



Roundtable on Sustainable Forests

A Partnership for the Future

Mission and Summary of Work Plan

Mission

The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests (RSF) uses the Montreal Process criteria and indicators (C&I) as a common national framework which integrates environmental, social and economic considerations to advance understanding, assessment and reporting of forest sustainability and forest resources management. The RSF does this by engaging multiple stakeholders using collaborative efforts.

Purpose

The original purpose of the RSF was described in its current charter (February 2, 2001) “to serve as a forum to share information and perspectives that will enable better decision-making in the U.S. regarding the sustainable management of our nation’s forests.” The Roundtable does this in the following ways.

- Provides a forum for dialogue about sustainable forest issues, including the use of criteria and indicator frameworks at national and sub-national scales;
- Broadens and deepens public understanding of the importance and adoption of sustainable forest management practices;
- Facilitates the coordinated assessment and reporting of the sustainability of the Nation’s forest resources;
- Communicates and coordinates data and programs within the sustainable forest community;
- Serves as a venue for connecting domestic and global forest issues; and
- Demonstrates on-the-ground benefits of sustainable forest management.

Participants of the RSF share the fundamental belief is that *better data* will lead to *better dialogue* about the sustainability of the nation’s forest resources, which will in turn lead to more informed, *better decisions* by forest stakeholders and policymakers.

Background

The RSF activities proposed for Fiscal Year 2010 are based on two formative documents which are available on the RSF website at <http://sustainableforests.net/>.

- 2006-2010 Work Plan: 2006 Annual Plan
- 2008-2011 Work Plan Addendum

RSF activities generally fall under the following themes outlined in these documents.

1. Reporting and Monitoring Progress Toward Sustainable Forests
2. Coordinating with Related National Data and Indicator Efforts
3. Fostering Sustainable Forest Management through the Application of the C&I
4. Engaging the Broader Community of Forest Stakeholders at Multiple Scales

FY10 activities are also shaped by three unique opportunities.

1. Development of the Draft stakeholder Sustainable Forests Action Strategy (SFAS) - the Roundtable’s response to the draft 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests;
2. Preparation for the 2011 International Year of Forests; and
3. Collaboration between the RSF and the Sustainable Water Resources and Sustainable Rangeland Roundtables to advance the use of Criteria and Indicators to foster collaborative work on forests, rangelands, and water.

As a forum that brings together a diverse network of people interested and active in sustainable forest management, the RSF provides the opportunity for dialogue and shared learning. These opportunities are needed to better understand the effects of actions taken by forest owners, managers, and others who care for the nation’s forests. This learning relates to all facets of the RSF's work plan and is facilitated by RSF events, website, listserv among participants, and more.

RSF Activities

Tabulation of Potential RSF Activities As of Fall 2009	
RSF Theme (as delineated in the 2008-2011 Work Plan Addendum)	Activities
Reporting and monitoring progress toward sustainable forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue RSF focus on improving the quality of data used to assess the state of the Nation’s forests within the framework of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators (MP C&I)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue playing a role in: 1) finalizing the draft 2010 National Report on Sustainable forests; 2) disseminating and enhancing stakeholder utilization of the draft and final 2010 National Report; 3) encouraging federal agencies to recommit to the multi-agency federal MOU for coordination on data collection; and 4) facilitating the integration of data from other interest sectors
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support stakeholders in drafting, distributing and developing broader stakeholder input and support of the draft “Sustainable Forests Action Strategy”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in the Montreal Process Working Group Meeting hosted by the USA, April 2010
Coordinating with related national data and indicator efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in and coordinate with other related national data and indicator efforts including: Roundtable Network, Council of Environmental Quality; Heinz Center ecosystem measurement report; the National Academies’ Key National Indicator Initiative; and National Environmental Status and Trends (NEST), States & State Foresters, Sustainable Forests Partnership
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue fostering and developing Regional Indicator Initiatives (Place-based Initiatives) with the Water and Rangeland Roundtables as partners
Fostering sustainable forest management through the application of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and help to initiate/implement any additional follow-up activities from the 2009 stakeholder Sustainable Forests Action Strategy.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess whether there are any additional follow-up activities from the 2007

the C&I	<p>stakeholder Consultation to Guide the Preparation of the 2010 National Report on Sustainable Forests (that were not address in the 2010 Reporting cycle)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to serve as a platform for stakeholder connections trough brief presentations at meetings, postings to the RSF listserv, information on the RSF website, other web 2.0 technologies as they become available, and other outlets • Expand the efforts of the Sustainable Forests Partnership (SFP) to “make meaning” of the MP C&I for private forest landowners using the National Association of State Forester’s (NASF) Handbook and Lessons Learned from Phase I and II of the pilot projects. • Engage the NASF Forest Health and Forest Science Committee to showcase success and foster the use of MP C&I • Continue to support the university- and extension-based Sustainable Forest Partnership (SFP) in efforts to define and communicate the concepts of the MP C&I in ways that are meaningful to landowners and how the principles can be applied. • Produce a publication with case studies of how states, counties, etc. used the MP C&I • Identify states that are grappling with MP C&I as a framework for measuring and reporting and connect them with states that have already done this • To assure that agroforests, riparian forests, and urban forests are appropriately represented, protocols are currently being developed for the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program in KS, NE, SD, and ND through the Great Plains Initiative, being coordinated by the Nebraska Forest Service. The USDA National Agroforestry Center will help convene a Roundtable meeting to help expand the FIA program inventory of agroforestry and other working tree plantings in urban areas at a location like the Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City.
Engaging the broader community of forest stakeholders at multiple scales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to explore connections with regional roundtables, tribal indicator efforts, sub-national indicator efforts, and other emerging efforts • Continue to cultivate and support local government capacity building for incorporating the MP C&I in county-scale land use/watershed management in MD, an effort led by Baltimore County and the Maryland Department of Forestry. • Continue to support the efforts of the Pinchot Institute on follow-up from their report on “Implementing Sustainable Forest Management” • Develop specific recommendations for a national communications and outreach program that is regionally grounded, based on the theme about "Why forests are important to me?" and brings relevance to the concept of sustainable forests. • Provide a convening platform with partners to further national dialogue on opportunities and challenges for developing a national policy on sustainable forests.

Potential New Initiatives that Integrate Multiple Purposes

New Initiatives	Activities
Follow-up on actions identified in the Draft stakeholder Sustainable Forests Action Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and Conduct Economic Valuations of the Nation’s Priority Forested Watersheds
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Forest Inventory and Forest Health Monitoring Activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact Dedicated Funding Sources for Wildland Fire Suppression
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heighten Awareness of Forests Benefits with a Focused Communication Campaign
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and Support a Portfolio of Pilot Landscape Level Sustainable Forests Projects in All Regions of the Country
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Targeted Outreach Strategy and Tracking System for Local Governments to Characterize the Status of Local Forest Protection Through Land Use Mechanisms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a focused analysis of the impact of tax policies to sustainable management of private forests in the United States
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and diversify markets that allow sustainable forest management.
2011 International Year of the Forest (IYOF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY 2010 – explore possible roles and actions and beginning planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roles (Initiate, Facilitate, Plan, Coordinate, participate, Communicate) ○ Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan, organize and conduct together with federal agencies and universities the 8th American Forestry Congress in 2011 ▪ Work with Smithsonian magazine to encourage a forests article in 2011 ▪ Work with the Post Office to develop a new design for the “Forever” stamp with a tree on it. Message: forests forever. ▪ Serve as a convener for a large stakeholder group to discuss mutual interests and projects. ▪ Facilitate the development of a 2011 IYOF logo that many organizations could/would use. ▪ Plan and conduct a major public awareness and education campaign. ▪ Facilitate, participate in, or encourage participation in, national sustainable forestry policies discussions and forums.
Move the RSF Communications into a Web 2.0 World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redesign the RSF Website •

Areas of Focus in FY 2010

- Follow-up on actions being identified in the upcoming final Sustainable Forests Action Strategy.
- 2011 International Year of the Forest (IYOF).
- Move the RSF Communications into a Web 2.0 World.
- Support collaborative efforts of resource roundtables.

So how does the Roundtable make this ambitious work agenda happen?

The progress toward sustainable forest management via the RSF process is entirely dependent on the willingness and commitment of interested individuals and organizations to engage and, to the extent possible, “do work.” Further and significant progress toward sustainable forests now requires the emergence and “unleashing” of champions, national and local leaders who are willing to step out and lead the dialogue, assessment, reporting and application of sustainable forest management efforts. The RSF is more than just showing up at a meeting, but a combination of face-to-face as well as electronic collaborative processes. There are several opportunities and levels of engagement, at multiple scales, that are open to all who are interested in the vision of the RSF.

- **RSF Participants** – The RSF is comprised of public and private entities and individuals who are interested in advancing the U.S. efforts toward sustainable forests. Participants engage through their involvement in national and regional meetings, electronic interactions, and various work groups (see below).
- **RSF Core Group** – The Core Group serves as an informal steering committee for the RSF. It is comprised of 12-18 members who have committed to a higher level of voluntary participation in the work of the RSF, including planning national RSF meetings, attending 2-4 Core Group meetings per year, drafting and periodically reviewing the annual RSF Work Plan, and reviewing and commenting on other pertinent RSF documents. RSF participants desiring to serve as members of the Core Group express their interest and willingness to serve to the RSF’s Executive Leadership Team (see below).
- **Executive Leadership Team** – This team provides the overall leadership for the RSF and is comprised of two co-chairs: one from a federal agency with substantial program responsibilities that encompass forests, and one from the non-federal public or private sector. The current federal co-chair is Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief for the National Forest System, USDA Forest Service. The SFP serves as the non-federal co-chair. Dick Brinker, Dean and Professor, Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, and Jim Finley, Professor of Forest Resources, The Pennsylvania State University School of Forest Resources, share the SFP’s co-chair responsibilities. The team meets by conference call at least quarterly and provides overall direction for the RSF with consideration given to the identified priorities of the participants and Core Group members. The Executive Leadership Team reviews Core Group participation annually as part of the overall Work Plan review process (see below) and will affirm expressions of interest by a letter of invitation to participate in the Core Group.
- **RSF Facilitation** – In order to provide a setting in which a diversity of views, opinions and perspectives about sustainable forest management are present, it is essential that the RSF be facilitated by an independent, impartial facilitator who is skillful in managing discussions where multiple, and sometimes strongly held, viewpoints are present. A critical element in the RSF’s success to date and its potential for future progress is the utilization of an impartial facilitator.
- **RSF Work Groups** – The work of the RSF is largely done outside of the periodic meetings. Ad-hoc work groups, initiated either by the RSF leadership or by participants themselves, are formed as needed on an ad-hoc basis to carry out specific projects. At this time, the RSF has one active Work Group, the **Communications and Outreach Work Group (COWG)**, to: Identify and further define the audience(s) of

the National Report on Sustainable Forests (National Report), and assess related issues of report format and information access; Assess the need for, define, and help to implement additional engagement activities regarding preparation for the 2010 National Report and other related short- and longer-term Roundtable activities; Develop strategies to enhance the use of the 2010 National Report and begin a long-term process to foster institutionalization; Create and take advantage of opportunities to link activities associated with the 2010 National Report to other aspects of the Roundtable's Work Plan; and; Provide input to the redesign of the Roundtable website.

- **Work Plan Drafting Group** – This team of 5-7 RSF participants, representing a diversity of perspectives, will review the Work Plan on an annual basis and submit it to the Core Group for discussion and feedback. A modified draft will then be distributed to the RSF at large for comment, and a final draft will be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team for finalization. Activities will be added and removed as appropriate during the annual review. The RSF's purpose will be used as a tool to review work plan achievements.