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THE MAINE FOREST CERTIFICATION INITIATIVE

The Final Report of the Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee

January 28, 2005



T6 North of Weld: Tumbledown Pond in Autumn
Photo: H. Whittemore

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The Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee wishes to thank each of the individuals who met with the Committee or provided information to the Committee. This report is stronger because of their willingness to share their knowledge and experience. Individuals who assisted the Committee are identified at the end of this report.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

In July 2003, Governor John E. Baldacci launched the Maine Forest Certification Initiative and directed the Maine Forest Service to establish a Certification Advisory Committee. As described in the Governor's announcement, the purpose of this initiative was to "help grow Maine's forest industry by distinguishing Maine products in the marketplace while improving forest management on-the-ground."

The Committee was charged with developing recommendations in four areas:

1. *What can be done to increase the amount of land and wood products that are certified in Maine?*
2. *What can be done to increase the number of businesses producing certified wood products in Maine?*
3. *What can be done to enhance the markets for certified forest products from Maine and distinguish Maine in the global marketplace for certified products?*
4. *Review the certification systems in use in Maine and recommend changes to make them more effective in achieving sustainable forestry.*

This document constitutes the Committee's report to Governor Baldacci.

Committee Process

The Committee was made up of 23 members representing the forest products industry, landowners, the conservation community, consulting foresters and loggers, and academia. A chair and four co-chairs were appointed. The Maine Forest Service provided staff support and a project facilitator. The Committee held a series of information collection and recommendation development meetings between fall 2003 and spring 2004. The Committee operated as a collaborative work group according to agreed-upon ground rules.

At the onset of the process, it was acknowledged that the subject of forest certification engenders strong reaction. Forest products companies, foresters, loggers, landowners, conservation organizations, and public agencies each see certification from their own unique vantage points. The members of the Committee were invited to participate both because of their expertise with certification and because they represented these various perspectives. Although there was no presumption that members would agree on every detail, all members of the Committee recognized the importance of responsibly managed forests and viewed forest certification as a potentially positive catalyst for improving forest management.

There was no requirement that consensus be reached by the Committee, only that members work constructively and collaboratively to achieve the group's mission. It must be emphasized that all members do not necessarily endorse every point made in this report. At the same time, readers of this report can have confidence that it contains the collective thinking of forest management experts who are committed to the notion of well-managed forests and have a detailed understanding forest

certification – especially as it applies to Maine. From a public policy perspective, the recommendations developed by the Committee represent an innovative and comprehensive approach to forest certification at a statewide level. Taken as a whole, implementation of these recommendations can play a significant role in shaping forest management in Maine as well as enhancing Maine’s position in the regional, national, and international forest certification arenas.

Challenges

Following are some of the key challenges that Maine faces as it seeks to establish forest certification as a viable component of forest management:

Costs and Benefits. Perhaps the major obstacle to certification is the question of costs and benefits to landowners and forest products processors. Landowners have expressed concern that the cost of certification is relatively high. Per-acre costs can be particularly high for small woodland owners, even under group certification. Can these costs be reduced? All agree that a price premium would be a major incentive. Unfortunately, widespread price premiums have not been realized. Is it possible to create an environment where price premiums would be more common? Are there other incentives that could encourage participation?

Certification System Credibility. There are many forestland certification systems, including three that have a significant presence in Maine. These systems each have their own standards and protocol; each has elements that are attractive to potential participants, with the relative attractiveness depending on a variety of factors including size of ownership, objectives, and market demands. While having multiple certification systems creates market diversity and provides opportunities for landowners and forest products processors to select a system that best meets their needs, there are strong differences in opinion about the credibility of the various certification systems. Some members of the Committee felt strongly that not all of the certification systems met the Committee’s definition of a credible certification system, while others felt all three systems that are active in Maine contribute significantly to the stewardship of Maine’s forests. Members of the Committee recognize that these issues have been and will continue to be addressed through other forums. Controversies surrounding system credibility increase confusion in the markets, especially with end consumers who may not be as well versed on the intricacies of certification. How might Maine retain the benefits offered by a diversity of certification systems while instilling confidence in markets that, regardless of the system, certified products do indeed come from well-managed forests?

Family Forests. Two-thirds of Maine’s private timberlands acreage is in large parcels owned by companies or organizations having forest management as one of their objectives. Large parcels constitute the vast majority of Maine’s total certified forestlands. The remaining one-third is divided into thousands of smaller parcels owned principally by individuals or families. Only a small percentage of these “family forests” are currently engaged in certification. For Maine to achieve a volume of forest products that will maintain the State’s position in the global market, increased participation by owners of family forests is essential. Family forests present unique challenges. How might the State, the forest products industry, and other certification interests help facilitate certification of family forests? Are there ways to address smaller parcels where certification is not practical or possible in the near term?

Marketing and Demand. The Maine forest industry operates in a competitive, free market environment. Companies compete against other companies for market share and collectively they compete with other regions and other countries. Recognizing (and embracing) the competitive nature of the forest industry, how might Maine, and Maine’s forest products companies, position themselves in the global marketplace to take advantage of Maine’s inherent forest-related advantages, both for

the good of the State and the good of individual companies? Markets can be viewed as the interplay between supply and demand. Should Maine focus on supply, demand, or a combination? What can be done within Maine State Government, Maine's forest industry, and Maine's public interest organizations to increase and solidify demand for certified products?

Goals

In his charge to the Committee Governor Baldacci established the following goal:

To maintain and strengthen our leadership position regarding certification, the goal of this initiative is to increase the amount of certified forestland in Maine to at least 10 million acres by the end of 2007.

In addition, the Committee recommends a supplementary goal:

To complement and supplement the goal of 10 million acres of certified forestland, the State of Maine and the Maine forest industry should seek to increase the volume of wood from certified sources to 60 percent of the statewide total by the end of 2009 and to ensure that buyers desiring to secure even higher percentages from Maine sources are able to do so.

Currently some 7 million acres of forestland is certified through one system or another, including approximately 500,000 acres of public land, 6 million acres of large-parcel private lands, and 350,000 acres of small-parcel private lands. To achieve the governor's goal, additional 3 million acres of new certification will be required. The recommended strategy for achieving this goal calls for an additional 2.5 million acres from large parcels, i.e., parcels over 5,000 acres in size, one-half million acres from smaller parcels, and 100,000 from public timberlands. This equates to a 33 percent increase in certified large parcel acres and a 250 percent increase in certified small parcel acres.

Meeting the 10 million acre goal will significantly increase the volume of wood coming from certified sources and this will certainly aid in reaching the 60 percent volume goal. But this, in-and-of-itself, will not achieve the volume goal. In addition to increasing the amount of certified acreage, Maine must also identify ways to certify volume from lands where land certification is not possible in the near-term. Perhaps the most realistic and credible way to do this is through harvest practices certification, whereby foresters and loggers are certified and the volume that comes from harvests overseen or conducted by these certified harvest practitioners counts toward meeting the State's volume goal.

Neither the 10 million acre goal nor the 60 percent volume goal will be met unless a wide variety of landowners, foresters, and loggers actively become engaged and are supported by the greater forest industry, Maine state government, and others with an interest in Maine's forest environment and forest economy. 10 million acres and 60 percent of total volume are numbers that are difficult for any one person -- or organization -- to grasp. Given this, perhaps the most reasonable approach would be for both goals could be divided into "bite-sized bits," whereby individual forest products companies, group managers, the State of Maine, and other certification interests each establish and work towards meeting their own goals within the larger statewide goals.

Recommendations

The Committee offers recommendations in four areas: (1) recommendations for achieving the above stated acreage and volume goals, (2) an additional recommendation for strengthening treatment of

biological resources, (3) recommendations for forest certification systems, and (4) a final recommendation for the public. These recommendations are as follows:

Recommendations for Achieving Maine's Certification Goals

Recommendation 1: Create a Maine Forest Certification Information System

Action Item 1a: Develop an Internet-based forest certification information system.

Action Item 1b: Create a strategy for using the forest certification information system to aid in certifying forestlands.

Recommendation 2: Expand Harvest Practices Certification

Action Item 2a: Expand opportunities to certify harvest practices.

Action Item 2b: Incorporate harvest practices certification into forestland certification.

Recommendation 3: Motivate Owners of Private Forests to Certify Their Lands

Action Item 3a: Produce and distribute information on certification.

Action Item 3b: Increase opportunities to become involved with group certification.

Action Item 3c: Increase the potential that landowners will get involved with certification by increasing the number of foresters and loggers actively involved in certification.

Action Item 3d: Expand the use of forest management plans as a component of certification.

Action Item 3e: Provide financial incentives to owners of family forests.

Recommendation 4: Motivate Owners of Public Forests and Private Conservation Areas to Certify Their Lands

Action Item 4a: Increase certification of state-owned forestlands.

Action Item 4b: Increase certification of private conservation forestlands.

Recommendation 5: Track Wood from Certified Sources

Action Item 5a: collect critical information related to forest harvest practices certification, and integrate certification information with the Maine Forest Service's existing forest information programs.

Recommendation 6: Market Maine's Certified Wood Products

Action Item 6a: Initiate public sector promotion of certification.

Action Item 6b: Strengthen private sector marketing.

Action Item 6c: Develop a marketing information system.

Action Item 6d: Promote certified wood products in State purchasing practices.

Implementation

Private and public sector forest certification interests should collaborate in the implementation of the above recommendations. Specifically, they should:

1. Establish a leadership team to coordinate actions,
2. Identify funding and staffing requirements,
3. Establish implementation priorities,
4. Work with forest certification systems to integrate Committee recommendations with their procedures, and
5. Develop and implement a strategy for monitoring progress.

An Additional Recommendation for Strengthening Treatment of Biological Resources

Action Item: Provide technical assistance to landowners concerning certification-related issues related to sensitive plants, animals, ecological communities, and water quality.

Recommendations to Certification Systems

Recommendation 1: General Provisions

- Adopt clear and credible standards and procedures that are broadly supported.
- Develop systems for collaboration and mutual recognition.
- Engage the public in developing markets and improving system standards.
- Look for ways to reduce costs, streamline procedures, and transfer certification with ownership changes.

Recommendation 2: Silviculture

- Include explicit standards for sound silviculture.

Recommendation 3: Environmental Conservation

- As appropriate to ownership size, ensure that at the landscape scale management maintains habitat sufficient to maintain healthy population of the full range of native plant and wildlife species.
- Protect the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered species and of rare or exemplary natural communities.
- Minimize chemical use.
- Favor management based on native species and natural processes.
- Favor local, value-added manufacturing.

Recommendation 4: Procurement, Chain of Custody, and Product Labeling

- Develop clear and verifiable chain of custody tracking systems
- Strengthen mill procurement standards to increase the amount of wood that comes from responsibly managed forests.
- Develop standards for “waste” wood that comes from conversions to non-forest use.
- Develop percentage-based claims standards for solid wood products.

Recommendation 5: Auditing Processes

- Ensure that all audits and auditors are truly third party and qualified to audit all aspects of the standards.
- Audit team size, makeup, and field time is appropriate to the size and complexity of the property.
- Make more extensive use of public summaries of the audit prepared by the third-party auditor.
- Streamline reporting requirements to reduce the costs of audits.

Recommendation 6: Involving Owners of Family Forests

- Simplify group certification requirements and expand opportunities for participating in group certification.
- Establish pre-certification “feeder” programs and establish upper acreage limits for smaller ownerships.

Recommendation 7: Collaboration in Implementing the Committee’s Recommendations

- Work with Maine certification interests to implement the committee’s recommendations and expand certification, including:
- Review the potential to reduce certification costs by utilizing state forest and biodiversity information.
- Consider harvest practices certification as a component of forestland certification or as a stand-alone system.
- Identify creative ways to engage landowners in certification.

A Final Recommendation for the Public

Certification is, and should remain, market driven. To the extent that customers – both high volume purchasers of wood products and end consumers – demand and seek out wood products that come from well-managed forests, and are willing to pay an appropriate price for these products, forest landowners and the forest products industry will respond.

BACKGROUND

The Challenge

In July 2003, Governor John E. Baldacci launched the Maine Forest Certification Initiative. As described in the Governor's announcement, the purpose of this initiative was to *"help grow Maine's forest industry by distinguishing Maine products in the marketplace while improving forest management on-the-ground."* Specifically, Governor Baldacci desired to explore whether Maine might achieve this through increased use of forest certification. Certification of forestlands is a process whereby independent third parties review on-the-ground forest practices as well as office-based documentation of those practices to determine if they meet set standards that reflect a well-managed forest. There are two reasons to pursue certification of forestlands. First, certification can help to ensure that landowners and managers manage their lands in a way that is environmentally sound and that will continue to produce a sustainable yield of forest products. Second, in an increasingly competitive and global market, certification can help to distinguish Maine's forest products and thereby help to ensure that Maine's forest industry will maintain its viability into the future. Several private organizations have established independent forest certification systems. Standards and evaluation procedures vary greatly among certification systems and, indeed, debate concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the various certification systems pervades most discussions of this topic.

Maine is at a point where strategic decisions need to be made regarding the future of forestland certification in the state. Taking into account lands certified by all active forest certification systems, Maine has the highest percentage of certified forestland in the nation. At the same time, forest managers in several other states are increasing their involvement in certification. Canadian forest managers are also actively involved in forestland certification and, in fact, Canada has far more certified forestland than the United States. By reinvigorating and consolidating its efforts in forest products certification, Maine can solidify its position as the leader within the U.S., achieve parity with eastern Canadian provinces, and, in so doing bolster its competitive position in the global forest products market.

The potential for economic benefit is accentuated by substantial and already documented benefits to the environment. In his announcement, Governor Baldacci observed that *"certification has been a significant force for improving forest management in Maine, increasing the attention paid to balancing harvest with growth, maintaining water quality, and achieving other environmental objectives."* Governor Baldacci also recognized the potential for certification to complement regulations when he observed that *"accomplishments both go beyond what can be achieved through regulation alone and provide a positive, market-based approach to improving forest management."*

To focus and jump-start the initiative, Governor Baldacci set the following goal:

To maintain and strengthen our leadership position regarding certification, the goal of this initiative is to increase the amount of certified forestland in Maine from 6.5 million acres to at least 10 million acres by the end of 2007.

Governor Baldacci understood that this is a very ambitious goal – one that would clearly stretch the State's capabilities. Given this, he recognized that its achievement would require a collaborative effort among a range of public and private interests.

The Governor also identified several actions that would be taken by the State to help achieve this goal, including:

1. Certifying actively managed state lands, including approximately 100,000 acres managed by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife;
2. Giving preference in state purchasing to certified wood and paper whenever practicable;
3. Providing technical assistance, outreach, and encouragement for owners of both large and small landholdings who seek to become certified;
4. Providing preference in Maine Forest Service cost-share programs for landowners, resource managers, and loggers entering certification systems;
5. Paying part of the cost for foresters to become certified resource managers, and
6. Encouraging the expansion of the Master Logger Certification Program and the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine's initiative to enroll owners of small woodlands in the Tree Farm Program using Tree Farm's new group certification program.

To provide guidance for the certification initiative, Governor Baldacci formed the Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee. The Committee was specifically charged with developing recommendations in four areas:

1. *What can be done to increase the amount of land and wood products that are certified in Maine?*
2. *What can be done to increase the number of businesses producing certified wood products in Maine?*
3. *What can be done to enhance the markets for certified forest products from Maine and distinguish Maine in the global marketplace for certified products?*
4. *Review the certification systems in use in Maine and recommend changes to make them more effective in achieving sustainable forestry.*

Overview of the Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee Process

Governor Baldacci appointed 22 individuals to the Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee, representing a range of forest management interests, perspectives, and expertise. The Maine Forest Service provided staff and consultant support. John Cashwell of Seven Islands Land Company chaired Committee meetings. Four additional members of the Committee served as co-chairs: Rob Bryan (Maine Audubon), Stephen Hanington (Master Logger Program), Josiah Pierce (Small Woodlands Owners Association of Maine), and Joel Swanton (Maine Forest Products Council).

The Committee met a total of seven times over a six-month period. At the initial meeting, the Committee discussed and agreed to a set of ground rules, which defined how the Committee would function (Appendix 1). It was agreed that although the Committee would seek consensus on a set of recommendations, there would be no requirement for unanimous agreement on all recommendations.

If differences could not be reconciled, individual members would have the opportunity to identify the area of dissent and state their positions for the record. This document respects that agreement and identifies areas where differences of opinion exist.

The first three meetings focused on clarifying the mission of the Committee and collecting information. Presentations were made by Maine Forest Service staff on the status of forest management and certification in Maine. Other presentations included briefings on forest statutes regarding the condition of Maine's forests and forest trends, the Maine Natural Areas Program, the Master Logger Certification Program (MLCP), Certified Resource Managers (CRM), Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), and forest industry wood-tracking protocols and methods. In addition, representatives of four certification systems – the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), and Green Tag – met with the Committee to explain these systems and answer questions. Prior to these presentations, representatives of the various certification systems were provided with a list of questions prepared by the Committee (Appendix 2).

The fourth and fifth Committee meetings focused on clarification of issues and identification of opportunities to advance certification in Maine. The final two meetings were dedicated to evaluating these opportunities and developing a final set of recommendations. In several instances, subcommittees were established to work on particular topics.

Between meetings, conference calls and telephone interviews were conducted with officials at Metafore regarding certification marketing strategies, Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) regarding the status of harvest certification standards in other states, and the Society of American Foresters (SAF) regarding options for involving foresters in certification. Follow-up meetings and conference calls were also held with ATFS, FSC, and SFI to brief certification system officials on the Committee's preliminary recommendations and identify ways that these recommendations might be integrated into each system's activities.

As the Committee process unfolded, staff provided Committee members with a series of draft products outlining key principles and issues and, later, recommendations. These products became the basis for this final report. Committee members had the opportunity to review the final report in its entirety prior to release.

Introduction to Maine's Forests and Certification in Maine

Maine Forests as a Natural and Economic Resource

Maine's forests possess significant natural resource values and provide substantial recreational opportunities. Maine has over 6,000 lakes and ponds, far more than any state in the Northeast (nationwide, only Minnesota and Florida have more), and almost all are adjacent to forestlands. Maine also has over 32,000 miles of rivers and streams, including nationally and regionally significant fisheries and the only remaining habitat in the U.S. for wild Atlantic salmon; almost all of these waterways flow through forestlands. Maine's forests provide habitat for moose, deer, bear, raptors, and small mammals, including healthy populations of species that are imperiled elsewhere, and are home to significant natural plant communities. Maine's forest landowners are the nation's leaders in providing recreational access to private lands. Fishing, hunting, boating, long-distance hiking, and camping are widely available to Maine residents and contribute significantly to the economy by attracting out-of-state visitors. The evocative image of Maine's "backwoods" has been

indelibly imprinted in the minds of people throughout the nation and has spawned important business enterprises.

Maine's forests also provide the raw material for the backbone of the Maine economy, the forest products industry. As a provider of wood products, Maine is in many ways unique. Maine has the highest percentage of land in forest cover of any state in the nation. Maine also has the highest percentage of private land of any state. These factors combine to make Maine the northeastern United States' major producer of marketable wood, pulp, and paper products. To service this industry, Maine has some 800-850 Licensed Professional Foresters,¹ 2,500 loggers, 120 mills that operate year-round, and other related wood-processing facilities ranging from independent facilities operated by a small crew to large industrial facilities. Yet, with all of these advantages and infrastructure, Maine is not particularly well known in the global market. Governor Baldacci's decision to refocus attention on certification was, at least in part, driven by a desire to increase Maine's visibility in this global market.

Overview of Certification

Forest certification refers to efforts by the forest industry and owners of timberlands to satisfy market demand for forest products that come from well-managed forests. The ultimate goal of certification is to provide assurances to markets and consumers that the forest products they buy come from well-managed forests. The assumption is that, faced with a choice, consumers will give preference to products from well-managed forests. By giving preference to certified products, consumers provide those within the forest products industry who engage in certification with a market advantage. Certification provides assurances to consumers by verifying that forest practices, including planning, meet defined standards. The purpose is to improve forest conditions and ensure that forest resources are sustainable into the future. While long-term sustainability is the goal, there must be near-term incentives for landowners and managers to participate. The most basic incentive is a price premium. The logic behind this is that retail purchasers of forest products will be willing to pay a premium for products produced from well-managed forests and that this premium will find its way to the landowner and land manager. To date, most price premiums have involved niche markets; broad-based market price premiums have not been realized. There are, however, indications that this may be changing, particularly for some paper products. Whether this suggests a trend, or is an anomaly, has yet to be determined.

Regardless, there are other possible advantages beyond a price premium. Principal among these are access to markets due to demand on the part of major markets that wood be certified, maintaining or increasing market share in these markets, and, potentially, regulatory relief.² There are, as well, intangible benefits, including a positive public image, increased public confidence in forest management, and personal pride. Many landowners have reported that certification provides an opportunity to self-scrutinize operations, thereby improving land management and business practices.

¹ This is the total number of licensed foresters. Not all are actively practicing on-the-ground forestry. Some have moved to management positions; others are in academia, have moved into allied fields, or have changed professions.

² Regulatory relief could take two forms. First, existing regulations could be modified so that certification was considered as meeting some portion of the regulatory requirements. Second, certification could be a factor in determining if new regulations were warranted. Presumably, if the use of certification was widespread, and regulators had confidence that this was resulting in well-managed forests, the need for new regulations would not be as compelling. While a possibility, the Committee is not recommending that action be taken to implement a regulatory relief program.

This improvement in management may make time spent in certifying one's lands worth the effort regardless of other benefits.

Although there is considerable variation in certification systems, it is generally agreed that a credible forest certification system must:

1. Have rigorous, defensible standards;
2. Have a third-party audit component that is fully independent with no conflicts of interest by the auditors;
3. Be implemented by practitioners who are trained in forest management, forest ecology, biodiversity, and the specifics of a given certification system;
4. Be open to revision and improvement over time, and
5. Be open and transparent, both in the development of standards and the reporting of audit results.

Certification is governed by standards and protocols developed and sponsored by a variety of organizations. Of the available forestry certification systems, three are particularly active in Maine: SFI, FSC, and ATFS. Green Tag is an example of an active certification system that, as yet, has not gained a foothold in Maine. Other frequently mentioned systems are the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). These last two are not forestry certification organizations *per se* but, rather, comprehensive standards-setting organizations covering a broad range of topics in addition to natural resources and forestry. The vast majority of ISO standards are highly specific to a particular product, material, or process. However, ISO 14000 - Environmental Management Systems is a generic management system standard that provides the framework for specific standards to be developed or adopted, implemented and audited. CSA is similar to ISO but does contain standards specific to sustainable forest management in Canada (CSA Z809-02). ISO and CSA are important in that protocols are used by certification systems as components of their forest certification systems. SFI, for example, makes use of ISO 14000. While ISO is the most widely recognized, both in the United States and internationally, CSA is relevant in Maine due to the state's proximity to Canada and the use of CSA by firms doing business on both sides of the border.

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) focuses on family forests. ATFS was established in response to concerns that America's private forests were being cut at unsustainable rates without reforestation. ATFS's purpose was to demonstrate sound forest management practices to landowners. The first Tree Farm was designated in 1941 in the State of Washington. California's Tree Farm program started that same year. ATFS has been active in Maine since 1952. ATFS started as a means to recognize good forest practices and this emphasis continues to this day. However, as the notion of certification gained hold ATFS expanded its focus to include certification. ATFS is a national organization, with evaluations and audits performed by local Tree Farm inspectors and administered through state-level Tree Farm committees. Historically, ATFS has required training of inspectors but did not require that they be independent of the land being certified. Recently ATFS has moved toward a partial third-party system by requiring that at least one auditor on the initial certification team have no direct involvement with the land being certified. Currently, recertification does not require a third-party component. ATFS undertakes periodic reviews of its standards and procedures and actively supports group certification. The Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (SWOAM) recently completed an ATFS group certification project that had a required, fully

independent third-party audit component. ATFS also has a Pioneer Program, which introduces owners of non-certified forestlands to the ATFS certification concept. Although ATFS certifies lands up to 10,000 acres in size, the vast majority of ATFS participants own parcels that are far smaller. The average size is between 100 and 150 acres and parcels as small as 10 acres may be included.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an independent international system that certifies forestlands of all sizes. FSC provides standard setting, trademark assurance and accreditation services for companies and organizations interested in responsible forestry. Founded in 1993, FSC's mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests. FSC forest management standards are based on FSC's 10 Principles and Criteria of responsible forest management.

FSC's governance structure ensures that FSC is independent of any one interest group by requiring an equal balance in power between its environmental, social and economic chambers as well as a balance between interests from the north and south hemispheres.

Although it has perhaps been most successful in certifying larger, corporate holdings, FSC has established initiatives aimed at family forests, namely the Certified Resource Manager designation and the Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests Initiative, often referred to as SLIMFs. While FSC maintains the standards and procedures, other companies or organizations, including Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), SmartWood, and SGS Qualifor (SGS) do the actual on-the-ground verification.

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) was established in 1995. SFI focuses on forestland holdings larger than 10,000 acres, and, in fact, participation in SFI is a requirement for membership in the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), the forest industry's primary national trade association.

In SFI parlance, "participation" means that a company adheres to SFI principles, and is responsible for full implementation of practices, policies and procedures that meet SFI standards. Participants can verify their SFI implementation through a 1st or 2nd party verification or through full 3rd party certification. SFI participation with verification through a 1st or 2nd party can be viewed as a feeder program for SFI certification and, in fact, exposure to SFI through AF&PA's participation requirement has played a significant role in preparing AF&PA members for 3rd party certification.

SFI "certification" means that a company both adheres to SFI principles and has undergone independent third-party evaluation. All SFI certifications are conducted by accredited environmental auditing firms consistent with ISO auditing protocols. Some landowners implement SFI utilizing ISO systems and some implement through other internally developed systems.

While SFI participants are not required to undertake third-party certification, many of Maine's industrial private forestland owners and managers pursued SFI 3rd party certification soon after it was available. Others followed later or are currently in the process of becoming certified. In addition, several of the state's larger wood processing facilities have adopted procurement policies consistent with SFI guidelines and many of these facilities have become 3rd party certified. As with other certification systems, landowners and processing facilities that seek SFI third-party certification typically do so for business reasons.

While there are – and perhaps always will be – differences of opinion regarding the relative merits and credibility of the various certification systems, for the purposes of this report the term "forest certification system" is meant to encompass all forest certification systems active in Maine. At a

minimum, these include ATFS, FSC, and SFI. This report also reviews the role of third-party systems that certify on-the-ground practitioners, that is, foresters and loggers. In Maine, there is one such system, the Master Logger Certification Program.

Certification systems are not static. Instead, they have undergone significant changes to better respond to emerging needs, and indeed, improvement over time is an underlying tenet of all these certification systems. This is exemplified by the fact that each system periodically holds formal reviews of their standards and procedures. Ideally, these reviews include formal opportunities for the public to recommend changes. It is anticipated that additional systems will seek to gain inroads in the future and that variations on the forest certification theme will emerge. As one example, SCS is developing an independent forest certification system based on its experience implementing the FSC system.

Certification in Maine

Maine is the national leader in forest certification, with 37% of the State's productive forestlands certified. Certifications in process as this report is released will certainly increase this percentage. This relatively high proportion of certified forestland in Maine is all the more striking considering that Maine has the highest percentage of forestland cover in the nation. While comparative figures are not available, it is likely that Maine is also in the forefront when it comes to the total volume of wood products that come from certified forestlands.

Eighty-seven percent of Maine's certified forestlands involve private industrial and non-industrial parcels larger than 5,000 acres. By contrast, only 5% of certified forestland is on private parcels smaller than 5,000 acres; the remaining 8% is on lands owned by the State of Maine.

Each of the active certification systems has a well-developed process for implementing certification within the State. Both ATFS and SFI have state-level implementation groups. The ATFS has the Maine Tree Farm Committee, which serves as the link between the national program and the landowner. The Tree Farm Committee provides information and coordinates the delivery of Tree Farm services, including initial evaluations and audits. SFI has a State Implementation Committee, which has a full-time staff coordinator. FSC utilizes a regional structure that has representatives from Maine and, as noted earlier, other organizations, namely SCS, SmartWood, and SGS implement FSC certification in Maine.

Increasingly, Maine producers of forest products are being approached by buyers desiring to secure certified products including solid wood, pulp, and chip products. For example, Time Warner, an international publisher and one of the world's major paper users, has indicated its desire to significantly increase the amount of certified fiber that goes into its paper, with a goal of 80% certified within the next few years. At least one Maine mill is reportedly paying a premium for certified wood to meet the demands of a buyer. To date, each buyer has defined its own criteria for what it considers to be certified. In some cases, buyers may elect to limit acquisitions to wood certified through a specific certification system. In other cases, wood from any active system is acceptable. In still other cases, acquisition formulas include wood from multiple forestland certification systems and wood from harvests that meet specified standards. While it is possible that one set of criteria will prevail, at least in the near-term it appears that each large-volume customer will continue to define its own thresholds for what that customer will accept as certified.

In the northeastern U.S., Maine is well positioned to benefit from market desires for certified products. Owing to both the size of the forest products industry and the amount of certified forestland, Maine is capable of providing the largest volume of certified wood products of any state

in the Northeast. As the demand for certified products increases, it is reasonable to assume that high volume buyers will focus on geographic areas where there is greatest assurance that certified products will be available. If Maine is recognized as a reliable source for certified products, and can produce these in relatively high volume, and at reasonable cost, the State could realize a significant competitive advantage.

Although Maine is the national leader in forest certification, major certification efforts have been initiated in several other states, most notably Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and Pennsylvania. Given these efforts, it is by no means certain that Maine will retain its leadership in this area. Competition from these other states only accentuates the need to move ahead quickly with the Governor's certification initiative.

From a global perspective, it should be recognized that other parts of the world have embraced forest certification even more comprehensively. For example, almost half of European forests are certified, and certified radiata pine from the southern hemisphere has made significant inroads into US markets. As of the close of 2003, the total certified acreage in Canada was double that of the US. The Province of Quebec is considering certifying all Crown land, which includes most of the forestland in the Province.

GOALS

Meeting the Governor's 10 Million-Acre Goal

Introduction

As referenced earlier, in establishing the Forest Certification Initiative, Governor Baldacci set a goal of 10 million acres of certified forestland in Maine by the end of 2007. This section of the report explores the issues and opportunities associated with this goal, assesses the potential for reaching it, and identifies ways that it might be achieved.

Status

Achieving the goal of 10 million acres of certified forestland requires, first, an understanding of the current situation and, second, a strategy to move from the current situation to the goal. Table 1 presents the essential information upon which such a strategy must be based. Ninety percent of Maine's total area is forested. Of that, 97% is productive, accessible, and potentially available for harvest, i.e., not restricted by law or other means. Six percent of the forested area (1,113,496 acres) is publicly owned. Of that, 754,500 acres are state-owned conservation lands, of which 490,694 (65%) is potentially available for harvest. Baxter State Park,³ other state reserves, and nonproductive lands⁴ constitute the remaining state forestlands. Of the remaining public forestlands, most are federally owned and are managed as national forests, wildlife refuges, and parks. National forests and refuges are at least partially available for timber harvest while Maine's only national park – Acadia – is not.

Table 1. Forest ownership in Maine by ownership category⁵ and parcel size

	# of parcels	Total acreage
Total state land area	n/a	19,751,394
Total forested	n/a	17,833,109
Total timberland ⁶	n/a	17,338,955
Public forestland	n/a	1,113,496
Public timberland	n/a	798,077
IPF/NIPF > 5,000 acres	n/a	10,400,000
Family forests & NIPF < 5,000 acres ⁷	250,100	6,201,000

³ While most of Baxter State Park is not available for timber harvest, Baxter does include a Scientific Forest Management Area covering approximately 30,000 acres where timber management does occur. These lands have been FSC certified.

⁴ The term nonproductive land refers to forest areas capable of producing less than 20 ft³ of merchantable timber per acre per year. Areas with significant wetlands, surface bedrock, or poor soils would likely fall into that category.

⁵ Throughout this report, the term "ownership category" is used as a generic term to refer to the various types of forest landowner in Maine. For statistical purposes, the Maine Forest Service recognizes three basic landowner classes: 1) public forest, 2) industrial private forest, and 3) non-industrial private forest. Within the private forest classes there are five landowner groups: 1) corporate, 2) non-governmental organizations, 3) unincorporated partnerships or associations, 4) Native American, and 5) individual.

⁶ Refers to forestlands that are capable of producing 20 ft³ of wood per acre per year and not withdrawn from timber production.

	# of parcels	Total acreage
Breakdown of parcels < 5,000 acres:		
1-9 (1993)	145,000	318,000
10-99	80,500	2,741,000
100-199	10,300	1,341,000
200-499	13,400	962,000
500-999	700	450,000
1000-4999	200	389,000

The vast majority of forested land is privately owned. Large privately held forest parcels are typically classified as industrial private forest or non-industrial private forest. Industrial private forestlands (IPF) are lands owned by a forest products company that also owns and operates a primary wood processing plant. Non-industrial private forestlands (NIPF) are parcels owned by private individuals or institutional investors for forestry, recreation, conservation, or other purposes. Given the diversity of ownerships, NIPF lands are perhaps the most difficult to characterize. They include lands managed by forest companies that do not maintain their own processing plants, lands owned by investment groups, lands managed by companies for energy production or other non-forestry uses, and lands managed by not-for-profit organizations for conservation purposes. Also included within the NIPF category are an increasing number of parcels owned by independent logging contractors. Together, IPF and NIPF lands greater than 5,000 acres in size make up 60% of Maine's productive timberlands. Thirty-six percent of Maine's productive timberlands are in parcels less than 5,000 acres in size. There are 250,000 individual parcels of private forestland under 5,000 acres; all but 900 of these are less than 500 acres.

Table 2 expands the essential information from Table 1 to identify the number of acres in each land category that are certified under one or more certification systems and the number of acres where certification is either in progress or planned. As of January 2005, there were 6.95 million acres of certified forestland in Maine, or 40% of productive timberland.

Table 2. Status of certification in Maine by ownership and parcel size

	Total acreage	Certified	Certified lands as a percent of the total
Public timberland	798,000	514,587	64%
IPF/NIPF > 5,000 ac.	10,400,000	6,082,044	58%
Family forests & NIPF < 5,000 ac.	6,201,000	355,413	5.7%
Total timberland	17,338,955	6,952,044	40%

⁷ Statistics on private forestlands under 5,000 acres in size were derived from 1993 forest inventory data, the most recent date for these data. (An update to 2003 is currently being prepared.) It is reasonable to conclude that in the decade since 1993 the number of parcels – and the total acreage – has increased in each small parcel category due to subdivision of land. It is also reasonable to assume that the number of parcels above 5,000 acres in size has decreased somewhat in the past ten years.

Table 3 provides a summary of certification progress since the beginning of the Governor's certification initiative. This table also provides a breakdown of certification by forest certification system.

Table 3. Progress between 2003 and 2004

	2003	2004	Change
Acres certified through ATFS ⁸	300,000	300,000	0
Acres Certified through ATFS/ SWOAM 3 rd Party Audited Pool		30,000	+30,000
Acres certified only through FSC ⁹	89,880	366,828	+276,948
Acres certified only through SFI	4,676,000	4,858,144	+182,144
Acres dual certified through both FSC & SFI	1,426,000	1,426,000	0
Totals	6,491,880	6,980,972	489,092

Analysis

Public Lands. The vast majority of public timberlands have been or are likely to become certified. Of the public lands already certified, the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands manages the largest proportion. There is an additional 160,000 acres of state land that hold potential for certification. Of that amount, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife manages several parcels totaling approximately 100,000 acres. Also included in the 160,000 acres are significant forest holdings managed by the University of Maine and miscellaneous parcels managed by other state agencies. Public lands not currently slated for certification includes lands within the White Mountain National Forest, three national wildlife refuges, lands within military reservations, and a variety of smaller state- and municipally-owned parcels. Whether or not the U.S. Forest Service or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will pursue certification of national forest or national wildlife refuge lands is a matter of federal policy and thus largely out of state control. There is, however, no harm in suggesting that certification be considered for these lands. The remaining public parcels are typically too small to make a significant contribution. At least in the near-term, the focus for certification of public timberlands should be on the aforementioned 160,000 acres of state-owned timberlands, especially the 100,000 acres managed by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife as these lands represent such a large portion of the available state lands and could potentially be certified through a consolidated, agency-wide process. A consolidated certification process may also be possible for the University of Maine's timberlands.

Large Private Parcels. Private forestlands greater than 5,000 acres in size have already made a significant contribution to certification; however, assuming that lands currently being prepared for certification are actually certified, there still remain nearly 4 million acres of these lands that are not certified. Given that this is a considerable amount of land, that acre for acre it is far less expensive and time-consuming to certify larger parcels, and that owners of these larger parcels are more likely

⁸ Some parcels are dual certified by both ATFS and FSC. Precise acreage figures are not available and so are not included in this table.

⁹ The figures for FSC and SFI do not include dual certification acreage. For a total FSC or SFI acreage figure, add acreage from the dual certification row.

to be familiar with certification and understand its potential benefits in the marketplace, it stands to reason that large uncertified parcels should be considered a key part of the strategy for reaching the 10 million-acre goal. In fact, looking at the overall picture of Maine forestlands, it becomes apparent that it would be virtually impossible to reach this goal without a substantial contribution from these lands. Conversely, it would be theoretically possible to achieve the goal exclusively through these lands if 3 million acres out of the remaining 4.3 million acres of uncertified 5,000-acre-plus lands could be certified. For several reasons, however, this may be unrealistic, at least in the near term. For instance, much of this land is owned by multiple parties and securing agreement by all owners takes time. It may also be difficult to convince institutional investors to spend the money required to certify lands, especially if there is no assurance that a near-term economic gain will be realized. Other reasons why individual large-parcel landowners may not be in a position to engage in certification at this time include having other near-term priorities that require significant staff attention or cash-flow problems that make it difficult to invest in certification.

A still ambitious but more attainable near-term goal would be to seek certification of slightly over one-half of the remaining large parcel private lands, or 2.5 million acres. To do this, it will be important to focus on larger landholdings (those greater than 100,000 acres). Even so, reaching this target will require participation by landowners in the 5,000- to 100,000-acre size range.

Small Private Parcels. Certification of Maine parcels that are 5,000 acres or smaller is in an early stage. To date, approximately 355,000 acres of these smaller parcels have been certified, principally through individual registrations by the American Tree Farm System (300,000 acres), the Forest Stewardship Council's Certified Resource Manager program (25,228 acres), and, most recently, an ATFS group certification initiative sponsored by the Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (30,000 acres). Although 355,000 acres is a substantial number, it still amounts to less than 2% of the total timberland base and is only 5% of the total small-parcel acreage.

Given the issues involved in certifying small parcels, particularly the large number of parcels that would need to be included, it could be argued that it is more prudent to seek to achieve the 10 million-acres goal by focusing on larger parcels. However, there are four potential implications to consider:

First, regional effects must be considered. If the focus of certification were to be exclusively on larger parcels, areas of the State where there are few if any large parcels, particularly in southern and mid-coastal Maine, would not see new certification. This would mean that mills relying on these areas for their wood supply would not be able to secure certified wood in any volume. If markets demand certified wood – and increasingly this is the case – mills in these areas could be placed at a competitive disadvantage.

Second, family forests are an important part of the Maine landscape. Excluding these lands could have a significant effect on the sustainability of Maine's forests. In addition, this would deprive local landowners of an opportunity to learn about sustaining their forest resources and contribute to an important program.

Third, as has been demonstrated with both economics and ecology, diversity is a significant factor in determining the long-term sustainability and resiliency of a system. For certification to succeed in Maine, participation by landowners from a variety of land categories throughout the State will be necessary, including significant participation by owners of smaller parcels.

Fourth, family forests contribute a significant percentage of the overall state timber volume.¹⁰ If this wood remains uncertified, it may be difficult to meet the emerging demand for certified wood. If, for example, other buyers adopt Time Warner's policy of 80% of the wood going into its paper coming from certified sources, it is extremely unlikely that Maine suppliers will be able to meet that demand without a significant contribution from family forests.

With this in mind, the Committee suggests setting a goal of 825,000 acres of certified forestland for parcels under 5,000 acres. This represents an increase of 470,000 acres over the existing 355,000 acres of small-parcel certification. This is, admittedly, an ambitious goal and one that will require commitment and aggressive action by both public and private sectors. But to place this in perspective, even this aggressive goal still represents only 13% of the small parcel timberland in Maine.

Summary of the Strategy for Reaching 10 Million Acres

Table 4 expands on Table 2 to incorporate the goals for each landowner category as described above. It also shows, in the right-hand column, the number of acres that will need to be certified in each category to achieve the goal. To reach the 10 million-acre goal, an additional 3 million acres will need to be certified. The most realistic scenario calls for approximately 100,000 acres to come from public forestlands, approximately 2.5 million acres from private parcels over 5,000 in size, and approximately 470,000 acres from private parcels under 5,000 acres in size.

Table 4. Certification goals by ownership and parcel size

	Total acreage	Certified	Goal	Needed to meet goal
Public timberland	798,000	514,587	615,000	100,000
IPF/NIPF > 5,000 ac.	10,400,000	6,082,044	8,600,000	2,500,000
Family forests & NIPF < 5,000 ac.	6,201,000	355,413	825,000	470,000
Total timberland	17,338,955	6,952,044	10,000,000	3,070,000

Table 5 presents summary statistics that help to visualize the 10 million-acre goal. While there are many scenarios for reaching the 10 million-acre goal, the Committee believes that the scenario described in Table 4 offers a reasonable scenario given both the realities of Maine's forest ownership and the public policy need for landowner diversity and geographical distribution. There are perhaps other scenarios that could achieve this same goal, and the actual distribution is likely to differ somewhat. However, the distribution offered here can serve as a useful guide to achieving the goal. The Committee believes that this 10 million-acre goal, while ambitious, is attainable. To do so will, however, require a significant effort on the part of state government and private certification interests to develop and implement actions targeted at each of the landowner categories identified in Tables 4 and 5.

¹⁰ As depicted in tables 2 and 3, family forests and other non-industrial private forests less than 5,000 acres in size total 6,201,000 acres, or approximately 35% of Maine's total available timberland.

Table 5. Summary of certification goals by ownership and parcel size

	Total acreage	Goal	Goal as a % of total timberland	Goal as a % of total land category
Total timberland	17,338,955	10,000,000	58%	58%
Public timberland	798,000	675,000	4%	85%
IPF/NIPF > 5,000 ac.	10,400,000	8,500,000	49%	82%
Family forests & NIPF < 5,000 ac.	6,201,000	825,000	5%	14%

Discussion

Success in reaching the goal of 10 million acres requires understanding the motivations and interests of different categories of landowners when identifying opportunities for additional certification. As described above, other than certification in progress or planned, there does not appear to be significant opportunity for new certification on public lands. The primary opportunities lie with large- and small-parcel private lands.

Large Private Parcels. Most of the existing acres in certification are in large ownerships, and the majority of large-parcel landholdings are already certified or in the process of becoming certified. The large-parcel landowners involved in the certification process have, in large part, been motivated by the desire to assure the public that they are managing in a responsible manner. As part of this movement, American Forest & Paper Association members are required to participate in the SFI Program. While participation does not necessarily equate to third-party certification, these companies have at least been exposed to certification concepts. However, in Maine, most members have completed third-party certification. Nearly all of the large-parcel landowners/managers who have gone through the certification process have concluded that they are better landowners for doing so but acknowledge that they have seen little market benefit. Remaining large-parcel ownerships are typically not opposed to certification, but find it difficult to justify the cost of certification given the lack of market demand or price advantage.

The majority of large-parcel, non-certified forestlands are held by multiple-owner entities, typically timberland investment management organizations (TIMOs) and extended families with many shareholders. The decision process on these lands is far more complex than on lands owned by one corporation or an individual. Over the past few years, there has been a tendency for industrial private forest owners to sell non-strategic forestlands. These lands are sometimes sold to TIMOs or logging contractors, which may lead to land becoming de-certified. While much of the industrial land ownership is certified, most TIMO and logging contractor lands are not. TIMO lands, even those that are certified, are likely to be re-sold within a relatively short time, after which these lands may be purchased by a non-certified entity. The decertification of land through land transfer represents a major impediment to reaching Governor Baldacci's 10 million acre goal and, just as important, maintaining the number of certified acres once the goal is achieved.

Small Private Parcels. For smaller parcels, the challenge is how to interest 15 to 20 percent of the more than 100,000 owners, 90 percent of whom own 500 acres or less, in having their forestland certified. Collectively these landowners own some 5 million acres, nearly one-third of the State's total available timberland. Very few family forest owners have had their lands certified, and most are unfamiliar with certification. Even after years of effort by the Maine Forest Service to encourage the use of foresters, only one in three harvests on smaller parcels is overseen by a professional forester.

Given that the average small-parcel landowner in Maine owns less than 60 acres, it will take many landowners to add significant acreage to the certification totals.

With the high number of small private parcels and the high rate at which small parcels change owners, certifying small ownerships is a major challenge. Nonetheless, there needs to be a significant number of small-parcel ownerships certified to meet the acreage target. And, importantly, family forests are major suppliers to markets – particularly in southern Maine. If markets for certified products increase statewide without a corresponding increase in certified small acreages, wood producers in southern Maine will be disadvantaged, and it will not be possible to meet market demand for certified wood products.

While many owners of smaller parcels hope certification will result in financial gain, this has not been the chief impetus; rather, they typically have been motivated by a desire to practice good land stewardship. A combination of market access and assistance with costs will be key factors. The public concerns over forest management that motivate owners of large commercial timberlands to certify are less likely to be a major influence on owners of small parcels. The principal challenges when dealing with family forests will be, first, to have demonstrable benefits such as market access linked to certification, second, to make them aware of certification, and third, to demonstrate to them that certification can be accomplished at reasonable cost. The market demand by large-volume buyers like Time Warner is likely to have a trickle-down effect to small woodland owners, although the extent of the potential effect is difficult to judge at this time.

Perhaps the single most effective way to encourage owners of family forests to become involved with certification would be for mills and brokers to communicate to landowners their desire to increase the percentage of wood that they receive from certified sources, and to indicate their intention to favor these sources in their procurement practices. Two strategies that hold the most promise for engaging owners of family forests are, first, group certification and, second, the involvement of certified foresters and certified loggers in the oversight and implementation of harvests.¹¹ Both of these strategies will be explored later in this report.

Conclusion

Although the 10 million-acre goal is attainable, it is very ambitious. In large part, landowners and managers who have recognized the value of certification have already certified their lands, and, therefore, certification of the remaining 3 million acres is a challenging prospect. Some new acreage will be certified regardless of intervention; however, it is highly unlikely that the full 3 million acres will be certified without a combination of market demand, education, facilitation, and technical support.

What is needed is a willingness on the part of all forest certification interests – public and private – to create new approaches to education, on-the-ground technical support, and incentives that can, collectively, move certification in Maine to a higher level of understanding and implementation. In the recommendation section of this report, the Committee identifies actions that it believes can, if aggressively implemented, provide the momentum to meet the Governor's goal.

In the final analysis, of course, if consumers demand certified products – and are willing to pay for these products – producers of wood products will respond. Thus, while actions can be taken by state government, the forest industry, and others to significantly increase the number of parcels certified, consumers – i.e., the public – also need to do their part. This suggests the need for a significant effort

¹¹ The terms certified forester and certified logger are defined in the glossary.

to inform the public of both the concept of forest certification and the benefits of purchased certified forest products.

An Additional Goal: Increase the Volume of Wood from Certified Forests and Responsible Harvests

While acknowledging the importance of Governor Baldacci's 10 million-acre goal, the Committee concludes that certification of additional land should be considered only part of the equation in satisfying the demand for wood derived from responsibly managed forests. To meet emerging market demand for certified products from Maine's forests, the Committee believes that there must also be a continuing supply of certified wood products moving from the forest, through the mills, and on to markets. Further, to meet the high volume demands of buyers, it may not be enough to simply increase the acreage of certified forestlands and guarantee that products will flow from these lands. In addition, it may also be necessary to develop means to ensure that wood coming from non-certified lands – and especially those lands where certification may be especially difficult to achieve – meets specified standards that indicate that the forest is being harvested responsibly. Later in this report, the Committee will describe how this might be accomplished through certification of loggers and foresters. By achieving a high volume of forest products coming from certified forestlands and from certified loggers and foresters, Maine would send the message to markets and consumers that they can rely on Maine sources to supply a predictable volume of wood from responsibly managed forestlands. It would also send a message to the various players within the Maine forest industry that certification is not just an abstract concept but rather an integral component of day-to-day business. To focus attention on the need for increased volume from responsibly managed forests the Committee believes that a specific volume goal should be established to complement Governor Baldacci's 10 million acre goal. The Committee's proposed goal is as follows:

To complement and supplement the goal of 10 million acres of certified forestland, the State of Maine and the Maine forest industry should seek to increase the volume of wood from certified sources¹² to 60 percent of the statewide total by the end of 2009 and to ensure that buyers desiring to secure even higher percentages from Maine sources are able to do so.

Neither the 10 million acre goal nor the 60 percent volume goal will be met unless a wide variety of landowners, foresters, and loggers actively become engaged and are supported by the greater forest industry, Maine state government, and others with an interest in Maine's forest environment and forest economy. 10 million acres and 60 percent of total volume are numbers that are difficult for any one person -- or organization -- to grasp. Given this, perhaps the most reasonable approach would be for both goals could be divided into "bite-sized bits," whereby individual forest products companies, group managers, the State of Maine, and other certification interests each establish and work towards meeting their own goals within the larger statewide goals.

¹² Certified sources include both certified forestland and wood from certified harvest practices, a concept that will be described in detail later in this report. See the glossary for a definition.

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS

Core Principles

The Committee has identified a series of core principles that are fundamental to the development of recommendations for advancing certification. As used here, a core principle is a central idea that is considered to be true based on both an objective knowledge of the situation and on the deeply held values or beliefs that one brings to the analysis. Core principles may vary from person to person based on differences in background and experience. This section of the report identifies the core principles that the Committee has concluded are both widely held and directly relevant to the Maine situation regarding forest certification, as follows:

1. Certification is not an end in itself, but rather a tool that can be used to encourage and support improvements in forest practices. Certification is not the only means for achieving this, but it is a way to distinguish forestlands, wood, and wood products that meet a specified standard of forest practice.
2. Certification alone cannot achieve all forest management goals. The Committee believes, however, that properly implemented certification can make a substantial and potentially essential contribution to sound forest management by protecting ecosystem values and favorably positioning Maine's forest industry in the global forest economy.
3. Credibility is the key to certification. Regardless of the system(s) used to verify the quality of management practices, those who purchase certified wood products must have confidence that these products come from well-managed forests. To instill this confidence, the certification systems used to verify management practices must employ credible standards and follow third-party auditing procedures. Ensuring the credibility of certification must be considered a fundamental responsibility of those involved in developing and implementing certification initiatives within the State. Simply put, failure to achieve credibility will eliminate the value of certification in the market.
4. Certification is, and should remain, a non-governmental, market-driven approach to forest management that is purely voluntary. Landowners, forest products companies, foresters, and loggers must have the flexibility to decide how, or if, to participate. Consistent with this voluntary, market-driven approach, the role of state government should be limited.
5. While the role of government must be limited, this does not mean that state government has no role. The primary role for government is to help create a supportive environment where certification has an opportunity to succeed.
6. While certification and governmental regulation can be complementary, it must be recognized that they are fundamentally distinct. Regulations are mandatory and usually prescriptive. Certification is voluntary and should focus on outcomes, not prescriptions. Certification is therefore more flexible and, potentially, more capable of engendering creative solutions, both in the near and long terms.
7. The long-term success of certification will be determined by: 1) whether it is demanded by the marketplace and the public, principally large retailers and end consumers; 2) whether

certification helps to promote forest management practices that support the long-term sustainability/viability of Maine's forests and forest products economy; and 3) whether, as a result of the first two determinants, certification is seen to be value-adding within Maine's markets. In a very practical sense, the success of certification will be judged by the willingness of landowners, land managers, and wood processors to participate.

8. If a landowner or land manager is not interested in pursuing certification, this does not necessarily mean that he or she is not practicing good forestry. Regardless of the initiatives taken to promote certification, care must be taken to recognize the contributions of all landowners and managers who oversee well-managed forests.
9. Regardless of the system(s) used to certify forests and forest products, as well as the standards employed, from a market and customer perspective it is essential that products advertised as "certified" actually come from well-managed forests. Certification standards must, therefore, mirror sound forest management principles, and systems must be established to track the flow of wood from certified sources.

Major Findings

This section of the report presents the Committee's findings regarding a range of issues related to forest certification in Maine. These findings, along with the core principles identified above, form the basis for specific recommendations that will follow.

The Relationship between Certification and Forest Sustainability

In 1998, the 118th Maine Legislature (P.L. 1998, Chapter 720) identified seven criteria for assessing forest sustainability on a statewide basis:

- Soil productivity
- Water quality, wetlands, and riparian zones
- Timber supply and quality
- Aesthetic impacts of timber harvesting
- Biological diversity
- Public accountability of forest owners and managers
- Traditional recreation

The Legislature gave the Maine Forest Service responsibility for developing indicators and benchmarks for these criteria and for monitoring progress. There is considerable similarity between the State's forest sustainability criteria and the standards used by the various certification systems. Similarities are to be expected, as both the State's sustainability criteria and forest certification standards have as their objective the sustainable management of forest resources. The metrics used by the Maine Forest Service to measure progress toward meeting State sustainability goals are likewise very similar to those needed to measure progress toward meeting forestland certification goals.

While recognizing the desirability of maintaining distinctions between public forest sustainability policy and privately based forest certification, the Certification Committee sees merit in appropriate collaboration between these efforts. For example, state forest sustainability criteria were among the factors considered in a recent third-party evaluation of SWOAM's ATFS group certification program.

Perhaps the area where collaboration would be most useful in the near-term is the compilation and analysis of information. The State's criterion 6 (Public Accountability of Forest Owners and Managers) has four indicators of sustainability: (1) involvement of a Licensed Professional Forester in forest management, (2) forest certification, (3) involvement of loggers trained and certified through the Certified Logging Professional Program or similar programs, and (4) management plans meeting Maine Forest Stewardship Program guidelines. Information on these indicators would be equally valuable in measuring progress toward meeting the state's forest sustainability goals and certification goals. Information on all seven of the state's forest sustainability criteria could also be very useful to forest certifiers and auditors, particularly those involved in group certification initiatives.

Certification System Credibility

The differences among certification systems, particularly the three systems most active in Maine (ATFS, SFI, and FSC) reflect their different histories and the constituencies they serve. There has been considerable discussion among certification interests, nationally and internationally (and within the Committee) regarding the extent to which the various systems meet the criteria for a credible forest certification system. Some members of the Committee felt strongly that not all of the certification systems met the Committee's definition of a credible certification system, while others felt all three systems that are active in Maine contribute significantly to the stewardship of Maine's forests. Members of the Committee recognize that these issues have been and will continue to be addressed through other forums.¹³

Differences of opinion regarding certification system credibility are to be expected, as the various certification interests view the issue from different vantage points, the systems fill different niches, and these systems are relatively new and still evolving. Being international in scope, FSC is often criticized for being bureaucratic and unresponsive to local conditions. SFI's history of being developed by the forest products industry opens it to criticism that it has a bias toward an industry perspective. And given its history as a program to "recognize" good management, which predated certification as currently defined, and its ongoing efforts to engage the full range of family forest owners, ATFS is sometimes criticized for having standards that are more flexible than some forest management advocates might prefer. Each of these systems has acknowledged these criticisms, and each has taken steps toward rectifying perceived problems: FSC by adopting a regional structure, SFI by establishing an independent organization, the Sustainable Forestry Board, and ATFS by refining its standards and establishing, for the first time, a five-year review cycle. FSC and SFI also refine standards on a regular basis. Indeed, continual improvement is fundamental to all three systems.

In Maine, the most active recent debate on these systems has focused on the ATFS. This is to be expected as ATFS focuses almost exclusively on family forests, the most diverse category of lands. The concern expressed by some committee members is that because the ATFS has flexible standards that leave most final decisions to the landowners, growing market pressures that wood be certified might result in lands being certified that do not meet the accepted definition of a well-managed forest. These members observed that to date these market pressures have not materialized, and that certified Tree Farms in Maine have been good models of forest management. These Committee members believe that this concern is most likely to manifest itself in the future on individual Tree Farm audits, which do not currently have a complete third-party audit process comparable to the SFI and FSC

¹³ This report is not intended as a source of information on the intricacies of the various certification systems, nor does it contain a systematic comparison between these systems or discuss the relative merits of any of their features. Others have done this. The Committee recommends that those who wish to explore the topic in more detail consult the online sources, articles, and reports referenced at the end of this report.

systems. In general, these committee members have less concern about the ATFS group certification process, which requires a fully independent audit process. This independent audit process was exemplified by a recent audit of a group certification project sponsored by SWOAM using the ATFS 2004 standards. The audit, which adhered to a strict interpretation of the ATFS standards, concluded that group members were managing their forestlands in accordance with the 2004 standards. The audit helped to resolve many of the concerns with the interpretation and implementation of ATFS standards due to both the rigor of the audit and its positive findings. The audit did not cover all ATFS members in Maine, only those participating in the SWOAM group project. However, the State Tree Farm Committee, which coordinates ATFS activities in Maine, subsequently confirmed its agreement with the audit's interpretation of the ATFS standards.

It is important to note that, regardless of perspective, all members of the Committee agree that organizations or individuals should be free to continue to advocate for a given certification system and for a given set of standards and procedures. Indeed, the Committee believes that competition among the systems can be healthy, as long as this does not confuse the public or reflect negatively on forest certification as a concept.

From a statewide, multiple-interest perspective, the Committee recognizes that a large-scale statewide certification effort will have the broadest support if it incorporates a variety of certification systems and strategies.

Differences in Forestland Categories and the Special Case of Family Forests

Maine's forest landholdings vary greatly in both size and use. To significantly increase the amount of certified forestland and certified harvests in Maine, the Committee believes that the entire spectrum of landowners must become involved. Each landowner has unique needs and motivations, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Approaches to certification must, therefore, be tailored to meet the needs of each landowner category.

Small woodlots, or family forests, present a special set of issues. The following attributes distinguish family forests: 1) forestry is often only one of several management objectives; 2) owners of small woodlots typically do not maintain the same level of inventory information as larger industrial landowners, nor do they typically have access to the expertise available to owners and managers of larger parcels; 3) the time horizon for forest management differs from that of larger parcels, with smaller landholdings typically being harvested less frequently (often only every 15 to 20 years); 4) decisions to harvest are typically made according to family needs (e.g., paying for college or retirement) rather than market demand; and 5) smaller parcels tend to change ownership frequently.¹⁴

While owners of family forests are less likely to be familiar with certification than are landowners of larger parcels, family forest owners are often excellent land stewards and, within the limits of reasonable cost, are willing to manage their lands to high forestry standards. It is important to note that, at least as currently practiced, certification involves certain fixed costs, generally resulting in a higher per-acre cost for small parcels.

¹⁴ Historically small parcels changed owners far more frequently than larger parcels. While the fast turnover of these parcels continues, and in many areas is accelerating, in recent years turnover of larger parcels is also increasing, especially those held by TIMOs. With both large and small parcels the issue of land turnover is exacerbated by the fact that changes in ownership often is accompanied by subdivision of land. Thus the issue is two-pronged – lack of continuity in ownership and fragmentation of forested parcels.

Given the large number of small forest parcels in Maine and the fact that a significant portion of the total state harvest comes from these lands, it is imperative that these small parcels be recognized as a key component of Maine's overall certification initiative. Moreover, given the problems that small woodlot owners face in getting their land certified, the Committee concludes that creative new approaches to certification must be developed to both meet their needs and encourage them to participate.

Certification in Southern Maine

From a forest management perspective, southern Maine is unique in the State. While small private woodlots can be found throughout the State, most forestland in northern and eastern Maine is in larger parcels owned by companies engaged in forest management. In southern and mid-coastal Maine, by contrast, the overwhelming majority of parcels are small and owned by individuals, not the forest industry. Although forestry is an important use of these lands, it is typically not the dominant use, and minimal forest management on the woodlot is often the norm for the periods between harvests. Statewide, smaller parcels change hands more frequently than do larger parcels, with the rate of landowner change in southern Maine being the most rapid in the State (every five to seven years on average). Southern Maine is also undergoing increasingly rapid land use conversion, with forests shrinking and urban uses expanding. Formerly concentrated on the coast and around Portland, land conversion is increasingly being felt in areas previously thought to be outside the urban influence.

As changes in land use accelerate, public sentiment in favor of retaining open space is increasing, resulting in pressure on state government, towns, and land trusts to acquire lands and easements for open space. The extent to which timber harvest is allowed on these fee-simple and easement lands varies. In many instances, harvesting is allowed in accordance with state law. In other instances, restrictions are placed on harvest, ranging from requirements that the land be sustainably managed to outright bans. The Committee believes that preserving open space and maintaining a healthy forest products industry can be mutually supporting. If easements and fee-simple land purchases provide appropriate provisions for environmentally sensitive timber harvest, both open space and the forest industry benefit; indeed, for all lands, perhaps one of the most effective ways to maintain open space, both in developing and remote areas, is to maintain undeveloped land as economically viable timberland.

The predominance of small parcels and the increasingly rapid conversion of forested lands to other uses have an effect on the forest industry as well as on the character of the land. Compared to the rest of the State, mills in southern Maine tend to be smaller and more locally oriented. With a diminishing forest base it is becoming increasingly difficult for southern Maine sawmills to secure large volumes of wood from local sources. In southern Maine, the large number of small parcels, combined with the difficulty of certifying small family-owned parcels and the pressure to convert forestland into housing or commercial areas presents many challenges to smaller mills interested in procuring certified wood. Of the wood secured locally, a disproportionate share comes from terminal harvests,¹⁵ not typically considered a source of certified wood.¹⁶ If markets demand increasing percentages of wood from certified sources, and wood from terminal harvests is not considered "certified," mills relying on wood from southern Maine may be placed at a competitive disadvantage.

¹⁵ Final harvests conducted prior to land conversion to a non-forest use.

¹⁶ The issue of how to treat wood from terminal harvests presents an important forest certification policy issue that will be discussed later in this report.

Despite or perhaps because of these impediments, the Committee believes that it is important that southern Maine be fully incorporated into any statewide certification strategy. This will help ensure that Maine's certification efforts are broad-based, that southern Maine has an equal opportunity to participate, and that southern Maine mills have access to locally grown certified wood. It will also help spread the word among owners of smaller parcels about the importance of sustainable management.

The Committee recommends that special emphasis be placed on jump-starting certification in this part of the State, with methods adapted to the area's special circumstances. Especially in the near term, while certification is taking hold in this part of the State, it is important that smaller mills not be penalized for an inability to meet the certification requirements of their markets. Hopefully, the interest in certification on the part of southern Maine landowners, and the demand for certified products, will track one another and this will not be a problem. Nonetheless, it is something to consider as certification strategies are developed.

The Committee also believes that although certification can play an important role in encouraging responsible forest management in southern Maine, a solution to the incremental displacement of forests by other land uses will require a concerted land protection effort on the part of the State of Maine and local communities that goes well beyond forest certification.

Approaches with Owners of Larger Parcels

Although it is clear that family forests have unique needs and require unique solutions, it would be wrong to assume that this is not the case for other forest categories. In fact, each of these categories – industrial private forest, non-industrial private forest, and public forest – presents its own problems and opportunities. Industrial and non-industrial forest companies that belong to the American Forest and Paper Association are required to adhere to SFI principles to maintain membership in the association. While this does not necessarily equate to certification, it does encourage AF&PA-member companies to employ sound forest management techniques and affords them opportunities to learn about certification. Several of the larger companies also have applied for and received FSC certification. Virtually all of the owners of larger forest parcels have at least a familiarity with certification. For these landowners cost, not awareness, is typically the limiting factor.

It is important to remember that many forestry companies operate in more than one state. Some regional companies operate in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and possibly Massachusetts or New York. National companies may operate in twenty or more states. Many of these also operate in Canada and overseas. For these companies, perhaps the major concern is that they be able to apply the same certification standards and protocol across their geographic area. This has implications for both their forest operations and the marketing of their products. These companies do not wish to see a certification program developed in Maine that would require them to follow Maine-specific standards or protocols that are at variance with their practices elsewhere, especially if these standards and protocol have the appearance of being mandatory,

As most industrial forest owners are already involved with certification, efforts to reach the 10 million acre goal must, at least in the near-term, focus on larger tracts of non-certified forestlands within the non-industrial private forest category. Non-industrial private forests include a wide range of owner types, including forest management companies, investment groups, individuals, companies in non-forestry businesses, logging contractors, sportsmen groups, and not-for-profit conservation organizations. While on-the-ground managers of these lands typically are aware of certification, the actual owners may not be and, especially for investor groups, owners may not be aware of, or

sensitive to, the non-monetary benefits of certification. For this diverse group, it is access to market, revenue, and the cost of certification that are the primary issues.

For publicly owned forests, there are two factors that largely determine whether the land will be certified. The first is the policy position of the governmental body that makes decisions for these lands. If local, state, or federal government supports certification, the likelihood that its lands will be certified is much higher than if support is not present. The second factor is funding. While all forestland categories have funding issues, public forestlands are unique in that securing funds to pay for certification typically requires authorization through some sort of public process. In the cases of state government, this means authorization by the state legislature. In Maine, funding is the key issue as the Governor has made this a priority and managers of the largest tracts of non-certified state lands, principally lands held by the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the University of Maine, have already indicated a willingness to pursue certification.

Foresters and Loggers

Certification cannot work without a productive partnership between landowners and the various certification systems. Especially for family forests, in most cases the critical link between the landowner and the system is the forester and/or the logger. A description of the roles of each follows:

Foresters. In Maine, only foresters can practice forestry and foresters must be licensed to practice. Foresters who meet state standards are termed Licensed Professional Foresters (LPF). State LPF licensing requires documentation of education and experience, and includes a test of the forester's knowledge of forest management as well as an internship. Foresters also have the option of becoming a Certified Forester (CF) by passing a detailed professional practice test prepared by the Society of American Foresters. The CF test covers a range of silvicultural and ecological topics that relate to forest sustainability. It is important to remember that LPF and CF are verifications of professional qualifications. They do not certify performance and should not be confused with forest certification, where performance is the key factor.

There are several options for foresters to be involved in forest certification. Foresters who work for or contract with owners of large parcels are very familiar with certification, as over one-half of large-parcel productive forestlands have been certified. Foresters also may serve as Certified Resource Managers (CRM), a Forest Stewardship Council program whereby the lands of CRM clients can be certified if the forester adheres to the FSC standards as verified through audits of sample client properties. While most Maine foresters are not certified through CRM or other similar programs, they often assist landowners to develop forest management plans that are typically a requirement of certification. They may also assist landowners in developing certification applications and in implementing both forest plans and certification requirements. Foresters also serve as certification evaluators, auditors, or, in the case of ATFS, Tree Farm inspectors.

Loggers. In contrast to foresters, who oversee management of forest systems, including the biological elements of these systems, loggers are responsible for on-the-ground operations associated with timber harvest. This might include site preparation and restoration as well as the actual harvest. While it is important that loggers be sensitive to the environmental considerations involved in harvest, loggers do not practice silviculture. That is the purview of foresters. Depending on the circumstance, there may be some overlap in the activities that foresters and loggers undertake. This is particularly so on small operations. On almost all larger operations, and many smaller operations as well, the forester and the logger form a team, with each complementing the practices of the other.

Loggers are not licensed in Maine. However, Maine loggers have been involved in three private-sector initiatives to define professional logging standards. The first two are the Certified Logging Professional program (CLP) and the Qualified Logging Professional program (QLP), both of which provide training and certify professional competence. As with LPF and CF, CLP and QLP verify training and qualifications. CLP also includes field verification. The third is the Master Logger Program, sponsored by the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine. Master Logger establishes a set of standards and an auditing procedure for evaluating logger performance in implementing harvests and related on-the-ground forestry activities. It also covers business practices. Master Logger focuses on the firm, not on the individual (CLP focuses on the individual). Master Logger is not a forest certification system in the mold of SFI, FSC, or ATFS. Although it does have several elements in common with these systems, Master Logger focuses more narrowly on short-term harvesting activities rather than on long-term, comprehensive land management that is the purview of traditional forest certification systems.

Forester/Logger Integration. The Committee believes that both foresters and loggers play a critical role in ensuring that forests are well managed and, by extension, in promoting and implementing certification. This is particularly so with family forests, where landowners may not be as aware of certification. Foresters and loggers are in an excellent position to inform family forest landowners about certification, to assist them in determining whether certification is in their best interest, and, if so, to provide the technical expertise necessary to become certified. The Committee, therefore, concludes that additional effort needs to be expended to engage both foresters and loggers in certification. This could be accomplished by: 1) providing foresters and loggers with information on the various certification systems, costs and benefits of certification, and the potential on-the-ground roles that these practitioners could play; 2) integrating foresters and loggers more fully into group certification initiatives; 3) exploring with the various certification systems creative ideas for simplifying certification for parcels using foresters and loggers who follow a set of credible standards and procedures; and 4) integrating foresters and loggers into harvest practices certification initiatives.

Forest Management Plans

The Maine Forest Service recently revised its forest management plan standards for use in the Service's Forest Stewardship Program. In developing these standards, the Service considered the management plan requirements of the various certification systems and sought to align State standards with those of the certification systems. While absolute consistency between State and certification system standards is probably not practicable because the standards differ from program to program and they change over time, comparable standards between state programs and certification system requirements decreases confusion among landowners, foresters, and loggers, promotes transferability, and helps to ensure that all plans target key sustainability issues.

Based on a preliminary review, the Maine Forest Service believes that its new standards meet the management plan requirements of certification systems currently active in Maine. This compatibility is important in that it helps to ensure that a forest plan prepared by a qualified forester will meet the requirements of public sector programs and serve as the basis for private sector certification. If landowners know, before the fact, that a properly prepared plan is likely to meet the requirements of a given forest certification system, they are more likely to both prepare plans and seek certification. Two actions are indicated. First, Maine certification interests should work with the various certification systems to determine if, indeed, state requirements meet their management plan requirements. Second, certification interests should advocate for the preparation of forest management plans appropriate to the size and characteristics of each forest parcel.

Harvest Improvements

The Committee recognizes that the time at which trees are harvested is when natural forest values are most at risk. The point of harvest is also the time when landowners may be most amenable to the idea of certification, particularly if they perceive some benefit. Unfortunately, although interest may be high, time is often short, with the landowner seeking revenue from the harvest in a shorter period than it may take to certify the land.

It is also important to recognize that although many landowners may be motivated to seek certification, there will be instances when individual landowners conclude that forest certification is not appropriate. This may be because of the cost or because the landowner is not in a position to commit to a long-range management program.

Given the environmental risk associated with harvest, the volume of wood harvested from small parcels, and the fact that the vast majority of small parcels are not currently certified (and some may never be), the Committee concludes that addressing harvest issues on small parcels is one of the most important steps that can be taken toward ensuring that harvested areas are left in good condition for future forest growth.

The Committee, therefore, suggests that “harvest practices certification” be considered an integral component of Maine’s overall certification initiative. The essential components of harvest practices certification are as follows:

1. To qualify, a harvest must be overseen by a certified forester¹⁷ or conducted by a certified logger.
2. To be certified, the forester or logger must follow a recognized standard and subject performance to a third-party audit process.
3. Harvest Practices Certification applies only to the wood harvested and not to the land.
4. Harvest practices certification is only intended for small land parcels, where harvests are less frequent and forest management is less complex.

There are two ways that harvest practices certification could be integrated into the larger forest products certification arena. First, harvest practices certification could be a stand-alone program targeted at parcels where comprehensive forest certification may not be possible or practical in the near-term. Second, assuming agreement by a forest certification system that focuses on family forests (e.g., ATFS and FSC), harvest practices certification could become a component of forest certification, especially for family forests seeking certification at the time of harvest. An allied concept would be for harvest practices certification to serve as a feeder system for later forest certification.

¹⁷ It is important to understand the difference between a “licensed” forester and a “certified” forester. A licensed forester is licensed by the State of Maine to practice forestry in the state; a certified forester is a forester whose forest practices meet specified criteria as defined by a given forestland certification system or harvest practices certification program. This is complicated by the fact that the Society of American Foresters has a Certified Forester (CF) program (described earlier), whereby a forester can use the CF designation if he or she passes a test and meets other specified qualifications. Refer to the report’s glossary for further explanation.

The Master Logger Program has developed a set of performance standards and auditing procedures that focuses directly on harvest activities. That program's standards and auditing procedures are, as far as the Committee has been able to determine, the only set of standards established solely for the purpose of assessing the operation's impact on forest resources, in Maine or nationally. This approach does not necessarily involve a professional forester and a forest management plan, but nonetheless has the potential to recognize the professionalism of loggers, improve harvest practices, and if widely implemented could reach most family forest owners who harvest timber.

The fact that Master Logger focuses on loggers does not mean that foresters are precluded from participating; indeed, Master Logger is actively exploring ways to more fully engage foresters in the program. Several possibilities exist for involving foresters or, for that matter, other relevant professionals including wildlife biologists. One idea would be to more formally link forester-prepared forest management plans to the harvest practice. Another would be for the certified logger to involve a forester. Yet another would be for foresters to undergo certification similar to loggers.

Like forest certification systems, Master Logger is not a static system and is open to proposals for improvements to both standards and procedures.

Expansion of the Master Logger Program would make a substantial contribution to both forest health and to Maine's position within the certified wood marketplace. This especially would be the case if foresters were to be more fully integrated into the Master Logger Program, or develop similar forester certification systems.

While seeing the value in expanding harvest practices certification, the Committee believes that it is important that the distinctions between forest certification and harvest practices certification be fully understood. An important distinction between forest certification and harvest practices certification is that the former involves a professional forester and management planning for the entire forest holding over an extended time horizon. In forestland certification, silvicultural principles are specifically incorporated into the management and evaluation process. In Maine, only a licensed forester is allowed to practice forestry. In contrast, harvest practices certification (as practiced by Master Logger) focuses on stand-level harvest practices that need not include silvicultural principles. For example, while Master Logger requires a harvest plan be prepared by a logger or forester, it does not require a forest-wide management plan prepared by a forester. Nor does it require that short-term harvest practices be placed within a long-term perspective.

How these distinctions should be treated is the subject of some debate. Regardless of the form that certification takes, central to the certification concept is the notion that consumers wish to support good forest management. Some consumers may not be concerned with specifics; they only want to know that the wood products that they purchase come from sources that are certified. Other consumers may have very specific certified source requirements. For the first group of customers the distinctions between forest certification and harvest practices certification are of little consequence. This may not be the case for the second group (who, in addition, may want to distinguish between the different forest certification systems.) For their part, forest conservation advocates and many professional foresters believe that the concept of forest certification should not be equated with harvest practices certification. They fear that labeling wood as certified outside of a comprehensive forest certification process could 1) mislead buyers, 2) dilute the concept of certification, and/or 3) lead to efforts to label products as certified that do not qualify for that designation because of the different types of standards and procedures involved. They are also concerned that landowners may opt for harvest practices certification as the course of least resistance rather than embark on full forest certification. Contrast this to a forest products company that is under pressure to deliver a high volume of certified products to meet the needs of a customer. Assuming concurrence from the

customer, this company is interested in securing certified products from a variety of sources, including certified harvest practices.

There may be no way to resolve this to the satisfaction of all. There are, however, ways to diminish the controversy. First, standards and procedures for any harvest practices certification program must be precise and rigorous. Second, suppliers of wood products must be clear in describing the source of their products. Third, harvest practices certification must be recognized as a complement to forest certification, not a rival. Using harvest practices certification as a feeder system to, or a component of, forest certification is one way to solidify this relationship, as is targeting harvest practices certification toward situations where forest certification may not be possible or practical.¹⁸ Fourth, certification interests must be clear in their use of terminology to define certification terms. The glossary to this report defines these terms. Due to their importance, these definitions are repeated here:

Forest (or Forestlands) Certification. The act of certifying a parcel of forestland as being managed according to a set of standards and procedural requirements as defined by a given forest certification system. The unit of measure for forestland certification is land area, expressed in acres or hectares.

Harvest Practice Certification. A harvest implemented by a professional forester or logger or a firm consisting of professional foresters and/or loggers that: 1) has met a set of credible qualification and practice standards; and 2) is subject to third-party audit of forestry practice, and is thereby able to make claims about the quality of forest practices that are overseen or conducted by this individual or firm. Harvest practices certification is separate and distinct from forest certification. The unit of measure for harvest practices certification is volume or weight, typically cords of wood, board feet, or pounds/kilograms.

From an ecological perspective forestlands certification is distinguished from harvest practices certification, at least as currently practiced, in that forestland certification is based on the principles of silviculture as depicted in a property-wide forest management plan.

Tracking Wood from Certified Forests and Responsible Harvests

In a perfectly orderly world it may make sense to establish a single formula, applicable in all circumstances, to determine what is and is not certified. However, given the variations in landowners, producers, and markets, the evolving nature of certification, as well as its free market nature, the Committee concludes that it is not desirable, and probably not possible, to adopt one certification formula. Rather, the Committee believes that the sensible approach is to accept the variable nature of certification and construct processes and information systems that are capable of responding to a wide range of expectations and demands. Experience has shown, for example, that some purchasers demand wood from lands certified by a specific system while others seek wood from a variety of systems. As the Time Warner case demonstrates, purchasers may elect to set different standards for small woodlots in an effort to include or increase the flow of wood products from those sources.

While recognizing the value in allowing various forest products companies and markets to develop their own certification scenarios, the Committee sees value in a common information framework. This common framework could serve both as the context for organizing state-level tracking systems

¹⁸ There are certain to be instances where wood comes from both certified forest and certified harvest practices. In effect, this provides added assurance that the wood comes from a well-managed forest. From an accounting perspective, care must, of course, be taken to insure that this wood not be double counted.

and progress-monitoring programs. It would also serve as the departure point for the various companies or markets to develop tracking systems uniquely fitted to their needs. To this end, the Committee proposes that state government and other certification interests develop a multi-tiered tracking system that includes three components, as follows:

Certified Forestland. This component tracks lands that have been certified by an active forest certification system. The intent would be to track land certified by each system as well as the total acreage of all certified forestlands. This is important, as some markets may prefer to secure wood that is harvested only from lands certified by a particular system while others may be interested in wood from lands certified by any active system. Given the variability in ownerships and markets, tracking these data by ownership size, type, and region would also be useful. Wood harvested from these lands would also be tracked and would count toward meeting the State's volume objective.

Certified Harvest Practices. This component includes wood that comes from harvests that meet a set of verifiable standards as determined by a third-party audit procedure. The performance of the forester and logger in planning for and conducting the harvest would be the focus of certification, not the overall management of the forestland. Wood produced through harvests by certified foresters and loggers would count toward meeting the state's volume objective but not toward the forestland certification objective. Currently, Master Logger is the only example of this in Maine.

The Committee has concluded that tracking wood volume harvested by third-party certified loggers and foresters should be applicable only to small woodlots based on the following rationale: First, as referenced earlier, small parcels are more difficult to certify. A logger or forester certification system may serve as a means to address basic sustainability issues on these hard-to-certify lands. Second, larger parcels are typically managed by organizations having access to professional silvicultural expertise and the types of resource information required for forest certification. Given these considerations, the Committee concludes that the focus for larger parcels should be on forest certification, not on certification of harvest practices.

The question then becomes, what should be the upper size limit for land parcels to qualify for harvest-event certification? Three options have been discussed by the Committee: 1) Set an upper parcel size limit of 500 acres, and, within this, possibly distinguish one or more sub-groups, for example, parcels smaller than 100 acres and parcels between 100-500 acres. This option is reasonable, as 500 acres is a convenient cut-off point for grouping the vast number of small woodlot owners in Maine. In addition, there are precedents for this in real-world market conditions. 2) Set an upper parcel size limit of 1,000 acres, as this is consistent with the Maine Forest Service's forest stewardship incentive program and sustainability tracking protocol. 3) Track harvests on parcels up to 1,000 acres but accept that each certification system and buyer has the option of defining its own upper size limits for its own purposes. The latter option, tracking harvests on lands up to 1,000 acres, is perhaps the most prudent approach as it offers the most flexibility. In reality, this is not a major issue as the vast majority of Maine's forestland parcels are less than 500 acres in size.¹⁹ It also reflects the realities of the workings of an unfettered free market and ensures that certification will remain voluntary and not become prescriptive in any respect.

Other Professionally Managed Harvests and Forestry Activities. This component includes forest management activities conducted by a Licensed Professional Forester that do not meet the specific requirements for either land or harvest practices certification. That is, the activities are not covered

¹⁹ Of the approximately 250,000 forest parcels under 5,000 acres in size, less than 1,000 are larger than 500 acres. See "small woodlots" in the glossary for a more detailed discussion of the various size classifications used to define smaller parcels.

by a set of certification standards and a third-party audit procedure. These activities commonly include preparation of forest management plans and overseeing harvests. While not meeting certification criteria, these activities should be considered in forestry tracking system, because they are performed by state-licensed professionals trained in silvicultural techniques and practices and may, therefore, contribute to the overall sustainability of forestlands.

It is important to emphasize that the Committee does not propose that these professionally managed forest activities be considered as part of a certification system, either forestland or harvest practices. The Committee does, however, believe that it is important to track these activities in concert with land and harvest practices certification in order to obtain a more complete picture of forest management in Maine. This may also be useful for individual forestry companies in their development of certification packages for specific markets.

The three forest practice elements described above – certified forestland, certified harvest practices, and plans and harvests overseen by Licensed Professional Foresters – are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Harvest by a certified logger or forester can, for example, occur on certified forestlands. A harvest may involve both a certified logging operation and oversight by a Licensed Professional Forester. Tracking all three provides significant flexibility to those who make use of this information. For example, based on past precedents, it is entirely possible that a large-volume purchaser of wood products might want to focus on securing wood that meets any of the following:

1. Wood from forestlands certified by one or more forestlands certification systems,
2. Wood from harvests on small parcels (example: under 500 acres or 100 acres) conducted by a third-party certified logger or forester, or
3. Wood from harvests on larger parcels (example: 100 acres to 500 acres, or 500 acres to 1,000 acres) conducted by a third party certified logger or forester and where there is a forest management plan prepared by a Licensed Professional Forester.

It should be noted that the three components described above – forestlands certification, harvest practices certification, and activities involving a licensed professional forester – are also integral components of the Maine Forest Service's tracking of progress toward meeting the State's sustainability goals. As part of its sustainability program the Maine Forest Service compiles information on forestlands certification, licensed professional forester involvement in forest management, and, to a lesser extent, harvests undertaken by Master Loggers. The tracking envisioned here does not, therefore, constitute a new program but rather collaboration with an existing one.

Terminal Harvests

Terminal harvests are final harvests conducted prior to converting land to a non-forest use. From a certification perspective, terminal harvests present a unique problem. By definition, wood made available through land use conversion cannot be considered as coming from a sustainable source. As such, wood from a terminal harvest does not typically meet the standard for certification as set by the various certification systems. At the same time, the wood will be harvested regardless of whether a mill is willing to purchase it, and it should be utilized for productive purposes. The Committee is concerned that mills that rely on wood from terminal harvests to meet their volume requirements may have difficulty supplying sufficient volumes of certified products. This is particularly an issue in southern Maine, where the bulk of terminal harvests occur. In some cases, southern Maine mills rely on wood from terminal harvests for much of their volume for a given species. White pine is a

particularly striking example. Informal estimates by mills and the Maine Forest Service suggest that between fifty and seventy percent of the pine going to southern Maine mills comes from terminal harvests.

The potential for confusion among wood products buyers is obvious. Customers need to be educated about the realities of this situation in order that mills not lose business for reasons beyond their control. In addition, it may be helpful if Maine certification interests could engage in discussions with the various forest certification systems regarding ways to equitably treat wood from terminal harvests in certification. At a minimum, the Committee suggests that each wood products processor identify and adhere to a terminal harvest procurement policy.

For certification purposes, it is important that wood from actual conversion be distinguished from other wood harvested on a development site. While wood coming from acreage that will be converted to roads, buildings, etc. is a legitimate by-product, wood from other areas on the same parcel that will remain undeveloped as forestland, and is, therefore, potentially available for ongoing harvest, should have to meet the same standard as other parcels to be counted in the certification mix.

Increasing Demand for Certified Products

Even as the work to increase the supply of certified wood continues, the next challenge in positioning the certification initiative as a value-adding component of Maine's forest products industry is to match the existing supply of certified wood in the marketplace with increased demand for that certified wood. While many large and small landowners are enrolled in certification programs, in the absence of a market premium for their certified wood, their motivations to become or remain certified are less related to increasing profits than they are to decreasing the various risks to which their businesses are exposed by, for example, strengthening management and decreasing public criticism of their practices. Looking to the future, it is likely that it will no longer be enough simply "to do the right thing" and become certified. Instead, landowners and manufacturers can be expected to demand that certification bring value to their businesses.

Essentially, this means that certification must be accompanied by an increase in access to markets, a price premium for products, or, ideally, a combination. The only way to bring this about is by increasing the demand for certified products. The Committee believes that increasing demand will require a multi-faceted approach involving first, a public/private initiative to market Maine as a reliable source of certified products – in terms of both volume and diversity – and, second, a more targeted approach by individual forest products companies to market certified products to specific segments of the market. In doing this, it is important to distinguish between the roles of state government and private industry. While state government should team with private interests in both industry and the conservation community in marketing Maine and Maine's forest resources, marketing to – and negotiating with – individual market sectors should be the purview of the private sector.

Currently Maine has a competitive advantage over other states in its relatively abundant supply of certified land and wood volume. (As suggested earlier, this competitive advantage does not necessarily extend outside of U.S. borders as Canada, for one, has a significantly higher percentage of its wood products coming from certified sources.) While Maine currently enjoys a national leadership role related to forest certification, many states (and foreign countries) are moving to take advantage of emerging markets for certified products. This activity has been particularly noticeable within the past year. Given this, if Maine is to solidify its position as a leader among other states the time to act to develop market demand is now. If Maine moves quickly, it can distinguish itself in the marketplace and take advantage of the emerging demand for certified products. It will also solidify

its position as a leader among other states in pursuing creative, “business-and-environment-minded” forestry.

Bridging the Gap between Findings and Recommendations

During its examination of certification opportunities and constraints, several conclusions emerged that the Committee believes are fundamental to the development of a successful state-level certification initiative. These key conclusions emanate from and build upon the goals, core principles, and major findings described above and form the basis for the recommendations that will be presented in the next section of this report. In summary form, these conclusions are as follows:

Scope. For certification to play a broad and lasting role in Maine’s forests and forest industry, it must involve the entire spectrum of forest stakeholders – landowners, foresters, loggers, processors – as well as markets, consumers, government, and the public. In addition, participation must be encouraged throughout the State and involve all forestland categories, including private industrial and non-industrial forests, family forests, public forests, and private conservation forests.

Differences in Approach. Forest landowners and managers have a wide range of needs based on the size and type of their landholdings, their management objectives, their economic situation, and the demographic features inherent in their location within the State. These differences suggest that different owners and managers are likely to respond to different approaches to certification. The availability of multiple certification systems provides a means to accommodate this wide range of needs. Use of multiple systems may also provide opportunities for individual forestry businesses to distinguish themselves within the greater forestry certification arena.

At the same time, it must be recognized that the presence of multiple systems can confuse the public, potentially leading to less trust in the certification concept. A non-forestry example with which most people can relate is safety of small electronic appliances. Given its longstanding use, consumers have grown comfortable with the UL label on toasters and other small appliances. Compare this to forestry, where there are several active certification systems, each with different standards and procedures.

The tension between, on the one hand, recognizing the merit of different certification approaches, and, on the other, the potential confusion of multiple systems and the inherent differences of opinion concerning the relative validity of the various systems, is one of the most difficult issues faced by Maine certification interests. The Committee recognizes that to be successful Maine’s certification initiative will need to capitalize on the ability of multiple systems to accommodate the needs of several types of landowner and varying types of market demand. There is, however, a difference of opinion regarding how this might be accomplished. Rather than dwelling on the complexities of a given system or cross-system comparisons, some members believe that it would be prudent to focus on the general concept of well-managed forests and encourage landowners and managers to get involved with a certification system that meets one’s individual needs. This is predicated on the belief that, first, all forest certification systems currently active in Maine have as their goal the implementation of forest practices that will result in a well-managed forest, and, second, all systems currently active in Maine are committed to continual improvement over time. Other members suggest that the differences between systems should not be ignored given the public values at stake and the credibility of those who advocate for the use of certification as a means to achieve sustainable forestry. In fact, they suggest, this should be the focus of the discussion.

In the final analysis, both perspectives have merit depending on one’s vantage point. It would be both unwise and unproductive to expect all parties with a stake in forest certification to speak with

one voice. From a statewide, multi-interest perspective, perhaps the most productive approach is to seek to avoid confusion among markets and consumers by focusing on generic certification themes, differentiating between the basic types of certification recognized in Maine (i.e., forestland certification and harvest practices certification), while providing detailed harvest volume and acreage information for each certification system.

Regardless of one's perspective, the Committee recognizes that organizations and individuals have the right to advocate for a given certification system or a given set of standards and procedures. At the same time, the Committee recognizes that alternative systems provide beneficial market diversity. Competition among these systems and diversity of views can be healthy, as long as this does not confuse the public or reflect negatively on forest certification as a concept.

Influencing Change. History has shown that certification systems are not static; rather, they can be expected to change and improve over time. This is a result in part of experience gained in implementing these programs. However, the major reason for change is pressure from those with a stake in certification, especially from those who seek to ensure the credibility of forest certification. Landowners, foresters, and loggers are in a particularly strong position to influence the direction of certification. In the final analysis, however, the marketplace and, by extension, the general public will decide whether forest certification is credible, what constitutes certification, and how certification standards and procedures will change over time. Regardless of how one might feel about the standards and procedures of individual certification systems, given the performance of the systems in Maine (as documented through audit reports), the evolving nature of certification, the need for various approaches to address different needs, and the fact that at least the major systems are probably here to stay, the Committee believes that it makes strategic sense to work with all of the active certification systems to influence their evolution.

Incentives. Benefits to the environment aside, it is difficult to imagine landowners and mills engaging in certification unless there is a demonstrated benefit to these landowners and mills. Obviously, a price premium would be a significant motivator, and there are cases where price premiums have occurred; however, this has not been common or widespread. Enhanced access to markets is a more common market-based result of certification. If, for example, a high-volume buyer expresses a preference for wood products that come from certified sources, mills will seek out certified products and those able to supply mills with these products will have an advantage over other suppliers. Of course, each forest products company is unique and the measurement of economic benefit can only be made by each individual company. It is not the role of state government or of this committee to presuppose anything about the financial considerations of any given company relating to certification. Although certification interests should continue to look for ways to create price premiums, and to increase access for certified products, other forms of potential benefit should not be overlooked. Depending on the circumstances, these might include regulatory relief, access to tax abatements and cost-sharing programs, and using certification as a means to measure improvement in forest practices. Many forest companies report that this last consideration – improving forest practices – has been the principal benefit to their participation in certification.

Technical Support. Technical support can play a key role in facilitating participation in certification; however, given the variety of landowner types, this support must be tailored to the need. Information on the intricacies of certification may already be available to corporate owners and managers, but they may benefit from technical support with various aspects of certification analysis such as biodiversity and sensitive species. For owners of family forests, more basic information on the certification concept may be needed. These owners might also benefit from audit planning services, particularly regarding what information is needed and how to go about collecting it.

Improving Forest Practices. Landowners and forestry professionals do not start from the same place regarding awareness of, or training in, sustainable forestry, nor do they share a common understanding of, or commitment to, forest certification. Yet all things being equal, the Committee believes that responsible owners and forestry professionals want to do the right thing and, given proper encouragement, would be interested in improving their forestry practices. When landowners view certification as a means to improve forestry practices they are more likely to participate.

Cost. Cost is often cited as a key factor limiting participation by landowners of both large and small parcels. For certification to succeed, certification systems and interests alike need to give more attention to how the certification process can be made more universally available and affordable without sacrificing the integrity of the process.

Resource Information. Collection and structuring of resource information is a time-consuming and expensive component of certification. "Pre-packaging" available natural resource and other relevant information at a state or regional level could result in significant cost-savings for individual certification evaluations. This information could be particularly useful for group or small landowner certification efforts where the landowner does not have control over landscape-level issues.

Negative Effects. Care must be taken to ensure that efforts to promote certification do not have the unintended consequence of harming the economic viability of the forest industry by effectively establishing new mandates that increase costs or restrict market options without providing commensurate benefits.

Collective Approaches to Certification. Given the cost and complexity of engaging multiple small woodlot owners, group certification and other "collective" systems probably offer the most effective way to achieve meaningful participation within this forestland category. Group certification need not be restricted to family forests. There may also be opportunities to capture economies of scale with public lands involving multiple parcels, for example forestlands managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and with lands owned by several landowners with similar circumstances, for example parcels owned by logging contractors and lands with conservation easements held by a single entity.

Continuity Beyond Maine's Borders. Certification programs in Maine must take into account that forestry companies and markets often operate in the larger regional, national, and global marketplace. Ensuring that certification programs within Maine are compatible with those outside of the state will make it more likely that regional and national forestry companies will participate and will lessen confusion with outside markets.

Reaching Landowners. Many family forest owners are either unfamiliar with the concept of certification or do not know how to go about getting involved. Reaching these landowners is a crucial first step in encouraging them to participate. Landowners, and especially small-parcel owners, can most effectively be reached through individuals, firms, and organizations with which these landowners have existing relationships and comfort levels. In many cases, foresters and loggers are the principal contacts for these landowners. In others, forest landowner associations such as SWOAM or local and state-level conservation organizations may be the best means to reach landowners. In still others, county extension agents or MFS regional foresters may be the best means. Regardless, effort must be made to target entities that can serve as key contacts and provide them with the wherewithal to fill this vital role.

The Point of Harvest. The effect of forest management practices on the environment is greatest at the time when wood is being harvested. Strategies that involve owners of small properties in

certification at the point of harvest can be an important tool to promote certification and improve forest management.

Timeframe for Implementation. While actions can be taken to encourage and facilitate use of certification as a tool for improving forest management, it is important to remember that full integration of certification into Maine forest management may take some time to bring about. There is, therefore, a need for both patience and perseverance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Achieving Maine's Certification Goals

Introduction

This section of the report presents the Committee's recommendations for actions that the State of Maine and private forest management interests might take to achieve Governor Baldacci's goal of 10 million acres of certified forestland by 2007 as well as the Committee's additional proposed goal of significantly increasing the volume of wood coming from certified sources. Although the focus is on these two goals, the Committee believes that its recommendations also address the broader aim of establishing and supporting a vibrant, broad-based, and long-term certification program that will maintain Maine's national leadership in certification and sustainable management of forestlands.

As described in the first section of this report, Governor Baldacci directed the Committee to develop recommendations in four areas. The recommendations that follow address Governor Baldacci's first three questions:

- 1. What can be done to increase the amount of land and wood products that is certified in Maine?*
- 2. What can be done to increase the number of businesses producing certified wood products in Maine?*
- 3. What can be done to enhance the markets for certified forest products from Maine and distinguish Maine in the global marketplace for certified products?*

Collectively, the subjects of these three questions – forests, processors, and markets – define the flow of wood products through the forest products economy. From a strategic perspective, the essential question is: where along this forests-processors-markets continuum should initial action be taken? It may be that the market is the logical choice, since increasing demand would motivate forest managers and wood processors to increase the supply. On the other hand, if there is no guarantee of supply, markets may be hesitant to use certification as a purchasing consideration. The Committee believes that a comprehensive approach to certification requires concurrent attention to increasing both the supply of certified products and the demand for these products.

This approach involves three strategic, interrelated efforts: 1) work with landowners, land managers, loggers, foresters and others to increase the number of acres certified and to establish a "harvest practices certification" system to certify wood volume; (2) work with a variety of constituencies to develop market based incentives for forest certification, including increasing market demand for certified forest products; and, 3) work to position Maine's marketplace "brand" at the forefront of consumer awareness for sustainably produced forest products. Collectively, these efforts are aimed at increasing opportunities and market-based incentives for additional landowners to engage in certification. This, in turn, should help to bring about better-managed forests and strengthen the various sectors of the forest products industry.

The Committee's recommendations take into account and build upon the key concepts and ideas that emerged during Committee deliberations, as described earlier in this report. Recommendations are

arranged into six major groupings, each related to a specific theme and each containing two or more related action items. An estimate of the cost to implement the recommendations is also presented.

Recommendation 1:
Create a Maine Forest Certification Information System

Action Item 1: Develop an Internet-based forest certification information system.

A user-friendly, Internet-based forest certification information system should be created. The system should provide landowners and managers, foresters, loggers, and certification evaluators with ready access to state-managed information that is critical to certification evaluations. Information should be understandable and available through an interactive Internet-based data access system that utilizes geographic information system (GIS) technology and contains suitable privacy features. In order to make efficient use of funds, this product should be integrated with the existing Maine Department of Conservation GIS system. The certification system should continue to pay benefits into the future, necessitating a strategy for maintenance and information updating as part of the system's design and implementation.

This system should focus on three types of information, as follows:

Forest Inventory and Sustainability. The Maine Forest Service should report on key forest health and sustainability indicators for which data are available through the USDA Forest Service/Maine Forest Service forest inventory. These indicators would be similar to the sustainability indicators identified in the MFS's Report on the State of the Forest and Progress Report on Forest Sustainability Standards. It should be noted that the intent is not to provide site-specific data; these do not typically exist. Rather, it is to provide a regional or, in some cases, a statewide context for parcel-level certification evaluations on landscape-level issues.²⁰ Examples of the types of data in the forest inventory dataset that could prove useful include: 1) information on growth and harvest levels, 2) size and age class distribution, 3) stocking levels, 4) information on the quality of tree by stand types, and 5) information on tree and crown condition.

Sensitive Species and Communities. The Maine Natural Areas Program and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife should identify key biological and ecological factors relevant to forest certification and for which state-maintained data are available. In addition, an information access system should be developed that can be integrated with the forest inventory information referenced above.

Several factors could be included: 1) rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species; 2) rare or exemplary natural communities and ecosystems; 3) significant habitats, e.g., deer wintering yards, wading bird breeding habitat, waterfowl staging areas; 4) essential habitats (bald eagle); 5) presence of municipal watersheds; 6) habitats of management concern (e.g., vernal pools); 7) other unique features; and 8) especially high concentrations of any of the preceding. It is important that systems be put into place that will provide security for this information and ensure that landowners will not be placed in jeopardy due to the presence, or suspected presence, of special features.

²⁰ These data are typically compiled at the county level, except in southern Maine where counties are smaller and forest data accounting units are aggregations of counties.

The application of this information to certification evaluations would depend on the certification system. Taking the major systems used in Maine as examples, this information might apply to FSC's Criteria 6.2, 6.4, or Principle 9; SFI's Objectives 4 or 6; or ATFS's Standards 6 or 8.

State Laws, Regulations and Programs Relevant to Forest Lands. The Maine Forest Service, in consultation with other Maine forest certification interests, should develop an information package on Maine laws, monitoring information, and other programs that can be used as a resource by forest certification systems, certifiers, landowners, and land managers. The information package should ideally link the available information on state programs to the criteria, performance measures, and indicators of the major certification programs. This information package should be available in a searchable database (e.g., sort by criterion number or search by keyword) and be integrated with the online information for forest inventory and biological information discussed above. Among the state laws and programs that should be included are:

- Protection and Improvement of Waters Law
- Erosion and Sedimentation Control Law
- Natural Resources Protection Act
- Shorelands Zoning
- Forest Practices Act
- Tree Growth Tax Law
- Endangered Species Act
- Land Use Regulation Commission regulations
- Municipal zoning ordinances related to forestry and shorelands protection
- Water quality standards and best management practices

In addition, the Maine Forest Service should identify existing programs that monitor implementation of state laws, regulations, and best management practices applicable to forest management (e.g., Forest Health, Forest Inventory) and integrate these into the information system as appropriate.

Note that compliance with state and federal laws and regulations is required by all certification systems currently active in Maine and that they typically expect applicants to go beyond these requirements. Although the Maine Forest Service can ascertain the extent to which these monitoring programs are generally applicable to certification and identify areas where these laws and regulations might apply to the various systems, it will be up to the individual systems to determine the extent to which compliance with laws and regulations meets a system's standards.

Action Item 1b: Create a strategy for using the forest certification information system to assist in certifying forestlands.

Maine forest certification interests should consult with the various certification systems to determine what information would be most helpful in such systems, and how the proposed online forest certification information system might be applied to a given system's certification and auditing procedures. The intent is to determine if this information might be used to streamline or otherwise simplify certification activities and thereby cut cost to applicants.

While it must be left to the certification systems and those using these systems to determine how the information might be applied to any given system and situation, some of the possibilities include: 1) to provide a regional context for certification and audit evaluations; 2) to supply information on one or more specific certification elements, for example, biodiversity and sensitive species; and 3) to serve as a screen for conformance with several standards.

It is, of course, important that the various forest certification systems be consulted prior to design of this information system to both gauge their interest and solicit guidance on the factors that they deem most important to include.

Recommendation 2:
Expand Harvest Practices Certification

Action Item 2a: Expand opportunities to certify harvest practices.

Maine certification interests should expand certification programs that focus on wood harvested by loggers or overseen by foresters who subscribe to a recognized set of environmentally sensitive harvest practices and subject their practices to third-party inspection. Markets and, as applicable, forest certification systems, will need to determine the extent to which silvicultural expertise should be a component. The Committee has identified several scenarios, as follows:

1. Harvests conducted by a logger who adheres to credible harvest practices certification standards and auditing procedures with no direct forester involvement.
2. Harvests conducted by a logger who adheres to credible harvest practices certification standards and auditing procedures following a suitable forest or harvest plan prepared by a forester.
3. Harvests conducted by a logger who adheres to credible harvest practices certification standards and auditing procedures and overseen by a forester.
4. Harvests overseen by a forester who adheres to credible harvest practices certification standards and auditing procedures.

Markets and certification systems will need to decide which of the above meet its standards. There is at least one example where a large-volume buyer has requested wood from scenarios 1, 2, and 3, but limiting wood from scenario 1 to parcels under a specified acreage limit. Note that scenario 4 is not currently an option as there are no programs in Maine involving foresters in harvest practices certification. The FSC Certified Resource Manager program is the closest approximation, but this is a forestland certification program, not a harvest practices program.

As the initial step in expanding harvest practices certification, the State of Maine should seek funds to provide a one-year grant (possibly renewable for a second year) to facilitate continued development and implementation of third-party certification of harvest practices. Funds would contribute to training loggers, developing chain of custody protocol, conducting audits, and program administration.

Effort should also be made to confirm the validity of harvest practices standards. To ensure transparency and accountability, certification standards and procedures should be reviewed by an independent, Maine-based oversight panel. Effort should be made to identify ways to more fully incorporate foresters and silvicultural practices into harvest practices certification, either as a complement to logger-based certification or through direct certification of professional forestry practices.

In addition, Maine certification interests should explore opportunities for “institutionalizing” harvest practices certification in the greater certification arena. Specifically, Maine certification interests

should consider whether it would be appropriate to implement harvest practices certification under the umbrella of an existing forest certification system (FSC/SCS, SFI, ATFS, etc.), as an independent certification program, or using a combination of these approaches.

Action Item 2b: Incorporate harvest practices certification into forestland certification.

As a collaborative effort with one or more forest certification systems, Maine certification interests should conduct an analysis of the relationship between Master Logger's harvest practices certification standards and procedures and those of the various forest certification systems to determine the extent to which implementation of Master Logger standards could contribute toward meeting any of the system's requirements for forest certification, especially for family forests.²¹ Based on this, certification interests should work with the certification systems to integrate appropriate harvest practices provisions into their forest certification programs. Opportunities for integrating harvest practices provisions into group certification initiatives such as the ATFS group certification program and the FSC SLIMFs program should especially be considered. Possibly this could be implemented as one component of a group certification initiative sponsored by Master Logger, a forest products company, and/or a private, not-for-profit forest advocacy or conservation organization.

As a related effort, Maine certification interests should work with forest certification systems to create a forest certification "feeder system" based on the harvest practices certification concept. ATFS's Pioneer Program is an example of an existing program that introduces family forest owners to certification and prepares their lands for subsequent Tree Farm certification. Maine certification interests should explore opportunities for linking the harvest practices certification concept with the Pioneer Program and similar programs offered by other certification systems.

Recommendation 3:

Motivate Owners of Private Forests to Certify Their Lands

Action Item 3a: Produce and distribute information on certification.

Maine certification interests should provide educational materials and opportunities for foresters, loggers, forest advocacy organizations, and landowners (and especially owners of family forests) regarding certification. At least initially, the focus should be on foresters, loggers, and forest advocacy organizations as they often provide critical on-the-ground links to landowners. Steps include:

- Maine certification interests should prepare and disseminate information for foresters, loggers, and landowners on the fundamentals of certification and how to become involved. This could be accomplished through a combination of online products and a paper brochure that could be disseminated through a combination of the Maine Forest Service's landowner outreach program and private efforts by the forest industry and conservation organizations.
- The University of Maine should consider expanding its coverage of forest certification in its undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs.
- Maine certification interests should encourage the various certification systems to offer training sessions in Maine for both landowners and forestry professionals. Maine

²¹ A preliminary "gap analysis" has been conducted comparing Master Logger and FSC standards and procedures, but a more thorough review is recommended.

certification interests should offer to co-sponsor this training, taking responsibility for identifying participants and shaping the curriculum to respond to Maine's ecological and institutional character.

- Maine certification interests should create and maintain a database of Tree Farm inspectors, FSC Certified Resource Managers, SFI foresters, Master Loggers, auditors, group managers, and others involved in certification. This information should be made available to landowners and managers who may be interested in pursuing certification.

Action Item 3b: Increase opportunities to become involved with group certification.

Maine certification interests should seek to significantly increase the number of family forests and possibly larger parcels involved with group certification by taking the following actions:

- The State of Maine should seek grant funding that would allow qualified organizations to promote, coordinate, and facilitate group certification by family forests through the Tree Farm Group Certification Program, FSC SLIMFs, and/or other group certification systems.
- Forest products companies with processing facilities in Maine should consider sponsoring group certification initiatives that focus on landowners within a given mill's wood procurement area. This would involve either serving as group manager or identifying an outside party to assume this role.
- Recognizing that an increasing proportion of non-industrial private forestlands are owned and managed by logging contractors, Master Logger should consider sponsoring a group certification program specifically for lands owned by loggers. This would be organized and implemented like the group certification system for family forests but would focus on larger parcels owned by loggers. To do this, Master Logger would establish an agreement with one or more forest certification systems and assume the role of group manager. Although the emphasis would be on forest certification, given Master Logger's involvement with harvest certification, it may be appropriate to consider if and how harvest practices certification concepts could be integrated into this effort.
- Multiple parcels owned by one landowner or landowners with similar management objectives should be identified and opportunities for group certification of these lands explored. Among others, these might include lands with conservation easements, and lands owned by a state or federal agency, a Native American tribe, a conservation organization, or a power producer.

Action Item 3c: Increase the potential that landowners will get involved with certification by increasing the number of foresters and loggers actively involved in certification.

If the forester and logger hired to advise a landowner is involved with certification this significantly increases the possibility that the landowner also will get involved. To help facilitate forester and logger involvement the Maine Forest Service should reinvigorate the State's Certified Resource Manager grant program. This program provides financial assistance to foresters who wish to become certified resource managers. Funds can be used for training or to help offset the cost of certification. The term Certified Resource Manager is typically associated with FSC. In this program, a third-party auditor evaluates the practices of a forester or consulting forestry firm, and if the FSC standard is met, the forester/firm is certified as a Certified Resource Manager, and lands managed by that forester in response to the standard are eligible for certification. This connection with FSC notwithstanding,

State regulations provide for funds to go to foresters interested in involvement with other certification systems as well, as long as this is authorized by the State Forester. Given the importance of getting loggers involved in harvest practices certification, the opportunity to expand this program to also cover loggers and logging firms involved in certification should also be explored. Although the State Legislature has authorized the program, funds are not currently appropriated for this purpose. New funds would need to be authorized.

Action Item 3d: Expand the use of forest management plans as a component of certification.

Forest certification interests should encourage owners, and especially owners of family forests, to engage foresters to prepare forest management plans that meet credible certification system standards. Specific steps that should be taken to accomplish this include:

- Maine certification interests should collaborate with individual forest certification systems to review the State's Forest Stewardship Program's new management plan standards to determine if these standards are consistent with their certification requirements. To the extent that there is consistency, foresters and prospective certification participants should be made aware of this and encouraged to prepare plans to these standards.
- Maine certification interests should make landowners aware of the importance of forest management plans and the connections between forest management plan and certification.

Action Item 3e: Provide financial incentives to owners of family forests.

The State of Maine should encourage owners of family forests to participate in certification by providing modest financial incentives, including:

- The State Legislature should consider modifying the Forest Management Plan Tax Credit Program to encourage participation in forest certification by providing tax credits to family forest landowners for expenses related to certification, including the cost of annual certification fees and periodic certification audits.²²
- Similarly, the State Legislature should consider revising the Forest Stewardship and Non-Commercial Improvement Practices cost-share programs to provide incentives for certification by family forest landowners by increasing cost-share rates for those involved in certification and/or giving priority to landowners whose lands are certified.

Recommendation 4:

Motivate Owners of Public Forests and Private Conservation Areas to Certify Their Lands

Action Item 4a: Increase certification of state-owned forestlands.

²² The Tax Credit Program provides owners of small forest parcels a credit of \$200 every 10 years to offset the cost of developing qualifying forest management plans. This amount has not changed since its initiation in 1989. The cost to prepare a forest management plan has increased significantly in the past fifteen years. Further, in 1989, there was no certification and therefore no certification costs. As a result, a \$200 tax credit is not near the incentive that it was in 1989.

The State of Maine should continue with its policy of certifying all state-owned forestlands where commercial harvest is a potential component of land management, including productive timberlands managed by Baxter State Park, the Bureau of Parks and Lands, and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. This policy of certifying state-owned lands should be extended to all such lands to be acquired in the future. The certification system(s) should be selected based on its fit with the management objectives for these lands, with dual certification being considered where practical.

Public land managers should look for ways to make the certification process as efficient as possible, including group certification, whereby various state-owned parcels would be “bundled” under one application process and covered by one certificate. The possibility of one certificate for most if not all state lands should be considered. Another way to economize would be to develop generic state certification policy provisions applicable to all state-owned parcels. In the near term, the following should be the priorities:

- The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife should seek funds that would allow the Department to allocate staff or hire a consultant to: 1) conduct a gap analysis (collaboratively with one or more certification systems) of the DIFW certification proposal in relationship to certification system requirements; 2) develop a package of policies, plans, and programs that would constitute the Department’s initial proposal for certification; 3) secure concurrence from one or more certification system(s); and 4) develop and execute a final certification proposal.
- The University of Maine should consider funding an initiative to develop a certification application for university-owned forestlands similar to that recommended for the Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife’s forestlands. While the University must make its own decisions regarding how, or if, to implement this recommendation, it could serve as an excellent real-world training opportunity for forestry graduate students. This would not only expedite certification but would also train new foresters in certification methods.

Action Item 4b: Increase certification of private conservation forestlands.

Maine certification interests should take the following actions:

- Maine certification interests should identify timberlands owned by not-for-profit organizations that have not been certified and contact them to inform them of the opportunities presented by certification, solicit participation, and ascertain the need for technical or other forms of support.
- Forestlands with conservation easements represent a major largely untapped opportunity for forest certification. Land trusts and other conservation easement holders with major forest landholdings should be contacted to explore whether certification might be a useful tool in managing conservation easements and in annual monitoring of their terms. Opportunities for group certification of conservation easement lands should be explored. To advance this effort, Maine certification interests should consult with the various certification systems to determine the potential for using the provisions of an easement to satisfy all or part of the requirements for certification; this could significantly decrease the cost of certification and subsequent audits. Certification audits could also potentially serve as a means to confirm compliance with some conservation easement provisions, and visa-versa, resulting in further cost savings.

- Landowners and easement holders negotiating new easements should consider including certification as a component of the easement provisions. The relationship between the relative permanence of easement requirements and the evolving nature of certification standards would need to be resolved, i.e., the language in the conservation easement would need to be crafted to accommodate the evolutionary nature of certification.

Recommendation 5:
Track Wood from Certified Sources

Action Item 5: Collect critical information related to forest and harvest practices certification and integrate this information with the Maine Forest Service's existing forest information programs.

The Maine Forest Service, in consultation with the Maine forest industry, should develop a strategy for compiling information that will help track progress toward meeting certification goals.

One way to do this would be to collect these data from certification systems and resource managers. Another strategy would be to revise the harvest notification form and/or the end-of-year landowner harvest reporting requirements to better enable the State and private wood processors to track the flow of wood from certified forestlands, certified harvest practices, and other sources that are indicative of well-managed forests. Regardless of the method, the essential information to be collected should include:

- Did this harvest occur on forestland that is certified by an active forest certification system? If so, which certification system?
- Does this parcel have a management plan prepared by a Licensed Professional Forester?²³
- Did a Master Logger or equivalent conduct the harvest?
- Was the harvest overseen by a Licensed Professional Forester?

If this information is to be collected through landowner reporting, the State of Maine would need to determine whether providing this additional information should be mandatory in order to satisfy legal requirements. Given the voluntary nature of certification, it is the Committee's preference that this reporting be voluntary. The Committee believes that landowners and managers would be willing to provide this information simply because it would be in their best interest to do so. At the same time, the Committee recognizes that landowners and managers who are active in certification will be more likely to provide this information than those who are not. This could lead to a bias in the statistics that would be generated from this information.

In an effort to achieve economies of scale, and to meet compatible objectives, the Maine Forest Service should evaluate how the information needed to track forest certification relates to its other information and tracking programs, specifically including the information used in the Forest Service's *Biennial Report on the State of the Forest and Progress Report on Forest Sustainability Standards*, and take steps to integrate certification information needs into the Forest Service existing forest information programs.

²³ It would also be important to know if the plan was followed. However, obtaining this information would be more difficult.

Recommendation 6:
Market Maine's Certified Wood Products

Action Item 6a: Initiate public sector promotion of certification.

The State of Maine should publicize Maine's leadership in forest certification through the following actions:

- The State of Maine should include certified wood products as a component of its overall strategy to market Maine and Maine-based products and industries. This strategy could include direct outreach to specific market sectors through trade missions and other venues. Opportunities for integration with the Maine Made and Green initiative should also be explored. In promoting certification as a marketing strategy, the State should convey the essential message that Maine is a reliable source for significant volumes of certified forest products.
- The State of Maine should publicize its certification efforts and successes with appropriate federal agencies; regional, national, and international forest policy organizations; and forest advocacy and trade organizations.
- The State of Maine should reach out to the building industry – architects, builders, and lumber supply retailers – to educate them about certification and the various certification systems and methods, and to encourage them to include certified wood in their project specifications.
- In collaboration with other certification interests, the State of Maine should conceive of, develop and introduce market-based incentives to enhance both supply and demand of certification
- The State of Maine should establish a certified product market development committee to include a broad range of interests and market players.

The Committee believes that it is important to draw distinctions between the roles of the public and private sectors in the marketing of certification and certified products. While it is appropriate for the State to promote Maine and the type of products that are produced in Maine, State government should not get involved in outreach to specific markets. This should be left to individual companies within the forest industry.

Action Item 6b: Strengthen private sector marketing.

Individual companies within Maine's forest industry should consider highlighting certification and the condition of Maine's forests in their own marketing activities. How this is done and the extent of the effort must be left to each individual company.

In addition, the State of Maine and the Maine forest industry should seek to increase the number of certified large and mid-sized industrial and non-industrial private forests and the number of mills producing products from certified wood by contacting individual owners and managers of forestlands and mills not currently involved in forest certification to inform them of the opportunities presented

by certification, solicit participation in certification, and ascertain the need for technical or other forms of support.

Action Item 6c: Develop a marketing information system.

The State of Maine and the forest industry should collaborate in an effort to position Maine's marketplace presence at the forefront of consumer awareness for sustainably produced forest products by developing and implementing an integrated, Internet-based information system. This system should provide potential consumers of Maine forest products with information on: 1) the status of Maine's forests, 2) factors that distinguish Maine in the global forest products market, 3) the characteristics and certification efforts of individual forest products producers and suppliers within the State, 4) sources within the State to secure specific types and volumes of certified products, including links to applicable producers and suppliers, and 5) due to the fact that different consumers have different needs, information on the distinctions between the sources of wood, including the volume available from the various forest certification systems and from certified harvest practices.

Action Item 6d: Promote certified wood products in State purchasing practices.

The State of Maine should set an example for purchasing certified products by continuing to implement the Governor's Executive Order directing state purchasing procedures to give preference to certified wood products. The Committee recommends that these should include wood from certified forestlands and wood from certified harvest practices. The State should also encourage others in both the public and private sectors to give preference to certified wood products and should publicly recognize those who make especially noteworthy efforts to use certified products.

Implementation

The Committee is aware that implementation of the above recommendations will require initiative on the part of a wide range of public and private entities, including the State of Maine, and especially the Maine Forest Service, the forest industry, not for profit forest interest organizations, and the various forest certification systems. To make this happen, the Committee offers the following recommendations:

1. Establish a Leadership Team

Existing programs together with the recommendations offered in this report can set into motion a statewide forest certification initiative that will maintain and enhance Maine's position as a national force in the production of forest products from well-managed forests. The Committee views effective leadership as perhaps the single most critical factor in determining the success of this initiative. While the State of Maine can play an important leadership role, at its core, certification is a voluntary, private sector concept and must, therefore, tap the commitment and leadership of the private sector. Moreover, given the variety of ways in which the concept of certification can be applied, it is unlikely that a single entity could expect to represent the wide range of interests and perspectives that will come into play.

The Committee therefore recommends that Maine certification interests collectively establish a certification leadership team, which would include individuals representing the forest industry, small and large landowners, conservation interests, and state government. This team would have responsibility for: 1) seeking the funds and staff resources needed to implement the report's recommendations, 2) designating responsibilities for implementation of recommendations contained

in this report where multiple-organizational participation is needed, 3) convening certification interests for periodic technical workshops or policy forums, 4) maintaining contact with applicable forest certification systems regarding integration of this report's recommendations with certification system programs, and 5) periodically evaluating the status of the certification initiative and the need for mid-course corrections. At least initially, the Maine Forest Service should provide staff support.

In making this recommendation, the Committee wishes to emphasize that the proposed leadership team should not be viewed as a new organization or bureaucratic structure. On the contrary, and in keeping with the notion of certification as a creative, adaptable, and voluntary private sector initiative, the Committee strongly recommends that the leadership team be recognized as a flexible, non-bureaucratic venue for exchanging ideas and making progress on actions that provide mutual benefit.

2. Identify Funding and Staffing Requirements

Full implementation of the recommendations offered above will not be possible without a commitment of resources. The Committee has prepared a preliminary cost estimate for implementing these recommendations. This estimate is presented below in Table 5 below. The table identifies costs over a two-year time period that the Committee believes will be needed to initiate all actions.

Costs are expected to decline substantially after two years, because many of the actions will have been completed or converted to more of a maintenance mode. There will, however, be ongoing costs associated with many of the recommendations. Tracking of wood, monitoring of progress, landowner education, and information maintenance and enhancement are examples of activities that would need to continue into the future.

Table 6 distinguishes between actions that could be completed within the first two years and those that would be ongoing. Action items that could likely be implemented through existing mechanisms without additional funds are also noted, using the term "existing staff." The intent here is that staff from public and private organizations with a stake in certification would take on these tasks as part of their normal responsibilities or as a reallocation of responsibilities. This is not meant to infer that there these actions can be implemented at no cost, only that they can be implemented at no "new" cost.

Table 6. Estimated cost over two years

Action Item	Description	Year 1	Year 2	Total	Length of Commitment
1a	Certification information system development ²⁴	45,000	35,000	80,000	One-time
1b	Integration of information with forest certification	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
2a	Harvest practices system development ²⁵	60,000	40,000	100,000	One-time
2b	Integration of harvest practices/forest certification	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	One-time
3a	Landowner information and education	10,000	Existing staff	10,000	Ongoing
3b	Family forest group certification ²⁶	50,000	40,000	90,000	One-time
3c	Forester and logger involvement	20,000	20,000	40,000	Ongoing
3d	Forests management plans	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	One-time
3e	Family forest financial incentives ²⁷	50,000	50,000	100,000	Ongoing
4a	State lands certification ²⁸	48,000	47,000	95,000	One-time
4b	Private conservation lands certification	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
5a	Collect information, integrate with MFS programs	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
6a	Public sector promotion	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
6b	Private sector marketing	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
6c	Certification marketing information system ²⁹	7,000	8,000	15,000	One-time
6d	State purchasing	Existing staff	Existing staff	Existing staff	Ongoing
	Totals	290,000	240,000	530,000	

²⁴ This includes funds to compile additional eco-regional survey data and develop the necessary computer-based information systems. Cost projection assumes that information will be a component of the Maine DOC's Internet system. Otherwise, the cost would be higher.

²⁵ This includes (1) a grant to an organization capable of facilitating expansion of harvest-oriented certification programs and (2) \$10,000 to refine and enhance standards and procedures.

²⁶ Funds a grant to an appropriate organization to pursue group certification of family forests.

²⁷ Costs for State tax incentives reflect incremental increases related directly to certification, not the total cost of these programs. This estimate is based on MFS's experience with these programs.

²⁸ This includes costs of drafting applicable policies, updating of aerial photography, forest cover typing, preparation of the certification application, and evaluation by certification auditors.

²⁹ This marketing information system could be combined with other similar Internet-based systems within either State government or the forest industry. The stand-alone cost would otherwise be much higher.

It is important to note that new funds would be required to implement those action items that have a cost figure attached. Many of these actions would clearly need State funding, landowner tax credits and cost shares being obvious examples. Others could potentially be funded from a variety of sources including State allocations, grants, and contributions of funds or staff time from private sources. Recognizing the need for additional funding, the Committee is aware that funds are limited and that reallocation of responsibilities without new funds can hamper the ability to conduct other important business. It is therefore important to be judicious in both selecting actions and identifying the most cost-effective way to implement them.

The Committee has refrained from assigning specific public agency or private organization responsibilities for implementing these actions, except in those cases where it is clear that one entity should implement the action. State government, and more specifically the Maine Forest Service, will clearly play a role. However, in keeping with the private and voluntary nature of certification, the Committee is firm in its belief that the private sector must have a significant role in coordinating and implementing these efforts. Regardless, the Maine Forest Service simply does not have the ability to deliver all these services within its existing budget without harming other essential programs.

The Committee recommends that Table 6 be used as the basis for developing a more detailed cost estimate that would identify costs that are more precise, action and timing priorities, and responsibilities. Should funding limitations dictate, available funds should be directed at the highest priority actions. At least initially, the Maine Forest Service should take responsibility for working with other Maine certification interests to develop a more detailed cost estimate and to identify priorities for implementation.

3. Establish Implementation Priorities

Table 7 lists all of the action items included above and rates them according to three factors: (1) the overall importance of the action item in relation to meeting Maine's certification goals, (2) relative cost, and (3) the potential that the action could be implemented through a collaborative effort by two or more entities, for example, by state government in collaboration with the forest industry and private conservation organizations. The Committee suggests that efforts to set actual priorities take all three of these factors into account.

Table 7. Implementation priorities

<u>Importance</u>		<u>Cost</u>	<u>Partnership Opportunities</u>	
1 = critical in the near term		1 = existing staff time	1 = high opportunity	
2 = important in the mid-term		2 = one year cost ≤ \$25K	2 = some opportunity	
3 = can implement later		3 = one year cost > \$25K	3 = low opportunity	

Action item	Description	Importance	Cost	Partnership Opportunities
1a	Certification information system development	1	3	2
1b	Integration of information with forest certification	2	1	1
2a	Harvest practices system development	1	3	1
2b	Integration of harvest practices/forest certification	2	1	2

Action item	Description	Importance	Cost	Partnership Opportunities
3a	Landowner information and education	1	2	1
3b	Family forest group certification	1	3	1
3c	Forester and logger involvement	1	2	1
3d	Forests management plans	1	1	2
3e	Family forest financial incentives	1	3	3
4a	State lands certification	1	3	3
4b	Private conservation lands certification	2	1	1
5a	Collect information, integrate with MFS programs	1	1	2
6a	Public sector promotion	1	1	1
6b	Private sector marketing	1	1	3 ³⁰
6c	Certification marketing information system	2	2	1
6d	State purchasing	1	1	3

Obviously, at least in the very near-term, implementation should focus on actions that can be implemented with existing staff and existing funds.

4. Work with Forest Certification Systems to Integrate Committee Recommendations

Maine forest certification interests should work with FSC, SFI, ATFS, and other forest certification systems that may become active in Maine in the future to identify creative ways to integrate Committee recommendations, either singly or in combination, into existing certification systems in order to simplify, expand, and/or jump-start certification initiatives. The Committee recognizes that actual approval of the integrated approach it envisions would be at the discretion of each certification system.

5. Monitor Progress

Procedures should be established to monitor progress in meeting certification goals, including:

- The Maine Forest Service, in consultation with the forest industry and other Maine forest certification interests, should establish and implement procedures for monitoring the amount of land that is certified under each of the existing certification systems and in total. These procedures should include protocol to ensure that acres certified under more than one system are not double counted.

³⁰ While each forest products company must develop its own marketing strategy, contacting owners of large parcels could involve a partnership effort.

- Maine certification interests should establish and implement a strategy for monitoring progress in increasing the volume of wood entering the market that comes from certified forestlands and certified harvests. This will likely involve statistical sampling.
- The Maine Forest Service should include progress made toward meeting certification goals in its Biennial Report on the State of the Forest and Progress Report on Forest Sustainability Standards. Topics that should be included are: 1) actions taken to implement the Committee's recommendations as described in this report, 2) progress made in meeting forest certification and wood volume objectives, 3) major issues that limit progress (along with potential resolutions), and 4) emerging trends in certification that may affect Maine's certification efforts.

This monitoring program should, to the extent possible, be integrated with the Maine Forest Service's existing forest sustainability monitoring program.

An Additional Recommendation for Strengthening Treatment of Biological Resources

The above actions focus on near-term actions that could collectively assist in achieving Maine's forestland certification and wood products volume goals. In this section, the Committee identifies an additional recommendation that, while perhaps outside the scope of this initiative, could have a significant effect on Maine's longer-term certification efforts. Recognizing the importance of biological resources and water quality to the forest environment, and the relative complexity – and expense -- of addressing biological and water quality issues in certification, the Committee recommends that the State of Maine provide biological and water quality technical support to landowners

More specifically, the State of Maine should seek funds to allow the State of Maine to provide technical assistance to landowners concerning certification-related issues related to sensitive plants, animals, ecological communities, and water quality.

This service would be provided through the Maine Natural Areas Program, in cooperation with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. A team with a combination of ecology, forestry, and wildlife biology skills could:

- Conduct educational programs for small woodlot owners and foresters and loggers aimed at identifying and properly managing special sites and endangered plant and animal communities.
- Prepare recommendations for the management of sensitive species and forest communities and integrate this with into forest certification processes. (Essentially, this would involve developing and maintaining a set of recommendations for management of special sites and endangered/threatened/rare animal and plant communities as these relate to forest management and certification. Conceptually, this would be similar to best management practices currently available for erosion control and water quality protection. Like these existing products, sensitive species and forest community recommendations would use an outcome-based approach. Recognizing the independence of forest certification systems, it would be up to landowners and certification systems whether or not to integrate sensitive species and community management recommendations into their management and certification activities.)

- Identify ways to efficiently and effectively address ecological issues in group certification initiatives.
- As requested and as time is available, consult with individual landowners and managers concerning site-specific issues. This assistance would be provided for all landowner classes from owners of larger industrial and non-industrial forestlands to family forests and managers of group certification initiatives.

The anticipated demand for these services equates to two full time staff for two years. A cost estimate for these services was developed using salary rates and related expenses for a Range 25 community ecologist/licensed forester, and a Range 23 zoologist. If both were full time, the cost would be \$130,000 a year for two years, or a total of \$260,000. Another possibility would be to scale back this service to two half time staff or one full time. This would cost \$70,000 a year for two years, or a total of \$140,000. The services that could be provided with this lower cost scenario would, of course, be considerably lower than would be the case with the higher cost scenario.

Recommendations to Certification Systems

Introduction

Governor Baldacci's fourth and final request to the Committee was to "review the certification systems in use in Maine and recommend changes to make them more effective in achieving sustainable forestry." This section of the report responds to that request.

The Committee elected not to engage in a comparison of the various certification systems. There were several reasons for this. First, this was the subject of a previous State of Maine report.³¹ In addition, there have been several other evaluations of this issue that are available for review.³² Also, and perhaps most importantly, the Committee concluded that such a comparison would be time consuming and detract from its primary mission of identifying strategies for increasing the use of forest certification as a forest management tool.

The Committee acknowledges that comparisons of certification systems can be controversial and that, given the range of interests represented on the Committee, consensus would be difficult. Rather than dwell on specific elements of a given certification system, the Committee has elected to develop a set of generic recommendations that are applicable to good practice for all systems. Given variations between systems, some recommendations are, of course, more applicable to one system than they are to another. In these cases, the Committee generalized the recommendations to apply to all.

The Committee's recommendations reflect suggestions from individual Committee members that were raised during Committee meetings or offered during the review of the draft report. Given the range of issues, the variations between systems, and the range of perspectives of the members of the

³¹ See "Forest Certification in Maine: Report of the Speaker's Advisory Council on Forest Certification," Office of the Speaker of the House, April 2002.

³² See "system comparisons" in the Internet source materials section at the end of this report. While these Internet sites provide useful information, the reader should note that in some cases standards have changed since these comparisons were made. Also, neither the Committee as a whole nor individual Committee members necessarily endorse the findings of any of these evaluations.

Committee, the Committee concluded that reaching full consensus on all recommendations was not possible, especially given the Committee's short timeframe. Rather, the Committee opted to list all recommendations offered by members. It is, therefore, important to note that each individual item on this list did not necessarily receive the endorsement of all members of the Committee. Nonetheless, these recommendations do represent the essential range of issues that the Committee believes certification systems must address.

While the Committee did not engage in system-specific critiques, nor make recommendations specific to a given system, the Committee does see considerable merit to the various systems' efforts to examine their own standards and procedures. Each system holds periodic reviews of their practices during which the public is given the opportunity to provide comments. The Committee encourages Maine certification interests to avail themselves of these opportunities to present specific recommendations for improvement to these systems and suggests that the recommendations that follow could serve as the framework for making more specific recommendations to individual certification systems.

The Committee focused on recommendations aimed at: 1) ensuring that each system verifies that land certified is, in fact, well-managed; 2) maintaining the credibility of the concept of certification; 3) bringing greater consistency to the word "certified" without fundamentally altering the goals of the various systems; 4) attracting more landowners to certification; 5) reducing certification costs for landowners and wood processing facilities; and 6) gaining broader public support for certification and certified forest products.

The Committee recommends that the various certification systems consider incorporating the following recommendations into their standards and procedures if they have not already done so.

Recommendation 1: General Provisions

- Regardless of the specifics, the primary focus of a forest certification system should be on: 1) assuring customers, consumers, and the general public that forests are being responsibly managed by adopting credible policies, standards, and procedure that are broadly supported; and 2) giving landowners and forest product processors reasons to engage in certification.
- Forest certification systems should make written standards and auditing procedures as clear and unambiguous as possible.³³
- Forest certification systems should increase efforts to work collaboratively with each other and to send the message to certification interests that collaboration among the various certification systems is in the best interest of our forests. There are many different situations and many different ways of reaching the same goal of sustainability. While one system may

³³ Members of the Committee have expressed concern that some standards are less than precise or appear to suggest that adherence is optional. The Committee believes that it is important to use clear and unambiguous language in describing standards and expected on-the-ground performance. If standards are optional they are not standards and should be omitted from the standards. At the same time, the Committee recognizes that the complexity of some certification concepts, and the need to have standards that apply to a wide range of circumstances, may result in language that is less than precise. In the final analysis, the Committee is more concerned about how the standard is implemented on the ground. It has been the Committee's observation that, in Maine, auditor interpretation of standards/principles is typically more precise than certification system language. The Committee believes that credibility of certification will be enhanced by both precise language and precise interpretation of standards by auditors and evaluators.

be best suited to a given situation, a different system may be best suited to another. By working in collaboration, certification systems can help to ensure that a broader spectrum of forest landowners will become engaged with certification. At the same time, constructive competition between systems is healthy and has helped bring about improvements to all certification systems. Maintaining the appropriate level of collaboration and competition is key to the long-term success of the various certification systems as well as the viability of certification as a forest management concept.

- Forest certification systems should encourage mutual recognition between certification systems to the extent that they have compatible standards.
 - Forest certification systems should continue to encourage consumers to make their opinions on forest certification systems known so that these systems will have a better understanding of the desires of wood product markets.
-
- Forest certification systems should establish or continue transparent public input processes for development or improvement of the system standards.
 - Forest certification systems should continue to look aggressively for ways to reduce costs and streamline procedures for all aspects of certification. This is important for all landowner categories, but particularly important for owners of smaller parcels
 - Forest certification systems should develop protocol for allowing, or simplifying, transferability of certification from one owner to the next when appropriate assurances can be given that forest practices will continue to meet certification standards under the new owner.
 - Forest certification systems should continue to recognize that standards and protocol are “living systems” that must change, adapt, and improve as knowledge improves and needs dictate.

Recommendation 2: Silviculture

- Forest certification systems should include explicit standards for sound silviculture and management that involves maintaining or improving the quality of growing stock and, consistent with landowner size, long-term sustainable harvest levels.

Recommendation 3. Environmental Conservation

- Forest certification systems should include standards or requirements for information to ensure that, at a landscape scale, management maintains the full range of native plant and wildlife habitat needed for healthy populations of native plant and wildlife species. For small parcels, where landowners do not own a significant portion of the landscape, this could involve evaluating conditions within the region from an overview perspective, and determining how the individual landowner fits within this larger region, or, for group certification, evaluating habitat conditions for the overall group.
- Forest certification system standards should ensure that the habitat of endangered, threatened and rare species and the character of rare or exemplary natural communities are maintained. (These terms are defined in the glossary.)

- Forest certification systems should include standards for minimizing the impacts of chemical use, such as using non-chemical means first; using the least toxic, narrowest spectrum chemical possible; and keeping accurate records of applications and results.
- In Maine, forest management typically involves native species and natural processes, rather than plantations. This form of forestry is consistent with the ecological foundations of the various certification system standards and with the public's view of a well-managed forest. In some cases, certification systems give equal recognition to forest management in other locations that utilize exotic species and plantations. While recognizing that there are situations where this type of forestry may be appropriate, forest certification systems should take steps to distinguish between forest management based on native species and natural processes and those involving exotic species or plantation forests.
- Forest certification systems should favor local value-adding manufacture of forest products.

Recommendation 4: Procurement, Chain of Custody, and Product Labeling

- Forest certification systems should ensure that products labeled as coming from certified sources actually come from certified sources (or, in the case of paper, a significant percentage comes from certified sources), by developing clear and verifiable chain of custody processes.
- Forest certification systems that have standards or protocols for processing facilities should strengthen procurement standards for mills and other processing facilities to ensure that an increasing amount of wood comes from lands and harvests where management follows sound forest management principles.
- Forest certification systems should establish specific language in the standards to clarify how terminal harvests should be treated in certification. Systems should recognize that use-conversion is antithetical to forest sustainability, and that wood from such conversions should not be considered certified. At the same time, if this wood is harvested it should be put to productive use and mills that receive this wood should not be placed in a position where they cannot meet a market-defined certification percentage quota due to their use of wood that would otherwise be wasted.
- Forest certification systems should provide opportunities for making percentage-based claims for solid wood consistent with those for chip and fiber.

Recommendation 5: Auditing Processes

- Forest certification systems should ensure that auditing procedures are truly third party and that all auditors have no conflict of interest regarding the property being certified.
- Forest certification systems should establish clear protocol regarding the size and makeup of audit teams to make certain that these teams are appropriate to the size and complexity of properties being certified or re-certified and have adequate time to truly assess conditions on-the-ground as well as review forest management plans. In other words, protocols need to ensure that enough attention is given to the various aspects of the audit to be certain that the program's standards are being met. From a funding perspective, landowners should not have to pay for audits that are beyond the needs of the situation, nor should complex situations be understaffed.

- Forest certification systems should ensure that auditors evaluating the wildlife and forest ecology aspects of forest management are qualified in those disciplines.
- While continuing to respect confidentiality and privacy, forest certification systems should increase the readability of audit reports and make more extensive use of public summaries in order that the public might better understand and appreciate, and have confidence in, the certification process.
- Forest certification systems should build objectivity into public summary reports by having the third-party auditor prepare the summary report.
- Forest certification systems should seek to decrease the time required to conduct audits by focusing reporting requirements on the most essential information.

Recommendation 6: Involving Owners of Family Forests

- Forest certification systems should actively work with Maine certification interests to significantly expand opportunities for owners of small woodlots to participate in group certification. This involves both refining and simplifying requirements and establishing creative institutional arrangements to coordinate and facilitate these group efforts.
- Forest certification systems should establish and/or enhance pre-certification “feeder” programs that will lead landowners toward certification.
- Forest certification systems should clarify the upper acreage limits for programs designed for smaller ownerships.

Recommendation 7: Collaboration in Implementing the Committee’s Recommendations

- Forest certification systems should meet with Maine certification interests to review the recommendations made in this report, with an eye toward 1) reviewing recommendations made in this section of the report, 2) from the section of the report that offered recommendations for advancing certification in Maine, identifying specific action items where increased collaboration with Maine certification interests could result in significant gains in certification within the State, and 3) developing a strategy for moving forward. Three of the ideas that should be priorities for attention are listed immediately below as separate recommendations.
- Forest certification systems should collaborate with Maine forest certification interests to evaluate the extent to which the forest and biodiversity information already collected and available from the State might satisfy a portion of certification requirements, thus reducing its costs and complexity. Systems should work with Maine certification interests to devise a strategy for applying this concept to future certification efforts.
- Forest certification systems should increase the extent to which factors related to harvest practices are considered in determining eligibility for certification. Systems should consider adopting or strengthening a “harvest practices certification” component to certification, either as a component of the forest certification system or as a stand-alone system for those

instances where traditional forest certification may not be possible or practical in the near-term.

- Forest certification systems should work with Maine certification interests to identify creative ways, through group certification or other means, to engage specific landowner categories in certification, including public lands, investor-owned forests, logger-owned forests, and private conservation lands, among others.

A Final Recommendation for the Public

The recommendations offered in this report can, collectively, help to solidify Maine's position as a national leader in forest certification and, hopefully, take Maine's certification efforts to an entirely new level. The Committee's recommendations aim at making certification more efficient, effective, and responsive to real-world needs. The Committee is confident that implementation of these recommendations will induce a significant number of additional forest landowners and forest products companies to become involved in certification.

However, regardless of the proactive actions taken by Maine certification interests, wood producers, wood processors, and wood brokers must make their own decisions regarding whether to become involved. The single most meaningful incentive for these individuals and firms to participate is for them to have confidence that participation will result in demonstrable benefit in the form of either increased access to markets or, better yet, a price premium. These incentives are directly linked to market demand. To the extent that customers – both high volume purchasers of wood products and end consumers – demand and seek out wood products that come from well-managed forests, and are willing to pay an appropriate price for these products, forest landowners and the forest products industry will respond.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Glossary

This glossary defines key terms used in this report. For terms that are generic, the definition focuses on forestry applications. The source of each definition is identified in the parentheses following the definition. See the list of acronyms for the full names. An effort was made to use existing definitions from reputable sources. Where such could not be located, or where a specific point needed emphasis, the Committee offers its own definition, signified by CAC (for Certification Advisory Committee).

Audit. An assessment aimed at verifying whether the forest management on a given parcel or site meets a set of pre-defined standards. A **first party audit** is an internal audit conducted by the party seeking certification. A **second party audit** utilizes an outside, but not completely separate, entity such as a customer or agent to conduct the assessment. A **third party audit** is an assessment conducted by an entity that is totally independent of the party seeking certification. (CAC)

Biological Diversity. The variety of life forms in a given area. Diversity can be categorized in terms of the number of species, the variety in the area's plant and animal communities, the genetic variability of animals, or a combination of these elements. (USFS)

Certification. Independent (third party) verification of conformity to a standard. (SFI)

Certification Interests. See *Maine Certification Interests*.

Certification System. A method that is created and implemented by a credible entity for the purpose of providing independent verification of a forest management claim. Each certification system has a set of standards, verification protocol, and administrative procedures. In this report two forms of certification are distinguished: (1) forest certification, and (2) harvest certification. See also ***Credible Certification System***. (CAC)

Certified Forest (or Forestland). Forestland where management practices have been found to meet the substantive standards and procedural requirements of a given forest certification system. (CAC)

Certified Forester (CF). As used by the Society of American Foresters (SAF), an individual who has passed a test administered by the SAF that evaluates knowledge of several forest management-related competencies. Passing the test constitutes verification of qualifications, not practice. While the terms are the same, the SAF notion of a certified forester differs from that of a certified forester as used in this report. See ***Certified Forester/Certified Logger*** immediately below. (CAC)

Certified Forester/Certified Logger. A professional forester or logger or a firm consisting of professional foresters and/or loggers that: 1) has met a set of credible qualification and practice standards; and 2) is subject to third-party audit of forestry practice, and is thereby able to make claims about the quality of forest practices that are overseen or conducted by this individual or firm. This term is similar to, but not necessarily the same as, a certified resource manager. See ***Certified Resource Manager*** below. The different uses of the term certified forester, and the similarity of this term to certified resource manager, can be confusing to those unfamiliar with these concepts. (CAC)

Certified Logging Professional Program. An industry-sponsored training and certification program that verifies that individual loggers have the training and experience to carry out harvests and other on-the-ground forestry practices according to a set of high professional standards. (CAC)

Certified Resource Manager. A forester who is certified by a given certification system to manage forest properties for multiple clients according to a standard and third party audit. Parcels so managed are considered to be certified under the given certification system. This term is typically used to identify foresters certified by the FSC. (CAC)

Certified Sources. Suppliers of wood and wood products that are certified through either forestland certification or harvest practices certification. (CAC)

Certified Wood. Wood, fiber, or chip produced on land that is certified by one or more credible certification systems and/or, for smaller parcels, the product of forest operations overseen or conducted by a third party certified professional forester or logger. (CAC)

Credible Certification System. A situation where a forest certification system is administered by a reputable organization and the certification method employed by the organization is widely recognized as having met an accepted standard for scientific rigor and objectivity. It is generally agreed that a credible forest certification system must: 1) have rigorous, defensible standards; 2) have a third-party audit component that is fully independent with no conflicts of interest by the auditors; 3) be implemented by foresters who are trained in forest management, forest ecology, biodiversity, and the specifics of a given certification system; 4) be open to revision and improvement over time, and 5) be open and transparent, both in the development of standards and the reporting of audit results. (CAC)

Chain of Custody. The channel through which products are distributed from their origin in the forest to their end-use. (FSC) Seller assures buyer that the certified product's history is known and monitored according to specific standards from tree to end product. (MLP)

Endangered or Threatened Species. Species listed as threatened or endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife or other fish and wildlife agencies as may exist in other states or provinces. See also *Rare Species or Natural Community*. (CAC)

Family Forestry. Forest practices on a small parcel conducted by a private individual or family, with or without professional assistance. The term family forest is often used to draw distinctions between these lands and larger industrial and non-industrial forests. The terms small woodlot and family forest are often used interchangeably. See the definition for *Small Woodlots* for a discussion of size. (CAC)

Forest (or Forestlands) Certification. The act of certifying a parcel of forestland as being managed according to a set of standards and procedural requirements as defined by a given forest certification system. See *Certified Forest, Forest Certification System, and Credible Certification System*. (CAC)

Forest (or Forestland) Certification System. A system of standards, procedures, and programs that certifies forestland. In Maine the American Tree Farm System (Tree Farm), Forest Stewardship Council, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative are the principal active forest certification systems. See *Credible Certification System*. (CAC)

Forest Management Plan. A written working instrument that guides actions and that changes in response to feedback and changing conditions, goals, objectives, and policies. (SAF)

Forest Practices Act. The Maine law that governs forest practices in Maine. Among other provisions, it: 1) ensures adequate regeneration of commercial tree species within five years of harvest; and 2) regulates the size of clearcuts and sets minimum standards for surrounding buffers. (CAC)

Forest Practitioner or Forestry Professional. A logger or a forester, or a logger or forester firm, engaged in on-the-ground commercial forestry activities. Foresters prepare management and harvest plans, and oversee on-the-ground forest management operations such as road construction, harvest, and reforestation. Loggers conduct forest management operations, including cutting and removal of timber and related site preparation. (CAC)

Forest Stewardship Plan. A written document listing activities that enhance or improve forest resources (wildlife, timber, soil, water, recreation, and aesthetics) on private land over a ten-year period. (MFS) A Forest Stewardship Plan may be broader in scope than some forest management plans, and must meet a set of written criteria in order to be designated a Forest Stewardship Plan by the Maine Forest Service. (CAC)

Group Certification. A process where several owners organize collectively to achieve certification. By sharing administrative and reporting requirements, achieving certification becomes more cost effective and less time consuming for group members. (FSC) Group certification is viewed as especially applicable to family forests, with owners banding together under one group manager. (CAC)

Group Manager. The entity that oversees and coordinates a group certification initiative, typically a non-profit organization, a forest products company, or a forester who is certified by a given certification system. (CAC)

Harvest Practice Certification. A harvest implemented by a professional forester or logger or a firm consisting of professional foresters and/or loggers that: 1) has met a set of credible qualification and practice standards; and 2) is subject to third-party audit of forestry practice, and is thereby able to make claims about the quality of forest practices that are overseen or conducted by this individual or firm. Harvest practices certification is separate and distinct from forest certification. (CAC)

Industrial Private Forest. A forest parcel, usually large in size that is owned and managed by a forest industry entity that also owns and operates a primary wood processing plant. (CAC)

Licensed Professional Forester. A forest professional who has met the educational and experience qualifications and satisfies procedural requirements to be licensed by the State of Maine to practice professional forestry within the State. (CAC)

Liquidation Harvest. The purchase of timberland followed soon thereafter by the removal of most or all commercial value in standing timber, and subsequently attempted resale of harvested land within five years. (MFS)

Maine Certification Interests. As used in this report, a general term for the range of Maine organizations and individuals involved in forest certification or realizing benefit from forest certification. Organizations might include forest industry associations, forest management companies, mills and other forest products processors, forest landowner groups, conservation

organizations, forestry-related professional societies, state government, and educational institutions, among others. This term is typically used in the recommendation section of the report to signify situations where implementation of a given recommendation can best be accomplished through collective or collaborative action, rather than unilaterally by state government or any one private organization. (CAC)

Master Logger. Voluntary certification awarded to a logging company by the Professional Logging Contractors of Maine after a third-party team of assessors has completed field-based assessment. This designation is based on performance standards that apply to the company, not the individual. It is expected that all foresters and loggers within a given company will possess the necessary knowledge and skills that will make it possible for the company to consistently perform to the level of the standards. Standards address harvest planning, environmental protection, workplace safety, sound business practices, and continuous improvement. The term “master certified logger” is also sometimes used. (MLP, augmented by CAC)

Natural Regeneration. The reestablishment of a plant or plant age class from natural seeding, sprouting, suckering, or layering. (MFS)

Non-industrial Private Forest (NIPF). Forestlands owned by either organizations or individuals that do not also own or operate primary wood processing plant. (CAC)

Nonproductive Lands. Lands incapable of producing 20 ft³ of wood per year per acre. This term is specific to forestry. The land may serve other beneficial commercial or environmental purposes. (MFS)

Plantation Forest. Forest areas lacking most of the principal characteristics of native ecosystems that result from the human activities of planting, sowing, or intensive silvicultural treatments. (FSC)

Point of Harvest. The time and place of a harvest operation, also referred to as a “harvest event.” The Certification Committee uses the term to describe when and where forest values are most vulnerable to mismanagement and, therefore, most in need of attention. Given this vulnerability, the Committee sees the point of harvest as being a significant consideration in certification. (CAC)

Procurement. The act of securing wood for processing or sale. A processing facility may obtain wood from its own lands or through purchase from owners or managers of large or small woodlots. (CAC)

Procurement Policy. The rules of a given forest products company that govern wood procurement. This is both a general term and one that is specific to SFI procedures and protocol. (CAC)

Productive Forest. See *Timberlands*.

Qualified Logging Professional Program (QLP). An industry-sponsored training and certification program that verifies that individual loggers have the training and experience to carry out harvests and other on-the-ground forestry practices according to a set of high professional standards. (CAC)

Rare Species or Natural Communities. Rare species or rare or exemplary natural communities as identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program or other Natural Heritage Programs as may exist in other states or provinces. (CAC)

Responsible Harvest. A harvest that protects environmental, economic, and social values, such as water quality, important plant and wildlife habitats, soil productivity, future growth potential and quality of the stand, aesthetics, and recreational use. A responsible harvest occurs at the stand level. A responsible harvest is not necessarily based on silvicultural principles or a management plan prepared by a licensed forester. See **Responsibly Managed Forest.** (CAC)

Responsibly Managed Forest. A general term that indicates that a forest parcel is being planned and managed in a sustainable manner and that important ecological and social values are being protected in accordance with long-term forest management principles. In most cases, a responsibly managed forest is managed under a management plan prepared by a licensed forester. When following a written forest management plan, a responsibly managed forest should be able to meet forest certification standards with few or no changes in management. (CAC)

Silviculture. The art and science of controlling the establishment, growth, composition, health, and quality of forests to meet the diverse needs and values of landowners and society on a sustainable basis. (MFS)

Small Woodlots. Small forested parcels owned and managed by private individuals, families, or groups of individuals. The terms small woodlot, small woodland, and family forest are often used interchangeably. The size threshold varies according to application. For some statistical analyses, a cut-off as large as 25,000 acres is sometimes used. The ATFS sets an upper limit of 10,000 acres, generally the same size as the lower limit for the SFI. The state/federal forest inventory uses 5,000 as a statistical breakpoint. (The tables in the section of this report that discusses the 10 million-acre goal follow this protocol.) For many of its technical assistance and incentive programs the MFS sets an upper limit of 1,000 acres. Demographically, 500 acres appears to be a logical dividing point, as over 99% of the individual parcels in Maine are less than 500 acres in size. (One-half of one percent is between 500 and 5,000 acres in size, while the other half percent is larger than 5,000 acres.) For some applications 100 acres may be an appropriate cut-off, the logic being that forestry practices taken on a given parcel under this size will not typically have a significant impact on the overall forest. The above discussion notwithstanding, markets that elect to make size distinctions for certification purposes are free to define their own size limits. (CAC)

Standard. A document established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree of order in a given context. (ATFS) In the context of forest certification, an auditor evaluates performance against the standard approved by the certification system (e.g., ATFS, FSC, SFI) chosen for the audit. (CAC)

Sustainability. The use of resources in such a way to allow for a full range of options for utilization by future generations. (Northern Forest Lands Council)

Sustainable Forestry (or Sustainable Forest Management). Forestry management that enhances and maintains the biological productivity and diversity of forests, thereby assuring economic and social opportunities for this and future generations. It takes place in a large ecological and social context and achieves balance between landowner objectives and society's needs. (MFS)

Terminal Harvests. Final harvests conducted prior to converting land to a non-forest use. Road widening, commercial development and subdivision of land for housing are examples of land use conversion that may involve terminal harvest. (CAC)

Third party. An independent entity capable of unbiased evaluation of a claim. A third party has no conflict of interest with the subject of the evaluation. (CAC)

Timberlands. Forested land that is available for harvest or other forest practices at some level. The terms productive timberlands and productive forestlands refer to the same concept. To be classified as productive timberland a parcel must: 1) be accessible to equipment necessary for harvest operations, 2) be operable, in other words have sufficient volume to warrant harvest (at least 20 ft³ of wood per year per acre), and 3) not be constrained by law or administrative action that prohibit harvest operations. (MFS)

Tree Growth Tax Law. The Maine law that provides for the tax valuation of forestland on the basis of the land's productivity value, rather than on fair market value. The State tax assessor determines tree growth valuation for each forest type on a county basis. Municipalities apply their own tax to the tree growth valuation to determine taxes due on the land. (MFS)

Well-Managed Forest. See *Responsibly Managed Forest*. FSC uses the term well-managed forest to describe forest management that meets FSC standards. As used in this report, the term applies more generally to responsibly managed forests regardless of whether the forestland is certified by one or another forest certification system. (CAC)

Acronyms

ATFS	American Tree Farm System
CAC	Maine Certification Advisory Committee
CLP	Certified Logging Professional
CSA	Canadian Standards Association
CF	SAF Certified Forester
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
IPF	Industrial private forest
ISO	International Standards Organization
LPF	Licensed Professional Forester
MFS	Maine Forest Service
MLP	Master Logger Program
NIPF	Non-industrial private forest
QLP	Qualified Logging Professional
SAF	Society of American Foresters
SCS	Scientific Certification Systems
SFI	Sustainable Forestry Initiative
SLIMEs	Small and/or Low Intensity Managed Forests Program
SWOAM	Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine
TIMO	Timberland Investment Management Organization
USFS	USDA Forest Service

Internet Source Materials Related to Certification

Background on Certification

An Introduction to Forest Certification

<http://www.agcomm.ads.orst.edu/agcomwebfile/edmat/html/ec/ec1518/ec1518.html>

Forest Certification Resource Center

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

Forest Certification Watch

<http://certificationwatch.org/>

Foundations for Certification

The Montreal Process

http://www.mpci.org/home_e.html

Santiago Declaration

http://www.mpci.org/rep-pub/1995/santiago_e.html

American Tree Farm System

Tree Farm Homepage

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

Tree Farm Certification

<http://www.treefarmssystem.org/aboutfarming/certification.cfm>

Tree Farm Standards and Guidelines

<http://www.treefarmssystem.org/aboutfarming/standards.cfm>

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

FSC Homepage (International)

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

FSC Certification (International)

<http://www.fscoax.org/principal.htm>

FSC Principles and Criteria (International)

<http://www.fscoax.org/html/1-2.html>

FSC Homepage (US)

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

FSC Certification (US)

<http://www.fscus.org/certification/index.html>

FSC Standards and Policies (US)

http://www.fscus.org/standards_policies/index.html

FSC Principles and Criteria (US)

http://www.fscus.org/standards_policies/principles_criteria/index.html

FSC Regional Standards (US)

http://www.fscus.org/standards_policies/us_regional_standards/index.html

FSC Regional Standards (North East US)

<http://www.fscstandards.org/> (click on NE)

SmartWood (FSC accredited system)

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

Scientific Certification Systems: Forest Conservation Program (FSC accredited system)

<http://www.sccertified.com/forestry/>

FSC – Maine

<http://www.fscus.org/maine/index.html>

Green Tag

Green Tag Homepage

<http://www.greentag.org/greentag/greentag.asp>

Green Tag Guiding Principles

<http://www.greentag.org/greentag/principles.asp>

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

Sustainable Forestry Board Homepage

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

SFI Program Overview and Standards

<http://www.aboutsfb.org/sfi.htm>

SFI Consumer Website (key link to SFI labeling program)

<http://www.aboutsfi.org>

SFI External Review Panel Website (link to 8th annual progress report and list of panel members)

<http://www.abouterp.org>

American Forest and Paper Association's SFI Homepage (technical website for program participants)

http://www.afandpa.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Environment_and_Recycling/SFI/SFI.htm

SFI Certification

http://www.afandpa.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Environment_and_Recycling/SFI/Certification/Certification.htm

SFI Standards

http://www.afandpa.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Environment_and_Recycling/SFI/The_SFI_Standard/The_SFI_Standard.htm

Other Certification Systems

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Environmental Management

<http://www.iso.ch/iso/en/prods-services/otherpubs/iso14000/index.html>

Canadian Standards Association home page (CSA)

<http://www.csa-intl.org/onlinestore>

CSA Forest Certification Description

http://www.csa-international.org/product_areas/forest_products_marking/default.asp?language=english

Pan European Forest Certification (PEFC)

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

Scientific Certification Systems: Forest Conservation Program (SCS)

<http://www.scs-certified.com/forestry/>

System Comparisons

Compare Forest Certification Systems

<http://www.certifiedwood.org/search-modules/CompareCertSystems.asp>

SFI/FSC Comparison

<http://www.merid.org/comparison/>

Certification in Maine

Forest Certification in Maine: Report of the Speaker's Advisory Council on Forest Certification, April 2002

http://janus.state.me.us/house/speaker/fin_rpt.pdf

Maine Forest Service Forest Certification Homepage

<http://www.state.me.us/doc/mfs/fpm/forcert.htm>

Maine Forest Service Certification Links

(links to specific Maine providers and reports)

<http://www.state.me.us/doc/mfs/fpm/forcertlinks.htm>

Maine Tree Farm Committee

<http://www.mainetreefarm.org>

Maine SFI State Implementation Committee

<http://www.mainesfi.com>

Forest Sustainability

USDA Forest Service: NE Sustainability Report

http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability/highlights_toc.htm

PARTICIPANTS

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Barrie Brusila, Mid-Maine Forestry
Rob Bryan, co-chair, Maine Audubon
John Cashwell, chair, Seven Islands Land Company
Molly Docherty, Maine Natural Areas Program
Cliff Foster, Maine Tree Farm Committee
Matthew Hancock, Mark Rabon, Hancock Land Company
Stephen Hanington, co-chair, Master Logger Program
Dr. Malcolm Hunter, University of Maine
Cathy Johnson, Natural Resources Council of Maine
Bruce Kidman, The Nature Conservancy
Tony Lyons, MeadWestvaco
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Josiah Pierce, co-chair, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine
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Pat Sirois, Master Logger Program³⁴
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Joel Swanton, co-chair, Maine Forest Products Council
Michael Thompson, Woodlot Alternatives
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Jeff Williams, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
John Williams, Maine Pulp & Paper Association

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Presentations to the Committee:

William Banzhaf, Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI standards and procedures)
Barrie Brusila, Mid-Maine Forestry (Certified Resource Managers)
Rick Cantrell, American Forest and Paper Association (SFI standards and procedures)
Tom Doak (Family forest demographics in Maine)
Molly Docherty, Maine Natural Areas Program (Species/ecosystem information systems)
Matthew Hancock, Hancock Land Company (Certified Resource Managers)

³⁴ Currently: Sustainable Forestry Initiative, State Implementation Committee.

³⁵ Currently: Maine Forest Products Council.

³⁶ Currently: Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine.

Ken Laustsen, Maine Forest Service (Statistics on Maine forest conditions and trends)
Jack Lutz, James W. Sewall Company (Green Tag standards and procedures)
Donald Mansius, Maine Forest Service (State technical support for family forests)
Gary Morse, Master Logger Program (Master Logger standards and procedures)
Josiah Pierce, Small Woodland Owners Association of Maine (Group certification pilot)
Neil Postlewaite, Hancock Land Company (Mill procurement of certified wood)
Robert Simpson, American Tree Farm System (ATFS standards and procedures)
Steven Sloan, International Paper (Wood tracking, certification marketing)
Michael Thompson, Woodlot Alternatives (Scientific Certification Systems standards/procedures)
Michael Washburn, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC standards and procedures)

Consultation via Telephone:

William Banzhaf, Sustainable Forestry Initiative (Briefing on draft recommendations)
Sam Doak, David Ford, Metafore (Marketing strategies)
Michael Ferrucci, Interforest (Certification involving conservation lands and easements)
Michael Goergen, Society of American Foresters (Forester certification)
Robert Hrubes, David Wager, Scientific Certification Systems (Harvest certification)
Robert Simpson, American Tree Farm System (Briefing on draft recommendations)
Michael Washburn, Forest Stewardship Council (Briefing on draft recommendations)

APPENDIX 1.

Ground Rules for Maine Forest Service Stakeholder Processes

Note: These ground rules were adopted by the Certification Committee and served as the basis for the group's deliberations.

Participants agree to:

- Work constructively to achieve the Group's mission – This is fundamentally important. If a prospective participant does not agree with the mission, they should remove themselves and pursue their disagreements through other venues.
- Collaborate with the Maine Forest Service and with one another – this involves:
 - Accepting that all relevant issues must be open for discussion;
 - Forming opinions based on the best factual information available;
 - Pursuing underlying interests, not positions;
 - Actively participating and being assertive in seeing that interests are addressed;
 - Respecting divergent opinions;
 - Openly sharing relevant information;
 - Helping to educate other participants;
 - Being creative in developing solutions that can work for other interests as well as their own. In this regard, the most desirable solutions are where all interests make out better than they would have otherwise (win/win solutions);
 - Operating by consensus (“consensus” being defined as being “able to live with” an outcome both within the Committee process and outside of the Committee process;
 - Acknowledging that it is the responsibility of the minority to convince the majority;
 - Sharing discussion time fairly with other participants – that is, participating but not dominating;
 - Isolate disagreements over other issues from these proceedings;
 - Attending all relevant meetings and being prepared;
 - Accurately representing the interests of their constituency – this involves communicating regularly with their constituency;
 - Withdrawing from the process if the participant can not live with decisions the rest of the Group has made after full deliberation and focused analysis;

- Withhold final judgment on the pieces of a solution until all the pieces have been assembled. Preliminary agreements on the pieces of a solution are termed tentative agreements, but are not final until the entire package is agreed upon.
 - The integrity of the process requires that members discuss the issues within the group process and not attempt to influence the group outcomes from outside.
 - Allow substitutes provided that the primary member keeps current with group progress and fully briefs the substitute. This will ensure that time is not lost in restatement of previous discussions during meetings.
 - Use up-turned nameplates as a means to be recognized to speak during meetings.
 - Recognize that the Maine Forest Service must fulfill its mandates even if consensus cannot be achieved.
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APPENDIX 2.

Questions of Certification Systems for the September 24, 2003 Meeting of the Maine Forest Certification Advisory Committee

Note: These questions were developed by the Certification Committee and distributed to representatives of the various forestlands certification systems prior to the Committee's work session with these representatives.

Origin

When was the system established and by whom?

Governance

How is the system/standard consistent with internationally agreed upon sets of sustainable forest management criteria and indicators?

What makes your system credible?

What organizations have acknowledged the system as a credible source of certified forest products?

Explain the structure and governance of your system.

Explain how the system is open and accessible to interested stakeholders.

Rulemaking/Amending standards

When are the standards for your system open for review and what is the process for input and decision making? Who makes the decisions on the content of your system? What is the history of changes to your system over time? Please give a few specific examples of significant changes that have occurred.

Are there any changes being contemplated for your system?

Implementation

What specific standards does your system require landowners to meet regarding maintaining and conserving biological diversity?

What specific standards does your system require landowners to meet in order to ensure that harvest levels are permanently sustainable? Are these different for large vs. small ownerships?

How does your system relate to foresters?

How does your system relate to large landowners?

Does the system offer certification to forest products manufacturing facilities?

If you have a product label, explain the standards for use of that label.

What makes your system affordable?

What are the costs of initial certification for small landowners, groups, large landowners, mills, and certifiers?

What are the costs for small landowners, groups, large landowners, mills, and certifiers to maintain certification? How frequently do these occur?

Is the system available and accessible to small landowners? If yes, explain how (i.e., appropriate standards, affordable, manpower resources for timely certifications).

Audit

Describe the requirements for third-party certification in your system:

Is it required in all cases?

If not, when?

What are the requirements for independence and qualifications of the certifier(s)?

Does your system require a public summary of the certification, and if so what must be included in the reports?

How does the system ensure results of audits are repeatable and consistent?

Funding

How is your system funded and by whom?

Other

What can you do to contribute to the goal of reaching 10 million acres of certified land in Maine by the end of 2007? And specifically, what will make your system attractive to small landowners in Maine?

What in your opinion needs to happen to enhance markets for and access to certified wood and products?

How many certificates have been issued and how many acres are certified (break out first, second, and third party) in the system – total, United States, Maine?

Does the system offer anything other than certification to landowners and mills? (i.e., licensing, phased certification approach, group certification, education and information)

What is unique about your system relative to other certification systems? Why should I as a landowner, land manager, or mill get certified under your system?

What activity and use of your system in other states or countries should this Committee be aware of?

