

## Backgrounder

### THE INTERNATIONAL MODEL FORESTS PROGRAM

The International Model Forests Program was announced by Canada at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The first stage of the program is the establishment of model forests in three countries, building on Canada's domestic Model Forests Program now being implemented. Total funding of \$10 million, or approximately \$3.3 million for each of the three international partners, is provided by the Green Plan International Partnerships Fund administered by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

A model forest is a working forest managed on sound environmental principles by a partnership of government, industry, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and Indigenous and community groups. The forest may be used for a variety of purposes, including timber production, conservation, wildlife habitat and ecotourism. In balancing these and other activities, model forest sites demonstrate sustainable forest management in action by meeting both economic and environmental goals.

The International Model Forests Program supports key Canadian foreign policy objectives. It fulfils a number of commitments made in Rio de Janeiro as part of Agenda 21, including the provision of new and additional financial resources and the promotion of technology transfer. The program also addresses a fundamental obstacle to progress toward a Global Forests Convention: the absence of a clearly understood definition of sustainable forest management. The program does not promote any one definition; rather, it proposes criteria such as multiple forest values (i.e. protection of wildlife, habitat, watershed protection, cultural values, harvesting, etc.) and the need to develop local solutions through participatory decision making involving government, industry, NGOs, community and Indigenous groups.

The long-term objective of the International Model Forests Program is for nations to arrive together at a better understanding of sustainable forest management through international co-operation, both in building working-scale projects and in maintaining an interactive network among all participants.

Russia is the second of three participants in the International Model Forests Program. Mexico was the first country to accept the Canadian invitation, and two sites are being established in that country. The third partner has not yet been confirmed.