



Sustainability / Statewide Scale



Investing in Sustainable Forestry: Opportunities for Profitable Forest Management in Virginia's Tobacco Region

<p>Place-Based Example</p>	<p>Virginia Tech; Virginia State University, a historically minority-serving institution; Virginia Department of Forestry; and Federal natural resources agencies developed a guidebook to assist forest owners in pursuing sustainable forestry investments and hosted an associated series of discussion-based meetings for underserved audiences across Virginia's Southside Tobacco Region.</p>
<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Description: A multi-institutional partnership was formed to develop a guidebook that provides Virginia forest owners with steps for investing in the sustainability of their forests. Montreal Process Criteria were used to help identify and formulate these steps. The guidebook poses a series of questions related to each Criterion in the Montreal Process framework. These questions allow owners to use the Montreal Process in a compelling and resonant fashion for their own forests. Deliberations among partners and the resulting guidebook were used to arrange discussion-oriented indoor/outdoor meetings for underserved forest owners in the Southside Region of Virginia. These meetings were advertised via an article in <i>Virginia Forests</i> titled "The Montreal Process and Why It Matters in Virginia" and held in Charlotte and Sussex Counties in March 2009. Eighty-six forest owners possessing over 15,000 acres of Virginia's forests participated. Nearly 40% were female and 20% minority forest owners. Peer-to-peer planning was conducted to assist participants in serving as sustainable forestry ambassadors. Follow-on meetings are planned for other areas of the Commonwealth.</p> <p>Context: A sizeable percentage of Virginia's forests are located in its "Southside" region. Tobacco has historically been the dominant economic enterprise. However, quotas and production have steeply declined in recent years, forcing landowners to look for profitable alternatives. Many own forests and could benefit by sustainably managing their forest resources. Additionally, similar programs for forest owners across the state's diverse forest regions are needed.</p> <p>Value Added: A diverse group of forest owners from Virginia's Southside were introduced to emerging and traditional sustainable forest management opportunities. Montreal Process Criteria were used as a replicable framework for considering these opportunities and participants encouraged to consider the implications for their forests. The resulting discussion provided a basis by which next-steps for sustainable forest management education in Virginia's Southside and beyond may be formulated.</p>
<p>Key Resources and Web Links</p>	<p>Virginia websites: www.valeaf.org; http://www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate/ Sustainable Forests Partnership website: http://sfp.cas.psu.edu/CI.html (for John Munsell's article "The Montreal Process and Why It Matters in Virginia")</p>
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