

International Model Forest Network Secretariat
Secrétariat du Réseau international de forêts modèles

Model Forest Development Guide



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Introduction

This document has been created in response to heightened awareness and interest in the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) from many countries around the world. Its purpose is to provide information to those with an interest in creating a model forest and to facilitate their exploration of participating in the IMFN.

From its origins in Canada in 1992, and its 10 national sites, the network has since grown to include the participation of six countries with a total of 21 model forests. Today the network continues to grow with several countries presently either drafting proposals or otherwise investigating options for model forest development.

Naturally, all of this activity has generated considerable demand for information on model forest fundamentals: where did the concept come from, how has it evolved, what is a model forest, how is one established, and what exactly does a model forest do? In response, we have created this document based upon the real experiences of functioning model forests. We have purposely tried to keep the document short and to the point while still providing to prospective sites and new entrants all the information needed to show how a model forest could work in their regions, and to understand the possibilities and limitations of its application.

We have structured the document beginning with a brief background on the origins of the idea and its evolution, followed by a detailed description of the concept. This latter section includes a treatment of the premise, goals, objectives, and core attributes of the model forest concept. A description of the operational aspects of model forests – focus, structure, activities, and guiding principles – follows this section. A final section on frequently asked questions has also been included. We have supplemented the text with an annex (Document 2 of 2) with information put out by model forests on things such as organizational structure, decision-making processes, and partnership composition.

What this guide is, is as important as what it is not: it is not a "how to" instruction manual of rules and regulations for creating a model forest. Even though all model forests have broadly shared organizational structures, objectives, and goals each develops according to specific local, regional and/or national influences. This guide is a composite sketch of model forest experiences to date, essentially, what has worked so far.

It is our view that a dynamic and evolving network is one which will draw innovation, constructive criticism, and creativity from both within and outside of the model forest network. The text that you have before you is the first of what we hope will be many editions as model forest experiences continue to be documented and compiled for your use. We hope to improve the document on an ongoing basis, and we welcome your input to help us do this.

Frederick Johnson
Executive Director
IMFNS

Background

The challenges facing natural resource managers today, and indeed all of society, are inherently complex as conflicting societal demands and values compete with one another against a backdrop of limited and dwindling resources. In 1987, the Bruntland Commission Report clearly described the precarious and growing imbalance between the growth of humanity and the capacity of the earth to sustain this growth. Six years later, at UNCED, world leaders set in motion a chain of policy level events targeted at finding workable solutions to achieving sustainable development.

Within the forestry sector itself, an array of processes was begun with many countries subsequently demonstrating new and innovative approaches to forest management. Not surprisingly, several of these new approaches revealed parallel evolutions of thought as to the nature of the sustainability problem, and of proposed action concerning strategies for effectively addressing them.

One initiative directly inspired by the challenges laid down during UNCED was the International Model Forest Network Program (IMFN), announced by Canada at the Rio conference. Its origins were rooted in the Canadian Model Forest Network, itself created in 1991. Establishing the IMFN represented a major commitment to actively facilitate the development of field-level capacity across a range of ecosystems and jurisdictions in pursuit of the goal of sustainable forest management. The international program initially invited Russia, Mexico and Malaysia to link with the Canadian Model Forest Network in a partnership to assist all members to assemble the tools needed to undertake their own search for locally relevant and workable solutions to the sustainability challenge. As with the Canadian Network the purpose of the proposed International Model Forest Network was to stimulate the field-level application of new concepts and ideas in sustainable forest management and to create opportunities to share these experiences.

Working to achieve sustainable resource management is a fundamentally optimistic endeavour. It assumes that there are solutions, and that they are accessible to society - if society chooses to seek them out. The model forest concept shares that optimism. The IMFN is built upon the firm belief that forests can be managed in a sustainable way to safeguard the economic, environmental and social needs of current and future generations. It assumes that an inclusive partnership of all agencies, organizations,

communities, and individuals who use the forest resource, each having their own specific understanding and appreciation of it, can together create the conditions that will lead to improved and sustainable utilization of all forest resources.

Experience to date, including the growth of the network, supports this optimism. Since the 1992 announcement at Rio other countries have undertaken to develop model forests and have participated in the Network. Its steady growth suggests the concept has relevancy at both field and policy levels, locally, nationally and internationally. Currently, Canada, Mexico, Russia, USA, Japan, and Chile have established model forests, while Argentina, China, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom, Indonesia and Vietnam are at various stages of developing model forests or considering their application. Today, the IMFN is supported by a Secretariat housed at the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The Secretariat supports existing sites in technical and organizational matters and facilitates inter-site networking in a number of specific areas. An international steering committee is being established to govern the Secretariat, which currently operates at arms-length from the Canadian government.

What is a Model Forest?

So, what is a model forest? It can be described both as a physical entity and as an organization.

A model forest is a working scale land base in which forestry is one of the main values. One of the core attributes of a model forest is that the land-base or model forest territory be at a scale that fully reflects the range of resource values in a geographic region. In Canada model forests are at least 100,000 ha in size. At the same time it is understood that countries with a smaller land-bases may not be able, or in fact need, to establish model forests this large. In identifying a model forest site, two of the main considerations are:

- 1) that the land-base is large enough for it to reflect the full range of environmental and socio-economic influences on it, and
- 2) that the project be able to develop an integrated package of projects that can lead to better conclusions and decisions on issues of sustainable forest management (SFM)

From an organizational perspective, a model forest is

a voluntary partnership of all who have a stake in the sustainable management of forest resources within a specific working-scale land-base. The organization's members - its partnership - fully represent the environmental, social and economic forces at play within this land-base through a partnership that operates transparently and on the basis of consensus¹. The model forest partnership works to identify, develop, and apply innovative forest resource management options for the model forest territory. As a member of the International Model Forest Network, a model forest organization is committed to sharing these experiences and innovations with other model forests as well as with others who can benefit from their expertise - locally, nationally, and internationally.

While it typically does not exercise decision-making authority over the land-base, a model forest organization will include in its partnership those with legal tenure over the land. Working together, this partnership acquires the expertise and creates the processes that will improve planning and management of the forest resource toward sustainability.

With this in mind, the IMFN has identified the following as its goal:

The IMFN Goal:

To support, through model forests, the management of the world's forest resources in a sustainable manner, reflecting environmental and socio-economic issues from the perspective of local needs and global concerns.

Like other sustainable forest management (SFM) initiatives the model forest concept views learning and understanding as constantly evolving rather than as things that can simply be acquired and applied to fix one or another forest management problem. Better understanding of the issues comes from the working partnership of many stakeholders over a substantial period of time. In a model forest meaningful consultation, collaboration and participation of stakeholders is understood as essential to achieving SFM.

¹Consensus is understood in this context to be a characteristic that emerges over time as a partnership develops, not as something that is in place from the start.

Where the model forest process differs from other SFM initiatives is in two distinct features: the first is that all model forests share a core set of attributes and principles by which landscape-level experiments in SFM can be conducted - regardless of ecosystem type or system of tenure. Second, and directly linked to the first feature, is its deliberate strategy of intra-site and inter-site demonstration and networking. The assumptions underlying these features is that the shared attributes and principles will stimulate opportunities for networking, while a deliberate strategy of demonstration and networking will improve and accelerate implementation of specific advances in SFM among network participants.

These features are reflected in the three key objectives of the IMFN. They can be seen as representing a continuous loop (from the operational level to the policy level and back) describing a network oriented towards the exchange of information, giving a prominent focus to field-level applications, and a clear link to international policy issues.

In a model forest new ideas are tried - some with success and some with failure - all to arrive at better ways to move toward the goal of sustainability. It is

IMFN Objectives:

- *To foster international cooperation and exchange of ideas on the concept of and practical experience in sustainable forest management;*
- *To facilitate international cooperation in field-level applications of sustainable forest management*
- *To use these concepts, experiences, and applications to support ongoing international discussions on the principles, criteria and policies related to sustainable forest management*

acknowledged in the model forest process that no one country, agency or individual has yet developed the knowledge necessary to achieve the goals set at UNCED, but by working together we can make progress more quickly.

Partnership

While conceptually simple to describe, for a number of reasons a model forest can be very complex in practice. One of the main reasons for this is that the operating principle of a model forest – consensus within an inclusive partnership – has the effect of generating a much more open debate and discussion on resource use, planning, management and decision-making at the local level than is generally the case. The debate has many layers and will typically take a good deal of time and effort to accommodate. The model forest partnership's dynamic mix of diverse professions, organizations, and personalities brings with it a diversity of priorities, expectations and demands on the forest and its resources. In turn, these expectations and demands are themselves framed by particular and frequently conflicting social, environmental and economic viewpoints. At yet another level, we see these views as strong reflections of the broad range of traditional, practical and scientific knowledge brought to the partnership by its varied members.

Understanding the emphasis and importance given to the model forest's partnership is central to understanding the model forest concept. In order to usefully engage local expertise the partnership needs to recognize that its many points of view are not necessarily mutually exclusive, that they are relevant and have a place in the decision-making process. Experience consistently demonstrates that when local expertise is pooled outputs exceed what could be accomplished by each partner individually. In an inclusive partnership setting the exchange of knowledge and expertise broadens and improves members' overall understanding of SFM issues and strengthens their capacity to identify measures to improve management and/or planning.

The model forest concept provides the framework while the model forest organization provides the forum in which local priorities can be assessed by stakeholders and agreed upon. The model forest organization works to bring balance into its members' frequently competing demands, and to understand the consequences and trade-offs of actions so that informed decisions can be made under the shared objective of sustainable forest management.

While sharing attributes, goals, and objectives each model forest will be unique by virtue of the distinct cultural, geographic, institutional, political, and other circumstances at play in each site. As well, each model forest partnership will add to this uniqueness its own cross-section of perspectives and experiences. Because of this variability of influences and circumstances from one region to another, it follows

that the activities and approaches taken to meet the objectives of sustainable forest management will also differ. In some sites, for example, biodiversity issues will be paramount, while in others economic diversification, or forest research will feature more prominently.

Networking

Networking takes place at all levels starting with the local partnership and working through regional, national, and international levels. Networking at the local level reinforces the model forest partnership and its effectiveness to introduce positive landscape level changes. This same networking principle – of sharing information to create a shared net benefit to participants – provides the *raison d'être* for national and international networks.

With respect to networking beyond the model forest site, as the IMFN has evolved it has become apparent that some types of expertise and activity are more promising than others, largely for reasons such as ease of replication and cost-effectiveness. Among the most promising areas of networking are the following:

- ▶ Partnership and capacity building;
- ▶ Forest-based economic diversification;
- ▶ Measuring and assessing progress toward SFM;
- ▶ Adopting and using tools for SFM, and;
- ▶ Networking through special projects with highly focused regional or thematic features.

Within each of these five areas new tools and innovative approaches to sustainable forest management can be applied, tested and shared within and among model forests.

Core Model Forest Attributes:



Craft and food market in the Linan Model Forest, China

As noted, making a partnership work effectively can be difficult. Among the partnership-building tools available is a set of commonly held model forest attributes on which partners agree, and by which a project can be structured. The list is not exhaustive. In the case of Russia, for example, to the five core attributes three more have been added that have relevance specifically in Russian circumstances. In all cases the purpose of the attributes is to provide a set of reference points for establishing a model forest. They can assist each site to maintain its conceptual focus and program integrity throughout its development while also ensuring that each site has the autonomy to put together an initiative reflective of local priorities. No less important, the adoption of network-wide attributes creates the foundation on which functional networking can take place from local to international levels.

Among the attributes that define the model forest concept the following five are considered as fundamental:

1. Partnership

A model forest organization is governed by a partnership that identifies the goals, sets priorities and establishes policy guidelines for the overall program. The partnership must include key land users and other stakeholders represented in the geographic region (e.g. industry, community groups, government agencies, non-governmental environmental and forestry groups, academic and educational institutions, national parks, aboriginal groups, private landowners and others as appropriate).

Example indicator: The majority of the resident population can access the model forest organization through a model forest partner who represents their principal activity or area of interest.

2. Commitment to Sustainable Forest Management

In a model forest sound, socially acceptable, and economically viable forestry practices and techniques are applied and demonstrated. The overall objectives and program of work are based upon an ecosystem approach to forest management, and reflect a vision of sustainability.

Example indicator: The partnership has an agreed upon strategy for determining progress towards

sustainability and will develop and implement the strategy.

A model forest will have the support of the appropriate national, regional and/or local government that has jurisdiction over the land, private landowners, and other interested community and private-sector representatives active in forest and natural resource management. Where appropriate, the model forest program of work should relate to an overall national or regional forest sector plan.

Example indicator: Participation by communities, landowners and managers in the partnership committee is reflected in the governance structures.

3. Magnitude/Scope of Activities

A model forest must be of a size that includes the full range of forest uses and values in the surrounding geographic region. The activities undertaken reflect the realities and needs at the local and national level. The activities support increasing the knowledge base, assessing impacts and developing, testing and otherwise supporting new approaches to sustainable forest management.

Example indicator: The majority of the forest values as defined in the national forest plan (or other similar documentation) are reflected in the model forest.

4. A Governance Structure to Address a Broad Range of Values

A model forest is managed in an integrated manner for all forest values identified as important by the partnership. The management process is both participatory and transparent. The governance structure reflects the cultural, social, political and economic realities of the region. Additionally, the governance structure supports consensus building amongst the partners

Example indicator: A governance structure documented and approved by the partnership and shown in practice to function in a fashion that draws meaningful participation from the partnership.

5. Cooperation, Sharing, and Capacity Building

A model forest partnership agrees to share its experiences and knowledge locally as well as throughout the IMFN. At local, regional, national and global levels model forests share experiences, successes and lessons learned on the critical aspects of sustainable forest management. Model Forests also provide opportunities for urban interests to be represented and to have an impact on the processes supporting sustainable forest management.

Example indicator: The commitment to sharing is demonstrated through network activities, demonstration projects, linkages to other model forests and participation in global processes such as the development and application of local level indicators of sustainable forest management.

How is a Model Forest



Where the Mie river watershed meets with the ocean, pearls are harvested. Mie Prefecture, Japan

Implemented?

Given the concept, philosophy and attributes that make up a model forest, the next question that arises is how have model forests been created and operated. This section addresses that question in three parts:

- ▶ Initial steps taken to create a model forest;
- ▶ Options for Organization, governance and management
- ▶ Operation of a model forest (or, what does a model forest do?)

It bears repeating that the text below provides a composite picture of what has worked so far. There is no standard template for creating or operating a model forest. The creativity of the local partnership, or specific regional, cultural or other circumstances will all influence the form and function of the model forest that is ultimately created.

1. The Initial Steps Taken to Create a

Model Forest:

Becoming Familiar with the Concept

The first step toward establishing a model forest involves developing an understanding of the model forest concept. With systematic documentation of model forest experiences (such as this document), it is increasingly possible for candidate sites to familiarize themselves with the model forest concept and experiences. Options include accessing the IMFN Web site (<http://www.idrc.ca/imfn>), and/or obtaining copies of IMFN documents, including past proposals from established sites.

Familiarization with the concept is generally followed by an examination of the experiences of others through visits to operational model forests in another country. Experience shows that these direct contacts between practitioners and those investigating establishment of a model forest are highly effective. Through them, working examples of different approaches to setting up and operating a model forest - from management to project delivery - can be explored. In particular, it has been found that demonstrations of projects and field visits are highly productive ways of making the concept tangible and demonstrating benefits. Additionally, site visits are valuable in demonstrating how partnerships function, how they make decisions, develop consensus, and deal with conflict.

Proposal Preparation

Creating a model forest within the international network involves the guided preparation of a proposal. The proposal helps the partnership to focus, to identify what it wants to do, and how it will be operated. It typically details the composition of the partnership, describes the land-base in question, and documents the specific strategic and operational plans according to which the model forest partnership will act. Past proposals have included detail on most or all of the following:

- ▶ Background
- ▶ Project Outline: project name, sponsors, partners and project summary
- ▶ Description of the proposed model forest territory: Includes significant documentation of resource characteristics, socio-economic data, significant cultural or historical information
- ▶ Goals and Tasks: strategic overview of goals
- ▶ Proposed administrative structure
- ▶ Short and long-term activities and expected results (e.g., Research, Technology transfer,

Communication)

- ▶ Budget (Planned expenditures and revenue sources)
- ▶ Appendices (maps, scientific, or survey information)

In most instances development of the proposal would be led by those who participated in the familiarisation mission, together with additional local expertise and partners. Technical assistance and advice can be made available by the IMFNS and other model forests throughout the proposal development process.

Judging from previous experiences a full proposal will generally take a number of months to complete. Most of the costs associated with proposal development are local and need not be significant, however, it is often useful to include a consultant or facilitator to assist the local partnership. At this stage a core partnership has been formed and additional partners are becoming active through consultation and information exchange.

The Model Forest Workshop

Once the draft proposal has been completed, the model forest proponents convene a workshop with the full partnership, facilitators, potential sponsors, and others to discuss the draft proposal. Through the workshop the proposal is reviewed in as much detail as necessary to arrive at understanding and consensus on what is being proposed, how it will be implemented and what various roles and responsibilities may be. Frequently, this workshop will mark the first time that all MF participants gather as a working partnership.

The costs for this activity are variable but might include the participation of approximately 40 participants, including representatives from a number of existing model forests. The workshop concludes with endorsement of the proposal or with recommendations for additional editing, detail or focus. At the end of the workshop the partnership is expected to have a very clear understanding of what the model forest is proposing to do and how it proposed to do it.

In most cases, once the partnership accepts the proposal, its next step would be to seek national level endorsement through the appropriate department or ministry. This endorsement paves the way for model forest proponents to enter into a dialogue with the IMFNS on membership and participation in the network.

It is important to note that there is currently no formal procedure for accepting a proposal for a model forest

by the IMFNS. According to past experience however, the final draft of a proposal will be expected to have national level endorsement. The access point to the IMFNS is at the country level and it would be at that level that discussions would take place – with the full participation of the local-level proponents – on acceptance of the proposal within the international network. As noted earlier in this guide, an International Steering Committee is being established to oversee governance of the IMFN. The formalisation of an official procedure for accepting new members will be one of their first tasks.



As the IMFNS is not itself a grant-making institution proponents of new model forests are expected to secure funds for the project that they are proposing. If requested to do so the IMFNS will work with the site to seek financial or technical support, however, the lead responsibility in all such activities resides with the model forest organization itself with the Secretariat playing a supportive or facilitative role.

2. Options for Organization, Governance and Management

Each model forest organization creates governance, technical, quality control, management and other bodies according to standards and norms that apply in the model forest's country and/or region. In the case of Canada, for example a model forest partnership will generally constitute itself as a legal, not-for-profit public association. It will generally structure decision-making within itself through its Partnership Meetings, Board of Directors, Technical bodies, and

permanent staff (see annex A), with each assigned specific roles and functions.

As with other types of organization, in setting up a model forest entity there are often a number of clearly identifiable organizational objectives. For present purposes the discussion can be limited to four of them: structure, accountability, technical competence, and effective self-governance.

Most of these organizational objectives are familiar to readers and ample illustrations are provided in the annex, however a generic treatment of them is provided below for reference purposes.

Structure

The Partnership Group

In model forests the full partnership group is usually understood to be the most senior decision-making body. Its decisions are typically made through an annual partnership forum or similar event, at which broad questions of strategy, programme direction and, policy are taken up. The partnership generally elects a president or chair, and board of management (directors) from among its members, who are charged with on-going program oversight and ensuring implementation of annual plans as endorsed by the partnership group. This organizational sketch is typical of experience to date, but it is only one of many options available for structuring partnership activities.



Japanese model foresters on Canada's west coast, September 1999

During an annual partnership forum, the bodies that govern, manage, and deliver projects on behalf of the model forest partnership report to it on activities undertaken over the previous year and intentions for the forthcoming year. The annual partnership forum is the main opportunity that all partners have to raise, debate and discuss strategic and operational issues

with all other partners present.

While some partnerships will only meet formally once per year, or in extraordinary session, some model forests, for example Russia's Gassinski, have had as many as eight partnership meetings per year. Greater frequency of meetings can be advantageous particularly during the first phase of a model forest's start-up when specific projects, research objectives, or other strategic issues are being elaborated, and when partners are still becoming familiar with working together.

It bears mentioning that not all partners are active in the same measure or intensity. While all are equal, roles and responsibilities will vary in absolute terms as well as over time and activity. Some are passive partners, for example, who consider their membership to be an ongoing opportunity to publicly indicate their support for the concept and its local application. Others have niche interests and may limit their participation to annual or technical meetings, at which they will voice their interests and ensure that these are considered in the model forest's planning and activities. Still others will find themselves with periods of intense involvement followed by lulls that reflect the year's management, planning and project delivery cycles. In each model forest there is also a core group of partners who are consistently engaged in management and activities: tenure holders (forest industries), government, environmental specialists, and academia are generally among this latter group.

The Annex (Document 2 of 2) lists members of a number of model forest organizations. It illustrates the broad range of potential partners.

The Board of Directors

Whether it is known as a Management Committee, an Executive Steering Committee, a Board of Directors, or otherwise, the model forest entity requires a body that meets regularly and to which model forest staff report and receive direction and authorisation on issues of substance. The size of the body is highly varied and ranges from as few as three members to nine or more.

Boards of Directors are typically elected to office during the annual meeting of partners or other agreed upon process and usually serve two-year, staggered terms of office. The composition of the board tends to reflect the broad diversity of the partnership base. It meets regularly, generally once per month, to review with model forest managers activities, project developments, new proposals, problems and financial

reports. The board approves budgets and makes decisions of its own accord or on recommendation from management. As the chief body of governance, the board of directors bears ultimate responsibility for the conduct and performance of the model forest entity.

Accountability

A model forest organization acts on behalf of its partnership in areas such as project development and implementation. Among other things, the organization also has a public profile and seeks to make input into public discussion on resource issues. In order for the model forest organization to represent and accurately reflect its membership in these and other areas it needs to be structured in a way that will make it accountable to the partnership for its decisions and actions. In most - but not all - cases this accountability has been secured by establishing the model forest as a legal entity within appropriate national or sub-national jurisdictions regarding public organizations or associations.

Whatever its eventual structure, the purpose of that structure is to create the procedural milieu in which partners interact, and by which decisions are made. It is also on this basis that the model forest organization becomes publicly active as a legitimate and credible entity. Its cohesion as an organization can be created through a combination of clearly stated and documented goals and objectives, governance structures, decision-making processes, membership criteria and so forth.

It is important to note here as well that the rights of a model forest organization rarely include the exercise of decision-making authority over the land-base. Its rights and responsibilities tend to be limited to the governance, management, and financial aspects of its internal management activities, as well as extending to contract oversight for its project activities.

Technical Competence

The model forest organization has a wealth of professional expertise at its disposal and benefits greatly from the input and guidance of its specialists. Expert input is often structured around formal or informal technical or advisory committees. The number, composition and level of activity of model forest technical committees varies according to need: in some cases, for instance, a technical committee will be project specific with the committee disbanding following completion of the project. Generally

however, there is at least one permanent technical committee that operates in an advisory capacity to both the board and management. This latter type of committee is frequently composed of the leaders of the various model forest programs or core projects (i.e. forest research, economic development, GIS, communication). It can be instrumental in helping the model forest to create and maintain an integrated and focused package of programs and projects.

Additionally, committee members can often access additional expertise and resources from within their home organizations. Technical committees will meet regularly and occasionally very frequently, as is the case when programs are being designed, or when outputs and progress are assessed or analysed.

Among the range of technical committees that might be formed on an occasional basis is a committee for internal management reviews and technical audits. It is beneficial for the organization to undertake routine quality control exercises to confirm that given courses of action will generate the anticipated outputs. Unlike technical audits, financial audits should be done annually and should be undertaken by independent auditors.

*Note: The requirements for **external** technical and financial reviews and audits will vary from one model forest to the next depending upon the requirements of sponsoring agencies and the statutes or adopted procedures of the model forest in question.*

Capacity for Effective Self-Governance

The model forest partnership identifies strategic goals and objectives on an annual and long-term basis and authorises annual and longer-term operational plans. It engages a small permanent staff to oversee project development and execution, with the staff manager reporting on a regular basis to the board of directors or comparable body. Annual operational plans are generally coordinated by model forest staff with principal input from project executors and technical committees and on occasion from the board of directors. Most Model Forest projects are implemented by the partner organizations under contract with the model forest entity. As such, the model forest management team is responsible for project oversight and contract fulfilment.

The minimum permanent staff level usually includes a project manager, a communication or technical officer and an administrative support position. The actual number of staff in a model forest organization varies considerably, and is determined by available resources, the scope of the annual work plan, and in

some cases by the reporting and tracking requirements of sponsoring agencies. In the case of developing countries staff costs might be paid for from the host government, from the partners organizations, from an international donor agency, or a combination of the three. It is critical that the model forest staff be provided with training and upgrading that allow them to perform their duties with skill and confidence (see section on Guiding Principles).

The Appendix (Document 2 of 2) includes a series of organizational charts illustrating how different model forests have structured themselves. Inter-relationships between organizational units are described also described in the accompanying texts.

3. Operation of a Model Forest, or What does a Model Forest do?

A model forest organization designs, develops and delivers an integrated package of projects that reflect the needs and expectations of the partnership within the context of sustainable use of the resource. It also communicates these advances in an active way locally and within the community of model forests and actively and continuously improves its understanding of sustainable forest management issues. In a number of cases where there have been inadequate local forums for stakeholders to air views on resource management, the model forest has become a tool to manage conflict in these areas. The text below describes the general framework of activities that occupy a model forest organization and are suggestive of the variety of functions that a model forest can play at local and higher levels within the SFM debate.

Program selection: Model forest annual and longer-range work plans will typically be comprised of a number of broad programme areas that reflect the priorities identified by the full partnership group. These selections are usually made following a large number of meetings, consultations, retreats and/or workshops.

Groups of technical experts work with the partnership group to identify not only what the priorities need to be but also how they can be addressed, the level of effort required, and the results that might be expected. To date, program areas have fallen into a relatively small number of areas, each having specific operational activities or projects within them (Project Management and Administration is assumed to be in each program):

- ▶ Data acquisition/resource inventory

- ▶ Forest Science/research
- ▶ Maintaining Biodiversity
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Technology Transfer
- ▶ Economic Development and Diversification
- ▶ Capacity building (management and staff training, and others)
- ▶ Networking
- ▶ Measuring sustainability / local level indicators

The eventual mix of program components and the weight that they are assigned in the overall model forest program will depend on choices made by the partnership, and are themselves a reflection of local priorities and needs. At the same time, caution should be exercised by the group so that the program of work is not simply a collection of individual initiatives, but instead an integrated, and mutually reinforcing set of initiatives that will facilitate better management and/or



Demonstration and discussion in the Chiloé Model Forest, Chile

planning in the future.

Project selection: Within each program area individual projects are identified for development and delivery. It is at this point that specific resources (money plus in-kind contributions) are assigned to projects. These are the most variable of all the costs. In order to support project costs the model forest organization will work to secure direct financial contributions (grants, donations, contracts etc.) from sponsors or donors. Parallel to securing direct financing, the partnership should work to secure matching or greater funds through internal resources in the form of actual funds, professional services, facilities or other contributions that would offset direct costs. Costs are generally higher during the first or second years of operation, during which the majority of capital acquisitions, and training costs might take place. Significantly larger projects, which are linked to the model forest may have budgets which are

comparatively larger than other projects, for example, resource inventories, institutional/capacity building, or forest industry development.

Based upon the proposed list of program areas provided (above), a short list of projects is provided below as illustration of the very broad range of options open to a partnership. Examples are drawn from the work plans of existing model forests:

Data Acquisition/resource inventory: inventory of resources with a current market demand, socio-economic profile of the model forest territory, detailed forest species inventories, archival research on forest history and dynamics, soil and hydrology mapping and classification.

Monitoring & Evaluation: development and application of tools for measuring sustainability (i.e. local level indicators of sustainability), measuring sustainable harvest/use levels of forest resources.

Forest science/research: Geographic Information System (GIS) development and applications; forest pathology research; riparian zone management; modelling forest dynamics; scenario planning; forest succession dynamics; value added wood processing through local enterprises, other non-wood forest products (see below).

Biodiversity: documentation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna; habitat research and/or restoration; measures for conservation and protection; monitoring population growth and patterns of migration with respect to forest harvesting operations;

Communication: partnership retreats; quarterly newsletters, web-site development; data acquisition and dissemination; organization of workshops and symposia; participation in events outside of region (IMFN Forums, etc.); liaison with sponsors, NGO's, government, and others.

Technology transfer: technology research for local applications; modification of forestry equipment to local conditions; GIS training; data and information management training; case studies in local economic diversification; inter-disciplinary partnership for a for exchange of expertise.

Economic Development and Diversification: local value-added wood processing; development of non-wood forest products; management of nut

producing zones; tourism and eco-tourism; technical and expert exchanges between model forests.

Capacity Building: training in conflict resolution, financial management; strategic planning, data

management, effective communication; internal technical and financial reviews.

Networking: attending regional and IMFN-wide for thematic networking (biodiversity, GIS, or local area indicators, for example), bilateral technology transfer initiatives; web-based data storage and exchange; case studies and experiences in economic diversification; sharing developments in the field of decision-support tools for SFM.

Administration/management: An administrative budget should include adequate funds to support a staff whose size and levels of skill are reflective of the size and complexity of the local model forest initiative. Activities include but are not limited to management and monitoring of projects, and communication. Each model forest group will determine the role(s) of its locally engaged staff, however, among a typical list of expectations on the model forest staff the following would be found:

- ▶ Organization of general meetings
- ▶ Organization of board meetings
- ▶ On-going liaison with partners
- ▶ Contract management
- ▶ Staff recruitment and training
- ▶ Communication locally and within the network
- ▶ Co-ordination of production and dissemination of technical and other reports
- ▶ Budget and financial management and control
- ▶ Strategic initiatives (such as establishing new partnerships, projects or funding arrangements).

Because funds for model forests are limited it is incumbent upon model forest managers to be highly efficient and innovative in ensuring the most effective use of funds.

Internal Appraisal, Analysis, and Dialogue: As an organization that will generate large volumes of data, maps technical reports, and other resources the model forest organization needs to take steps to ensure that the information is known - and where appropriate - applied. While this sounds sensible enough, it is frequently the weak link between the work of resource professionals and field-level applications. The responsibility for managing information and transferring it to potential users can reside with any or each of the main model forest bodies (management, board, or technical committees).

Engagement with SFM Developments Globally: Each model forest organization will be interested in

sharing its experiences and learning from others who are also developing local solutions to the sustainability challenge. In many instances this will mean developing ties with other model forests. There are a number of opportunities to do this:

Model Forest Workshops and Forums:

Throughout the year individual model forests,



Participants of the Halifax conference visit a partner of the Nova Forest Alliance, a museum specializing in forestry equipment (September 1999)

international organizations and national agencies organize events around thematic issues shared by most model forest sites.

Web-based information sharing and collaboration: most model forests currently have well-established electronic databases that are accessible from the internet. In the near-term it is expected that there will be development of a number of pilot projects to test the effectiveness of the electronic medium for networking purposes. In some areas, such as local level indicators, economic development, and riparian zone management, it appears that the web-based exchanges are effective.

Secretariat facilitation of exchange and networking: following a series of detailed regional consultations on model forests, conclusions pointed to a number of areas where model forests saw networking as being achievable and of value to members. The IMFN Secretariat will be developing strategies to facilitate networking (information sharing, collaboration, exchanges, etc.) between sites in five areas: Partnership and capacity-building; economic diversification; measuring and assessing progress toward SFM; adopting and using tools for SFM, and; networking through special projects with highly focused regional or thematic features (as noted above).

Autonomous networking between model forests:

the IMFN Secretariat need facilitate not all networking. Each site is encouraged to develop autonomous links with other sites.

Broader engagement with SFM initiatives and developments: A model forest project operates within the international network but also publicly and transparently within the broader community of resource management professionals. As such, and in order for it to improve upon its own activities each is encouraged to inform and be informed about events, developments and activities involving SFM at all levels.

Partnership development and maintenance:

Throughout all activities and on an on-going basis model forest managers take principal responsibility for liaison with and maintenance of the partnership. Advances in sustainable management rarely make headlines. They are incremental and hard won. Maintaining the interest and contribution of the partnership involves from the outset an understanding that this initiative is long-term. It requires vision, patience and the continuous and public advocacy of its supporters. Experience shows that active networking between professionals and sites, collaborative projects, and engagement with the broader international SFM policy dialogue are important contributors to partner interest.

Guiding Principles

Finally, it was noted earlier that the model forest concept is optimistic. It should be added that it is also ambitious. Because it relies heavily on the time, expertise and good will of many volunteers (aside from staff and contractors, of course) the model forest initiative has to demonstrate its potential to create a needed forum and process for improved local-level decision-making in resource matters and other benefits to the partners. To help it maintain its focus and credibility, the model forest concept is guided in its programs, projects and activities by a number of shared guiding principles. As with model forest attributes, these principles are designed to provide context and focus for the partnership to help it succeed. They stress sound management, continuous learning, clear focus, creativity and innovation. Among the most often cited are the following:

A high level of managerial efficiency and financial integrity.

A model forest is financially supported through a combination of government (taxpayer) funds, direct

and in-kind contributions from partner organizations, and by donors. While the range and depth of projects that a model forest could undertake is virtually limitless the amount of funds available to it is not. To maintain the endorsement of the partnership and to continue to instill confidence in financial and other supporters a model forest organization must be able to manage its affairs efficiently and demonstrate clear financial accountability at all times.

An appreciation for the value of partnership in all its facets.

Following the logic of the saying that *"the whole is greater than the sum of its parts"* it is understood that, within a model forest partnership, the forest is seen differently by different groups and individuals. Each of these views adds to the composite understanding of the web of values and inter-relationships that form an ecosystem. As good as this composite view may ever be, it is unlikely ever to be complete. But by using such a partnership we can aspire to some of the best approximations yet of how to understand and manage complex ecosystems.

Perhaps equal in significance, the development of working relationships within a partnership is itself a frequently ground-breaking exercise in forming links that did not previously exist. These links can play critical roles in developing improved long-term management strategies.

Respect for the independence of participating Model Forests and for the sovereignty of participating countries.

A vigorous partnership requires sound information, effective information flows and open forums for discussion. A model forest organization is more capable of managing these needs if it is recognized as having this role at all levels – local, regional and national. As all model forests operate within the strictures of their own countries, it is up to each sponsoring country to support and encourage conditions under which a partnership can fulfill its mandate within the model forest program.

The provision of an open forum for debate and decision on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

As noted above, the model forest should be structured to maximize the flow of information and the transfer of knowledge. Effective management of issues, debates, and conflicts will facilitate this goal. It requires skill and dedication but is indispensable to partnership well-being and the useful transfer of knowledge. This is particularly so as the Model Forest

partnership will include those who exercise considerable authority within the resource sector and those who exercise little or none.

In their start-up phase it is not expected - nor has it been the case - that model forest partnerships will function effortlessly: debate will frequently be heated, and views often one-sided. Decision-making processes will be untested, and a lack of familiarity in working with one another will test the resolve of the partnership to stay with the process. However, assuming that partners have made a commitment to the model forest concept and that each partner comes to the discussion table prepared to treat other partners with respect and consideration, debate can be constructive, and decisions can be well-considered and reflective of partner input.

Respect for the value of the knowledge of local communities, women and indigenous peoples.

Not infrequently the net benefit of forest use accrues to urban or far away users while local communities contend with a depleted resource, a degraded landscape or an unsustainable economy. These impacts impoverish communities in many ways other than economic, for example, by substituting outside values for existing indigenous values, or by marginalizing and diminishing the value of local knowledge about the forest, its uses and cycles. The model forest partnership and its programs respect the value of knowledge held by local communities, including that of women and aboriginal peoples, as fully legitimate and playing a role in contributing toward sustainability and achieving community well-being.

Attention to the quality of research results shared with members and partners of the Network.

The transfer of knowledge and technology within and amongst model forests is central to the idea of networking. The communication of experiences and advances toward improved forest management can accelerate similar developments in other sites and confirm for others the validity of their own observations and conclusions. As much as managerial efficiency and financial integrity, the quality of work produced by a model forest is vital for effective decision-making locally and for the credibility of the model forest partnership as a whole. A sound research programme, accessible data, and high quality technical reports are all part of this equation.

A recognition of the importance of information, communication and global awareness with respect to sustainable forest management.

Sustainable forest management is much more than a technical or managerial challenge. That is, inasmuch as SFM is about how the forest resource is understood and used by all of us, it is also thereby a significant communication issue. One of the factors in the SFM dialogue then is the effective transfer of knowledge from the model forest to a wider audience so that the initiative is understood and supported at multiple levels. The creation of information for this broader audience, its dissemination and communication – from school children to adults, from local to national levels – is a necessary element in a long-term strategy for achieving this understanding.

A recognition that the ultimate reason for the Network's existence is to contribute to the management of the forest in a way that fulfils the needs of the present inhabitants of the planet while respecting the rights of succeeding generations.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What influence does the model forest have on management of the land-base?

The model forest does not exercise decision-making or management authority over the model forest territory. It operates within the limits of existing laws and ownership structures. The model forest influences resource use in three main ways:

1. Because the model forest partnership includes all key resource users (government, industry, private owners, and others, for example), they are participants in defining the model forest, its goals, and its project structure.
2. The model forest undertakes projects, research and other activities on the land-base in collaboration and agreement with the major tenure holders. Therefore, the tenure holders are significant beneficiaries of model forest work.
3. The model forest's activity is relevant at a national policy level. Its activities and experiments point the way to applications in SFM within and beyond the model forest borders. Its influence can be considered then as being indirect, and long-term.

What is the relationship of model forests and certification of wood products?

There is no direct relationship between model forests and certification of wood products, however, a model

forest can choose to work with local harvesters and producers on certification issues. In Russia's Gassinski Model Forest (GMF), for example, linkage has been made between ongoing work on local-level indicators of sustainability and a certification program supported by the World Wildlife Fund (Russia). The Gassinski Model Forest partners will work on the project, and the GMF territory will be one of a number of test areas for the certification program.

What does the IMFN Secretariat do?

The IMFN Secretariat currently maintains a small staff at the headquarters of the International Development Research Centre, in Ottawa. Headed by an Executive Director who reports to an International Steering Committee, the IMFNS staff is responsible for delivery of annual work plans and on-going development of long-range plans. The chief activity of the Secretariat is to facilitate networking in the areas of a) partnership and capacity-building; b) economic diversification; c) measuring and assessing progress toward SFM; d) development and application of tools for SFM, and; e) special projects and initiatives. It does this through annual network meetings, education, training and extension work, specialized workshops, reports and publications, and development of a generalized database and web-site.

Does the IMFNS provide financial support to model forests?

The IMFNS is not a grant-making institution and does not provide direct financial support to model forests. If requested to do so, the IMFNS will work with model forests to seek funds for project activities, however, it does so in a supportive rather than lead role. On occasion the IMFNS has acted as an executing agent on behalf of a grant-making agency. As the Secretariat does not engage a large permanent staff its capacity to act as a delivery agent is limited. All such arrangements are therefore considered on a case-by-case basis.

How much money is needed to establish and operate a model forest?

The cost of establishing and operating a model forest is highly variable. It depends upon the existing physical, technical and information infrastructure of a given region (the starting conditions), as well as on the ambitiousness of the model forest project proposal (its objectives and goals). If, for example, the model forest territory has a detailed database on resource and socio-economic conditions that can be made available

to the partnership there will be considerable cost and time savings

Some costs will be recurring, such as certain administrative costs, participation in annual or other IMFN forums or meetings, information management and updating, and long-term project costs (for example, monitoring indicators of sustainability over the long-term).

Because the range and cost of potential projects and activities will always exceed available resources, it is critical that these choices be understood and accepted by the model forest partnership and that its management work to maintain that focus on an on-going basis. The preceding section on "Guiding Principles" outlines some of the ways that this focus can be maintained.

What role (if any) does the model forest play in resolving conflict over resource management?

The model forest program began at the height of a spirited and emotional debate over forest resource use and questions of sustainability. Today there continue to be strong opinions across the management spectrum and a need to focus these opinions to constructive ends. A positive by-product of the model forest has been its role in creating a respected forum and process to deal with conflict over resource use where no functional forum or process existed before. The model forest has shown itself valuable in



Linan City, China

providing neutral settings in which traditional antagonists can engage in constructive debate.

What is meant by "consensus-based management"?

First, consensus-based management does not mean

unanimous agreement. It is commonly understood to mean that a decision has been arrived at which all partners find acceptable (some may abstain from a vote for example, while others will agree to support without being enthusiastic, but in both instances the decision would be accepted). It assumes two things: first, that there is complete information available to all partners, and second, that the issue is fully debated before a decision is made.

Consensus-based management does not apply to all model forest issues. Day-to-day management of a model forest would not be included, for example, nor would technical committee decisions (unless the model forest partnership decided otherwise). The main forum in which consensus-based management is used is the full partnership meeting. It is at this level that strategic issues are deliberated, that broad financial questions are resolved, and that program activities are identified. It is to these types of questions that consensus is needed as a way of ensuring the continued support of the partnership as the program evolves.

What are the benefits of participating in the IMFN?

Participating in the IMFN offers a chance to gain access to talents and knowledge that will help managers in policy formulation and implementation at a time when many forest agencies are understaffed and under-funded. The Network - even with its inherent risks and its experimental nature - is an exciting and innovative concept that fits with the information age. The reality is that many resource managers, in many countries, are already heavily involved with the core elements that comprise the Model Forest concepts, in participatory forestry, ecosystem-based management, and in collaborative networks. An extensive new knowledge base is being developed within many countries through people-place experiences that could and should be shared. Indeed, relevant knowledge is no longer the domain of "experts" but includes those who claim knowledge by virtue of a history of connection with place. *An open, honest exchange of knowledge in all forms and an examination of that knowledge by all stakeholders creates the best potential of learning from one another.*²

1. In joining the Network, countries, agencies, and

² Stankey, G.H. and Shindler, B. 1997. Adaptive Management Areas: Achieving the Promise, Avoiding the Peril. USDA Forest Service. PNW Research Station.

individual partners will:

- ▶ have an opportunity to play a key role in the formation of the International Model Forest Network and in shaping the network's functions and governance structure;
- ▶ foster collaborative stewardship among countries through access where knowledge is shared, science and technology made available, and ideas and experiences exchanged;
- ▶ have access to the social processes already developed for consensus-building in the existing model forests. In fact, demonstration of social elements – e.g. empowerment in decision-making, respect for cultural differences, equity and sharing of benefits – is the most tangible benefit of the Model forest Program to date. (There is probably as much to learn from these processes and working relationships as from the physical results);
- ▶ Participate in a transparent continuing evaluation process to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of Network activities and the attainment of goals and objectives.

2) Participating countries are offered a chance to:

- ▶ provide leadership in the promotion of sustainable forest values;
- ▶ be part of a transparent process whereby others can freely obtain real-world experience in their model forest initiatives;
- ▶ challenge existing approaches and change existing institutions, policies and legislation;
- ▶ share lessons learned;
- ▶ enhance community capacity-building and consensus-building.

3) Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies are also potential beneficiaries from the Network because of key elements related to sustainable development within Model Forests:

- ▶ poverty alleviation;
- ▶ increased participation of women and indigenous peoples;
- ▶ food security and energy availability;
- ▶ healthy ecosystems - healthy communities;
- ▶ institution and capacity building, education, training;
- ▶ technology assistance and exchanges.

These benefits may be obtained through a variety of mechanisms. Some examples of the activities which address these issues are briefly described in a separate paper prepared through the international consultation process that was agreed to by the Antalya group of countries³. This paper is available on the IMFN web-site.

³ The twelve countries plus FAO, who met at the World Forestry Congress in Antalya, Turkey, in October, 1997 to discuss future development of the International Model Forest Network: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, United Kingdom, and the United States.