



Criteria and Indicators as Framework for Sustainable Forest Management

**Ruth McWilliams
USDA – Forest Service**

**Workshop on Sustainable Forest Management in Indian Country:
Historical Roots and Modern Challenges**

December 9, 2003



Sustainability

Fundamental Concepts

- Triple bottom line ... integrates environmental, social and economic concerns
- Intergenerational ... links short- and long-term decisions and actions
- Place-based ... connects actions within and across levels or scales of activity



Implications of Commitment to Sustainability

- **As a moral concept**

Helps shapes individual as well as our collective will and vision

- **As an objective**

Helps us develop individual (e.g., landowner, homeowner, citizen) as well as societal goals

- **As a means**

Helps us individually & collectively accomplish real on-ground and in-community work



Sustainability

Key Questions

- **Are we improving conditions?**
- **Are we moving towards a more sustainable future?**
- **How do we collectively know?**



Criteria and Indicators

- **Criteria**

Define categories of capacities or processes that are essential to sustainable forest management

- **Indicators**

Provide means for measuring or describing various aspects of the criteria



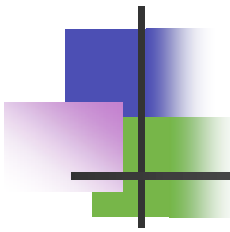
Montreal Process Criteria

- Biological Diversity
- Productive Capacity of Forest Ecosystems
- Forest Ecosystem Health and Vitality
- Soil and Water Resources
- Forest Contribution to Global Carbon Cycles
- Socio-Economic Benefits
- Legal, Institutional, and Economic Framework



Montreal Process C & I

- **Widely Accepted Starting Point**
- **Practical Framework and Common Language**
- **Test and Refine by Using**



National Examples of Efforts using Indicators

- Federal Interagency Working Groups on Sustainable Development Indicators and Environmental Indicators (White House Council on Environmental Quality)
- 2000 RPA Assessment and 2003 Planning Rule (USDA-Forest Service)
- Multi-stakeholder Roundtable Processes (Forests, Rangelands, Minerals, and Water)
- State of the Nation's Ecosystems Project / Report (Heinz Center)
- 2003 National Report on Sustainable Forests (FS in collaboration with FGDC SFDWG and Roundtable on Sustainable Forests)
- Draft Report on the Environment 2003 (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)
- Forest Management Certification Systems (Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council, Green Tag, Tree Farm)
- Principles & Guides for a Well-Managed Forest (National Association of State Foresters)



Sub-National Examples

- Local Unit Criteria & Indicator Development (LUCID) Project (USDA-Forest Service)
- Linking Communities to the Montreal Process C&I Project (American Forests in collaboration with Communities Committee of Seventh American Forest Congress)
- Oregon Forest Assessment Projects and 2003 Forestry Program for Oregon (Oregon Department of Forestry with Oregon Board of Forestry)
- C&I of Forest Sustainability in the Northeastern Area (FS and Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters)
- Great Lakes Sustainable Forest Management Projects (Great Lakes Forest Alliance)
- Southern Forest Resource Assessment, and Sustainability Workshop (FS in collaboration with others, and FS with Roundtable on Sustainable Forests)



C & I as Framework

C&I structure is being used for:

- Conceptualizing
- Visioning and Planning
- Implementing
- Monitoring, Assessing, and Reporting
- Informing and Communicating



Conceptualizing

- Understand and articulate what characterizes forest sustainability
- Understand and explain the contribution of forests to the well-being of people and society at large
- Translate implicit and abstract notions of sustainability into common vocabulary and language with explicit meanings
- Understand relationships and interactions among parts within larger context or system



Visioning and Planning

- Discuss values and assumptions about past, present, and future
- Envision, individually and collectively, the desired future conditions
- Facilitate collaboration across ownerships, scales, sectors, and countries
- Customize and adapt to local / unique situations
- Align long-range goals with measurable objectives



Implementing

- Put individual objectives, decisions, and actions into larger spatial and longer temporal contexts
- Evaluate / apply standards, guides, practices, and investment strategies or opportunities
- Train landowners, practitioners, managers, consultants, policymakers, and others
- Assess / update incentive and assistance programs
- Collaborate and build partnerships to foster sustainable solutions to real issues in real places



Monitoring, Assessing, and Reporting

- Evaluate, establish, and/or revise data definitions, metrics, and measurement protocols, standards and benchmarks, and analysis / information tools
- Define items to inventory and data to gather
- Structure monitoring / reporting processes and clarify relationships with and among existing ones
- Provide logic for conducting assessments of conditions and whole systems at various scales
- Develop country reports for international dialogue



Informing and Communicating

- Organize thinking, and help convey critical and complex information more simply
- Organize and improve the accessibility of data
- Provide common starting point for interdisciplinary teams, stakeholders, and others
- Help identify, sort, discuss, and manage issues within more comprehensive framework
- Develop guides, handbooks, and other information and communication tools



Tensions

- Triple Bottom Line ↔ Individual Parts
- Credible & Thorough ↔ Practical & Realistic
- Scientific Tool ↔ Policy Instrument
- Measure Progress ↔ Create Change



Progress

- Broaden and deepen the commitment to sustainability
- “What gets measured gets done” and “What matters gets measured”
- Individual, as well as, organizational responsibility and commitment



Contact Information

Ruth McWilliams

National Sustainable Development Coordinator

USDA – Forest Service

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-1123

Phone (202) 205-1373; Fax (202) 205-1174

www.fs.fed.us/sustained