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# news release

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## CANADA'S MODEL FORESTS GO INTERNATIONAL: AGREEMENT REACHED WITH MEXICO

External Affairs Minister Perrin Beatty and Natural Resources Minister-designate Barbara Sparrow today announced an agreement with the Government of Mexico to establish two model forests. The Mexican sites will be located in a temperate forest region in the state of Chihuahua, and in a tropical forest region in the state of Campeche.

This joint Canada-Mexico initiative represents the first phase of the \$10-million International Model Forest Program announced at the June 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

"Canada is delighted to have Mexico as its first international partner in the model forest program," said Mr. Beatty. "This announcement demonstrates that our Earth Summit commitments to promote international co-operation on this critical sustainable development issue are very much alive."

"This international initiative underlines Canadian leadership in global efforts to define and implement standards of sustainable forest management," said Ms. Sparrow. "It will only be through co-operative action and the sharing of expertise, through initiatives such as the model forests, that we can succeed in preserving the world's forests for future generations," she added.

The International Model Forest Program, launched under the auspices of the Green Plan International Partnerships Program, will support model forests in three countries as the first step in creating a global network of model forests. In the case of Mexico, Canada will contribute \$3 million for the establishment of two model forests, with matching funding from the Mexican government.

The International Model Forest Program builds on Canada's Model Forest Program which includes the development of 10 domestic sites from coast to coast. This network represents the principal forest regions in Canada and covers over 6 million hectares.

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## 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

Oaxaca in the tropical forest region. A review panel was created by the Mexican government to identify the most promising proposals for submission to Canada. The panel was chaired by Deputy Minister of Forests and Wildlife Manuel Mondragón, and included senior officials from government and academia.

The review process was designed by the Mexican government; however, it closely followed the Canadian model forest review process. First, each proposal was examined for applicability to the program criteria. Proposals meeting the basic criteria were then rated on several factors including management structure, activities, technology transfer and communications, and leveraged funding. The review committee met to reach a consensus decision and made final recommendations to Professor Gonzalez.

#### **CANADA'S MODEL FOREST NETWORK**

The development of Canada's network of model forests is the core of the Partners for Sustainable Development of Forests, the major forestry component of the Green Plan, the federal government's comprehensive environmental action plan.

The Model Forest Program establishes a network of large-scale projects that represent the major forest regions of Canada. The network also represents a variety of values, such as wildlife, biodiversity, watersheds and fisheries in addition to the traditional value of fibre supply. The network is intended to demonstrate, on a working scale, how to manage forest ecosystems within the context of sustainable development.