors Program, and the Yestermorrow School. David is a consulting landscape architect with Harvey Design and Land Architects and serves on the board of directors for the Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative and Greater Lynchburg Environmental Network and the steering committee of the Middle James Roundtable. David has had management responsibility for seven USDA grants and contracts through the Forest Service and National Agroforestry Center, including project manager for the Headwaters Forest Landcare Partnership. davidrobertson@vt.edu

Sue Rowland

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Jim Sitts

Appalachian Timber Manager for Columbia Forest Products for the last 26 years. With 7 panel plants, Columbia Forest Products is the largest manufacturer of decorative hardwood plywood in North America. Our two Appalachian Mills which are located in Craigsville, WV and Old Fort, NC consume over 80 million board feet of Yellow Poplar logs annually. I am a 1970 graduate of North Carolina State University with a BS in Forest Management. My wife and I have lived in western North Carolina for the last 33 years and we own and manage a 140 acre tree farm located in Burke County, NC. JSitts@columbiaforestproducts.com

Andrew Smith

Virginia Farm Bureau; Senior Assistant Director of Governmental Relations for the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation where he is in charge of various policy areas including forestry and renewable energy. He also has a background in land conservation and agricultural and forest land transition plans. He is also versed in areas concerning certification programs that effect agricultural and forest lands. Andrew in addition to his work with VAFB owns and operates his family's farm in Hanover and Caroline counties.

The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation is an organization of farmers and rural families with more than 148,000 members. There are 88 county Farm Bureaus located throughout Virginia. The organization works to support its members through legislative lobbying, leadership programs, commodity associations, rural health programs, products, insurance, marketing and other services. Farm Bureau is not a state agency. It is non-governmental, non-partisan and voluntary. Andrew.Smith@vafb.com

Bob Smith

Associate Dean, College of Natural Resources. Bob works in the area of the marketing of forest products. Specific interests include industrial marketing, strategic planning, and personal selling in the forest products industry. Bob teaches marketing, sales, and wood products continuing education courses throughout the US. He is the Director of the Center for Forest Products Marketing and Management (CFPMM) and is on the faculty advisory boards for the Wood-based Composite Center (WBC) and the Sustainable Engineered Materials Institute (SEMI). rsmith4@vt.edu.

Dave Smith

Shelton H. Short Jr. Emeritus Professor of Forestry, Virginia Tech with forty-one years of experience in forestry education, research, and technology transfer with an emphasis on the silviculture, and soil-site-plant relationships of

eastern U.S. forests. Developed and taught courses and educational programs in urban forestry, and programs for continuing professional forestry education. Author or coauthor of more than 70 research papers and proceedings related to forest management. Provided professional forestry testimony before US Congressional Committees/Panels on five occasions; Past-President and Fellow in the Society of American Foresters; Certified Forester®; Member of the Virginia Board of Forestry; Member of Virginia Forestry Educational Foundation Board of Directors; Captain, USN – Retired. smithdwm@vt.edu.

Richard Taylor

Appalachian Forest Stewardship Council coordinator for Columbia Forest Products. He has worked in the Appalachian region for over twelve years and began managing Columbia's FSC resource pool in 2004. He is a graduate of North Carolina State University with a degree in forest management (1995), a registered forester (NC and WV), and an SAF certified forester.

Bud Watson

Research Director, Model Forest Policy Program. Mr. Watson has worked on forest issues for MFPP for six years. An attorney with a natural science background, he has for twenty years concentrated on evaluating land development impacts on water quality and the development of effective measures to alleviate these adverse environmental impacts. He was the first director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Virginia office, where he litigated water quality cases, one of which reached the U.S. Supreme Court. Also in that capacity he participated in the drafting of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act, and then became the first director of the Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Department, which wrote and implemented the regulations that implemented the land use and water quality protective measures of the act. bmwatson3@aol.com

Brad Williams

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Faren R. Wolter, PhD, AWB

Land Conservation Officer, Piedmont Environmental Council (www.pecva.org). PhD in Forestry with a concentration in Society and Ecosystems from the University of Missouri – Columbia. Professionally certified as a wildlife biologist through the Wildlife Society and have worked extensively on a variety of wildlife studies in forested habitats. Worked in the Missouri Ozarks encouraging collaborative ecosystem stewardship across privately owned forestlands to voluntarily achieve stewardship goals. Works with state agencies to shepherd a private forestland owner association representing five counties in the northern Piedmont. Serves on the steering committee for Model Forest Policy Program, as well as contributes to Chesapeake Bay forest working groups aimed at addressing the Bay Directive's forest conservation goals. fwolter@pecva.org.

----INVITATION SENT PARTICIPANTS----

**The Future of Forest Certification in Virginia
A Roundtable for Forest Stakeholders**

10 AM to 3 PM; September 21, 2007

Virginia Department of Forestry Training Room
Charlottesville, Virginia

Purpose of Roundtable:

A new era for forests and forestry is emerging because of urbanizing forest lands, transforming forest industry, and evolving forest product markets. Certification of forests and forest products is a market-based strategy promoted by local, national, and international organizations as a mechanism that helps sustain our forests. The purpose of the roundtable is to discuss the relevance of certification in this new era and to examine certification's impacts on Virginia's forest stakeholders and on the sustainability of Virginia's forests. It is not expected that the roundtable will take a position for or against certification or any specific certification system. Rather, participants will learn about certification in the new era, as well as explore common ground and opportunities for next steps. Subsequent forums may target this or other topics.

Agenda

- Welcome (Brad Williams, Assistant State Forester)
- Purpose of the Meeting (Nathan Lot, Director of Virginia Conservation Network)
- Panel presentation to set the stage
 - Keeping our Eyes on the Prize: Sustainability in a globalizing, urbanizing, climate changing world. (Dr. Bruce Hull, Professor of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech),
 - Opportunities and limitations of certification to promote forest sustainability. (Dr. Dave Smith, past president of Society of American Foresters, former Dean of College of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech),
 - The Demand Side of the Equation: evolving markets, boycotts, globalization. (Dr. Bob Smith, Professor and Director of the Center for Forest Products Marketing and Management at Virginia Tech),
 - Green buildings, green neighborhood design, and certification. (Karl Bren, Green Visions Consulting, <http://www.green-visions.com/record.html>).
- Questions of panel and open discussion
- *Lunch (provided by Virginia Conservation Network & the LandCare Center at VT)*
- Facilitated discussion of common ground, critical concerns, & pregnant opportunities.
- Facilitated discussion of potential next steps in Virginia

Invited Organizations

Twenty to thirty invited guests representing forest products industry, environmental groups, environmental professions, certification services, land owners, state agencies, retailers and purchasers of certified product, forestry consultants, logging services, land developers, scientists, politicians, and social change agents.

Roundtable Sponsors

Virginia Conservation Network, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Tech Forestry, LandCare Center, James River Green Building Council, EarthCraft Virginia.

For more information contact a member of the planning team:

Bruce Hull, College of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech; hullrb@vt.edu; 540 231 7272

Nathan Lott, Virginia Conservation Network, Executive Director; nathan@vcnva.org

Karl Bren, Green Visions Consulting, <http://www.green-visions.com/record.html>

Jerry Gray, President of Va Forest Watch and Chair of the Forest Issues Workgroup.

David Robertson, Department of Forestry and LandCare Center VT;

Dave Smith, College of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech

Tammy Belinsky, Virginia Conservation Network, Forest Issues Working Group

Jennifer Gagnon, Coordinator, Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program

Charlie Becker, Virginia Department of Forestry

Directions: The meeting will begin at 10:00AM. Coffee and networking will begin at 9:30 in the Virginia Department of Forestry Training Room, Charlottesville, Virginia. The address is 900 Natural Resources Drive, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903, which can be cut and pasted into the Google Map link: <http://maps.google.com/>. From I-64, take exit 118 B onto Route 29 North. Take the first exit onto Fontaine Drive. Take the first right onto Natural Resources Drive, bear right at the top of the hill and follow that road to the end, about ½ mile. Signs and information desks inside the building will direct you to the meeting room.

Roundtable Materials: Reading materials and participant information will be distributed prior to the meeting in hopes that participants will hit the ground running and we can make constructive use of our scarce time. Notes will be taken at the meeting and a brief report sharing the jest of our discussions will be shared with participants.

STARTER TOPICS FOR AFTER-LUNCH BREAKOUT GROUPS

Help green building and green purchasing programs promote FOREST Sustainability:

Green building, energy efficient design, and green institutional buying programs are in place and growing.

- *How do these programs affect Virginia's forests and forest economy?*
- *How do we help these programs pull us towards sustainability rather than punish small forests and small forest products companies?*
- *What do these programs need to know about forests and forests products that communicate sustainable forests?*
- *What strategy or next steps would promote progress towards the desired outcomes?*

Help forest certification programs promote FOREST sustainability. The demand for certified forest products is here and potentially growing in its impact on Virginia's forests, forest economy, and forestry community.

- *What are the most important desired outcomes and impacts of forest certification programs?*
- *What are the most important **undesired** outcomes and impacts of forest certification programs?*
- *What strategy or next steps would promote the desired outcomes and minimize the undesirable outcomes?*

How will forest certification fare given the following trends?

- *Ownership of forest land is transitioning due to industry divestiture, boomer retirement, estate transfers, and urbanization.*
- *Globalizing and reorganizing forest industry is eroding traditional local management options.*
- *Profit margins from timber harvests that make local management affordable are shrinking because of fiercely competitive international markets and because processing facilities are relocating to where land and labor are cheapest and productivity and profits are highest (Wear et al. 2007).*
- *Income from fiber and timber may NOT be up to the task of sustaining forests—real estate development returns greater profits, leading to forest conversion. Therefore, certification of forest products may become ineffective as a conservation strategy.*
- *Meanwhile, scarce tax revenues available to fund state and federal government conservation efforts are increasingly reallocated to fund security, health, and retirement issues.*

Open corner for people to gather and describe critical issues not captured by the other three questions. Someone may volunteer to champion a topic, or we can stick with the other three. Illustrations include

- *Implications for certification of biomass, biofuels, and sequestered carbon.*
- *Challenges of chain-of-custody certification.*
- *Influencing Neighborhood Design Certification to reflect Virginia Forest concerns*
- *How effective is certification in comparison to other programs promoting sustainable forests? What other conservation strategies should we pursue if sustaining forests is our goal? What is the low hanging fruit?*