



1101 Wilson Boulevard, 15th Floor
Arlington, VA 22209
TEL 703-908-1800
FAX 703-908-1917
www.natureserve.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Rob Riordan, NatureServe, 703-908-1831 or rob_riordan@natureserve.org

Sustainable Forestry Initiative Adopts NatureServe Assessments of Conservation Status

Conservation Group Will Provide Information Needed by Timber Companies to Identify and Protect Important Forests

Arlington, Virginia — The sustainable forestry certification standard that is adhered to by most major timber companies has adopted the use of NatureServe conservation status assessments as the official standard for the protection of forests of exceptional conservation value. The new Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards, adopted as of July 1, will affect the management of some 60 million acres of forest lands in the United States and Canada.

The Sustainable Forestry Board, which oversees the SFI certification standards, approved the new standards on June 28. These standards must be followed by all SFI participants, including nearly all major timber companies in the United States and many in Canada. In order to receive SFI certification, the companies will develop and implement plans to protect sites on their forestlands that contain viable occurrences of imperiled plants, animals, and ecological communities.

“NatureServe welcomes the opportunity to work through the Sustainable Forestry Initiative to provide timber companies with critical information about biodiversity,” said Mark Schaefer, NatureServe’s president and CEO. “Imperiled species and important habitats are found on timber industry lands throughout North America. Through this strengthening of the SFI standard, the timber industry has taken an important step towards their conservation.”

“For nearly a year, the Sustainable Forestry Board has been collaborating with scientists, foresters, the conservation community, private landowners and the forest products industry to improve the SFI standard in order to enhance the identification and protection of forests with exceptional conservation value,” said Mr. Colin Moseley, Chairman of the SFB and Chairman of Simpson Investment Company. “For participants in the SFI program, these new enhancements represent a significant step forward in the protection of imperiled forests.”

In the terminology of NatureServe’s conservation status rankings, the species and communities to be protected are those ranked by NatureServe as G1 (critically imperiled) or G2 (imperiled). The rankings are based on nearly three decades of biological field inventories by hundreds of scientists in the network of U.S. natural heritage programs and Canadian conservation data centers (CDCs), combined with analysis of information from other scientific sources. The natural heritage programs and CDCs are the leading source of information on the exact locations

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and conditions of rare and threatened species and ecological communities. “Our conservation status assessments cover more than 50,000 species and communities in the U.S. and Canada,” notes NatureServe’s Vice President for Science, ecologist Dennis Grossman. “For example, we currently track about 17,000 native plant species alone, and more than 2,500 of these are ranked as G1 or G2.” NatureServe’s database is relied upon by conservation groups and government agencies as well as industry, and widely recognized as the most comprehensive and authoritative of its kind.

Information from NatureServe and natural heritage programs is referenced in the new SFI standards under the objective related to conserving biological diversity. Specifically, an indicator of compliance with SFI standard 4.1.4 is: *“Plans in place to protect species or communities that are vulnerable at the global, national, or regional level based upon conservation status ranking systems (e.g., NatureServe, Natural Heritage Network, etc.).”*

An indicator of compliance with standard 4.1.6 is: *“Collection of information on critically imperiled and imperiled species and communities and other biodiversity-related data through forest inventory processes, mapping or participation in external programs such as NatureServe, state or provincial heritage programs, or other credible systems.”*

Currently more than 115 forest product companies adhere to SFI certification standards. The Sustainable Forestry Board itself, which oversees the SFI standards, is an independent body comprised of SFI program participants, conservation and environmental leaders, and forestry community representatives.

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Additional Resources:

Sustainable Forestry Board: <http://www.aboutsfb.org/>. The complete SFI standards for 2002-2004 can be found at http://www.afandpa.org/forestry/SFI/Standard_02_04.pdf.

An explanation of how NatureServe develops its conservation status ranks:
<http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/ranking.htm>.

NatureServe Explorer (www.natureserve.org/explorer) is a searchable database of conservation information for the plants, animals, and ecological communities of the United States and Canada. It includes records of the G1 and G2-ranked species in each state or province.

To find a biologist from the natural heritage program or conservation data center in your state or province, see our program directory at <http://www.natureserve.org/networkdirectory.htm> or contact Rob Riordan at 703-908-1831 for assistance.

NatureServe is a non-profit conservation group dedicated to providing the scientific information and tools that form the basis for effective conservation action. NatureServe represents a network of 75 natural heritage programs and conservation data centers in the United States, Canada, and Latin America that collect and analyze information on plants, animals, and ecosystems. NatureServe is a leading source for detailed scientific information about rare and endangered species and threatened ecosystems. Visit us on the web at www.natureserve.org.