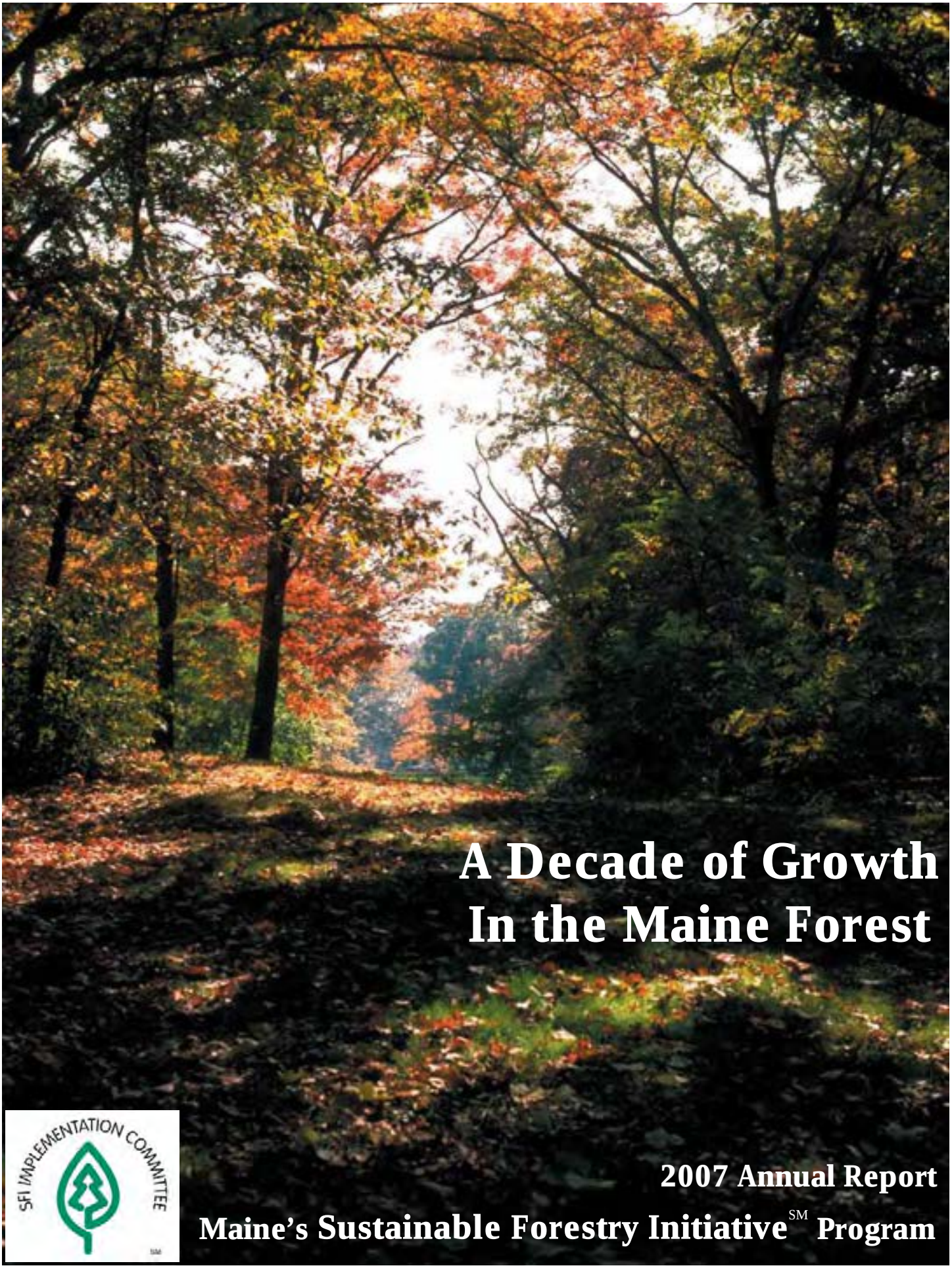


A Decade of Growth In the Maine Forest

2007 Annual Report

Maine's Sustainable Forestry Initiative℠ Program

Sustainable Forestry Initiative program celebrates decade of growth in Maine

Maine's nationally acclaimed Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program recently celebrated its tenth anniversary.

The program was conceived in a time of prolonged public debate about forest practices in Maine. Residents sought assurance that the state's forest resources would be managed productively and sustainably for generations to come, and that water quality, wildlife habitat and other values associated with well-managed forests would be safeguarded.

Maine's SFI program has been a leader in the areas of logger education, landowner outreach, the certification of sustainable forest practices and the implementation of Best Management Practices to protect Maine's water, soil and other natural resources.

The Maine SFI Implementation Committee is one of 34 state and provincial committees that coordinate the implementation of the North American standards of SFI. The Sustainable Forestry Initiative program is a comprehensive system of principles, objectives and performance measures that integrate the perpetual growth and harvest of trees with the protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. It is based on the belief that responsible environmental practices and sound business practices can be integrated to the benefit of everyone who cares about the forest.

Maine's SFI Implementation Committee includes representatives of large and small landowners, pulp and paper mills, sawmills, professional logging contractors and logger training programs, consulting foresters, the Maine Forest Service and Land Use Regulation Commission, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, the University of Maine and Maine Tree Foundation. Working together, members of the committee have built a nationally recognized program that has helped to improve forest practices throughout the state's 17 million acres of woodlands.

Pat Sirois

Are there still areas that need improvement? Certainly. But the state has made substantial progress in improving its forest management since the first clearcutting referendum in 1996, and the Maine SFI program deserves a large share of the credit for giving forest professionals the tools they need to continuously improve.

To learn more about the program, please visit www.sfimaine.org.

Pat Sirois

Maine SFI Program Director

Sustainability program becomes fully independent

On Jan. 1, 2007, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative became a fully independent program. A multi-stakeholder national board of directors is now the sole governing body over the SFI Standard and all other aspects of the program. The diversity of the board members reflects the range of interests in the forest.

Of the national program's 15 board members, five are the chief executive officers of nonprofit environmental groups; five are the CEOs of forest products companies; and the remaining board members represent stakeholders from the broader forest community. The directors include:

John A. Luke, Jr.
Chairman & CEO
MeadWestvaco Corp.

Norm L. Christensen Jr.
Professor of Ecology
Nicholas School of the Enviroment
Duke University

Joe Young
President
Low Country Forest Products Inc.

Marvin Brown
State Forester
Oregon Department of Forestry

John Faraci
Chairman & CEO
International Paper Co.

George H. Fenwick
President
American Bird Conservancy

Rick R. Holley
President & CEO
Plum Creek Timber Co.

John Innes
FRBC Chair of Forest Management
University of British Columbia

Steven J. McCormick
President & CEO
The Nature Conservancy

Patrick J. Moore
Chairman, President & CEO
Smurfit-Stone Container Corp.

Mary Motlow
President & COO,
Cumberland Springs Land Co.

Steven R. Rogel
Chairman, President & CEO
Weyerhaeuser Co.

Larry Selzer
President & CEO
The Conservation Fund

Laurie A. Wayburn
President
The Pacific Forest Trust

Steven A. Williams
President & CEO
Wildlife Management Institute

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative provides a way for foresters, landowners, loggers and mills to operate an economically viable industry while satisfying society's desire for environmental responsibility.

SFI program participants support sustainable forestry practices on the lands they manage, and actively promote such practices on other timberland through the SFI systems used to procure wood. This commitment to sustainable forestry stems from a conviction that forest landowners have a critical stewardship responsibility to current and future generations.

Independent certification of forest management

The SFI program is perhaps best known for the development and implementation of forest management standards that ensure sustainable levels of timber harvesting, while also protecting water quality, managing wildlife habitat, conserving biodiversity and safeguarding soil productivity. The nine underlying principles of SFI are to:

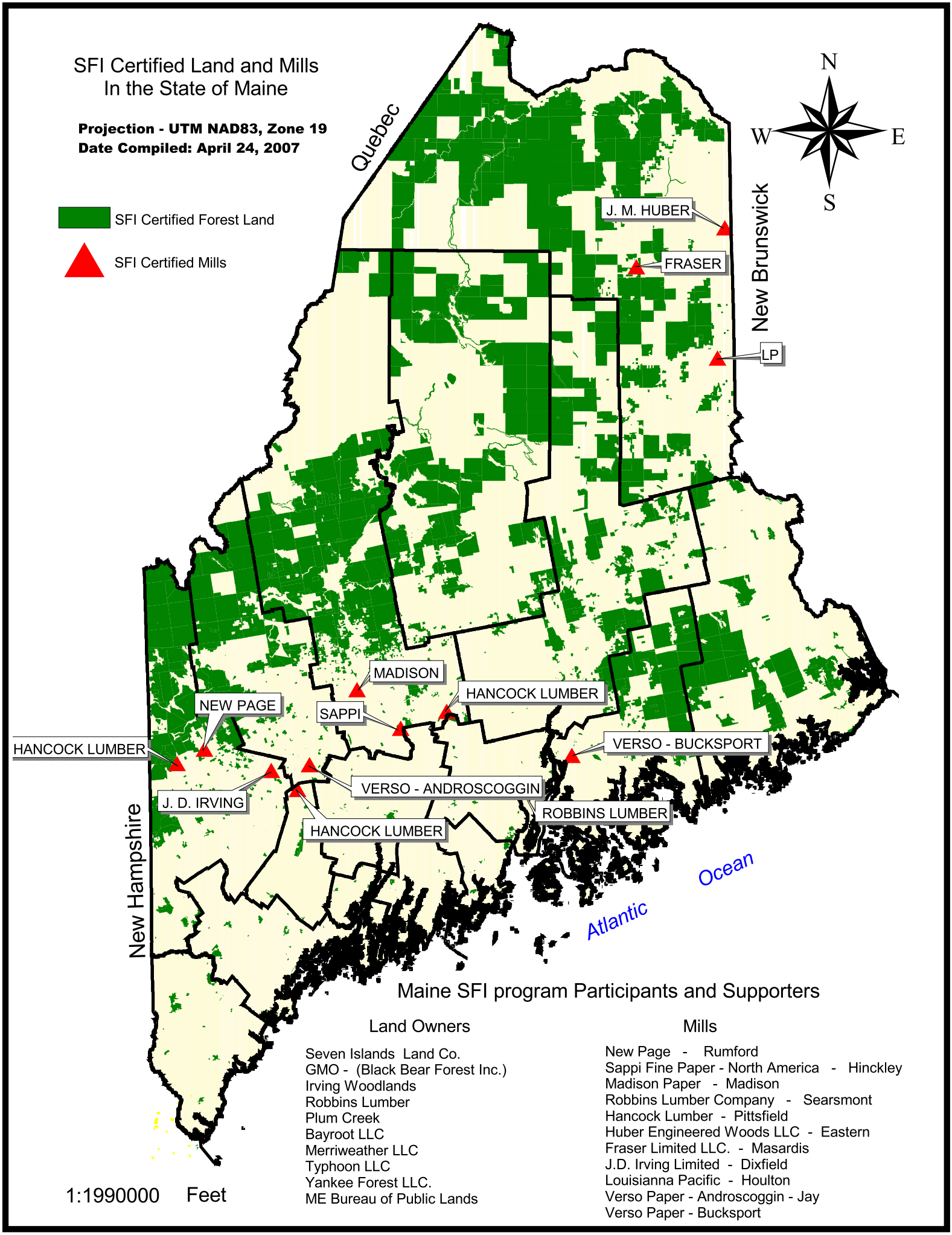
- Practice Sustainable Forestry
- Use and Promote Responsible Practices
- Ensure Reforestation and Maintain Productive Capacity
- Safeguard Forest Health and Productivity
- Maintain Long-Term Forest and Soil Productivity
- Protect Water Resources
- Protect Special Sites and Biological Diversity
- Comply with Laws and Regulations
- Foster Continual Improvement

In order for a landowner or mill to be certified to the SFI Standard, an independent, third-party audit team must review the owner's management practices to verify they meet the principles and objectives of the program.

To date, 19 Maine mills and landowners representing 5.8 million acres of land have been certified under the standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program. The program fosters continuous improvement in forest management. Benchmarks are established for each company at the time of its initial certification, and all participants must show improvement in each subsequent recertification.

"The ability to successfully apply standards for performance through certification requires an industry-wide, common understanding of terms and the principles of science behind practices. This is where SFI stands alone, above all other programs."

Pat Sirois



Maine SFI program Participants and Supporters

Land Owners

Seven Islands Land Co.
GMO - (Black Bear Forest Inc.)
Irving Woodlands
Robbins Lumber
Plum Creek
Bayroot LLC
Merriweather LLC
Typhoon LLC
Yankee Forest LLC.
ME Bureau of Public Lands

Mills

New Page - Rumford
Sappi Fine Paper - North America - Hinckley
Madison Paper - Madison
Robbins Lumber Company - Searsmont
Hancock Lumber - Pittsfield
Huber Engineered Woods LLC - Eastern
Fraser Limited LLC. - Masardis
J.D. Irving Limited - Dixfield
Louisianna Pacific - Houlton
Verso Paper - Androscoggin - Jay
Verso Paper - Bucksport

Outcome-based training of forest professionals

The certification of forest practices is only one of several ways in which the Maine SFI Implementation Committee seeks to have a positive impact on forest practices. The committee also focuses on professional development as the foundation for promoting continuous improvement. Two logger training programs have received certification from the committee: The Maine Certified Logging Professional program, which was established in 1990 and had trained almost 5,300 loggers by the end of 2006; and the Maine Qualified Logging Professional program, located at the Southern Aroostook County Vocational Technical School.

Both programs offer four days of intensive training in logging safety, sustainable forestry principles, best management practices, aesthetics, protection of wildlife habitat and compliance with state and federal statutes. On the fifth day, loggers must successfully complete a performance-based field evaluation in order to be certified. Following the principle of continuous improvement, loggers in Maine are required to attend a full day of approved training every two years to meet continuing education requirements.

Maine's SFI Education subcommittee has also developed and presented a series of other continuing education programs to more than 3,500 forest professionals. The courses are taught using a team approach, with each team consisting of a logger and a forester. This promotes a model of cooperation among the two professions and allows participants to consider topics from more than one perspective.

The training programs include: Introduction to Harvesting Aesthetics; Introduction to Wildlife Habitat and Biodiversity; Introduction to Harvest Planning; Wooden Mat Construction for Stream Crossings; Introduction to GPS; Road Construction; Introduction to Best Management Practices; BMP Level II (BMP Systems Assessment and Remediation); and BMP Monitoring Protocol.

In 2006, 17 workshops were conducted for 525 participants. Five of the workshops dealt with various aspects of Best Management Practices.

BMPs are techniques for minimizing impacts on water quality and other natural resources during timber harvesting. From June 2001 through November 2005, the Maine Forest Service conducted statewide field monitoring to determine the extent and effectiveness of BMP use. The agency produced a report in 2005 that documented substantial improvements in the use and effectiveness of BMPs over the prior reporting period, and offered a clear indication that SFI's training efforts are working.

The BMP Monitoring Protocol used by the Maine Forest Service has its roots in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative's outcome-based philosophy. The Maine SFI program participated in the development of the monitoring protocol with personnel from the Maine Department of Conservation and USDA Forest Service. The method focuses on designing and using practices with a specific outcome in mind, rather than implementing a one-size-fits-all approach that might not prove effective given actual site conditions.

Like all Maine SFI training, it focuses on the premise behind the practice, allowing professionals to think creatively in order to achieve desired outcomes in the field. Roger Ryder of the Maine Forest Service was lead author of the two-year project, and a lead instructor for the Maine SFI program.

An invitation to ask tough questions

In 1997, Maine was the first state in the nation to offer a toll-free telephone number, 1-888-SFI- GOAL, for the public to call with questions or concerns about forest practices. The following year, the program expanded to include New Hampshire.

To widely publicize the number, a brochure was developed and distributed to town managers and code enforcement officers in all 502 Maine communities; the SFI-GOAL number was posted at all gates operated by North Maine Woods (a landowner cooperative that manages access to 4 million acres of timberland); and the number was included in the latest edition of the Small Woodland Owner's Handbook.

Since its introduction, SFI-GOAL has fielded about 20 calls annually. Public concerns have centered on three areas: Water quality, aesthetics and harvest practices. Almost all of the calls – more than 95 percent – related to lands not owned by SFI participants.

Calls to SFI-GOAL are answered personally by Pat Sirois, the Maine SFI program director. Calls are treated as strictly confidential; unless a caller specifically asks for contact, his or her identity is not revealed to the company, logger, forester or landowner.

The program has developed a formal process for responding to practices that are viewed by the public as being inconsistent with SFI. To ensure the process is followed consistently in the field, the SFI Implementation Committee has conducted workshops outlining the steps to be taken and highlighting important lessons from past calls. Field personnel from all of the SFI-certified companies in Maine, along with representatives of the three state agencies charged with regulating forest practices, have attended the workshops.

The hotline also provides a barometer of public thinking about the forest, and highlights the types of activities that are of greatest concern to Maine residents. Although the vast majority of calls to SFI-GOAL do not relate to lands that are owned or managed by SFI-certified companies, the program has developed training in all three of the areas of greatest concern.

Landowner outreach

There are more than 200,000 owners of small forested parcels in Maine. It is critically important that the landowners have access to good information abut the forest in order to make sound management decisions. Many of them, however, are not affiliated with any landowner organization or program. The SFI Implementation Committee is committed to developing effective ways to reach out to those landowners.

Maine's SFI program has worked with the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine to use the latest edition of the association's Small Woodland Owner's Handbook as an outreach tool. With funding from SFI and a generous contribution from Maine TREE Foundation, SWOAM established a pilot program to reach 1,000 new landowners last year.

The bottom line: Maine's forest is healthy, growing

For the people of Maine, the most important question is: Are the state's forest resources managed better today than they were 10 years ago? Wildlife populations and water quality are two clear indicators.

A recent assessment prepared by the Maine Forest Service and Maine Natural Areas Program noted the state is home to a staggering number of species: 1,432 plants, 198 birds, 54 mammals, 34 reptiles and amphibians, 52 fish and more than 15,000 insects. Among them:

- Maine has nearly 300 nesting pairs of bald eagles (there are 10 in New Hampshire and one in Vermont).
- At 23,000 animals, Maine has one of the largest populations of black bears in the Northeast.
- Maine has 29,000 moose, the largest population in the eastern United States, and perhaps in the entire country outside of Alaska.

With few exceptions, water quality in the rivers, streams, and brooks running from Maine's forests meets or exceeds the national goal of "swimmable" and "fishable," according to the two state agencies. They credited Best Management Practices that protect water quality from the impact of harvesting.

Maine people also benefit from a longstanding tradition of open public access to millions of acres of privately owned timberland.

But what about the forest itself? A publication titled "The Forests of Maine, 2003," released two years ago by the USDA Forest Service Northeastern Research Station, offers a snapshot of Maine's timberland based on the first five years of a new system for continuously monitoring the state's forest resources. Among the report's conclusions:

- With 17.7 million acres of timberland, Maine is the most heavily forested state in the nation at 90 percent. The state's forested area has been stable for the last several decades.

- Unlike forests in many other timber-producing states, most of Maine's woodland acres are naturally regenerated and biologically diverse. Some 44 tree species grow in the Maine Woods.

- In Maine, natural regeneration typically results in thousands of seedlings per acre within several years of a harvest or other disturbance.

- Maine's forests have almost twice as much timber volume today as in 1952. Current estimates of growth and harvest are essentially equal (about one-third of a cord per acre each year.)