

Backgrounder

MODEL FOREST PROGRAM

Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced the International Model Forest Program 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 Forest Program now being implemented.

A model forest is a working forest managed on sound environmental principles by a partnership of government, industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and indigenous and community groups. The forest may be used for a variety of purposes including timber production, conservation, wildlife habitat and eco-tourism. 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 Forest Program supports key Canadian foreign policy objectives. It fulfils a number of commitments made in Rio as part of Agenda 21, including providing new and additional financial resources and promoting the transfer of technology. 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., concerns of industry, NGOs, community and indigenous groups) and the need to develop local solutions.

The objective of the International Model Forest 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 SELECTION PROCESS FOR MEXICO'S MODEL FOREST SITES

The Mexican government responded positively to Canada's offer to participate in the Model Forest Program during an initial briefing in mid-January to Carlos Hank Gonzalez, Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources, by David Winfield, Canada's Ambassador to Mexico.

The Mexican government, after inviting letters of intent from eight regions of the country, received six submissions. The submissions came from the states of Chihuahua, Jalisco, Durango and Michoacán in the temperate forest region, and Campeche and