

*Forestry certification increases community security
and public involvement*

Sustainable forest management on the west coast of central Vancouver Island has taken a tremendous leap forward with the support of dedicated community members. Weyerhaeuser's operations in Tree Farm Licence (TFL) 44 achieved Canadian Standards Association (CSA) certification in November of last year.

Wood-products customers around the world want to know that their purchases are not harming the environment or damaging the sustainability of forest resources, Michelle Colussi, facilitator for the West Island process, says. Certification under the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) ensures customers that Weyerhaeuser's harvesting and forest management is carried out in accordance with nationally-recognized standards, is audited annually by a third party and involves community input in the monitoring process.

Extensive and on-going public participation is one of the requirements for CSA certification. In TFL 44, the West Island Woodlands Advisory Group (WIWAG) has spent the last year developing the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Plan.

The Hupacasath First Nation is involved because part of the defined forest area falls within their traditional territory. They also have a small woodlot and want to know more about how the various certification processes will meet First Nations needs, says Treaty Manager Tawney Lem.

"The benefits of sustainable forest management are more diligent, lower-impact practices on the ground, community-based input and getting the most you can out of a piece of wood by working with value-added manufacturers," she says.

Sector representation on the WIWAG includes Parks Canada, fisheries, forestry, rural and urban communities, recreation, tourism, First Nations, labour, environment, small business and the commercial forest sector. The West Island areas includes Port Alberni, Bamfield, and parts of the west coast outside of Clayoquot Sound.

The West Island SFM plan was based on six criteria developed by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) for sustainable forest management, and adopted by the CSA as a national standard. These criteria include the conservation of biological diversity, conservation of water and soil resources, multiple benefits to society and accepting responsibility for sustainable development.

Values, goals, performance indicators and short-term objectives related to these six criteria were developed through the local advisory group process, in conjunction with existing requirements, policies and legislation such as the Forest Practices Code (FPC).

It took WIWAG one year to develop the first edition of the document "Towards Sustainable Forest Management." Now, the community advisory group is moving into the monitoring phase. This is also an opportunity for members to educate themselves on issues presented in the plan such as annual allowable cut (AAC), variable retention (VR) and sustainability, Colussi says.

The plan will be monitored, reviewed and revised annually by WIWAG to ensure its continuing improvement and effectiveness. A company must demonstrate continual improvement in order to maintain certification.

Copies of "Towards Sustainable Forest Management" are available at the Alberni Forest Visitors' Centre at Harbour Quay.

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*Media Contact: Michelle Colussi
724-1675*