Communities and Forests

The Newsletter of the Commmunities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress

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Inside this issue

Criteria and Indicators: Finding Meaning for Communities

by Ian Leahy, Editor, and Gerry Gray

In community forestry circles, we often talk about "Criteria and Indicators, " a shorthand term for an assessment and learning process that is still evolving. From a practical perspective, what are criteria and indicators? More importantly, what, if anything, do they mean to community forestry practitioners more concerned about on-the-ground projects than abstract international agreements? Now, as a three-year project focused on connecting communities into the Montreal Process framework comes to its conclusion, we may finally have an answer.

Workers capture information from a sample plot.

The Montreal Process

The "Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators" (MP C&I) evolved out of the 1992 Earth Summit. At the summit, there was much talk about advancing sustainable forest management globally, but there was little agreement as to what a sustainable forest was. It became apparent that a common set of criteria would need to be developed, and in 1993 at the International Seminar of Experts on Sustainable Development of Boreal and Temperate Forests, "the Montreal Process" was given birth. By 1994, 12 countries had joined this collaboration, and through a painstaking process, had identified 7 criteria that are further defined by 67 indicators. The 7 criteria are:

1. Conservation of biological diversity
2. Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystem
3. Maintenance of forest ecosystem health
4. Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources
5. Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles
6. Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of society
7. Legal, institutional, and economic framework for forest conservation and sustainable management

Linking Communities to the Montreal Process

US policy discussions regarding national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management utilized the results of the Montreal Process, but did not incorporate local knowledge or local level indicators well. Likewise, community based groups were not applying these internationally developed tools at the local level.

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the Forest Service partnered with the Communities Committee, American Forests, and Sustainable Measures to develop a three-year project, "Linking Communities to the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators." The project advances understanding of how local, regional, and national efforts to develop sustainability criteria and indicators can be connected, and provides information for the 2003 National Report on Sustainable Forests. Three pilot sites formed the basis for this work: Gogebic County, Michigan; Wallowa County, Oregon; and Baltimore County, Maryland.

The pilot sites represented different regions of the country, different land ownership pat-

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Listserv

The Committee's listserv, communityforestry@lists.nau.edu, is a bulletin-board type list where committee members post weekly federal policy updates, announcements of upcoming workshops and conferences, job announcements, and related notices.

Subscribers may also post questions or comments for general discussion. However, use of the listerv for extended debate is discouraged and personal attacks are not tolerated.

To subscribe to the listserv, send the following message to listserv@lists.nau.edu:

Subscribe communityforestry NAME

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From the President

Carol Daly

The Communities Committee bases its work on the four key principles of community forestry – stewardship; an open, inclusive, and transparent process; reinvestment in the land; and multiparty monitoring and evaluation.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on the last key principle: monitoring and evaluation. It explores how appropriate criteria and indicators help communities and nations measure and evaluate the progress they are making toward restoring and/or maintaining fully-functioning sustainable forests.

Similarly, we need your help to determine how well we are doing. Organizations such as ours, with leadership roles in community forestry, need to regularly take a clear, comprehensive look at our own progress. Are we meeting our existing goals, including adhering to the four key principles? Why or why not? Are there additional goals we should be setting? Are we giving our members and constituents the help and services they expect from us? Are we being effective advocates for community forestry?

We and our key national partners – American Forests, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, and the Pinchot Institute for Conservation – will be embarking together on a self-monitoring and evaluation effort. We will be reaching out to people and organizations across the spectrum of community forestry – rural and urban; public-land and private-land oriented; federal, tribal, state, and local; for-profit, and non-profit; in all parts of the country.

Through surveys and one-on-one interviews, we'll be seeking your input on community forestry in the United States. How do you see it, and where do you think it is going? Who's included – and who is not, but should be? Particularly we'll be trying to find out what you see as your major needs and issues of concern, and what we could do to help make your work easier and more effective. When you get a call or letter from us, I hope you'll take some time to share your thoughts candidly with us. If you particularly would like to be interviewed, please let us know, and we'll make it a point to do so.

Meanwhile, I hope the New Year will be a successful and rewarding one for you and community forestry in your area.

Carol

Carol Daly

Multiple Party Monitoring in New Mexico

by Ann Moote, Ecological Restoration Institute

Many community forestry advocates have heard of the Collaborative Forest Restoration Program (CFRP), a pilot Forest Service program that funnels $5 million per year to community groups in New Mexico. Funds available under CFRP go to diverse, multi-partner projects that promote forest restoration and improve the use of small diameter trees removed from restoration sites. Several advocates are clamoring to have this law expanded to provide similar funds for community forestry in other states.

What some may not know is that the Community Forestry Restoration Act, the legislation that created CFRP, also requires each grant recipient to conduct a "multiparty assessment." As written in the law, this assessment must "identify both the existing ecological condition of the proposed project area and the desired future condition" and "report, upon project completion, on the positive or negative impact and effectiveness of the project, including improvements in local management skills and on the ground results."

Monitors review data during a break.

In 2001, the first year that CFRP grants were offered, no one associated with the program knew quite what Congress intended by this "multiparty assessment" requirement. The Technical Advisory Committee that reviews CFRP grant proposals interpreted the first part to mean ecological monitoring, but no one knew quite what indicators the projects should measure or what the multiparty piece meant.

"The proposals coming in clearly showed that the communities didn't know what it meant to monitor," says Melissa Savage, a forest ecologist who served on the advisory committee. "They hadn't budgeted for monitoring, they didn't understand the value of monitoring, and they didn't know how to proceed with it."

CFRP grant recipients were at best lukewarm when told that they had to monitor their projects. "While interested local people should be involved in monitoring if possible, much of the required monitoring for program substantiation and 'institutional' level learning should be done centrally, such as by the state." said CFRP grantee Gordon West.

Bob Moore, another Technical Advisory Committee member and coordinator of the Catron County Citizens Group in western New Mexico, noted, "The piece that's going to be very critical as we move to monitoring is designing a system that isn't a research study but that has enough form that it has credibility."

Defining Monitoring for CFRP

In response to these concerns, CFRP program director Walter Dunn and other funders organized a group of researchers and foresters to better define the multi-party monitoring requirement. Their work was eventually translated into a series of handbooks on multiparty monitoring that are now provided to all CFRP grantees (*see sidebar*). Grant recipients are also encouraged to attend one of the CFRP's trainings in multiparty monitoring offered several times a year in different parts of New Mexico.

The handbooks explain that monitoring involves repeatedly measuring the same thing over time to see if project activities have caused expected or unexpected changes in the social, economic, or biophysical environment. The specific indicators and level of rigor grantees use will depend on the type of information and reliability they need.

The basic concept behind *multiparty* monitoring is mutual learning. Through this process, participants can gain greater understanding of ecological, economic, and social well-being, and the interconnections between all three through learning others' perspectives. Because it involves a diverse group of stakeholders tracking the effects of a project over time, multiparty monitoring can also allow a project to move forward in the face of conflict or controversy.

Choosing Goals and Indicators

Grantees are encouraged to use their project goals as the first step in develop-

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terns, and different institutional settings. One site had done no previous work to define sustainability indicators, while two sites had already begun such work locally. In all cases, county leaders expressed enthusiasm for the experiment, and were eager to see how national methodologies might be used to assess local forest health.

Gogebic County, Michigan

With 80% forest cover and only 17,370 people in this Upper Peninsula community, Gogebic County has faced many of the same problems encountered in the West: high unemployment, low wages, aging population, and increasing second home ownership. To address these issues, the county created a multi-year economic development plan in 1998 that included defining sustainable forestry for Gogebic County.

Before the pilot project, a large, diverse community group – the Forest Advisory Coordinating Committee (FACT) – had already drafted a definition of sustainable forestry for the county. The group's participants had extraordinarily diverse perspectives on what a sustainable forest is. In order to achieve consensus, FACT 'bracketed' several terms that needed future clarification. The resulting definition was:

"Sustainable forestry in Gogebic County is [*forest management*] that contributes to the [*economic health*] of Gogebic County while maintaining the [*ecological and social / cultural values*] for the benefit of present and future generations in Gogebic County."

Gogebic County sought to become a pilot community for the *Linking Communities* project in order to identify criteria and indicators that would better define the bracketed terms, and use these indicators to measure progress toward a unified vision of sustainable forestry. Participants sought to either adopt criteria and indicators from the Montreal Process framework or to develop their own.

Through two workshops in November 2001, participants first brainstormed a draft list of sustainability indicators within each of their four key areas – forest management, economic health, ecological value, and social / cultural value. Next, they selected community and forest indicators from a long list organized within the Montreal Process framework.

> "We were doing Green Infrastructure work, but the whole package came together with the Montreal Process framework."
>
> *– Don Outen, Baltimore Country Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management*

A local steering committee finalized the list and drafted an outline on how to proceed with the work. The definition of sustainable forestry in Gogebic County was finally agreed upon by selecting a small set of indicators for each of the four bracketed terms. For example, some indicators for assessing *social and cultural value* in the County were to be measured through "change in ownership of land," "change in quality of life" (assessed through interviews of county residents), "percent of population under the poverty level," and "change in acreage of forest land converted to development." *Ecological value* indicators were to be measured through "change in water quality," "changes in forest structure and composition," and "average parcel size."

The next challenge for Gogebic is to secure federal funding to carry out data collection and analysis, a process that has been hindered by the Forest Service's limited funding due to western forest fires. Nonetheless, Gogebic is in a good position to manage for sustainability, now that it has developed mutually-agreed upon, specific indicators.

Wallowa County, Oregon

Wallowa County is located in Northeastern Oregon in the area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The county is about 52 percent forestland, just over half of which is federally owned. Typical of the region, forest industry has declined dramatically in the last decade as a result of increased tree mortality, severe fire and pest impacts, a downturn in the lumber market, and increased federal restrictions.

In November 2000, the Forest Service's "Local Unit Criteria and Indicator Development" project brought together a diverse group to explore how they might coordinate various initiatives on sustainability. From those discussions grew the Northeast Oregon Community Assessment Workgroup (NEOCAW), founded to design and implement a social and economic monitoring framework for Union and Wallowa Counties.

NEOCAW was particularly interested in using the Montreal Process to help expand their indicator set to include ecological indicators. A multi-county workshop was held to refine and expand local indicators for sustainable forest management and community development, as well as to develop a common vision of what natural resource management can or should mean in the context of community-based needs, desires, and economic well-being.

The workshop faced local skepticism founded in fears that engaging in a national process might lead to increased government intervention. However, the local Natural Resource Advisory Committee (NRAC) and NEOCAW took a leadership role over the next several months to move the process ahead, which alleviated the concerns and culminated in a brainstorming workshop of over 70 participants.

As a next step, participants charged NEOCAW and NRAC to develop county-specific criteria and indicators that focused on the unique attributes highly valued by residents. Similar to the Gogebic County project, a final list of indicators has since been developed, but forward

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progress has been stalled by funding constraints due to western fires. Still, the Wallowa County pilot has proven to be a successful example of an ambitious effort to coordinate the efforts of federal, state, and local entities to create sustainable forests initiatives.

Baltimore County, Maryland

Bordering the City of Baltimore, Baltimore County is Maryland's third largest and most populous county. Despite its large population, 34% of the county is forested, with more than 10% in protective conservation easements. Much of this protected land is concentrated around three city-owned reservoirs, which serve 1.8 million people in the region.

Largely due to the county's 1967-enacted urban growth boundary, 85% of Baltimore County's residents live on only 1/3 the land area. The controls have benefited water quality, protected forests and preserved a rural economy in the county, a situation Don Outen acknowledges as fortunate. This has allowed his department's work to focus on issues of deer control, invasive species, forest product development, private ownership, and forest fragmentation. The last two issues have proven to be the most challenging — Outen estimates that at least 40,000 private landowners manage about 9,000 patches of forest, with the average size being only 14.5 acres.

Until the *Linking Communities* project, county officials had never addressed forest management outside the context of planning for development. But Don Outen of Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM) saw the Montreal Process as a scientific framework that could help the county manage its lands for production of ecological services over the long-term. "We were doing green infrastructure work, but the whole package came together with the Montreal Process framework," Outen said. "It provided guidance for what we need to do to provide ecological services.

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In August of 2002, he and key DEPRM staff met with the *Linking Communities* team members to discuss how Baltimore County could incorporate sustainability indicators into existing natural resource management efforts. The group also hoped to raise awareness among other county agencies about the usefulness of sustainability indicators to Baltimore County's mission, goals, and initiatives.

As a first step, DEPRM convened a Baltimore County Forest Sustainability Issues and Indicators Forum in June 2003. Over 60 participants attended the forum, including local, state and federal government, NGOs, citizens groups, businesses, and academia. Private sector interests included forest products users, consulting ecologists and foresters, and agencies that provide technical and financial assistance to landowners. Key objectives were to discuss how the concepts of forest sustainability and the Montreal Process might be relevant to Baltimore County, as well as to identify indicators to measure forest sustainability that were meaningful to local participants.

Since the *Linking Communities* pilot, DEPRM has established a local steering committee and developed a draft forest sustainability strategy to assess what they are accomplishing, where the gaps are, and who else needs to be engaged. They are simultaneously pursuing the goal of getting county leadership to adopt this approach to forest management and intend to make it an amendment to the current County Master Plan for Natural Resource Management.

The Final Verdict

The Linking Communities to the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators project set out to determine whether or not the Montreal Process framework could be valuable on a local scale and whether community experience could inform national discussions of the framework. With this three-year project completed, we have developed a useful process for introducing the Montreal Process framework in a local context. In fact, the *process* of introducing the framework locally may have been as important as how the criteria and indicators from the national-level framework were ultimately used or modified by communities. Likewise, each of the pilot communities considered the Montreal Process a useful framework to heighten awareness of the concepts of sustainability and to gain a level of commitment from local participants. While there is more work ahead as communities implement the measures, *Linking Communities* has shown that it is possible to apply the sometimes abstract global measures of sustainability at a county land scale.

For more information on Montreal Process Criteria & Indicators for Forest Sustainability, please visit the web at www.americanforests.org, www.communitiescommittee.org, or www.mpci.org.

Viewpoint

The Unspoken Indicator

by Ian Leahy

An otherwise passing comment at the most recent Communities Committee board meeting in Atlanta reverberated with me long after the meeting ended. The presenter, Audrey Peterman from Earthwise Productions, made a film recommendation during an intriguing presentation about her efforts to document African-Americans' role in the history and making of national parks. She and her husband, Frank Peterman, gained unexpected notoriety when they embarked on a cross country tour of the national park system. In most places, they were the only African-Americans vacationing in the park, and were so unique in their status that news articles were written about the nature-loving couple from coast to coast. The experience grew a new found passion in the Petermans to create opportunities for urban minorities to take part in the nation's wilderness areas and national parks.

Despite having been raised in rural Jamaica where "potholes have their own potholes," Audrey Peterman experienced an early life that could find much fellowship with community foresters in the United States. Yet I felt there was another element to Mrs. Peterman's work she wasn't really discussing – something few ever discuss: Why, with so many more established conservation ethics and better-funded institutions, do so many advocates and practitioners from such diverse locales, races, and cultural backgrounds continue to commit their careers to community forestry? Surely we can cross fame and glory off the list. Something told me Audrey Peterman already knew the answer to my question.

So the following evening I walked to a small arts cinema to see, "*What the Bleep Do We Know*?" This provocative, word-of-mouth hit explores the intersections of quantum physics, spirituality, science and belief in our daily lives. Through interviews with physicists, philosophers, astronomers, and mystics the film asks, "what do we really know?" and provides an argument for personal empowerment as a world-changing force. Its thesis is that there is "a fundamental truth of unity" between all things, and that through that unified energy we create our own reality with the power of our thoughts.

As I walked home after the show, I couldn't fathom what connection Audrey Peterman could possibly have been suggesting between quantum physics and community forestry. Then it dawned on me. Whether we think of it this way or not, community forestry pursues on a social level the same unity quantum physics reveals on a molecular level. While physicists make the connection between molecules and the individual body, community forestry makes a connection between the forest and the social body.

For example, community forestry does not seek to isolate land from the people in order to protect it. Nor does it seek to use land primarily for profit. Such thinking perpetuates separation. Instead, community foresters seek ways for land and people to not only coexist, but also to thrive together. Community-based forestry seeks economic and political collaboration between disparate groups and diverse perspectives, rather than economic competition and political gridlock. As we can see demonstrated in the pages of this newsletter, local and multinational efforts are well underway to establish criteria for sustainability, between groups that might otherwise be at one another's necks. Likewise, next June the Communities Committee will host a conference to help people develop community-owned or managed forests as a solution to the divestiture we are seeing nationwide.

These are but a few examples of this "fundamental truth of unity" at work on a social scale. When I finally saw community forestry from this perspective, it dawned on me that its greatest benefit over the long-term may not be job creation, ecosystem restoration, or minority inclusion. While these are all important indicators of sustainability, they do not reveal personal transformation — the change in our motivations that makes it possible to step outside of political gridlock to create mutual solutions.

Community-based forestry could ultimately stand as a template of how to pursue this "unspoken indicator" through strategies that build on collaboration, with the ultimate goal of meeting human needs as well as ecological goals. Such a template has applications far beyond the realms of forestry.

But is society ready for this push toward unity? It might seem obvious, but community forestry advocates are well aware of the resistance they face from all sides. Even people who ultimately agree with their vision have well-founded fears that short-sighted self interest could undermine even the best-intended inclusive efforts.

As I reentered my hotel, I felt I may have understood what Audrey Peterman was hinting at with both her words and her work to help inner city minorities see beyond their city streets: All the political and economic successes and struggles of community-based forestry will ultimately mean nothing if they are not used as tools to help humanity push itself closer toward this fundamental truth of unity.

Community-based forestry advocates are on the frontier. In this light, their work is all the more important to helping draw individuals toward this unifying truth and to building a template of social cohesiveness for future generations to use in ways we could not even imagine today.

The author of this opinion piece, Ian Leahy, invites your comments by e-mail at ianleahy@myway.com

"I get very frustrated being whipsawed between the users of forests who want to use it for economic purposes and the recreational users of forests, the environmentalists, on the other side. It makes no sense to have one administration go in one direction and have another administration come in and go in another direction. We get a ying-ing and a yang-ing in forest policy, and nobody knows what the rules are going to be more than a year ahead of time. Now, that drives everybody nuts. It should."

– Congressman David Obey (D-WI)

A policy paper on the impacts on rural communities of the Competitive Sourcing Initiative is available through Wallowa Resources and Sustainable Northwest. For more details visit www.wallowaresources.org and choose the publications tab to view the document.

"Urban and Community Forestry: Working Together to Facilitate Change" is a recently published 216 page book available for free through Committee board member Dr. Zhu Ning of Southern University's Urban Forestry program. Call 225-771-2262, ext. 267 or e-mail zhu_ning@suagcenter.net.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Community Forests: Possibilities, experiences, and lessons learned
June 16-19, 2005,
Missoula, Montana

Community-owned forests may be the answer for communities confronting unanticipated and unwanted large scale land use changes. Organized by the Communities Committee, the conference focuses on private forest land conversion and practitioner tools for acquiring and managing community-owned forests. Registration will begin in January, 2005, and community forest practitioners who wish to apply for scholarships must apply no later than March 31, 2005. For information visit www.communitiescommittee.org or call or e-mail Carol Daly at 406-892-8155 or cdaly1@centurytel.net.

2005 Wildland Fire Conference
February 16-18, 2005,
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Wildland Fire 2005, "Partnering to Protect Our Communities," will bring together fire service leaders at the local, state and federal levels to address this critical problem facing fire departments around the world—the wildland-urban interface The International Association of Fire Chiefs has partnered with the USDA Forest Service and the U.S. Department of the Interior to provide you the opportunity to network with more than 1,000 of your peers – fire chiefs, company officers, firefighters, land use planners, military personnel and local, state and federal government representatives. For information, see http://www.iafc.org/conferences/wildland/index.asp or contact the International Fire Chiefs Association at 703-273-0911.

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ing monitoring goals. "If you don't know what you're monitoring, if you don't have a goal, there's no purpose in doing monitoring," says Jan-Willem Jansens, a program director at Earth Works Institute who helped develop the CFRP monitoring guidelines.

Since most CFRP projects involve thinning the forest to reduce the threat of large, high-intensity wildfires, there are significant commonalities among the various projects. Many communities choose indicators such as the size and density of trees, canopy closure, and surface fuels. Those who are trying to diversify the local economy may measure such indicators as the number of value-added forest products industries in the community.

Other communities have developed more specialized goals. For example, Las Humanas, a group that represents villages and land grants along the eastern edge of the Manzano Mountains in central New Mexico, is mapping the distribution of medicinal plants across their project site to measure the effects of roads on areas where community members gather medicinal plants. A project on the Picuris Pueblo in northern New Mexico is monitoring the restoration effects of adding native fungi spores to slash left from small-diameter thinning projects.

Capitalizing on an Opportunity for Youth

Several communities train local youth to do the monitoring as a way to introduce them to biological and social science and to connect them to their local environment. The youth set up photo points, plots, and transects to monitor changes in vegetation and conduct surveys to monitor social impacts of the restoration projects. "Monitoring is great science training for students," says grantee George Ramirez, executive director of Las Humanas. "It's also a way to connect them to the land and make them want to stay in the community."

"We feel that it is very, very strong to have those youth out there with their diameter tapes and increment borers, gaining an understanding of the spatial relationships in the forest" says Bob Moore, coordinator of the Catron County Citizens Group in western New Mexico. Youth involvement in monitoring forest health helps build community support for the restoration work as well. Moore adds, "Over time, these skills are nurtured, these folks go back and talk to their families and say they had a great time doing this, and it builds on itself."

CFRP Multiparty monitoring handbooks are available online at:
www.fs.fed.us/r3/spf/cfrp/monitoring/index.shtml

Handbook 1 – What is Multiparty Monitoring?
Handbook 2 – Developing a Multiparty Monitoring Plan
Handbook 3 – Creative Budgeting for Monitoring Projects
Handbook 4 – Monitoring Ecological Effects
Handbook 5 – Monitoring Social and Economic Effects of Forest Restoration
Handbook 6 – Analyzing Monitoring Data

Communities and Forests

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Mark Your Calendars

Creating Community Forests from Corporate Divestment
Community Forests in the United States:
"Visions, Experiences, and Lessons Learned"

Missoula, Montana, June 23-26, 2005

Millions of acres of private forest lands in the U.S. are in imminent peril of conversion to non-forest uses. They are being divested by forest-products companies who now can get their timber more economically elsewhere. In response, the Communities Committee, the Bolle Center for People and Forests at the University of Montana, and other sponsors will organize a practitioner-oriented conference bringing together community leaders from around the country to explore issues and experiences in the establishment, governance, management, and use of community-owned and -managed forests.

Through presentations, group discussions, poster sessions, and field tours the conference will address such topics as: current and historic community forests in North America; corporate forest land divestiture - issues and opportunities for companies and communities; forest land acquisition and financing; options, tools, and techniques; developing and sustaining a collective vision for a community forest; community learning: multiparty monitoring and participatory science; who owns the forest – dealing with issues of property, tenure, responsibility, risk, and governance; managing a forest for multiple public and private values; and much more.

The target audience is forest practitioners from communities facing forest land conversions and either considering the possibility of a community forest or already involved in one. Scholarship assistance will be offered for those with limited budgets.

For more information call or write:
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Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress is to focus attention on the interdependence between America's forests and the vitality of rural and urban communities, and to promote:

- Improvements in political and economic structures to ensure local community well-being and the long-term sustainability of forested ecosystems;
- An increasing stewardship role of local communities in the maintenance and restoration of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity;
- Participation by ethnically and socially diverse members of urban and rural communities in decision-making and sharing benefits of forests;
- The innovation and use of collaborative processes, tools, and technologies; and
- The recognition of the rights and responsibilities of diverse forest landowners.