

## What is “Green” Forest Certification?

Some forest products carry the label “green.” This means they meet certain standards. But, what are those standards and does “green” appeal to consumers and benefit you, the producer?

Forest certification is an independent audit of forest practices. It gives consumers information on the impact of managing and harvesting forest products on the environment and assures the “chain of custody” of the forest products from the forest to the store shelf. In theory, some consumers will prefer products that are sustainably harvested and managed and will pay a premium for certified products.

Three organizations have taken steps toward developing forest certification programs: the Forest Stewardship Council, the National Forestry Association, and the American Forest and Paper Association. Each of these programs has unique concerns and limitations, but all must answer to the free market.

### Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The FSC is an international, independent, nonprofit, non-government organization with strong environmental ties. Through its program of *Green Certification*, it aims to set a worldwide, common set of principles for certifying well-managed forests.

FSC has accredited several organizations to certify the management activities of landowners and foresters. Two

of these groups are SmartWood and Scientific Certification Systems. Together they have given green certification to 1.6 million acres of forestland in the U.S.

FSC’s standards work best in regions with tree species that do not rely on intensive management for regeneration, such as planting or clearcutting. The standards are not tied into existing forest management programs such as Forest Stewardship and Tree Farm.

### The National Forestry Association (NFA)

A second program for certification, *Green Tag Forestry<sup>SM</sup>*, is now being offered the NFA, an affiliate of the National Woodlands Owners Association (NWOA), a national organization of nonindustrial private woodland owners affiliated with state and county woodland owner associations. *Green Tag Forestry<sup>SM</sup>* also relies on third party certification, but is designed specifically for private forest landowners.

To display the Green Tag sign, forest owners must have implemented a detailed forest management plan prepared by a registered consulting forester who has training in certification procedures. The plan can build on a Tree Farm or Forest Stewardship plan but will have more detail, especially in timber harvesting procedures

*(continued on the next page)*



road construction and stream crossing, and recognition of natural diversity components. Other criteria will include community relations, chemical utilization, economic viability, and record keeping. The NFA initiative ties into the existing network of consulting foresters nationwide affiliated with the NWOA. For information on this certification call 888-503-6737 or 800-476-9873.

### **The American Forest & Paper Assn. (AF&PA)**

The *Sustainable Forestry Initiative*, or SFI, is the mechanism AF&PA is using to inform the public that its members are managing forests and producing forest products in a sustainable manner. AF&PA members constitute 90 percent of the industrial forestland in America.

While not called a certification program, SFI appears to be heading in that direction. There presently is no third party verification to support SFI's forest management claims. Also, wood from nonindustrial private forests (NIPF), creates a special problem because it constitutes 60 percent of the wood used by forest industries.

There is nothing in the SFI principles to encourage landowners to use a professional forester when managing their resources. Currently, 80 percent of the timber harvested by your fellow NIPF owners is conducted without the advice of a professional forester. Therefore, AF&PA is, in essence, relying on loggers to manage most of America's non-industrial private forestland. AF&PA reportedly has this issue under consideration.

### **Concerns With Certification**

Significant questions are raised about the scientific underpinnings of the principles used by the FSC for its *Green Certification*. Under FSC principles, 1) no wood resulting from the harvest of old-growth forests that then are planted, and no wood from forest lands that are converted to non-forest uses can be labeled "green"; 2) no wood from well developed secondary forests that are planted can be labeled "green"; and 3) wood from plantations can be labeled only if the forest owner recreates and manages for natural forest conditions on 5-10 percent of the property.

FSC principles tend to be biased against regenerating commercially viable shade-intolerant species such as oak, ash, and pine, that rely on even-aged management practices. Many eastern forests are in poor conditions from past cutting practices. If only uneven-aged management is allowed, diameter-limit cutting or selective cutting practices will be encouraged, which can result in removing just the best trees and further degrading the forest. The push by FSC to prohibit stands regenerated by planting and other intensive practices can limit seriously the options for the small landowners that manage most Maryland forests.

### **Opportunity to Comment**

Currently, FSC is seeking to develop regional standards based on its eleven principles and criteria for forest management. Draft standards for the Appalachia regional (which includes Maryland) are now available for public comment, even though the official July 1 deadline has passed. The 25 pages of draft standards read like a legal document and provide no connection with existing landowner assistance programs.

Landowners and forestry professionals are encouraged to review this document on the Internet at [www.maced.org/fsc/fsc.htm](http://www.maced.org/fsc/fsc.htm). Click on the icon for "draft standards" to find the 11 principles and their contents. Send your comments ASAP to Mike Jenkins, Mountain Association for Community Economic Development, 433 Chestnut Street, Berea, Kentucky 40403; fax: 606- 986-1299; [mjenkins@maced.org](mailto:mjenkins@maced.org).

### **Final Thoughts**

For any certification program to be adopted, there must be an economic incentive to change. Unless the free market provides a premium for certified wood, most landowners will find little incentive to obtain certification. European consumers and markets are familiar with wood certification. However, studies have shown most American consumers are not willing to pay a premium for "green" products. One national hardware retailer is experimenting with selling certified wood products, but is encountering an inadequate supply. Proposed certification programs that count on buyers to purchase certified wood and thereby justify their standards may have the "cart before the horse."

If private landowners are interested in green certification, programs such as *Green Tag Forestry*<sup>SM</sup>, which fit in with existing assistance programs and require the involvement of professional foresters, appear most credible and flexible.

*Editor's note: Portions adapted from "Will Green Standards Determine the Future of Forestry?" by Loren R. Larson, Executive Director, Association of Consulting Foresters of America, in National Woodlands, January 1998.)*



### **Branching Out**

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Editors: Jonathan Kays, Vera Mae Schultz, Pam Townsend

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*Published quarterly and distributed to more than 4100 woodland owners, resource professionals, and others interested in forest stewardship. News items, dates, and comments are welcome.*

*Deadline for the next newsletter is October 10; phone 301-432-2767 x310; fax 301-432-4089; e-mail [vs12@umail.umd.edu](mailto:vs12@umail.umd.edu); or mail to Maryland Cooperative Extension, 18330 Keedysville Road, Keedysville MD 21756.*

The sponsoring agencies' programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, or physical ability.

## Dear Branching Out,

Dear Branching Out,

*I do not know if you ever tried to harvest trees. I did in the late 80's and it was not a problem. I tried it again last year and found many restrictions. These trees have been in the family for fifty years, but after my experiences, I'm wondering who owns them?*

*The state of Maryland has numerous programs that encourage forest stewardship. Under these programs, many of us have planted trees, nursed them along, and protected them from deer damage . . . under the presumption that we were engaged in an agricultural activity, much like a farmer planting corn or a homemaker planting a garden. However, one discovers that, unlike harvesting other agricultural crops, harvesting trees has many restrictions.*

*One must get a special permit; attest that he will not destroy the forest and will maintain it for five years; show that roads, skid trails, and slopes do not exceed a certain grade; verify that a wetland or stream buffer will not be affected (never mind that the neighbor's cows walk across the stream every day, contributing pollution in excess of what a logger ever could); submit the harvest application for review by several governing bodies; and hold a preconstruction meeting on the site with the logger and a county official.*

*Who owns my trees? P.C.L., Frederick County*

Dear P.C.L.,

*You are right: harvesting trees is not as simple as it was and it takes more time and planning. Roads must be constructed to protect water quality, and stream buffers and wetlands require best management practices. While targeted to protect trees on development sites, the Forest Conservation Act has added another step for forest stewards who harvest timber, since the landowner must sign a legal document agreeing to maintain the forest for five years. The number and variety of agencies and regulations involved in this process are good reasons why most forest owners should use a consultant forester to assure the timber harvest is done properly.*

*Thank you for writing. We are checking into the problems you described and plan to devote the next Branching Out to the many aspects of harvesting timber.*

Branching Out

[Editors' note: readers are encouraged to send questions or concerns about timber harvesting to *Branching Out* to help us with the next issue.]

## Education for Landowners

### Western Maryland Landowner Workshop

Absentee and resident forest landowners in Western Maryland can find answers to forest stewardship questions at a full-day workshop in Garrett County, Saturday, August 22.

Morning classroom sessions at the Western Maryland 4-H Center, Swanton, will focus on land taxes, landowner liability, income from alternative opportunities, management for wildlife, Christmas tree production, and timber sales. During an afternoon session at a nearby private forest property, participants will learn how to work with a private forest consultant. They will also gain experience in such stewardship practices such as forest and pine thinning, regeneration harvesting, forest buffers, and estimating future value of trees.

Registration is \$10/person or \$16/couple and includes lunch and reference materials. Make check payable to Garrett County EAC and mail to Forest Landowner Workshop, Garrett County Cooperative Extension, 1916 Maryland Highway, Suite A, Mt. Lake Park, MD 21550, by August 14. For more information call 301-334-6960 or *Branching Out*.

### Mid-Atlantic Forest Stewardship Seminar

The award-winning annual Mid-Atlantic Forest Stewardship Seminar, will be Saturday, November 7, at Frederick Community College. Speakers will address a wide variety of forest and wildlife management topics, such as forestry tax facts and strategies, woodland weed control, selling timber, forest reptiles and amphibians, forest and upland songbirds, ruffed grouse and wild turkey, wildlife management, alternative income opportunities, and women and the outdoors. The keynote speech will be on Stream Release.

The \$19 registration fee includes a full lunch. For information, contact Terry Poole, Frederick County Cooperative Extension, 301-694-1594; [tp8@umail.umd.edu](mailto:tp8@umail.umd.edu).



## Poachers Target Paulownia

Paulownia trees are scattered throughout mid-Atlantic forests. Maryland residents with paulownia trees should be on guard after a series of tree thefts. The wood is highly-prized by the Japanese and individual trees can be worth thousands of dollars. Its distinctive flowers and leaves make it easy to identify. For more information on paulownia, contact your local Extension office for a copy of "Producing and Marketing Paulownia" (EB319), \$2, or see the article in the *Washington Post*, July 10, B section, page 3.



## Upcoming Stewardship Events

**August 22 - Western Maryland Forest Landowner Workshop**, Western Maryland 4-H Center, Swanton; for absentee and resident forest landowners in western Maryland; see article on page 3.

**September 3 - Maryland Tree Farm System meetings**; western Maryland; field tour and discussion of new organizational structure, including Tree Farm Action Council (formerly Grassroots) and Tree Farm Committee; all tree farmers, especially those in the area are encouraged to attend; contact Howard Anderson, 888-455-7400 (toll-free).

**September 9 & 10: Ecosystem Management**, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; ecosystem concepts and management applications; for natural resources managers; CFE credits; fee; contact Dr. Jerry Cross, 540-231-8844.

**September 18-19: Maryland Forests Association annual meeting**, Solomons, Sustainable Forestry-Resource Planning for our Future; panel discussion, speakers, entertainment, awards, demonstrations on forest management computer software and Geographic Information Systems; open to public; registration fee; contact Karin Miller, 301-895-5369, [mfa@hereintown.net](mailto:mfa@hereintown.net) or MFA's website: <http://www.mdforests.org>.

**September 24-27: 1998 Coverts Cooperator training** for thirty selected forest landowners; Sharpsburg.

**October 4: 4-H Forestry and Wildlife Judging contest**, also novice skill-a-thon; Gunpowder Falls State Park, Days Cove, Kingsville; contact your county extension office for study materials

**October 4-8: North American Conference on Enterprise Development Through Agroforestry: Farming the Agroforest for Specialty Products**, Minneapolis; for private landowners and natural resources professionals; registration fee; contact Scott J. Josiah, 612-624-7418; fax 612-625-5212; [josia001@maroon.tc.umn.edu](mailto:josia001@maroon.tc.umn.edu).

**October 16: Ruffed Grouse Society banquet** and auction of wildlife-related items to benefit the Coverts Project and wildlife management programs, Frederick; contact Roy Culler, 301-371-7343.

October 24: Maryland Chapter of the Walnut Council, Washington County. Workshop features research on black walnut and field visits; all welcome; registration fee. Contact Allan Lowe, 410-756-2217 or [mtrn88a@prodigy.com](mailto:mtrn88a@prodigy.com).

**November 7: Mid-Atlantic Forest Stewardship Seminar**, Frederick Community College; see article on page 3.

## Take Note

**New! Legal Aspects of Owning and Managing Woodlands**, by Thom McEvoy, extension forester and associate professor, University of Vermont. This 174 page book provides an accessible overview of the privileges, rights, and obligations that accompany forest ownership. \$20 paperback, \$45 hardcover, plus shipping; Island Press, 800-828-1302; [ipwest@igc.apc.org](mailto:ipwest@igc.apc.org); [www.islandpress.org](http://www.islandpress.org).

**New! The Land of the Living**, by John Mash, retired MdDNR forester. Did you know that most of the 40,000 acres comprising Green Ridge State Forest in Allegany

County was cleared and planted as the "largest apple orchard in the universe?" This well-researched book on the history of Green Ridge Forest and eastern Allegany County, Maryland focuses on the human and natural history. It covers the land itself, its wild creatures, the history of the forest, and the interesting human history. Great reading! Available in some libraries or purchased for \$52.45 plus \$3 shipping from the Living History Foundation of Allegany County, 218 Washington St., Cumberland, MD 21502, 301-777-8678.

**Check it out!** Many **web pages** on the Internet have information for forest landowners. Search for "forest stewardship" and select from the thousands of topics, including the Forest Stewardship Programs in Maryland and Connecticut.

## Branching Out

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