

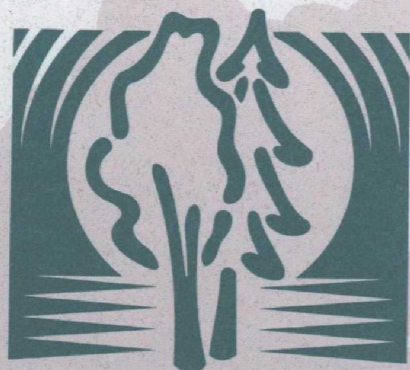
# Canada's Model Forests Go International

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Canada committed \$10 million from the Canadian Green Plan International Partnerships Fund to establish international model forest sites in three countries. This initiative builds on the domestic Model Forests Program, established under the National Forest Strategy, and serves as the first step toward a global network for the exchange of information and technology on sustainable forest management. Canada's Model Forests Program includes 10 sites from coast to coast. It covers over six million hectares, representing the principal forest regions in Canada.

A model forest is a working forest managed on sound environmental principles by a partnership of industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, 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 the economic and environmental goals.

The International Model Forests Program supports key Canadian foreign policy objectives. It fulfills a number of commitments made as part of Agenda 21, including the provision of 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 (e.g., protection of wildlife habitat, watershed protection, cultural values, harvesting) and the need to develop local solutions through participatory decision making that includes all parties with an interest in the forest.



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.

The first country to join Canada in the program is Mexico, where two sites are being established. One site is located in a temperate forest region in the state of Chihuahua, while the other site is in a tropical forest region in the state of Campeche.

Russia was the second country to join in the program. The Gassinskoe model forest site in Russia's Khabarovsk Territory will include over 270 000 hectares of forest land, primarily consisting of

pine and broad-leaved trees. Discussions are now taking place with Malaysia to be the third partner.

Canadians respect the role forests play in the global context, and understand the need to work with international partners to ensure that sustainable forests stand worldwide. At this stage, the focus is on building a strong international network of model forests that will serve as a framework for nations as they work toward agreement on what constitutes sustainable forest management. Over time, the goal is to expand the network into a self-sustaining global network, involving both developed and developing countries.

## The Model Forest of Chihuahua

The Chihuahua Model Forest, with an area of 110 067 ha, is located in the state of Chihuahua, in the northern part of the Western Sierra Madre Range. The model forest area includes more than 47 178 ha of commercially productive forest lands, limited agricultural land, small-scale fishing and hunting activities, and the opportunity for increased tourism and recreation development.

The Chihuahua Model Forest partners outlined some of their goals for the Model Forest Program:

"We want to preserve the future of the forests of Sierra Tarahumara by improving forest management techniques that will in turn allow for greater growth and development. At the same time, we shall be seeking to tap other resources, such as ecotourism, fish, farms, improved regional crops, tree nurseries and



handicrafts, so that the rural people of Chihuahua can find sources of income that represent alternatives to the forest itself. In this way, we hope to systematically reduce the impact of man on the forests."

"We wish to protect the environment by means of remedial practices such as the control of urban garbage in rural areas, and conservation of the biodiversity of the region. We intend to give special importance to certain threatened plant and animal species, notably the *Picea Chihuahuana* [an endangered species of spruce]."

"We will raise cultural awareness of the environment among both residents and visitors, through educational outreach activities aimed at all levels of society."

The Chihuahua Model Forest involves the participation of environmental, aboriginal, community, government, industry

and academic partners with interests in the forest.

## The Model Forest of Calakmul

The 380 000-ha Model Forest of Calakmul is located in the southwest of Campeche State and includes or is adjacent to the largest remaining area of tropical rainforest in Mexico. The forest is a mix of high and low tropical rain forest, depending on the drainage and soil conditions. Like all tropical rain forests, the area contains hundreds of plant and animal species, and has among the highest levels of biodiversity in the world.

The Calakmul Model Forest partners highlighted some of their key activities for the project:

- the examination of alternative economic development opportunities and their potential impact on environmental quality and social benefits;

- expanded research into forest ecology, water quality, and wildlife habitat; and

- the expansion of silviculture techniques to ensure a healthy and productive integration of agricultural and forest production.

The Calakmul Model Forest will also be a central focus for the collection and integrated analysis of information about communities, economic activities, and the forest ecosystems of the area. The establishment of proper surveys of the area and biological inventories will be undertaken.

The Calakmul Model Forest project includes the participation of environmental, aboriginal, community, government, industry and academic partners with interests in the forest.