



**30**  
1995-2025  
YEARS

**A History of SFI  
& the Pennsylvania  
SFI Implementation  
Committee  
1995 - 2025**



**SUSTAINABLE  
FORESTRY  
INITIATIVE  
PENNSYLVANIA**

SFI-01141

**[www.sfiofpa.org](http://www.sfiofpa.org)**

## **A LEGACY ROOTED IN PEOPLE, PURPOSE, AND THE PLANET**

At first glance, the name Sustainable Forestry Initiative may seem to suggest a focus solely on trees and timber, but at its core, our organization's story is really about people coming together to answer one of humanity's most pressing questions: "How can we live off the resources of this earth without spoiling them?"

SFI is a testament to the power of community, vision, and collective action. It's a story of forward-thinking leaders in the forest products industry who, decades ago, recognized the need for change. They understood that true sustainability wasn't just about conservation — it was also about people. It was about ensuring that communities, workers, and ecosystems could thrive together, and not just for today, but for generations to come.

SFI's journey is a powerful reminder that when people come together with purpose and passion, they can turn challenges into opportunities. It's a call to action for all of us — to recognize the value of our natural world, to utilize forests responsibly, and to work collaboratively towards a sustainable future.

Compiled by Chuck Coup, 2025

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In the past, forest product companies owned and managed forests primarily for a simple economic objective – profit from timber production. As the U.S. economy roared through the 1950s and 1960s, companies used their ingenuity and experience with sound forest management to meet the country's ever-increasing demand for wood products, generating economic activity that supported local industries and communities.

However, evolving public concerns began to be raised about whether forest products companies were considering the impacts arising from their activities. Several new terms began to enter the popular vocabulary – terms like biodiversity, habitat conservation, and ecosystem services. The prevailing management policy shifted from “sustained yield forestry,” which emphasized maintaining a constant flow of timber from the forest, to “sustainable forestry,” which sought to sustain all forest values, including non-timber values, such as wildlife habitat and water quality.

In the 1980s, the public and organized environmental interest groups had become increasingly concerned about the effect forest products companies, particularly the large industrialized forest-product companies in the U.S., were having on the environment. The forest products industry was realizing at the time that it had a credibility problem. It was viewed as part of the problem rather than part of the solution, and companies spent much of the previous decade on the defensive - fighting major lawsuits, public hearings, work stoppages, and boisterous demonstrations that sometimes turned violent. In Pennsylvania, new research was beginning to raise concerns that sound silvicultural practices were lacking throughout the state. Not everyone agreed that things were so bad, but the tide was turning and something needed to be done.

In response, the U.S. forest products industry launched a series of initiatives in the early 1990s to improve transparency and sustainability.

In October 1990, the American Forest Council, an education and outreach organization that supplemented the lobbying activities of the American Paper Institute (API) and the National Forest Products Association (NFPA) – the two national trade associations representing most of the forest products industry in the United States at the time, convened a “Future of Forestry Conference” to examine public concerns regarding management of private

forests. A task force was formed to develop specific recommendations for improving forestry practices across the forest products industry. At the same time, API was crafting a set of environmental, health, and safety principles for pulp and paper manufacturing. These efforts eventually converged and on May 12, 1992, API adopted a set of 10 Forest Management Principles, drawing influence from global sustainability efforts such as the 1987 Bruntland Commission's report on sustainable development ("Our Common Future") and the Principles of Forest Management from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The new API principles, and their required adoption by all API members, laid the foundation.

In February 1992, NFPA commissioned public opinion research to assess perceptions of the forest product industry's forest management practices. The study revealed a significant perception gap between industry leaders and other influential groups, such as politicians, media, academia, and environmental organizations. While industry CEOs believed their weakness in public support stemmed from poor communications, each of the other groups saw it as a behavioral issue that was undermining their credibility. The research was clear; instead of seeking cosmetic changes through public relations messaging, the industry had to adopt real substantive changes in its performance if it was going to regain public confidence.

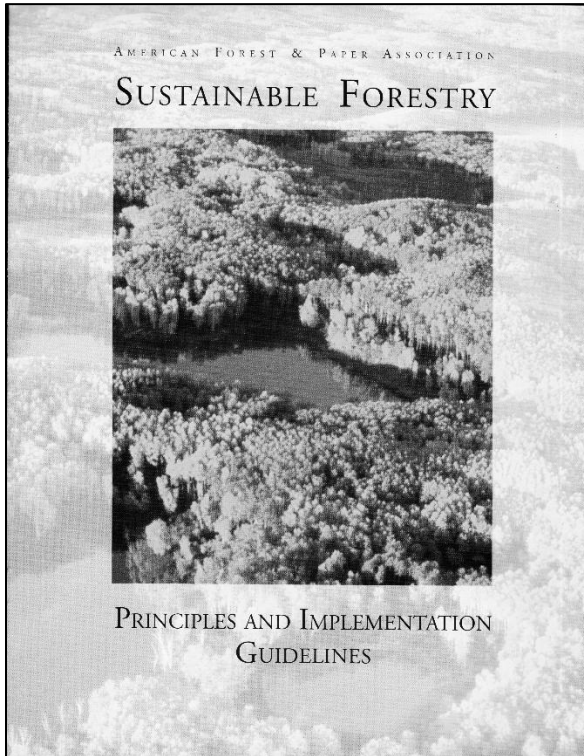
## THE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

API and NFPA merged on January 1, 1993 to form the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA), and the following year the industry CEOs launched a nationwide, collaborative effort with industry leaders, foresters, and stakeholders to develop and refine a strategic plan for improving the industry's credibility. The program that evolved, the cornerstone of the strategic plan, was the **Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®)**, a "proof-of-performance" program that would "visibly improve industrial forest practices and report results."

After being approved by the AF&PA Board of Directors on October 14, 1994, the new SFI Program was officially rolled out on January 1, 1995.

The heart of the program was the "Sustainable Forestry Principles and Implementation Guidelines" that represented, in writing, the

industry's commitment to fundamentally improve. The guidelines established clear objectives and performance measures by which the public could evaluate whether AF&PA members were meeting their commitments.



The Principles and Guidelines were introduced to members as “...working documents, open to occasional revision and modification as we improve our understanding of both forest management and program implementation.”

With a goal of enhancing the environment and improving public confidence by visibly changing the practice of forestry on industrial and other private forest lands, AF&PA members, who represented approximately 85% of the paper production, 50% of the solid wood production, and 90% of the industrial forestlands in the United States, were committing to a program of self-regulation and continuous improvement.

Compliance with the SFI Guidelines became a condition of continued membership in AF&PA on January 1, 1996. To prove the SFI Program was more than just a public relations gimmick, as some claimed, in 1996, during a period of significant downsizing (The AF&PA budget had been cut by nearly a third in the previous two years), the association suspended the membership of 17 noncompliant companies. At the time, AF&PA spokesman Luke Popovich stated “If this were simply a PR gimmick, we wouldn’t be losing members over it.”

## **THE EXPERT REVIEW PANEL**

As the SFI Program was being established in 1995, the AF&PA Board of Directors formed the Independent Expert Review Panel (renamed External Review Panel in 2001), a diverse group of outside forestry experts that were invited to voluntarily provide external quality control for the SFI Program and advise the AF&PA Board of Directors on appropriate changes to help SFI achieve its mission. Panel members included representatives from conservation, academic, professional, and government organizations.

The Expert Review Panel was challenged to observe whether: 1) the program defined what would constitute responsible, sustainable forestry first in the United States, and later in Canada; 2) the responsible forestry practices reported to the public were valid (independent third-party auditing would be added later); and 3) there were consequences for those who either would not participate in the new forestry approach that was proposed, or who said they were doing good work but were proven to be doing otherwise.

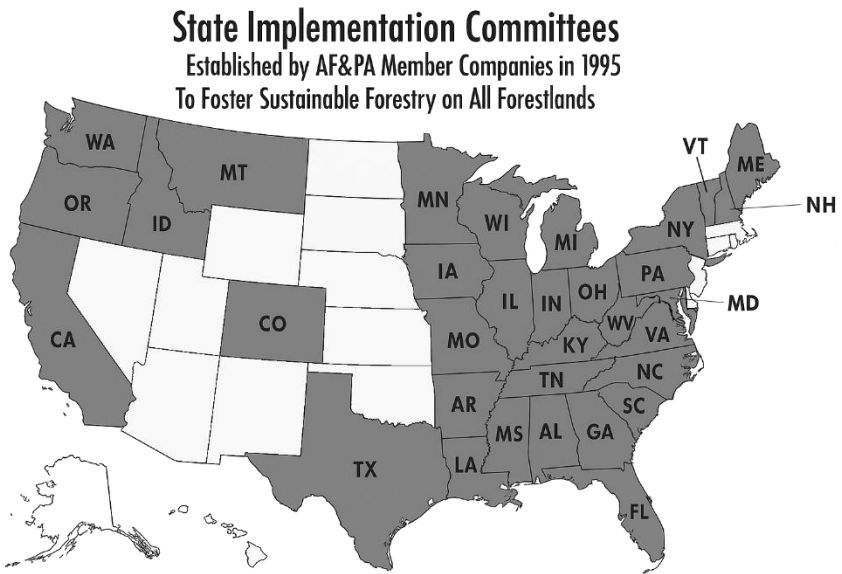
In 1997, the Panel adopted an independent operating charter and began to select its own membership and develop its own agenda to represent the public interest as an outside observer of the SFI Program.

Former State Forester and Director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry (1994 to 2007), Jim Grace served as a member of the SFI External Review Panel from 2001 to 2008.

Today, the SFI External Review Panel continues to provide ongoing independent review of SFI and its work (<https://sfierp.org/>).

## IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

From the beginning, the AF&PA program managers recognized that the principles and practices of sustainable forestry laid out in SFI's new guidelines could not be applied in a "one-size-fits-all" manner. Forests across the United States vary significantly in terms of ecosystem types, climate, biodiversity, and socio-economic factors. As a result, a more decentralized, locally focused approach was necessary to implement the SFI Program. Therefore, as part of the 1995 rollout, AF&PA Members began to form "State Implementation Committees" (originally referred to as "state groups" in Objective 10 of the SFI Guidelines) made up of diverse stakeholders that could provide a more locally focused approach for implementing the SFI Program across a wide variety of forest types and regional conditions in the United States.



The State Committees were made up of local AF&PA members working in cooperation with state, regional, and national forestry and logging associations, state and federal agencies, academia, professional and conservation organizations, consulting foresters, and landowner technical assistance programs. The Committees attempted to be as inclusive as possible in their formation. By

involving a variety of local and national stakeholders and experts, the State Implementation Committees helped ensure that the SFI Program was both rigorous and adaptable to different contexts. This grassroots network of Committees, unique to SFI among forest certification systems, even today, allowed the program to be more responsive to local concerns and build greater trust with stakeholders by fostering collaboration between groups with differing perspectives and opinions on managed forests.

Today, nearly 1,000 people comprise the 35 SFI Implementation Committees (SICs) that operate across the United States and Canada.

## **PENNSYLVANIA'S IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

The Pennsylvania SFI Implementation Committee (PA SIC) was formed in 1995, and became organizationally "housed" within the Hardwood Lumber Manufacturers Association of Pennsylvania (HLMA; now the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association) the following year. HLMA provided administrative support to the Committee.

Pennsylvania's Implementation Committee met for the very first time on June 2, 1995, at the South Ridge Motor Inn (presently defunct) in State College. It was co-chaired by John Skovran of Procter & Gamble and David Haag of International Paper. Although they were a SFI State Implementation Committee, the group started under the name "Pennsylvania Forest Sustainability Committee" and quickly pivoted to "Forest Industry Committee for Sustaining Pennsylvania Forests." On November 14, 1996, the members decided that the program should operate under the name "Sustainable Forestry Initiative of Pennsylvania" and the Committee became the "SFI of PA State Implementation Committee."

Like other State Implementation Committees, the early focus was on the difficult work of establishing itself as an organization, generating operating funds (the Implementation Committees were, and still are, completely self-funded), building broad support, and developing the collaborative programming that would achieve the new SFI Guidelines.

The PA SIC had their work cut out for them. The Guidelines required that AF&PA members not only practice sustainable



forestry on their own lands, but also reach beyond and promote good forestry on private lands by educating loggers and private forest landowners. It was therefore a challenge, to say the least, to develop the SFI Program in a state where the majority of private forestlands are not industry owned, rather, they are held by more than a half-million nonindustrial private forest landowners. Furthermore, the forest products industry was largely composed of a collection of small sawmills and a large, unorganized workforce of independent loggers; both difficult groups to engage. To make matters worse, change did not come easily. Many felt that improvement was not needed and what they had been doing for years was working just fine. Entrenched mindsets and behaviors had to be challenged and changed.

The initial purpose of the SFI State Implementation Committees was to develop the best and most effective ways to:

- Promote training and education of loggers, contractors, suppliers, and member company employees involved in procurement and landowner assistance;
- Educate and assist non-industrial private landowners and encourage them to apply the principles of sustainable forestry management on their lands;
- Support and promote appropriate mechanisms for public outreach, education, and involvement in forest management;
- Promote state-level reporting with regard to the overall rate of reforestation; and
- Establish and implement protection measures for all perennial streams and lakes, and involve a panel of experts at the state level to help identify goals and objectives.

In the early years, numerous questions on how to implement the SFI guidelines in Pennsylvania needed to be worked out. The PA

SIC made a conscious effort to include a representative cross-section of forest sector stakeholders, which meant members representing conflicting interests and opinions were sitting at the same table. "At times the atmosphere of the SIC was cooperative, other times it was intense, and sometimes downright heated and confrontational," recalled former PA SIC member and Chair, Tom Buzby. "The group had to slowly work their way through a lot of uncharted territory. A great deal of credit goes to these guys for getting a brand-new program going and sustaining it under some very difficult circumstances."

While discussions were contentious at times, the committee meetings themselves provided value beyond development of the SFI Program. "The SIC meetings provided tremendous benefit in that they created a forum in which all segments of Pennsylvania's forest sector could come together and gain a better understanding of each other," noted Dan Evans, former PA SIC Chair and an original SIC member who retired from Domtar in Johnsonburg, PA in 2016. "They brought together sawmills, pulp mills, forest landowners, managers of private forest land, the PA Bureau of Forestry, the Allegheny National Forest, Penn State professors and extension personnel, and others. By working through the myriad of forest sustainability issues that the SIC chose to undertake, the group gained a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities everyone was facing. It was apparent that we are all linked together and each link is important to the sustainability of our forests as well as the industries and people that depend on them. The relationships and understanding that developed in these meetings yielded benefits that transcended beyond a successful SFI Program."

The Implementation Committees were, and still are, completely self-funded. They receive no direct financial support from AF&PA or SFI Inc. Therefore, Pennsylvania's forest products industry backed their commitment to SFI by providing the operating funds for the developing Implementation Committee. AF&PA member companies voluntarily assessed themselves a fee based on wood consumption or the acreage under their management in the state. The Hardwoods Development Council (HDC) in the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture also quickly became an important financial supporter of the PA SIC in the early years.

Eventually, as the program progressed, additional sawmills and other companies saw benefits from the PA SIC's efforts and

contributed financial support. HLMA was instrumental in helping encourage many of its members to support the program. The industry's financial commitment to the PA SIC continues today with SFI-Certified Organizations and non-certified companies and landowners throughout Pennsylvania providing the majority of the organization's operating revenues.



Pennsylvania became the first Implementation Committee in the country to hire a full-time staff member to coordinate its operations and programming when Ken Manno was brought on as the Program Manager in September 1996. Shortly after, an office was set up in State College. Ken coordinated the massive undertaking of establishing the program in Pennsylvania from scratch and gaining support among numerous stakeholders.

The early focus of the PA SIC was on establishing a logger training program, developing landowner and public outreach, and exploring monitoring systems for measuring success. These three efforts eventually developed into the core of the PA SIC's programming for many years.

## **LOGGER TRAINING & EDUCATION**

From the very beginning, the SFI Guidelines required that AF&PA members fully commit to logger education programs. In fact, logger training and education programs were required to be in place by January 1, 1996.

However, the SFI Program's logger training requirements were not fully embraced by the logging community. In April of 1994, several loggers were attending a regional workshop in Nashville, TN that AF&PA held to solicit feedback on the draft SFI Guidelines. The loggers were concerned about the costs of training and their ability to implement new practices on the ground. They decided they needed a national voice of their own to represent the logging sector. Thirty loggers representing 20 states met for two days in St. Louis, MO and formed the American Loggers Council.

In Pennsylvania, the Implementation Committee understood that the most significant impact on forest sustainability was timber harvesting. Data indicated that only about 20% of harvesting

decisions involved foresters working with landowners, meaning that 80% of harvesting decisions were being made with the advice of loggers. Consequently, the Implementation Committee worked intensely on developing basic training programs for loggers.

Fortunately, the PA SIC had the benefit of building off a preexisting logger training program at the time. In 1989, NORTIM (derivation of Northern Timberlands) Corporation, a provider of workers compensation for loggers until 1995, formed the Timber Harvesting Council (THC) of Pennsylvania, a nonprofit organization, to teach professional loggers safe, efficient and ecologically sound timber harvesting practices. In the early 1990s, the organization developed the "Pennsylvania Timber Harvesting Certification Program" with courses in erosion and sedimentation control, logging in wetlands, forest ecology and forest silviculture. In 1994, the program won the prestigious Three Rivers Environmental Award for excellence in advancing environmental quality in western Pennsylvania. Twelve hundred loggers received training under the THC program. In 1997, the PA SIC took over THC's program.

In many other states, organizations external to the SIC, like the THC of Pennsylvania, handle logger training. In Pennsylvania, however, the SIC fully administers logger training and a great deal of effort was invested to develop the Pennsylvania SFI Professional Timber Harvester Training Program.

Training began in full force in 1997, after courses were developed and pilot tested during the two previous years. Ken Manno recalled the mass of documents produced for those initial course offerings, "Procter & Gamble printed nearly 40 cartons of the training materials, each containing 5,000 sheets and weighing approximately 50 pounds. I can remember Jon Howard delivering this load to the office, bringing it from Mehoopany to State College in his jeep. The rear of the vehicle was sitting noticeably lower than the front and the only space inside not occupied by boxes was the driver's seat. Generous donations like these were common among the AF&PA member companies at the time and demonstrated their dedication to the SFI Program."

Early on, the training program was very fluid as it continually grew and evolved. Five programs were initially developed and included courses in logging safety, environmental logging, sustainable forestry, business management, and First Aid/CPR. Continuing Education courses were later included to further participants'

proficiency in specific areas and to keep them involved in the program. Today, participants must complete a core set of training courses to be recognized as a SFI Qualified Logging Professional (QLP) by the PA SIC, and that recognition is maintained through required continuing education hours.

Courses were held year-round, often on 2 or 3 consecutive days. As many as 70 to 80 programs were offered in a typical year, and some years exceeded 100. The training was mostly conducted by volunteers from AF&PA member companies. Over the years, more than 40 different continuing education courses were offered through the program, covering everything from Best Management Practices (BMPs) for protecting soil and water resources, sustainable forestry, and wildlife habitat management to business management, using GPS technology, mechanized harvesting safety, and hardwood log bucking.

In 1998, Martin Melville, a logger and SIC member, was hired as the Training Program Manager. He was instrumental in establishing the PA SIC's training program as one of the most comprehensive and innovative logger training programs in the country. Under his guidance thousands of units of training were provided throughout the state in just a few years. His logging expertise and concern for logging safety proved to be invaluable.

Martin also established a Pennsylvania Master Logger certification program for those interested in attaining a higher level of training and recognition. The program was ambitious, and the certification requirements were quite rigorous, with audits that included on-the-ground verification of performance. Only a handful of loggers ever achieved the elite designation – John Bouch (02/28/01), Ron Andrus (05/14/01), Joe Zehr (03/08/02), Martin Melville (05/06/05) – before the program was discontinued in 2008.

Martin resigned from the staff in August 2001, but volunteered for many years on the PA SIC's Logger Training Subcommittee afterwards.

Today, more than 8,000 loggers, foresters, landowners, and other natural resource professionals and stakeholders have participated in training through the PA SIC, with more than 600 individuals maintaining a current SFI QLP status in the state each year. Many long-time participants have completed more than 100 hours of training.

At the outset of the program in 1995, only 34% of all fiber supplied to AF&PA member mills was delivered by trained logging professionals. Today, that number has grown to 96%, and more than 248,000 individuals across North American have participated in SFI logger training.

SFI continues to be the only certification program in the world that trains loggers and helps them become better at doing their jobs on the ground.

In 2014, the PA SIC began forming new and innovative partnerships with high school and post-secondary forestry programs that allow students to obtain SFI QLP recognition through the PA SIC at no cost to the students or the school. The hope is that by engaging in the same training that professional loggers complete and obtaining a widely respected credential, students will be encouraged to consider a future career in Pennsylvania's forest products industry. The Natural Resources Management Program at Keystone Central School District Career & Technology Center was the first program to participate.

## **FOREST LANDOWNER OUTREACH**

Industry leaders who developed the SFI Program recognized that public perception would not change if the program was only successful in improving management on the approximately 14% of timberland owned by AF&PA member companies. Additionally, the forest products industry in Pennsylvania depended on private landowner resources for an estimated 80% of its raw material. Ensuring the availability of the resource in the future was essential.

The SFI Guidelines therefore set out to foster the practice of sustainable forestry on all forestlands. Broadening the practice of sustainable forestry beyond the industry's lands required that the SFI Program strengthen procurement policies and engage with non-industrial private landowners to ensure they have current information about the environmental impacts of forest management, and to encourage reforestation, the use of environmental BMPs, and to improve the appearance of harvesting operations, particularly in highly visible areas. These original guidelines formed the basis of today's Fiber Sourcing Standard requirements.

SICs were the vehicles to conduct these important outreach and education efforts. In Pennsylvania, the Implementation Committee worked in cooperation with Penn State Extension to develop a packet of objective guidance on the use of BMPs, species retention, regeneration, residual stand protection and potential, and the impact of harvesting activities on future management options. “Forestry with Confidence” and the “Timber Harvest Checklist” were two key publications developed by the Implementation Committee for the packets. The PA SIC also worked to raise awareness with landowners about the importance of seeking assistance from professional resource managers and timber harvesters that received training through the PA SFI Program.

Industry members distributed these landowner packets during their interactions with private woodland owners. More than 26,000 SFI landowner packets were developed and distributed across Pennsylvania through the Implementation Committee. As more people sought information online, these materials were updated, made more comprehensive, and made available through the PA SIC’s website ([www.sfiopa.org](http://www.sfiopa.org)).

The American Forest Foundation’s (AFF) American Tree Farm System® (ATFS) became an important ally in promoting sustainable forestry among small private forest landowners both in Pennsylvania and across the country. In 1998, the ATFS was formally recognized through resolution by the AF&PA Board as a powerful tool for advancing the practice of sustainable forestry on private lands.

In June of 2000, AF&PA signed a mutual recognition agreement with AFF to collaboratively promote sustainable forestry on nonindustrial private lands. In 2002, the PA SIC established a MOU with the Pennsylvania Tree Farm Committee, the first agreement of its kind between SFI and the ATFS at the state level.

## **MONITORING AND PUBLIC REPORTING**

In 1996, AF&PA issued its first Annual Progress Report on the SFI Program titled “Sustainable Forestry for Tomorrow’s World”. These annual reports represented AF&PA’s commitment to be open and transparent with the public about the progress and performance of its membership’s compliance with the SFI Guidelines and Principles. The reports presented aggregated

information that members were required to submit to AF&PA describing their progress in implementing the SFI Program.

The SFI Expert Review Panel was tasked with independently verifying that the claims and data reported by the SFI Program managers in the annual reports were accurately analyzed and presented each year, and to make their candid views known to the public. The Panel spent many hours reviewing methods, results, and the interpretation of those results. When all were assured that the information in the annual progress report was as accurately and honestly presented as possible, the text went to press.

In their first annual report the Panel stated, “We are convinced that the SFI is designed to achieve a genuine behavioral change in America’s commercial forestry practices, and that the effects will be both significant and positive for the future of America’s forest.” In their second annual report they asserted, “those panel members who have been involved throughout the process have become convinced that the majority of the forest products industry has genuinely committed to achieving the goals of the SFI.”

In 1999, The Expert Review Panel cooperated with AF&PA, the Izaak Walton League of America, The Conservation Fund, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to establish a Forest Monitoring Project (FMP). The FMP conducted over 50 randomly selected field reviews over a 3-year period, evaluating how effectively practices on the land supported SFI’s Annual Progress Reports.

On the basis of the FMP results, the Panel could assure the public that the progress reported was an accurate reflection of what was taking place in the participating forests. With all lands in the SFI Program eventually being required to undergo independent third-party certification, the FMP was discontinued and oversight of quality control in the field shifted to the independent auditors.

SICs were also required to measure and report on-the-ground program success to the governing body of the SFI Program on an annual basis. Reporting primarily focused on reforestation, BMP implementation, and outreach initiatives.

The PA SIC focused a great deal of effort on developing uniform systems for monitoring harvesting practices and BMP implementation across the state. The effort was completed with



help from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the County Conservation Districts, Penn State, and the US Forest Service Northern Research Station in Irvine, PA and resulted in the Treatment Unit Sustainability Assessment Form (TUSAF) for conducting post-harvest sustainability assessments, and a Timber Harvest Assessment Form for evaluating BMP implementation. Professional foresters throughout the state were to complete the forms and return them to the PA SFI office. Responses were intended to provide a measure of performance and inform direction for the SIC's training and outreach efforts; however, the system never attained its potential. It was difficult to get already busy foresters to complete and return the forms, and some refused altogether. The responses were only compiled for analysis one time.

Currently, timber harvesting practices in Pennsylvania are monitored individually by each of the SFI-Certified Organizations. Nonetheless, the PA SIC continues to support efforts to establish statewide monitoring and assessment systems.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**



PA SIC Program Manager, Ken Manno, exhibiting at Ag Progress Days near State College, PA in August 2003.

SICs took on the effort of reaching out to the public at the local level with the message of sustainable forestry and to provide an understanding of the efforts industry was taking to ensure forests were being managed sustainably. They were essentially the face of the program. The PA SIC worked hard to make SFI as visible as possible by attending meetings, writing press releases, and exhibiting at various fairs and events.

It would be impossible to summarize all 30 years of the PA SIC's involvement in public outreach on sustainable forestry, but a few notable examples follow.

The PA SIC sponsors a number of worthy organizations and events to support sustainable forestry. These include the Pennsylvania 4-H Forestry Program, the Pennsylvania Future Farmers of America (FFA), the Log A Load for Kids charity (which supports Children's Miracle Network-affiliated hospitals), the Assisting Loggers Immediately Fund Trust (ALIFT), TEAM Safe Trucking, the Real American Hardwood campaign, The Penn State Center for Private Forests' biennial landowner conferences, and the Pennsylvania Hardwoods Development Council's WoodMobile.

In 2015, to bring added recognition to the SFI Program's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the two decades of work it has accomplished, SFI Inc. successfully organized an effort to set a new Guinness World Record, simultaneously planting 202,935 trees in one hour across multiple locations in the United States and Canada with 29 teams of 25-100 people. Pennsylvania had two teams that planted 7,323 trees during the hour-long event. It received a considerable amount of media attention.

In 2017, the PA SIC became a founding partner of the annual Walk in Penn's Woods event (<https://paforestry.org/walk-in-penns-woods>), an opportunity to encourage Pennsylvanians from across the Commonwealth to get into the forest by participating in a statewide day of walks in the woods on the first Sunday in October. The event strives towards a lofty annual goal of providing at least one guided walk in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties each year. Guided walks enlist volunteer forestry experts to help the public understand how Pennsylvania's forests are working for them every day.

## **FROM U.S. INDUSTRY CODE OF CONDUCT TO INDEPENDENT NORTH AMERICAN FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM**

The SFI Program has evolved considerably since its launch in 1995.

Originally, the SFI Program was developed as an industry-led initiative – a code of conduct of sorts exclusively for AF&PA members. However, in 1998, AF&PA established a Licensee program that allowed non-member companies to enroll their forestland and forestry operations in the SFI Program. By expanding the program to include outside groups, AF&PA looked to foster partnerships with diverse stakeholders and expand the number of forest acres in the U.S. being managed wisely and in an environmentally friendly manner. Private and public organizations were invited to join as SFI Program Licensees and expected to fulfill the same requirements as AF&PA member companies.

The Conservation Fund was the first SFI Program Licensee, and St. Louis County in Northern Minnesota became the first public land agency to enroll their forestlands in the SFI Licensee program. The Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry enrolled in the SFI Licensee Program in 2001.

In 2000, the SFI Program Expanded to Canada and established an Implementation Committee in British Columbia. “State Implementation Committees” were renamed “SFI Implementation Committees” in recognition of the newly included Province.

By May of 2003, around 85 public and private organizations in the United States and Canada had committed to the SFI standard through the SFI Licensee program, bringing some 24 million additional acres under SFI. The Licensee program was discontinued in 2013 after SFI became fully independent from AF&PA and eligible participants were required to seek and acquire certification to the SFI standards by the end of 2015 if they wished to continue participating in the program.

Conformance to the SFI Principles and Guidelines at the outset of the program relied on “first-party” verification by having the participants self-report their progress. In other words, it was based on the “good faith” assurances of the company/entity itself that it was in fact managing in accordance with the SFI Principles. Furthermore, the individual reports member companies were required to submit to AF&PA each year were strictly confidential. This created obvious challenges with the program’s credibility.

In early 1999, the SFI Principles and Implementation Guidelines were transformed into a formal industry standard consistent with other national and international standards, and SFI established a process for conducting voluntary verification to determine conformity with the SFI standard. The SFI Voluntary Verification Process gave companies the option to continue auditing themselves (first party), have AF&PA, a customer, or another company do it (second party), or have an independent certifier audit their practices (third party). Only third-party verification constituted 'certification'. Those who chose to voluntarily pursue certification had to follow a standard set of procedures and practices. Verifiers had to meet qualification criteria, companies had to achieve specific verification indicators, and reverification was required within the first 3 years and every 5 years thereafter.

Voluntary certification was rapidly adopted, with some 700,000 acres going through third-party verification in the first year. By the end of 2002, over 96 million acres were certified. By 2004, the number of acres independently certified under the SFI Program surpassed 100 million.

Governance of the SFI Program also evolved a great deal. The SFI Program was initially designed and operated within the AF&PA organization, but internal management by a national trade association limited the program's credibility. As a result, AF&PA took a bold step forward in July 2000 by chartering a 15-member multi-stakeholder Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) and imparting it with full responsibility of managing the SFI standard (subject to AF&PA's endorsement), SFI Verification Procedures, and SFI Program compliance. This new body was composed of 40% SFI Program Participants and 60% other forestry interests. In other words, outside stakeholders comprised a majority of the SFB.

To enhance the autonomy of the SFI Program, the SFB filed Articles of Incorporation on January 22, 2002, to become an entity separate from AF&PA, and was awarded a 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. This ensured that governance of the SFI Program was largely conducted by an independent organization. The new Sustainable Forestry Board, Inc. also rebalanced so that one-third of the Board members consisted of conservation and environmental organization representatives, one-third represented SFI Program Participants appointed by AF&PA, and the remaining one-third was drawn from the broader forestry community such as forestry research institutes, unions and trade associations. Directors served staggered three-year terms and

could serve no more than two consecutive full terms. For any action to be passed by the SFB, a minimum of 80% of the directors present, which had to include at least two representatives from each membership sector, needed to vote in support of the action.

The SFB selected its own Executive Director. Carlton Owen, founder of The Environmental Edge, LLC, an environmental consultancy and former Vice President of Forest Policy at Champion International Corporation, was hired as SFB's Interim Executive Director in February of 2001. William (Bill) H. Banzhaf was announced as the new President and CEO of the SFB in January 2003.

The SFB was chaired by CEOs from the forest products industry until April 28th, 2005, when Lawrence Selzer, President and CEO of the Conservation Fund, was elected Chair. The election of a Chair from the environmental community for the first time was a sign of continued maturation of the SFB.

Prior to 2007, AF&PA and the SFB had a "sister" relationship, but with distinct responsibilities. AF&PA still guided the Implementation Committees, got involved with policy issues that affected certification in the marketplace, and, starting in 2002, they ran the Office of Licensing and Label Use.

In July of 2006, a plan to provide complete independence of the SFI Program from AF&PA was jointly approved by the boards of both organizations. The Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) agreed to assume full and independent administration of all aspects of the SFI Program by January 1, 2007.

Under the plan, a new entity, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc., was created to govern all aspects of the SFI Program, including chain of custody, labeling, communications and promotion. Still today, SFI Inc. is governed by an 18-member, three-chambered SFI Board of Directors. Governance of SFI is structured purposefully to ensure equal voting power to environmental, social, and economic interests.

On July 23, 2007, SFI Inc. announced that Kathy Abusow would be its new President and CEO.

Former State Forester and Director of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, Ellen Shultzabarger, was elected and served on the SFI Board's Social Sector from 2021 to 2023.

## **ON-PRODUCT LABELING**

In June of 2002, AF&PA launched the first SFI on-product labeling program to help connect conscientious consumers with responsible forest product producers certified to the SFI standard.

Four on-product labels were designed and made available to Program Participants, with different labels used for those mills that received most of their raw material directly from the forest ("Primary Producers") and those that ran largely processed wood ("Secondary Producers"). SFI Program Participants who successfully completed third-party certification to the enhanced 2002-2004 SFI Standard and met strict on-product label requirements, began using the on-product labels that year. Periodic (annual) surveillance audits were required for all SFI Certifications where a Program Participant wished to use an SFI on-product label.

The newly created Office of Licensing and Label Use was managed by AF&PA until 2007, when SFI Inc. took over.

In September 2008, SFI Inc. announced the launch of new on-product labels designed to provide more detailed information to businesses and consumers. SFI Participants would begin implementation of the labels immediately and fully transition to the new labels by the end of 2009. SFI Inc.'s three new and distinct labels clearly articulated specific claims and information such as the type of third-party SFI certification the product is compliant to, SFI's website address, the amount of wood fiber in a product that came from certified forests, and how much recycled content is in the product. This marked the third time the SFI Program had updated its labels to ensure they were easy to understand and convey essential information.

Enhancements were again made to the SFI on-product labels in 2011. These changes strengthened the link between the claim on the labels and definitions in the SFI standards. A unique label identification number was also added to facilitate the tracking of label users.

Today, the SFI on-product labeling program continues to provide SFI-Certified Organizations the opportunity to give customers and consumers in the marketplace a visible stamp of assurance that they are purchasing products from organizations committed to sustainable forestry and in full compliance with the SFI standard.

## **GLOBAL RECOGNITION THROUGH PEFC**

As the forest certification movement continued to grow worldwide, the SFI Program increased its focus on the global stage. While the SFI Program only enrolls forestland in the U.S. and Canada, manufactured forest products are traded globally. Across the globe, customers were increasing their demand for knowing that wood products were harvested legally through certification of forests and forest products.

On December 7th 2005, the SFI Program received full endorsement by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC). This endorsement included an independent review of the SFI Program and standards in relation to the PEFC's international requirements for credible forest certification schemes. With the endorsement of the SFI standard, the Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) was appointed the PEFC-US Governing Body in March of 2006. PEFC endorsement brought greater recognition to SFI internationally and provided global market acceptance for SFI-certified products.

In June of 2006, SFI and PEFC entered an agreement allowing all certified SFI Program Participants with forest management operations to license to use the PEFC forest management logo with no additional audits. Program Participants could also license to use PEFC on-product labeling by completing an audit to the PEFC Chain of Custody standard with no PEFC label licensing fees.

## **RECOGNITION IN BUILDING STANDARDS**

On April 5, 2016, the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) announced a pathway for forest products certified to SFI to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) credits through a new pilot Alternative Compliance Path (ACP) credit. The credit was designed to further advance responsible forest management and help rid buildings of illegal wood by promoting the use of wood that is verified to be legal. LEED is one of the world's most popular green building certification programs. A basic concept of LEED is to recognize and reward the use of products or practices that meet the highest standards that exist in the marketplace and demonstrate high levels of sustainability. Despite years of advocacy, this was the first time that USGBC recognized SFI since the USGBC chose to exclusively recognize

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products starting in 2000.

Green Globes (US and Canada), Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM – United Kingdom), Built Green Canada, Built Green Colorado, Comprehensive Assessment System for Built Environment Efficiency (CASBEE – Japan) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) National Green Building Standard (US) had all previously recognized SFI certification within their standards.

## **EVOLUTION OF THE SFI STANDARDS**

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is a program centered around the concept of continuous improvement. Improvement is based on our evolving understanding of sustainable forestry and experiences with implementing the program in the context of shifting global interests in forest values and use. It's what allowed the original SFI Principles and Guidelines to evolve from a code of conduct to a credible certification standard with global recognition.

Since the SFI Guidelines were transformed in 1999, they have gone through five formal revisions governed by an established and transparent Standard Review Process that considers public input, scientific and economic factors, and conflicting demands.

### **2002-2004 SFI STANDARDS AND RULES**

- Introduced, among other things, explicit measures to improve outreach to family forest owners and for the protection of “Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value”. It also contained provisions to help prevent illegal logging and to promote the conservation of biodiversity hotspots and major wilderness areas. The standard required SFI Participants to develop plans for the location and protection of known sites with viable occurrences of species and communities identified as critically imperiled or imperiled, working with NatureServe or another organization with similar expertise.

### **2005-2009 SFI STANDARDS AND RULES**

- Included new provisions to conserve old-growth forests; to strengthen fiber sourcing from jurisdictions outside of North America and supply chain monitoring; and to



address invasive exotic species. It introduced new performance measures and indicators related to the certification of public forestlands, including requirements to confer with affected indigenous peoples.

#### 2010-2014 SFI STANDARDS AND RULES

- This standard was based on 14 core principles that promote sustainable forest management, including measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value. It had five more principles than the SFI 2005-2009 Standard, including separate principles for protection of special sites, biodiversity, aesthetics and recreation, and new principles for responsible procurement practices in North America, avoidance of controversial sources offshore, research, training and education, and public involvement.

#### 2015-2019 (extended through 2021) SFI STANDARDS AND RULES

- Launched in a new structure comprising three standalone standards dealing with forest management, fiber-sourcing, and chain of custody.
  - The new Forest Management Standard promoted sustainable forestry practices that protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species-at-risk, and Forests with Exceptional Conservation value.
  - The Fiber-Sourcing Standard promoted responsible forestry practices for forests that are not certified by directing how SFI Program Participants procure wood from non-certified land. These requirements included measures to broaden the conservation of biodiversity, use forestry BMPs to protect water quality, provide outreach to landowners, and utilize the services of trained forest management and harvesting professionals.
  - The Chain of Custody Standard tracked the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing, and recycled content through production and manufacturing to the end product.
- Changes to the PEFC endorsement requirements required SFI to extend the term of the SFI 2015-2019 Standards to the end of 2021.

## 2022 SFI STANDARDS AND RULES

- Major innovative improvements in the SFI standards were made to address key sustainability challenges. The new standards proactively address climate change, reduce the impact of wildfires and promote the positive benefits of prescribed fire, and recognize Indigenous peoples' rights. SFI Program Participants who are certified to the SFI Standards were renamed "SFI-Certified Organizations".

Today, the SFI standards are the benchmark of sustainable forestry that SFI-Certified Organizations are measured against by independent 3rd-party auditors. More than 370 million acres across North America are certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard and millions more are positively influenced by the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard.

## INCONSISTENT PRACTICES REPORTING

At the recommendation of logger stakeholders, AF&PA established a biannual SFI National Forum in 1995. This stakeholder group consisted of senior industry representatives, AF&PA members, landowners, loggers, and the Expert Review Panel. The Forum ensured that loggers and landowners, in particular, could communicate with industry leaders on the development and implementation of the SFI Program and suggest improvements. Recommendations were reported to the AF&PA Forestry Committee and Board of Directors for their consideration. The Forum met annually from 1995 through 2002.

During the early years of the SFI Program, loggers raised concerns about the lack of an established procedure for reporting perceived violations of the new SFI Guidelines. The Expert Review Panel also challenged AF&PA in 1998 to develop a formal process at the national level to accept and address concerns related to the SFI Program. When AF&PA failed to take action on this and other issues, the loggers withdrew from the 1999 summer National Forum meeting, presenting a formal letter of protest in an effort to force attention on their concerns.

As a consequence of the loggers' protest, the SFI National Forum immediately established a joint Loggers Task Group. The task group members developed a new system through which professional loggers and others could report any perceived violations of the SFI standard (i.e., "inconsistent practices") by

AF&PA members. By the close of 1999, the SFI Executive Committee had approved the establishment of the Interim Inconsistent Practices Report Protocol. The new procedure allowed for the filing of anonymous complaints of possible SFI Program infractions, which were then investigated and reviewed by a representative of the SFI Expert Review Panel, who then made a recommendation for action.

Complaints regarding forestry practices and the SFI Program were also dealt with through the Implementation Committees. In 1999, several of the State Implementation Committees either had or were working on developing protocols for receiving and addressing inconsistent practice complaints. Eventually, all Implementation Committees were required to have a defined Inconsistent Practices program. The PA SIC formally adopted its Inconsistent Practices Reporting Guidelines and Procedures on April 13, 2000 (available on the PA SIC website: <https://sfiofpa.org/inconsistent-practices/>)

In April of 2002, the Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) established the Certification Appeals Subcommittee (CAS) to handle questions about validity of a SFI certification. The subcommittee was Chaired by former National Outstanding Tree Farmer, Tom Thomson of New Hampshire. If the CAS determined a claim had merit it was referred to an Ad-hoc Certification Review Task Force with the power to suspend the certification.

## **EXPANSION OF SFI CERTIFICATION**

At the end of the SFI Program's first decade, more than 129 million acres in the United States and Canada had been independently, third party certified to the SFI standard, making it North America's largest forest certification program. Factoring in Program Participants' procurement systems and the vital activities of the SFI Implementation Committees, including forest landowner outreach and logger and forester training, the SFI Program was now positively affecting the practice of forestry on nearly half a billion acres of North American forestland.

By 2012, forests certified to the SFI Forest Management Standard reached 200 million acres and surpassed 300 million acres in 2018 – representing a quarter of all certified forest lands globally.

But companies looking to expand their use of certified feedstocks, particularly in the publishing sector, were still having challenges sourcing the material.

In 2012, four market leaders – Time Inc., the National Geographic Society, Macmillan Publishers and Pearson – stepped forward and became founding SFI Forest Partners®, investing in the future of forests by making a five-year commitment to increase the source of SFI-certified forest products. The program worked to involve more landowners, manufacturers, distributors, customers, conservation groups and government agencies across the supply-chain and had a goal of certifying 5 million additional acres of forests to the SFI standard by 2014, and 5 million more acres by 2017, starting in the U.S. South. The Partners worked collectively with the SFI community to make certification more efficient and accessible, particularly for small and medium sized mills and forest ownerships, by providing resources for activities such as shared consulting expertise, group certification, or audit coordination. The program was extended to grow the certified forestland base by another 5 million acres in the U.S. and Canada by the end of 2020.

Working through the SFI Forest Partners® Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry certified all 2.2 million acres of State Forests in Pennsylvania to the SFI Forest Management Standard. Their Certificate was officially issued on June 28, 2019.

To expand certification among smaller landowners in the United States and Canada, SFI Inc. rolled out a new optional certification module. In 2017, the SFI Board of Directors approved the “SFI Small Lands Group Certification Module” and began piloting its use in 2018. The new module offers a cost-effective way for mills or wood-procurement organizations certified to the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard to serve as group managers and certify small landowners within their wood and fiber supply area under one group certificate. This module applies in both the U.S. and Canada. This took the financial and administrative burden of certification off the landowner and instead placed it on the SFI-Certified Organization that has a need for more certified forest content. Under the scope of this Module, a small forest or woodlot owner is defined as no more than 20,000 acres in total across an entire ownership.

On February 5, 2019, SFI Inc. announced a new partnership with the American Forest Foundation (AFF) to grow the amount of certified family and other small holdings in North America through the SFI Small Lands Group Certification Model. Lands certified in the United States will be certified under the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), and lands certified in Canada will be certified to SFI.

## **ADVANCING CONSERVATION UNDERSTANDING & COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TO FORESTS**

SFI is the only forest certification program in North America that requires participants to provide in-kind support or funding for forest research to improve forest health, productivity, and sustainable management of forest resources, and the environmental benefits and performance of forest products. This requirement dates back to the original SFI Guidelines. Today, more than \$2 billion has been directly invested in forest research by SFI-Certified Organizations since 1995.

In May 2010, SFI Inc. announced a new Conservation and Community Partnership Grant program that furthered this long-standing commitment to research.

SFI Conservation Grants are designed to foster relationships between organizations interested in improving forest management in the United States and Canada, and responsible procurement globally. SFI committed \$675,000 in 2010 to fund nine North American conservation projects dedicated to—among other things—improving forest habitat and biodiversity, and reducing illegal logging globally.

SFI's Community Grants support the SFI Program's Vision of "a world that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests". They are awarded for collaborative community-based projects, activities, or events that support SFI's efforts to connect local communities to sustainably managed forests, and expand the understanding of their value and benefits.

Since 2010, SFI has awarded more than 115 Community grants totaling more than \$1 million to foster community-building projects, and more than 70 Conservation grants totaling nearly \$5 million (or more than \$13 million when including leveraged project partner contributions) to quantify and demonstrate the

value of SFI-certified forestlands, and lands providing fiber through the SFI Fiber Sourcing Standard, towards mitigating climate change impacts, enhancing biodiversity, and protecting water resources.

Bolstering SFI's Conservation Grant program, SFI Inc. announced the launch of its Conservation Impact Project on September 2, 2016. The project is aimed at quantifying the conservation benefits of well-managed forests across North America, and the connection between sustainable supply chains and important conservation outcomes.

To facilitate good decision-making, and to help make the case for the value of sustainability, the SFI Conservation Impact Project focuses on developing metrics for climate change mitigation, water quality and biodiversity, to encourage forest health, conservation and sound management. Quantifying these environmental benefits will enable the SFI community to understand and promote the conservation values associated with sustainably managed forests.

The project is guided by the Conservation Impact Sounding Board which helps ensure conservation impact results are founded in credible science and also resonates with key audiences. The Sounding Board is made up of a diverse group of scientists and leaders from academia, public agencies, the non-profit conservation community, SFI Program Participants and the SFI leadership; however, it has a deliberate open-door policy with an informal structure to facilitate the broadest possible engagement.

The Conservation Impact Project is supported by SFI-Certified Organizations and uses SFI Conservation grant projects to build an understanding of the conservation attributes of SFI managed forests, and forests affected positively by SFI Fiber Sourcing.

## **ADOPTING PROJECT LEARNING TREE**

On July 15, 2017, Project Learning Tree (PLT) was transferred to SFI Inc. from the American Forest Foundation (AFF). PLT is an award-winning environmental education program that uses trees and forests as windows on the world to increase youth understanding of the environment and actions they can take to conserve it. PLT's integration into SFI provided an opportunity for the program to expand its reach and impact, and SFI's role as a

sustainability leader is bolstered by PLT's expertise in education, an increasing focus in SFI's ongoing community engagement work.

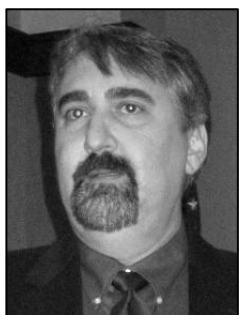
PLT was founded in 1970 as a collaboration between the American Forest Institute (AFI) and the Western Regional Environmental Education Council (WREEC). In 1982, AFI executed a licensing arrangement with AFF, which thereby became the co-sponsor with WREEC. In 1993, AFF became a wholly independent, publicly supported, 501(c)(3) non-profit education organization and took over all administration for PLT.

The PLT Education Operating Committee, a committee of the SFI Board, is responsible for providing leadership, direction, and strategy development for PLT.

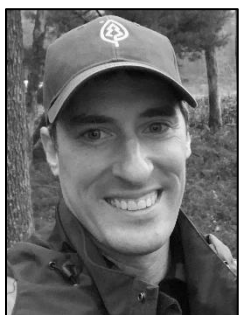
## **THE PENNSYLVANIA SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE THROUGH THE YEARS**

The PA SIC has also transformed quite a bit over the years, but it still continues to serve as the local face of the SFI Program. It still provides a forum where all segments of Pennsylvania's forest sector can come together to deepen their understanding of one another and work towards shared goals. It still provides a means for SFI-Certified Organizations to effectively address their commitments under the SFI standard, ensuring critical initiatives like logger training, forest landowner outreach, public education, and the resolution of inconsistent practices complaints are carried out consistently and efficiently.

At its peak, the PA SIC had four full-time staff members working at the State College office. In addition to Ken and Martin, the program also hired an Office Manager (Judy Marconi 1997 to 2002, Carolyn Clark 2002 to 2004, Connie Shoemaker 2004 to 2005, and Betty Gummo 2005 to 2010) and a Communication Manager (Andrea Ryan 1998 to 1999, and Ray Noll 2000 to 2003). As the economic downturn took hold in the mid- to late-2000s, the financial realities of the program eventually required that staffing be reduced to a single position. The State College office was closed and moved to the Program Managers home. Logger training moved from year-round offerings to a condensed spring and fall training schedule that coincided with typical downtime periods for loggers.



In 2009, Ken retired as the SIC's Program Manager and the position was taken over by Nate Fice. Amid the Great Recession, Nate quickly streamlined the program's administrative operations to match the new financial environment and staff capacity, while maintaining the integrity and high level of service delivered by the program. Nate's tremendous efforts modernized the program and incorporated the use of technology. He also increased emphasis on safety and professionalism in the PA SFI Professional Timber Harvester Training program by integrating Game of Logging training into the core requirements.



When Nate left the position in 2012, Chuck Coup was hired as Program Manager. Chuck continued to streamline and standardize administrative processes, expand the use of electronic communications, grew the PA SIC's network of collaborators, and improved program accessibility and reach by developing and maintaining a user-friendly website filled with valuable content, the capacity to handle online registrations for the logger training program, and a searchable database for training participant records. In many ways, the expanded website took on the capacity of an additional staff member at a critical time. Chuck digitized almost all of the PA SICs massive archive of paper records from the previous 20 years. He wrote numerous technical guidance documents and contributed to the publication of many others, maintained a PA SIC directory, and wrote articles for the PA SIC's newsletters and several other outlets. He overhauled the Professional Timber Harvesting Essentials training course, and during the COVID-19 pandemic he was instrumental in ushering the PA SIC's logger training program into the era of virtual learning.

During Chuck's tenure, the PA SIC hired a part-time Administrative Coordinator (Mark Ott 2016 to present), and a full-time Director of Outreach & Development (Doty McDowell 2023 to 2025) – making the PA SIC the first ever to hire a staff member specifically focused on development.



In 2024, the PA SIC began the process of reorganizing as an independent 501(c)(3), primarily to expand its eligibility for grants and charitable contributions. As a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association, a registered 501(c)(6), these opportunities were not available to the PA SIC. The Implementation Committee became “Pennsylvania SFI Implementation Committee Inc.” a fully independent non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) recognition on February 12, 2024. The PA SIC adopted several organizational changes to reflect this new 501(c)(3) status. The Executive Subcommittee became the Board of Directors, the Implementation Committee became an Advisory Board, and the Program Manager’s title was changed to Executive Director.

While this reorganization marked a new chapter for the PA SIC, its history and success remain inseparably linked to the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association. From 1996, when PFPA (then HLMA) agreed to house the Implementation Committee, through nearly three decades of administrative and organizational support, the Association provided the stability and resources that allowed the PA SIC to grow into the respected statewide program it is today. Even as an independent nonprofit, the PA SIC continues to hold close ties to PFPA and remains grateful for the Association’s longstanding guidance and commitment.

## **REFLECTIONS**

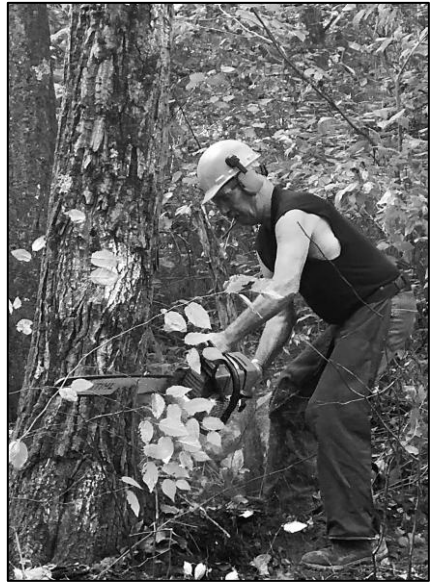
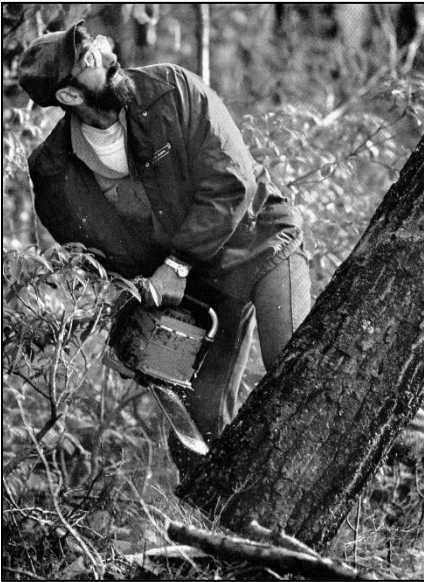
Reflecting on the past 30 years, the PA SIC and its partners are very proud of many successes and accomplishments. The organization has played an instrumental role in raising awareness about sustainable forestry and responsible timber harvesting practices across Pennsylvania.

The PA SIC’s Professional Timber Harvester Training Program, designed to improve the safety, professionalism, and stewardship skills of Pennsylvania’s logging industry segment, has undoubtedly had direct impact on both the state’s forests and the loggers that manage them.

SFI training focused on reducing the impacts of harvesting operations on soil and water resources by advocating for the use of BMPs has increased acceptance and recognition of sustainable forestry practices. Our success in teaching the importance of BMPs is evident in the latest DEP data that places logging nearly

last in the list of water pollution sources across the state (DEP Integrated Water Quality Report). Regulatory agencies at both the state and federal level strongly support SFI training programs, which has prevented additional regulations focused on forest industry.

Training focused on improving operational safety has facilitated the widespread use of personal protective equipment and safer felling techniques that were scarcely seen in Pennsylvania's forests when the SFI Program began.



(left) Pennsylvania logger John "Bob" Zwald taken by William T. Douthitt featured in the March 1985 issue of National Geographic Magazine. (right) John's son and Pennsylvania logger Paul Zwald felling a tree in September 2025. The two pictures 40 years apart illustrate the adoption of safer felling practices in Pennsylvania such as utilizing personal protective equipment and employing safer felling techniques like the bore cutting method taught through the Game of Logging program.

As an example, the photograph above on the left is a picture of Pennsylvania logger John "Bob" Zwald taken by William T. Douthitt that was featured in an article by Peter Miller titled "Susquehanna: America's Small-Town River," in the March 1985

issue of National Geographic magazine. As was common practice in those days, and demonstrated in the picture, personal protective equipment was rarely used and prevailing felling techniques often positioned loggers dangerously close to the tree as it fell. Bob's running stance with a still-spinning saw in hand, and the look of wary uncertainty on his face as he looks back at the tree that is already well on its way to the ground illustrate the risks that characterized common logging practices of the time.

Fast forward 40 years, and the evidence of SFI logger training's impact in Pennsylvania can be seen in the photograph on the right from September 2025 of Bob's son, Paul Zwald, also a Pennsylvania logger. Paul is wearing proper protective equipment (hardhat, eye protection, hearing protection, and chainsaw protective chaps) and uses the controlled bore cutting technique taught through Game of Logging, a core component of Pennsylvania's SFI Professional Timber Harvester Training Program. As an SFI Qualified Logging Professional, Paul credits his training with helping him work safer and smarter in the woods.

While there is still room for improvement within the logging industry, safety training through the PA SIC has successfully combatted the dismissive attitudes towards safety that plagued the logging profession. More loggers today see safety as a fundamental necessity of their operations rather than an unnecessary drain on productivity or a consideration reserved for wimpy loggers.

The credit for these achievements goes to the many participants that strive towards improvement and diligently implement practices they learned through our training program each day.

The PA SIC has been able to support numerous programs that further our mission and continuously partners with other organizations on important initiatives that are driving sustainable forest management forward in Pennsylvania.

Decades of experience in advocating for the proper implementation of forestry BMPs has allowed the PA SIC to be recognized as a technical expert and a trusted voice on statewide BMP policy and issues. The SIC served a critical role in updating DEP's Erosion & Sediment Control Plan Template for Timber Harvesting Operations, and the complimentary BMP field guide, when they were discontinued by DEP in 2017 for being outdated.

The PA SIC's early distribution of tens of thousands of forest landowner information packets laid the foundation for ongoing educational outreach on sustainable forestry, and today, the PA SIC's newly redesigned website remains a go-to resource hub for foresters, loggers, landowners, and other forest professionals.

The PA SIC has been recognized three times for its exceptional contributions to the SFI Program through the annual SFI Implementation Committee Achievement Award. The SIC was first honored in 2001 for its outreach efforts, communications program, and expanding affiliations. The PA SIC earned the award for a second time in 2015 for adapting the Professional Timber Harvester Training program for high school curricula. In 2024, it received the award for the third time for leveraging technical expertise and outreach to advance sustainable forest management practices across Pennsylvania and the broader SFI network. Only Minnesota and Maine have received the Implementation Committee Achievement award more times.

The PA SIC has experienced both prosperity and difficulty throughout its history. Our success over the last three decades is a direct reflection of the unwavering dedication of our Committee's founding members and all those who followed, its staff, our financial contributors, and the many partners who have stood alongside us over the years. With their support, the PA SIC has not only promoted sustainable forestry in Pennsylvania but has also empowered individuals and organizations to take meaningful action in Pennsylvania's forests that will benefit generations yet to come.

In 1997, the AF&PA independent Expert Review Panel reported the following in their second annual progress report:

"There is a significant change underway in America's forests – a change for the better – and the forest products industry, through the SFI, is a leader of that change. This change will not occur overnight, but through incremental progress it will occur."

The PA SIC is proud to have been a leader of incremental progress in Pennsylvania over the last 30 years, and we look forward to continuing our work at making positive changes that will ensure future generations have the same abundant forests that we enjoy today.

As we consider the next 30 years, we look forward to finding new and innovative ways of advancing sustainable forestry through

forest-focused collaborations with partners and supporters that share our vision of a world that values and benefits from sustainably managed forests. We hope you will join us.

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**EVOLUTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE LOGO**



**1995**



**1999**



**2000**



**2001**



**2020**

## **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

### **SENATE RESOLUTION No. 160 of 1996**

Introduced by Madigan, Musto, Peterson, Stapleton, Wenger, Corman, Afflerbach, Helfrick, Robbins, Schwartz, Rhoades, Heart, Salvatore, Tomlinson, and Heckler

Introduced and Adopted November 19, 1996

### **HOUSE RESOLUTION No. 480 of 1996**

Introduced by Lunch, Zug, Hutchinson, Jadowiec, and Egolf

Introduced as noncontroversial resolution under Rule 35, November 25, 1996

## **A RESOLUTION**

Recognizing Pennsylvania's forest products industry and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

WHEREAS, This Commonwealth has a rich natural bounty of more than 17 million acres of renewable hardwood forest land; and

WHEREAS, This vast forest resource has been a staple component of this nation's and this Commonwealth's economy since the founding of America and has sustained businesses, families and entire rural communities; and

WHEREAS, Through the generations, Pennsylvania's forest products industry has grown to represent this Commonwealth's fourth largest manufacturing sector, with more than 2,200 employers and 90,000 employees; and

WHEREAS, The forest products industry relies on the forest resource to make this Commonwealth the number one producer of hardwood-based material and to meet the public's increasing demand for wood and wood-related products; and

WHEREAS, The Pennsylvania forest products industry, in recognition of its stewardship responsibilities in nurturing the forest resource, has committed itself to the continuing principles of sustainable forestry by initiating the Sustainable Forestry Initiative to promote, educate, train and monitor adherence to sustaining the forest resource for future generations; and



WHEREAS, The Sustainable Forestry Initiative is based on the responsible environmental stewardship of the forests, water resources and wildlife; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate/House of Representatives commend Pennsylvania's forest products industry for its history of care and commitment to the responsible use of resources; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Senate/House of Representatives recognize the development of Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which has educated landowners, foresters and loggers about the sustainability of Pennsylvania's forests; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Senate/House of Representatives endorse the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and its self-regulatory objectives of increasing knowledge, professionalism and stewardship that will foster the sustainability of Pennsylvania's forests; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Senate/House of Representatives request that the public, forest landowners and resource agencies embrace and support the objectives of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative in this Commonwealth.

**PENNSYLVANIA SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE  
PURPOSE STATEMENT (adopted June 13, 2019)**

**OUR PURPOSE** is to promote wise forest stewardship, enabling Pennsylvania communities to thrive through a successful forest products industry.

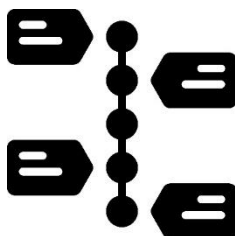
**THEREFORE**, the SIC works hard to support business operations by training and developing the logger workforce, educating the public about the value of working forests, promoting SFI forest certification and assisting with regulatory issues.

**OUR ALLIANCE** of deeply committed professionals from across the forestry community builds partnerships with many other conservation organizations that depend on the forest industry to advance their own missions. These relationships allow the SIC to serve with great impact.



## CHECK OUT OUR HISTORICAL TIMELINE

[www.sfiopfpa.org/history](http://www.sfiopfpa.org/history)



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## **SOME OF THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF THE PENNSYLVANIA SFI IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

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John Skovran, Co-Chair, Procter & Gamble  
David Haag, Co-Chair, International Paper

Dan Evans, Willamette (now Domtar)  
Jim Finley, Penn State  
Kent Fox, HLMA (now PFPA)  
Jim Grace, DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Steve Jones, Penn State  
Martin Melville, Melville Forestry Services  
Art Oplinger, Glatfelter (now Pixelle)  
Kevin Stout, Georgia-Pacific  
Mark Webb, PA Consulting Foresters  
Ron Weisenstein, Georgia-Pacific