

**Preliminary National Report  
To the Fourth Session of the  
United Nations Forum on Forests**

*Progress and Issues Related to the Implementation of  
The IFF/IPF Proposals for Action*

**United States of America**



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*This is a preliminary National Report for the United States  
prepared for the Fourth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF4).  
It has been prepared with the assistance of the Pinchot Institute and presents initial assessment  
results for specific UNFF4 themes, as well as plans for continued work.*

## **II. Progress and issues related to implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action**

### **General**

A general description of the issues and actions being taken in the United States to implement the Proposals for Action is presented in the Preliminary National Report to the Third Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests submitted by the United States in May 2003. The report to the third session describes the US support for the Proposals for Action, general lessons learned, how the US is approaching implementation etc. [http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/National\\_Reports/UNFF3/USA.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/National_Reports/UNFF3/USA.pdf)

This report, prepared for the fourth session of the UN Forum on Forests, focuses primarily on social and cultural aspects of forests. This builds upon the previous US reports to the second and third sessions, which focused primarily upon the ecological aspects of forests and the economic aspects of forests, respectively. The first section of the report describes actions that the US has taken, and is continuing to take, to strengthen the role of women in sustainable forest management, support role of local communities and indigenous people in sustainable forest management, and incorporate social data in systems for monitoring, assessing and reporting on progress toward sustainable forestry goals. Subsequent sections address related topics on incorporating traditional and scientific knowledge in sustainable forestry, and progress the US is making in adapting its overall monitoring, assessment and reporting processes to the framework of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. In each of these areas, the US has made substantial progress in implementing the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action. There is a great deal that remains to be accomplished, however. Americans look forward to sharing their experience with other nations, and particularly with the other countries participating in the fourth session of the UN Forum on Forests, in hopes that this will provide ideas that may prove useful in developing their own institutional, legal and policy framework for sustainable forest management. We also look forward to learning from unique and creative approaches used in other nations to advance sustainable forest management, and to address the special challenges of understanding and incorporating the many-faceted social and cultural considerations in natural resource conservation.

**Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to thematic issues of UNFF 4:**

**Social and cultural aspects of forests**

Summary of Proposals for Action	IPF	IFF
<b>Strengthening the role of women in sustainable forest management</b> Involve women in national forest programmes (NFPs), and enhance their role in sustainable forest management		56m 66
<b>Supporting the role of local and indigenous people in sustainable forest management</b> Support indigenous people and local communities by funding sustainable forest management projects, capacity-building, information dissemination and participation, and promote participation of people who possess TFRK in planning, development and implementation of national forest policies and programmes	17f 40e	66

**Introduction**

Sustainability is a social construct. The degree to which forest management reflects current norms of social acceptability and socially responsible behavior is as essential as its reflection of what is ecologically sound or economically viable. Finding socially constructive ways to manage is a different kind of challenge from determining the ecological and economic building blocks of sustainability, but it is a challenge that is no less demanding and exacting. Perspectives on social acceptability are as varied and diverse as forest ecosystems themselves. These perspectives are shaped by history, culture, education and personal experience, all of which vary greatly in American society. Further, these perspectives are not static, but continue to evolve with time. All of this presents an exceedingly complex challenge to forest managers seeking to understand and respect the different social and cultural perspectives, and to reflect these in the conservation and sustainable management of forests.

The United States strives to serve as a model of democratic governance in all aspects of national life, including the conservation and sustainable management of our natural resources. One of the founding leaders of forestry in America, Gifford Pinchot, wrote in 1910:

When the natural resources of any nation become exhausted, disaster and decay in every department of national life follow as a matter of course. Therefore the conservation of natural resources is the basis, and the only permanent basis, of national success. There are other conditions, but this one lies at the foundation.<sup>1</sup>

With this philosophy in mind, Pinchot and other early 20<sup>th</sup> century leaders in American forestry established the fundamental institutional, legal and policy framework that still guides the management of more than 300 million hectares of public and privately-owned forest land in the US today.<sup>2</sup> Private forest lands, which constitute approximately two-thirds of the total area of forest in the US, are managed within a legal framework that provides secure land tenure and well-defined property rights, providing a strong foundation for personal investment in the improvement and long-term stewardship of forest resources. The remaining

<sup>1</sup> Pinchot, Gifford. 1911. *The Fight for Conservation*. New York: Doubleday, Page & Company. 152 pp.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, W., Vissage, J., Sheffield, R., and D. Darr. 2001. *Forest Resources of the United States, 1997*. General Technical Report NC-219. Washington, DC: USDA Forest Service.

one-third is public forests, managed by federal and state government agencies for a wide variety of goods, services and values, and guided by legislative and administrative processes in which a broad diversity of stakeholders regularly participate.

In recent years, social and cultural values have played an increasing role in guiding the sustainable management of US forest lands, both public and private. This has come about in two major ways. First, there is a growing appreciation for the importance of understanding the diversity of perspectives within an American population that is increasingly multi-cultural. American society is an amalgam of indigenous peoples and immigrants who have come from all over the world, all with different cultural interpretations of how to value, use, and conserve forests. The shifting proportions of Native American, Hispanic, Asian, African, and European populations influences not only future goals for sustainable forest management, but even views on current conditions and trends. This is gradually being factored into policymaking, forest management planning, and US processes for monitoring, assessment and reporting.

Second, social and cultural values themselves are continuing to evolve, influenced especially by Americans' increasingly urban orientation, and by a growing scientific understanding of the effects of human activities in forest environments. The 2000 census estimated that more than 85 percent of Americans now reside within metropolitan areas. The needs and perspectives of urban dwellers often differ from residents of rural communities even though they share the same goals for conservation and sustainable use. Considering the disproportionate share of voting citizens that are urban, this leads to significant political tensions within American society, and to challenging situations for forest managers striving to conserve these resources for the common good. New scientific findings regarding the loss of species diversity in forest ecosystems, or the effects of past management practices on the outbreak of catastrophic wildfires, also prompt changes in social values toward forests. How these values evolve, however, depends again on perspectives that vary by culture, by economic advantage, and by urban or rural orientation, among others. Once again, such complex social and cultural considerations present a significant challenge to forest managers committed to reflecting democratic principles and conserving forests for the common good.

## **Progress on Implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action**

### ***Strengthening the role of women in sustainable forest management***

The past decade has witnessed a continued expansion of the role of women in sustainable forest management in the US, from the community level to the national level and beyond. Women now hold recognized leadership positions in community-based forestry organizations, and networks of these organizations, across the country. Women are in leadership positions in forest management organizations—in federal and state agencies and in forest industry. Women are in leadership positions at the national policy level in forestry, and are among the leading participants for the US in international policy and planning related to sustainable forest management. Finally, women constitute a significant proportion of students in university programs in forestry, natural resource conservation, and environmental sciences, including advanced degree programs. This is increasing the number of women with the educational training and experience to further expand their leadership role in sustainable forest management in the future.

As in many other areas of the world, women traditionally have not been as well represented as men in forestry, natural resource management, and related activities. Changes in American society as a whole have been the primary cause for the growing participation of women in forest management as a profession. In recent decades, the social “obstacles” before women who desired to work in the male dominated forest profession have diminished. Women are now encouraged to work even in physically-demanding forestry

activities, such as silviculture or fire suppression, and the percentage of woman in these jobs has grown steadily in government agencies, forest industry, and nongovernmental organizations. Women are also members or heads of households that own 117 million hectares of forest land, and thus exert significant influence on the management of a significant portion of private forests in the US as well.

Government agency hiring of women in the US is guided by national and state law and policies that are not unique to the forestry sector. For example all government agencies are subject to Equal Employment Opportunity laws that forbid discrimination on the basis of gender. Federal agencies are also subject to Affirmative Action rules, which may require actively increasing the mix of women and minorities in certain departments or positions. Private sector employment in the US is also subject to Equal Employment Opportunity requirements. Federal and state courts enforce these requirements, when necessary. For example, in a lawsuit brought in the state of California, a federal court determined that the Forest Service had not done enough to place women in high-level management positions. The Forest Service has responded affirmatively with initiatives to identify, train and advance qualified women to executive positions, including those at the national policy level. The Forest Service has also initiated outreach programs to attract more women to forestry, and especially employment with the Forest Service, through forestry education and cooperative employment programs. Even though the court ruling was specific to California, it has prompted action throughout the US, not only by the Forest Service but by other federal natural resource management agencies as well.

Women constitute a significant proportion of university students in forestry and related fields. Data available from the USDA Research, Education and Economics Information System indicates that the ratio of male to female students earning general forestry degrees over the last decade is 3:1.<sup>3</sup> In advanced degree programs in forestry, the proportion of women students is roughly the same. In 2000, the percentage of women earning PhDs in forest biology was 25.9 percent; 30.8 percent in forest management; and 20.0 percent in wood science and pulp/paper technology, although it was almost 0% in forest engineering. Women earned 56.3 percent of the PhDs in conservation/renewable natural resources, however. According to membership data for the Society of American Foresters, the national professional society for foresters in the United States, women now constitute 11.9 percent of its membership, and comprise 7 percent of their pool of Certified Professional Foresters.

All members of the public, be they women, minorities, or indigenous peoples, are afforded the opportunity to participate in forest planning and decision making processes. For federal forest lands, laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and administrative procedures allowing for the appeal of agency decisions, also provide for public participation and stakeholder consultation. The States have similar provisions for public and stakeholder participation. Although no data is available on numbers of individual women who participate under these processes as compared to men, women play a particularly strong role in sustainable forest management through the nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that influence government agencies and forest industry decision making. National and state level environmental and conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, and the Natural Resources Council of America have women in top level positions, including chief executive. Women are also leading many of the community-based organizations striving to balance ecological, economic and social priorities in forestry at the local level, and coordinating the activities of these organizations through organizations such as the Communities Committee, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, and the Forest Stewards Guild. In addition, a few states have formed non-profit “Women in Timber” organizations to promote the involvement

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<sup>3</sup> From the FAEIS website, <http://www.reeis.usda.gov>, which includes all Land Grant institutions along with some private universities.

of women in forestry activities and to provide educational resources to women forestland and business owners.

### ***Supporting the role of local and indigenous people in sustainable forest management***

The Proposals for Action call for integrating local and indigenous communities in sustainable forest management programmes, particularly in regard to (a) recognition and respect of the customary and traditional rights and privileges of indigenous and local communities, (b) participation in decision making regarding the management of forests, (c) the attainment of secure land tenure arrangements, (d) capacity building and technology transfer for sustainable forest management directed at indigenous and local communities.

Community-based approaches to forest stewardship are central to many of the current policy debates in sustainable forest management on public lands, from wildland fire management, to biodiversity conservation, to sustainable forest-based economic development. Difficulties in reaching political consensus on these kinds of issues at the national level have prompted many communities to seek consensus among a similar diversity of stakeholders at the local level. In many instances, local communities have come together around common goals for environmental, economic and social sustainability, and have produced practical strategies for consideration by the agencies that manage these public lands. In some instances, these strategies have been adopted and successfully implemented. In other instances, national level interests have intervened and halted implementation. This has led to calls for the decentralization of decision-making, particularly relating to the federal forest lands, and possible devolution of management authority or ownership to local governments or the private sector.

In many regions of the world, decentralization of decision-making is seen as important to sustainable forest management, and devolution of forest ownership is regarded as essential to decentralization. In the US, these two concepts are not necessarily linked in this way. National forests were established to maintain federal lands in forest land use, sustain forest productivity for a variety of resources and values for the long term, and serve the needs of the nation as a whole rather than those of a few influential individuals or corporations. Within these broad goals, however, there is flexibility to manage these forests in ways that meet local needs, challenges and opportunities. Historically, local forest managers representing federal agencies have had a high degree of flexibility to directly assess and meet community needs within a framework of national-level laws and policies. In recent years, policy controversies at the national level have resulted in a greater degree of centralization in forest management planning and decision-making. However, the increasing understanding and support for basic principles of sustainable forest management—among both the local and national level organizations—is leading back to a more decentralized approach to decision-making that will both protect the national interest in natural resource conservation and meet community level needs.

Although the Proposals for Action mention local and indigenous interests together, there are reasons to consider them separately as they relate to sustainable forest management in the US. While there are many similarities to the issues relating to community-based forest stewardship more broadly, there are numerous other issues that relate specifically to the management of indigenous Native American forest resource interests. The integration of Native American communities into sustainable forest management programs, and the recognition of their traditional culture, rights and privileges, has its own complex history and mix of current issues. These include tribal control of reservation forests, treaty rights on former tribal lands, and the resolution of land claims. There is also growing recognition of traditional forest management practices in mainstream forestry. These will be addressed separately.

### *Integration of local communities into sustainable forest management*

Community forestry is a growing movement in the US. It focuses on improving the health of the land and the well being of communities.<sup>4</sup> It emphasizes decentralized natural resource management decision-making, and promotes social and economic self-reliance at a relatively small scale. Community forestry in the US today is largely a reaction to the perceived political dysfunction of centralized decision making in Federal forest management, but its proponents are equally wary of the effects of economic globalization on corporate management of private forest lands.

The Conservation Movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which established the early institutional, legal and policy framework for forestry in the United States, was motivated as much by community concerns as it was by national interests. Widespread “cut-and-run” forest exploitation had left many communities bereft of forests sufficient to meet basic needs for structural timber, wild game, or watershed cover to prevent destructive flooding. Forest reserves were established beginning in 1891 to retain forests in common public ownership, provide a local source of wood for developing communities, and prevent overuse by individuals for purposes such as timber harvesting and livestock grazing. At a time when America’s wealth was becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few powerful individuals and corporations, the forest reserves were established to ensure that these essential resources remained available to the American people as a whole. The first national forests were created out of federal public domain lands in western states and territories. State and local interests pressed for the establishment of national forests in the eastern states as well, and the authority to acquire lands for the creation of new national forests was granted to the Forest Service in 1911.

Today there is a resurgence of interest in community forestry in the US, particularly in connection with the Federal public lands. Following World War II, the federal forests became a primary source of timber supply for producers of commodity wood products, and timber harvest levels increased sharply over the level of the previous five decades. This largely ended in the early 1990s when concerns over environmental impacts, especially in regard to habitat for threatened and endangered species, resulted in a sharp decline in timber sales from federal lands. The dislocation of lumber and plywood manufacturing facilities in numerous rural communities resulted in economic hardship for many individuals who were unable or unwilling to relocate.

The sudden drop in federal timber harvesting programs contributed to a number of unplanned impacts on the public forests themselves. The timber programs had been the basis for financing many other programs such as road building and maintenance, forest thinning, wildlife and fish habitat improvements, recreation access and fire management. These programs were consequently also significantly reduced. These changes, in combination with the effects of decades of fire exclusion and drought, have contributed to a significant increase in insect and disease problems and wildfires. The wildfires, many of them of catastrophic proportions and causing unprecedented ecological and economic damage, have become a central concern in US forest policy today. The urgency of this situation has caused most of the technical and financial resources of forest management agencies to be redirected to firefighting and reducing fire hazards, so much so that there is increasing concern in federal and state agencies that other forest values are being neglected and lost.

In response, the federal agencies have begun experimenting with new approaches to land management, in closer partnership with local communities. The Forest Service, for example, has undertaken a nationwide pilot project in which the agency enters into contracts with community groups or private firms in local communities to provide a variety of land management services over a period of several years. These “land

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<sup>4</sup> Baker, Mark and J. Kusel. 2003. Community Forestry in the United States. Island Press.

stewardship contracts” provide local employment and make local communities active partners in balancing the many uses of nearby forests, and in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the wide variety of goods and services a well-managed forest is capable of providing. Through additional research and technical assistance, the Forest Service is helping communities to develop and market new products manufactured from small-diameter or underutilized tree species. In addition, help is provided to capitalize on high-value “non-timber forest products” (such as medicinal herbs, fir boughs, mushrooms and floral ferns) that can be sustainably gathered from nearby forests. The ideal is that local communities contribute to the active stewardship of their surrounding forests, and in so doing strengthen and diversify their economies on the basis of employment and income that can be sustained over the long term

Federal forest management agencies are actively searching for more effective means of involving both national and local interests in consultation prior to forest management decision-making, and in the monitoring and evaluation of plan implementation. Multi-party monitoring could become an essential tool to provide independent assurance to the public that community-based stewardship and decentralized decision making are indeed keeping within the spirit and letter of national-level policy. Multi-party monitoring, involving a diversity of interests, has been used successfully in many different circumstances to evaluate agencies’ performance and ensure accountability.

There has also been a significant increase in community concern over the management of private forest lands, especially the large holdings of forest products companies. Nearly every large forest products company in the US now participates in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI™). Originally developed by the American Forest and Paper Association, the SFI™ is an independent organization that strives to ensure that member companies adhere to basic standards of sustainable forest management through independent, third party certification. The SFI™ was created, partly, due to public and local concerns about how industrial forestlands are managed. The other major forest certification program utilized in the US, that of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), actually requires that participants involve local people and consider the rights of indigenous peoples.

Of perhaps greater concern on private forest lands is forest products companies divestiture of millions of hectares of timberland to investment companies and land developers. Economic globalization and the continuing consolidation of the forest products industry worldwide have prompted US companies to sell their timberland assets to finance debt, or to acquire land in other regions of the world with higher growth rates and lower operational costs. Private charitable foundations have assisted land conservation NGOs to acquire some of the most environmentally sensitive lands. Federal financial assistance programs have allowed some state governments to acquire ownership or development interests to protect other forest lands. However, the majority of these divested forest lands have been acquired by private investment companies. Some of these timber investment management organizations (TIMOs) maintain the lands as forest, managing for current income from timber harvesting and longer-term income from land appreciation. However, the explicit focus on maximizing income, rather than investing in the long-term health and productivity of the forest, has prompted public concern that these lands will be exploited or eventually sold for conversion to nonforest land uses.

### ***Integration of indigenous communities into sustainable forest management***

In recent years, Native Americans have achieved a high degree of autonomy and self-determination in the management of their forest resources. Indian forest lands that have been held in trust by the US federal government, and managed largely by US federal agencies for a century or more, are gradually returning to direct management by the tribes themselves, to serve a variety of tribal social, cultural and religious needs as well as water, wildlife and sustainable wood production.

Long before European colonization of what is now the United States, Native Americans utilized their forest environment for “food, medicine, and materials for transportation, household use, and artistic expression and they served[d] as places of sanctuary for worship, contemplation, and inspiration.”<sup>5</sup> Indians were displaced from many of their ancestral lands, both before and after the establishment of the United States. Indian land rights have been secured by treaties in two ways. First, on designated reservations, the management of forest resources was conducted by the US government, based on European legal principles asserting government responsibility to protect the rights and resources of indigenous peoples from unprincipled exploitation. Since 1909, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has been the primary federal agency responsible for management of Indian forest lands, according to what it believed to be the best interests of the tribes. Second, the right to gather, hunt and fish was retained by the tribes on certain lands owned by the government, such as national forests and parks. The management on many of these lands emphasizes timber and water production, with relatively little attention given to other uses important to the tribes.

In the last four decades, tribes have been reasserting their rights in a number of ways. Tribal governments have pressed for greater involvement in the management of all lands to which they have rights. In 1975, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Act recognized the right of tribes to direct the management of their own forest resources, with trust oversight provided by the BIA.<sup>6</sup> Approximately half of tribal forestland is now under direct tribal management. In 1990, the National Indian Forest Resource Management Act further encouraged tribes to establish their own laws to regulate forest practices, management of wildlife, fish and water resources and protect environmental quality, and to seek advice on forest management opportunities from organizations other than the BIA.<sup>7</sup> This law also called for a periodic assessment of forest management on tribal lands, along with a report to Congress, thus providing tribes an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to manage their own forest resources without assistance from the BIA. The first such report was submitted to Congress in 1993.

Today in the continental US, there are 193 Indian reservations containing a total of 6.8 million hectares of forest land and 3.7 million hectares of woodlands (forested land with less than 5 percent crown cover of commercial timber species). The 97 most heavily forested reservations contain the approximately 2.3 million hectares that is actively managed for timber production. These lands contain an estimated standing inventory of 264 million cubic meters, and support an average annual allowable harvest of 5.1 million cubic meters. Of these 97 heavily forested reservations, the tribes themselves currently carry out all the functions formerly performed by the BIA at 35 of them.

The major recommendation in the 1993 report on the management of tribal lands was to redefine the federal government’s role in discharging its trust responsibility so that tribal governments have primary responsibility for directing the management of forest resources on Indian lands. The federal government activities would focus on financial support, technical assistance, research and trust oversight.<sup>8</sup> Supporting recommendations focused on the need for additional funding to support coordinated resource management and resource planning adequate to translate Indian visions for forest management into reality. A final, but strongly emphasized recommendation was to separate BIA’s technical assistance function from its trust

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<sup>5</sup> Morishima, G. 1997. From Paternalism to Self-Determination. *Journal of Forestry* 95(11): 4-9.

<sup>6</sup> 25 U.S.C. 450. Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. 88 Stat. 2203.

<sup>7</sup> 25 U.S.C. 3101-3120. Indian Forest Resource Management Act of 1990. 104 Stat. 4532.

<sup>8</sup> IFMAT 1993. *An Assessment of Indian Forests and Forest Management in the United States*. Portland, OR: Intertribal Timber Council.

oversight function. A 1997 progress report indicated that BIA was still monitoring its own performance, but that tribes could appeal to an inspector general if they felt they had been wronged.<sup>9</sup>

In 1999, as part of the preparation for the next required ten-year assessment of forestry on tribal lands, 30 tribes sought out independent, third-party evaluation of their forest practices against rigorous standards for forest certification under the two major certification systems currently in use in the US (Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI™)). After preliminary evaluations, seven of the tribes proceeded to full-scale assessments under the FSC program. Use of independent, third-party certification in the future would help to address the need for standards for performance evaluation. It would also assist the BIA in its trust oversight function by utilizing independent monitoring, auditing and evaluation, and maintaining separation from its technical assistance functions. The BIA also works in cooperation with the Intertribal Timber Council, a non-profit consortium of over 70 tribes that works to improve the management of natural resources of importance to Native American communities.

Native Americans have also asserted their treaty rights outside of reservations. Hundreds of thousands of hectares of land has to been transferred back to the tribes. The largest such transfers were made pursuant to the Alaskan Native Lands Settlement Act. There have also been significant areas of land adjacent to reservations transferred back to tribes, or purchased by them. Meeting the requirements of Indian ceded treaty rights has had a less direct, but still substantial impact on the management of forest lands outside the reservations. The best example is the Indian right to harvest 50 percent of the salmon in the Pacific Northwest. Because of very significant drop in the historic salmon runs, forest managers were required to change forest management practices to rebuild the fish populations.

There have been many ups and downs in the treatment of indigenous peoples in the US, but substantial progress has been made in recent years in asserting Native American tribes ability to manage or influence the management of significant forest resources and to develop the capacity to manage these resources themselves.

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon, J., Franklin, J., Johnson, K., Patton, D., Sedell, J., Sessions, J. and Williston, E. 1997. *Journal of Forestry* 95(11): 10-14.

## Traditional forest related knowledge

Summary of Proposals for Action	IPF	IFF
<p><b>A. Advance use of TFRK for SFM.</b>            With the participation of indigenous people and local communities who possess TFRK inventory, catalogue, retrieve and apply TFRK for sustainable forest management.</p>	40b 40g 40h 40i 40j 40k 40l 40n	
<p><b>B. Develop intellectual property rights for TFRK and promote equitable benefit sharing.</b>            Develop ways and means to promote effective protection of TFRK and work with relevant international organizations and conduct studies to help to develop common appreciation and understanding of relationship between TFRK and intellectual property rights and promote fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from TFRK, including consideration of payments.</p>	40c 40d 40f 40p 40r	74a 74b

### Introduction

Traditional knowledge plays a significant part in the management of Native American tribal forests where tribal leadership, often in conjunction with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, makes land management decisions. Native American cultures have long managed the land in order to create favorable environments for culturally significant plants, game species, and according to religious practices and beliefs. Especially in the West, many tribes used fire as a management tool.<sup>10</sup> The Karuk tribe for example, used fire extensively in what is now Northern California to manage the land for grass species they used for making baskets.<sup>11</sup>

Recognized tribes who manage their own forestlands, such as the Yakama, Hoopa, Menominee, and Seminole, tend to use a combination of Western science and traditional knowledge for management. Unrecognized tribes, as well as recognized tribes without their own lands, do not have such an easily available venue for utilizing their traditional forest related knowledge, although the USDA Forest Service often works in cooperation with tribes in managing National Forest lands. One unrecognized tribe, the Maidu, has used stewardship contracting, to put their traditional knowledge to work cultivating culturally important plants while performing thinning activities on National Forests lands.

In addition to the use of traditional knowledge by tribal peoples themselves, the academic community has investigated traditional knowledge in the areas of fire management, restoration, and especially with regards to managing for specific, non-timber forest products, or NTFP's.

<sup>10</sup> Williams, Gerald W. 2001. References on the American Indian Use of Fire in Ecosystems. USDA Forest Service Document. [http://www.wildlandfire.com/docs/biblio\\_indianfire.htm](http://www.wildlandfire.com/docs/biblio_indianfire.htm)

<sup>11</sup> "The Role of Traditional Ecological Knowledge in Managing Fire-Adapted Ecosystems," a presentation given by Renee Stauffer of the Karuk Tribal Forestry Department at the NNFP Annual Meeting in October 2003.

Ethnobotanists and anthropologists also work with US tribes to identify plants with significant medicinal properties.

The decline in timber harvesting in regions such as the Pacific Northwest, and the accompanying economic impacts on rural forest-dependent communities, has spurred new interest in the gathering of NTFPs, from edible mushrooms to fir boughs to floral ferns, not so much for personal use as for the development of new commercial ventures that can serve as a primary source of employment and income in rural communities. Tribal peoples, as well as immigrants and rural communities, are providing useful information on how to sustainably manage for NTFPs.

Agencies managing public forest lands, where the majority of NTFP gathering takes place in most regions of the US, were largely unprepared for the rapid development of commercial gathering, giving rise to concerns for sustainability (of the NTFPs themselves and of other forest resources affected by NTFP gathering activities) and equity concerns relating to protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and small-scale gatherers. Over the past decade, organizations in the US have devoted substantial effort to research on the variety of NTFPs that are currently or potentially useful, the ecological implications of continued increases in NTFP gathering, and the policy framework needed to ensure sustainability and equity.

## **Background**

In recent years, a new appreciation has developed in the US for traditional forest-related knowledge and its use in managing forestlands. Traditional knowledge has applications for restoration of forestlands, managing for particular species, conserving biodiversity, and using fire as a management tool. This traditional knowledge has been gleaned from indigenous Native American peoples, and also from European American populations that colonized forest areas and came to know them intimately as sources of food, medicine, tools, shelter, and spiritual renewal. A significant literature has developed cataloguing and describing this traditional forest-related knowledge from indigenous cultures and American folk life, prompted by concerns that this knowledge soon could be lost in our rapidly industrializing and urbanizing culture. Tribes, however, are sometimes reluctant to share traditional knowledge with others for a variety of reasons: fear of past and future exploitation, the lack of any true intellectual property rights for traditional knowledge, and the possibility of their knowledge being “corrupted,” or shifting away from its true practice when used by individuals not immersed in their tribal culture.

Forest uses based on traditional knowledge, but taken to a large scale, have in some instances raised new problems in sustainable forest management. There has been a new discovery of the potential value of NTFPs as a key source of income and employment in rural communities suffering from the pressures of economic change. This is especially true in forest-dependent rural communities hurt by the sudden reduction in timber harvesting over the past decade. In many areas, the gathering of NTFPs has gone quickly from occasional gathering for personal use, to regular gathering for supplemental family income, to large commercial enterprises that are the primary source of employment and income for entire communities. This rapid expansion of NTFP gathering activities, particularly on public forest lands, has raised significant questions regarding the ecological, economic and social sustainability of existing systems for managing these resources, and has necessitated an immediate response in both research and policy development.

## Progress on Implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action

As in many parts of the world, sustainable forest management that considers traditional forest-related knowledge and the gathering of NTFPs has not been the object of systematic study until very recently.<sup>12,13</sup> Many studies tend to focus on a limited number of plant and animal species and a few types of products. Results from recent research are making important contributions to our knowledge,<sup>14,15</sup> there are still major shortcomings in our current understanding of the ecological, social and economic aspects of managing NTFP use within the context of sustainable forest management.

A major concern among environmental NGOs and among the NTFP gatherers themselves is whether commercial levels of gathering will negatively affect biological productivity and future supplies of these products. Environmental NGOs themselves have advocated the development and marketing of NTFPs as a way of maintaining rural economies in areas traditionally dependent upon the wood products industry. Several recent studies have shown that uncontrolled market expansion has in some instances led to overharvesting. This has been shown to result in boom-and-bust cycles that have serious negative consequences for rural economies and for the forest resources themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Studies of the use and management of NTFPs by indigenous communities show that many of them rely on a diversity of products in what has been called a “portfolio approach,” rather than concentrating on the gathering of one or a few products. Not only does this spread the economic risk associated with the depletion of one kind of resource or the collapse of a market for that resource, it also maintains biological diversity and soil fertility at much higher levels than would be possible under other types of management.<sup>17</sup> The US has only recently initiated studies to identify ways to apply this approach in regions where NTFP gathering has grown quickly and become a major factor in economic stability in rural communities.

*Inventory.* The US is still developing ways of inventorying NTFPs and monitoring the extent of their use. Because large-scale commercial gathering of NTFPs is still relatively new, authorities in many regions of the US are still working to identify the diversity of NTFPs that have current and potential market value. The US does not yet have systems in place for maintaining uniform or comparable data on the inventory or use of most NTFPs, which is a limitation on domestic and international trade in NTFPs as well as on their sustainable use and management. Some European temperate-forest countries have well-developed protocols for inventory and monitoring

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<sup>12</sup> Jones, E., McLain, R. and Weigand, J. 2002. Nontimber Forest Products in the United States. University Press of Kansas, 424 pp.

<sup>13</sup> Emery, M. and McLain, R. 2001. Non-Timber Forest Products: Medicinal Herbs, Fungi, Edible Fruits and Nuts, and Other Natural Products from the Forest. Haworth Press. 176 pp.

<sup>14</sup> Vance, N. and Thomas, J. 1997. Special Forest Products: Biodiversity Meets the Marketplace. General Technical Report GTR-WO-63. USDA Forest Service.

<sup>15</sup> Von Hagen, B., Weigand, J., McLain, R., Fight, R., and Christensen, H. 1996. Conservation and Development of Nontimber Forest Products in the Pacific Northwest: An Annotated Bibliography. General Technical Report GTR-PNW-375.

<sup>16</sup> Anderson, Anthony B. 1990. Alternatives to deforestation: steps toward sustainable use of the Amazon rain forest. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Alcorn, Janis B. 1984. Development policy, forests, and peasant farms: reflections on Huastec-managed forests' contributions to commercial production and resource conservation. *Economic Botany*. 38 (4): 389-406.

of NTFPs that are of significant commercial value, and the US is examining these protocols for possible adaptation to its own applications.<sup>18 19</sup>

*Social issues.* The US is only now beginning to understand and address a host of social and economic issues associated with the transformation of NTFP gathering from personal use and small family enterprises based on traditional forest-related knowledge, to large capitalized ventures in which large volumes of materials are gathered for processing and distribution in broader markets. Many of these issues have no easy resolution, because they are based on conflicting interpretations of history, precedent, and the inherent rights of different segments of American society.

Access is one such issue, often pitting recognized legal rights of large-scale commercial gatherers against rights based on traditional use by individuals or small enterprises. Contractual agreements and permits for gathering NTFPs on public lands are often awarded competitively, favoring high-volume low-margin operations by large firms. Subsequently denying rights of access by groups that have a long history of gathering in a particular, but have no established tenure rights there, leads to a highly contentious situation with the agency regulating access, and sometimes violence between the two conflicting user groups.

Another such issue is the sovereign rights of indigenous peoples. Many Native American tribes have treaty rights outside reservations, and in recent years they have been increasingly willing to assert those rights through US federal courts. Although the courts often find in favor of the tribes, this is seldom the end of the issue because of patterns of use that have developed over many years by other segments of society.

*Intellectual property rights.* There has been little development in the US of intellectual property rights as they relate to traditional forest-related knowledge. The applications of traditional forest-related knowledge to the use and management of NTFPs has benefited greatly from recent studies of the diversity of uses by Native Americans.<sup>20 21</sup> Ethnographic studies of the uses of NTFPs by indigenous Native Americans have been used to gain insights into the factors that influence their production and sustainability.<sup>22</sup> Although studies such as these have also identified pharmacological uses previously unknown outside the Native American community,<sup>23 24</sup> little has been done in the US to recognize this knowledge as an intellectual property right warranting legal

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<sup>18</sup> Love, T.; Molina, R.; Liegel, L.; Cromack, K. 1993. Biological, socioeconomic and managerial concerns of harvesting edible mushrooms on the Olympic Peninsula and in the southern Appalachians. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State; U.S. Man and the Biosphere; U.S. MAB Temperate Ecosystems. 21 p. [plus appendices].

<sup>19</sup> Russell, Kenelm. 1990. Manufacturing, marketing, and regulatory considerations: forest fungi. Remarks presented at the Special Forest Products Workshop, 8-10 February 1990. Portland, OR. 9 p. On file with: Kenelm Russell, Washington Department of Natural Resources, Olympia, WA 98504.

<sup>20</sup> Hunn, Eugene S.; Turner, Nancy J.; French, David. 1998. Ethnobiology and subsistence. In: Walker, Deward, ed. Handbook of North American Indians, volume 12. Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, Nancy. 1997. Traditional ecological knowledge. In: Schoonmaker, Peter; von Hagen, Bettina; Wolf, Edward C., eds. The rainforests of home: an exploration of people and place. Washington, DC: Island Press.

<sup>22</sup> Boyd, Robert. 1986. Strategies of Indian burning in the Willamette Valley. Canadian Journal of Anthropology. 5(1): 65-86.

<sup>23</sup> Turner, Nancy J. 1982. Traditional use of devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus araliaceae*) by native peoples in western North America. Journal of Ethnobiology. 2(1): 17-38.

<sup>24</sup> Turner, Nancy J.; Hebda, Richard J. 1990. Contemporary use of bark for medicine by two Salishan native elders of southeast Vancouver Island, Canada. Journal of Ethnopharmacology. 29: 59-72.

and economic protection. On the other hand, intellectual property rights are being developed for many newly-discovered medicinal or pharmacological uses of NTFPs, such as the use of Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) to produce a powerful anti-cancer drug known as taxol, the rights to which were held as a patent by the drug company that discovered this use through its own independent research.<sup>25</sup>

The use of traditional forest-related knowledge is being advanced in the US, not so much by policy but by market forces. The strong market demand for non-timber forest products of all kinds, combined with the economic opportunities this presents to rural communities struggling to survive, is resulting in far more rapid development than was anticipated by most—so rapid that it has raised many difficult issues that current policy is ill-prepared to address. The resources being devoted by forestry agencies to research and policy development to address these issues are significantly more than in the past, but far less than is needed. As a result, the economic and legal conflicts among user groups, indigenous peoples and local communities can be expected to continue and increase.

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<sup>25</sup> Wolf, Edward; Wortman, David. 1992. Pacific yew management on National Forests: a biological and policy analysis. Northwest Environmental Journal. 8: 347-366.

## Scientific forest related knowledge

Summary of Proposals for Action	IPF	IFF
<b>A. Functional interaction between science and policy</b> Improve linkages between scientific research and policy processes and involve guidance from all the interested parties.		96c
<b>B. Setting the research priorities and addressing the knowledge gaps</b> Set research needs and priorities nationally, regionally and globally, to address knowledge gaps, and promote and strengthen research efforts in support of SFM.		96a 97d
<b>C. Diversifying funding for research.</b> Mobilize funding for forest research: examine new ways to mobilize funding for forest research to accomplish its objectives and build capacity at the national, regional and global levels)		96b
<b>D. Integrating research into the planning process</b>	17e	

### Introduction

The US has well developed systems for developing and disseminating new scientific information relating to the conservation and sustainable use of forests. During the past decade, these systems have been augmented by initiatives aimed at incorporating a quickly evolving body of scientific information relating to a particular issue (e.g., biodiversity conservation, climate mitigation, invasive species), usually involving a diverse network of universities, government agencies, corporations and NGOs. Improving the use of current science in policymaking is a goal widely shared among forest conservation organizations, whether public, private or NGO, but most of these organizations express frustration at the degree to which other factors seem to influence policy decisions. In some instances, this is due to uncertainty or a lack of consensus on scientific findings among scientists themselves. In many instances, however, this is due to the influence of other economic or social considerations that naturally must be considered in any democratically elected constitutional government.

### Background

Soon after the creation of the Forest Service in 1905, the agency began to establish forest experiment stations at locations around the United States, and to develop cooperative research programs with forestry schools at several universities. The results of this research were widely disseminated through bulletins, technical reports, books, films, and professional journals. Professional societies developed in forestry, wildlife, water, soil conservation and other forest resource-related fields, with annual technical meetings designed to promote information exchange among both scientists and forest managers. Active outreach and education programs were developed to bring relevant scientific information directly to the private forest owners who hold three-fifths of US forest land.

The institutional and policy framework for the development and dissemination of scientific information related to forests subsequently was reinforced by federal laws, especially the McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 582)<sup>26</sup> and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable

<sup>26</sup> 16 U.S.C. 582. McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962. P.L. 87-788, 76 Stat. 806, as amended.

Resources Research Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 1641-1648).<sup>27</sup> The McIntire-Stennis Act recognized that research is the driving force behind technological advances in the protection and use of forest resources. It provided for financial assistance for cooperative research between the federal government and the state universities, coordination on research priorities guided by an appointed council, and apportionment of federal funds consistent with those priorities. The Renewable Resources Research Act recognized the need for an expanded role for forestry research to address growing threats from deforestation, over-harvesting, atmospheric pollutants and “other causes that pose a direct adverse threat to people, the global environment, and the world economy.” It also expanded the forestry research advisory council to include scientists from a broader array of disciplines, including atmospheric, ecological and biological sciences.

The onset of specific threats to the health and productivity of forest ecosystems has spurred additional initiatives to closely track changes in forest conditions, monitor quickly evolving scientific information regarding these specific threats, and expedite the application of new science to forest management decision making. For example, significant additional research resources were dedicated to an effort to understand a relatively rapid decline in forest health, apparently caused by acid precipitation from sulfur dioxide, nitric oxide and other atmospheric pollutants from the combustion of fossil fuels. The effort was made more urgent by the extensiveness of the damage to temperate forests in both North America and Europe, and the transboundary nature of much of this air pollution. More recently, research on air pollution effects on forests has expanded to include the buildup of atmospheric carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and the effects of climatic change on general forest health, growth rates, regeneration, pest infestations and wildfires.

In the 1980s and 90s considerable emphasis was given to understanding forests as ecosystems. The apparent acceleration in the extinctions of plant and animal species in temperate as well as tropical forests has stimulated a multi-faceted research program by government agencies, NGOs and the private sector to: catalogue all the existing species and their ranges; identify the factors that contribute to the decline of rare, local, threatened or endangered species; and devise strategies designed to halt the decline and promote the recovery of populations of sensitive species.

More recently, research efforts have been established to better understand the potential role of forests in mitigating greenhouse gas accumulation through carbon sequestration in forest biomass and soils. Recently, considerable effort has been spent to understand criteria and indicators, how they can be used, data sources and data collection.

### **Progress on Implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action**

A commonly stated goal of nearly every organization involved in sustainable forest management is an improvement in “science-based policymaking.” There is a general expectation that a better understanding and appreciation of current science by policymakers will lead to more sound and sustainable forest management than can be arrived at simply through political maneuvering by competing interests. Several organizations have developed to advance this goal, such as the National Center for Science and the Environment (NCSE). Substantial progress has been made toward this goal in the US, but not necessarily to the satisfaction of any one interest or perspective.

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<sup>27</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1641-1648. Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Research Act. P.L. 95-307, 92 Stat. 353, as amended.

In many instances, especially in areas in which the science itself is evolving rapidly, there is no definitive consensus among the scientists themselves over the direction that forest policy or forest management should take. For example, many wildlife biologists supported a provision in the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 (note))<sup>28</sup> that required the dispersal of forest openings created by timber harvesting in order to maximize “edge” habitat, provide security cover, and encourage full habitat utilization by species unlikely to venture into large forest openings. Later research showed that this approach to forest management resulted in habitat fragmentation that was detrimental to many wildlife populations. Similarly, the removal of woody debris from streams was once considered an important component in sound, environmentally-sensitive forest management. Later research showed that coarse woody debris plays an essential role in nutrient cycling, structure, species diversity and biological productivity of streams. These and other examples of changing science have taught policymakers and scientists themselves important lessons regarding the incorporation of science that is dynamic and evolving, into laws that are relatively static and inflexible.

The United States today has a diverse and well-developed network of public, private and nonprofit organizations conducting forest-related research and disseminating the results through a variety of print and electronic media. Policymakers at the federal and state levels generally understand and support the need for a continued strong forest research capability, and they generally utilize available scientific information as one component in the inherently political process of policy decision making.

In part because so much of forestry research in the US is publicly funded, current research priorities as established by such bodies as the National Science Foundation, the Cooperative State Research and Environmental Education Service (CSREES), and the Forestry Research Advisory Council tend to reflect the major forestry issues currently requiring near-term action by policymakers. Forest scientists in the US have expressed concern that this tendency, in combination with what many see as declining financial resources available for ongoing forest-related research, is resulting in a loss of research capacity in several important areas of forest science.<sup>29</sup>

A perceived gap between forest science and forest practice was the basis for the recent formation of the National Commission on Science for Sustainable Forestry (NCSSF), a program of NCSE funded primarily by foundations and other private sources. The Commission is composed of a diverse group of scientists, forest managers and stakeholder interests, and concentrates on synthesis of scientific information for forestry practitioners to enable them to better conserve biological diversity in forests. Where critical gaps in current science are identified, NCSSF competitively awards grants to scientists at universities and other scientific organizations to conduct the research necessary to address these knowledge gaps.

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<sup>28</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1600 (note). National Forest Management Act of 1976. P.L. 94-588, 90 Stat. 2949, as amended.

<sup>29</sup> National Research Council. 2002. National Capacity in Forestry Research. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.; National Research Council. 1990. Forestry Research: A Mandate for Change. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.

**Monitoring, assessment and reporting using  
criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management**

Summary of Proposals for Action	IPF	IFF
<p><b>A. Collection and dissemination of national information on forests</b> Improve national forest resource assessments and make information related to sustainable forest management widely available</p>		17a 17b
<p><b>B. Improved and streamlined international reporting and information systems on forests</b> Develop improved and streamlined reporting and information systems to assist in the collection, verification, synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of information on progress in sustainable forest management and financial resources for SFM</p>		19a
<p><b>C. Develop, test and implement criteria and indicators with full participation of all interested parties</b> Develop, field test and promote the use of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, including by integrating them into national forest programmes and national forest assessments and using them to monitor trends and promote best forest management practices</p>	17d 89a 115a 115b	17d

**Introduction**

Since the United States became a party to the agreement on the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators (C&I), virtually all information in the monitoring, assessment and reporting on forests and forest management has been adapted to the C&I framework. For this reason, the US report combines two sections in the UNFF Secretariat’s suggested reporting format (Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting; and, Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management) into a single integrated section.

**Background**

The first US report on conditions and trends in its forests to be developed entirely on the basis of the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators (C&I) was issued in September 2003 (USDA Forest Service 2003). This *National Report on Sustainable Forests 2003* is the latest step in a decade-long process of re-examining US forests through the lens of the C&I, identifying information gaps to be filled, and setting the stage for taking decisive action on the conservation and sustainable management of US forests based upon the most thorough and comprehensive information ever assembled.

Assessments of conditions and trends in US forests have steadily improved since the first *Report Upon Forestry*, prepared by Dr. Franklin B. Hough in 1877.<sup>30</sup> The study was accomplished for \$2,000, and 25,000 copies were distributed by the USDA Division of Forestry in 1878. The

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<sup>30</sup> Hough, F. 1878. *Report Upon Forestry*. Division of Forestry, US Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC.

assessment gained the attention of policymakers and the public, describing the extensiveness of US forest resources, but also the rapid rate of deforestation taking place and its implications for future timber supplies. This assessment was instrumental in the passage of the 1891 Forest Reserve Act, which authorized the creation of numerous public forest reserves and laid the foundation for today's US National Forest System.

A century later, with demands on US forests having multiplied many times over, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (16 U.S.C. 1600 (note)) (RPA)<sup>31</sup> required the US Forest Service to prepare a comprehensive assessment of US forests every ten years, with special attention to the current and projected supply and demand for all major resources. The RPA also required the Forest Service to prepare a strategic plan, to be updated every five years, to describe a longer term program of work designed to address the challenges and opportunities identified in the assessment. The strategic plan also provided Congress a longer term perspective in its consideration of annual budget appropriations to the Forest Service.

### **Progress on Implementation of the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action**

The 2000 RPA Assessment of Forest and Rangelands is the first of these assessments to be organized generally on the framework of the Montréal Process Criteria and Indicators.<sup>32</sup> Following US agreement to participate in the Montréal Process in 1994, a First Approximation Report was developed to examine the extent to which information already being gathered on US forests met the requirements of the C&I. Three categories emerged, C&I for which: (1) current data collection in the US is adequate, (2) current data collection is not adequate, but techniques for gathering the data are sufficiently well understood to support data collection in the future, and (3) current data collection is inadequate, and suitable techniques for data collection are not yet available. Since the First Approximation Report, federal and state forestry agencies have striven to recast their periodic assessments in the mold provided by the C&I. They have redoubled their own efforts, and cooperative efforts with universities and other research organizations, to discover effective, cost-efficient mechanisms to monitor, assess and report on the full range of ecological, economic and social aspects of forests described in the C&I.

The culmination of this effort to date is the *National Report on Sustainable Forests 2003*.<sup>33</sup> The *National Report of Sustainable Forests* was written over a period of three years by a team of more than 20 individuals from federal and state agencies, universities, and NGOs. The development of the report was continuously monitored and guided in an open process, known generally as the Roundtable on Sustainable Forestry, in which the full range and diversity of government agencies, NGOs, universities, businesses, and interested individuals participated on a voluntary basis. During the development of the *National Report*, there were several facilitated meetings of the Roundtable in which participants raised questions, offered advice, and provided useful information to supplement that already appearing in the report. A complete draft of the report was made available in print and electronic form in November 2002. The release of the final report was announced at the World Forestry Congress in September 2003.

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<sup>31</sup> 16 U.S.C. 1600-1614. Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974. P.L. 93-378, 88 Stat. 476, as amended.

<sup>32</sup> USDA Forest Service. 2001. 2000 RPA Assessment of Forest and Rangelands. FS-687. USDA Forest Service, Washington, DC. Also available at: [www.fs.fed.us/pl/rpa](http://www.fs.fed.us/pl/rpa)

<sup>33</sup> USDA Forest Service. 2003. National Report on Sustainable Forests—2003. USDA Forest Service, Washington, DC. Also available at: [www.fs.fed.us/research/sustain](http://www.fs.fed.us/research/sustain).

Looking at conditions and trends in US forests in terms of 7 criteria and 67 different indicators it is difficult to arrive at a clear and simple determination of whether or not US forests are being sustainably managed. A key conclusion in the report reads as follows:

“The information we have about the criteria and indicators suggests, not surprisingly, that there is good news and bad news; reason for optimism and pessimism, depending on your viewpoint and on which indicators you consider. We do not suggest any conclusion about our current state of sustainability. Rather, we assert that the indicators must be interpreted in the total context of all the criteria and their associated indicators. They are richly interwoven. A positive movement in one might promote a negative change in some and a positive change in yet others. As we learn of changes, influences, and effects, we respond in turn as a society. The value of the indicators, viewed ensemble, is that they provide a common base of information that all parties can use to inform our understanding and improve our response. Ultimately, it is an individual matter to interpret the information, and our individual interpretations will lead to a collective societal response that will continue the evolution of the social framework that surrounds the notion of sustainable forest management.”

The portrait of US forests depicted in the *National Report on Sustainable Forests* is complex, and US progress toward sustainability is marked by both prevailing and countervailing trends. The Roundtable on Sustainable Forestry was careful to focus its efforts on fostering accurate, factual descriptions of current conditions and trends; the Roundtable chose to defer discussion of whether or not a given condition or trend was acceptable or unacceptable, recognizing the differences that would surely arise in a group of participants so diverse in its perspectives.

Now that process can begin. It is expected that discussions over the coming months will focus on determining what actions should be taken in response to the findings in the *National Report on Sustainable Forests*. Citizens of all perspectives will be asked for their views on the acceptability or unacceptability of conditions and trends in the various indicators. Inspired in part by previous efforts such as the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action, these citizens will be asked their views on the adequacy of the collective efforts of public, private and NGO organizations in the US to address the conditions described in the *National Report on Sustainable Forests*. They will be asked for their ideas for additional actions that can be taken to better respond to their own needs and the Proposals for Action. Finally, they will be asked for their sense of the priorities that should be attached to each of the potential additional actions, recognizing that some matters are more pressing than others, and that human and financial resources are not unlimited.

Over the past century, the US has made substantial progress in its assessments of its forests, and this progress will continue in the decades ahead. Through cooperative and technical assistance programs, the US is already assisting other nations in their development of useful assessments of their own forest resources, recognizing that this is a necessary first step toward conserving and sustainably managing forest resources. The US also looks forward to learning from other nations, as together all nations move forward toward the economically, socially and ecologically sustainable management of the world's forests.

### **III. Preparation of the Report**

This preliminary report is intended to describe the policies, program and activities in the United States that address the IPF/IFF Proposals for Action to be discussed at the fourth session of the UN Forum on Forests in 2004. Included are activities of the central government, but also state and local governments, private industry and nongovernmental organizations.

This preliminary report was prepared by the Pinchot Institute for Conservation for the USDA Forest Service International Programs Office and the US Department of State. Individuals from the US State Department, the USDA Forest Service, the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the US Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Association of State Foresters, and various academic experts reviewed the preliminary report. A broader discussion of the adequacy of US programs for addressing supporting UNFF 4 related Proposals for Action, and priorities for additional actions, will take place in early 2004, and will involve a broad diversity of federal natural resource and environmental agencies.

Later in 2004, a broader set of public, private and nongovernmental organizations will participate in a comprehensive review of all current US policies, programs and activities that address the IPF/IFF Proposal for Action. This review will subsume all of the themes addressed in the second, third and fourth sessions of the UN Forum on Forests. A subsequent final country report from the US, to be completed in 2005 for the fifth and final session of UNFF, will convey the results of this review by a broad diversity of stakeholder organizations in the US.