Project Impacts

Forest Certification: Its Role in Sustainable Forestry in the Northern Forest

PROJECT AWARD YEAR AND TITLE:

2003
Green Forestry: Case Studies of Sustainable Forestry and Forest Certification

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS:

Deane Wang
University of Vermont
deane.wang@uvm.edu

Bryan Foster
University of Vermont
bryan.foster@uvm.edu

William Keeton
University of Vermont
william.keeton@uvm.edu

Forest certification aims to endorse management practices that sustain forest ecological, economic, and social *capital* or resources. Certification of forest lands has expanded rapidly worldwide. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified land area, for example, has grown by 15-fold over the decade of 1996-2006. Certification has particular bearing on the Northern Forest as FSC-certifier Smartwood is based in Vermont, and Maine has recently completed the first state-wide certification initiative in the United States.

NSRC researchers used case studies to assess certified forest management practices. They evaluated one uncertified, one FSC-certified, and one Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)-certified white pine forest property in Maine; three uncertified and three FSC-certified northern hardwood forest stands in Vermont; and one FSC-certified neotropical forest property in Costa Rica.

The Maine research indicated that certification has improved management systems and biodiversity conservation practices, though certification has not necessarily required sustained timber yield, consideration of multiple social issues, or extensive ecological monitoring. The Vermont study showed that FSC-certified harvests involve biodiversity conservation practices without significant cost but do not significantly modify forest composition and structure compared to uncertified harvests. The researchers used a literature review including the Costa Rica study to develop six management concepts to meet objectives for sustaining forest ecological, economic, and/or social capital outside of certification.