

The Model Forest Network

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The Government of Canada, through the Canadian Forest Service, launched Canada's Model Forest Program in 1992 to address, "the challenge of balancing the extensive range of demands that we place on our forests today, and the needs of tomorrow's generations." The principle behind the program is for each model forest, "to serve as a demonstration of partners representing a diversity of forest values, working together to achieve sustainable forest management."

What is a Model Forest?

A model forest is a partnership between individuals and organizations sharing the common goal of sustainable forest management. Each model forest provides a unique forum where these partners can gain a greater understanding of conflicting views, share their knowledge, and combine their expertise and resources to develop innovative, region-specific approaches to sustainable forest management. In effect, a model forest acts as a giant, hands-on laboratory in which leading-edge techniques are researched, developed, applied, and monitored. One important feature of a model forest is that it encompasses a working scale land base where the participants have a direct interest and influence over the uses in the forest. However, the rights of participating landowners and land managers are not superseded by the model forest.

The creation of the model forest program was a direct result of public feedback in Canada. A nationwide public consultation, conducted in 1990 by the federal government, revealed public concerns about forestry practices and preservation of the natural environment. Out of this, groups from across the country were invited to submit proposals for a model forest in their regions, each assessed according to their ability to match four predetermined categories.

1. The objectives and management philosophy, and how they supported the concept of sustainable management and

integrated resource management (40 per cent)

2. The activities and results proposed using "best forestry practices" (25 per cent)
3. The use of the most advanced technology and the demonstration of techniques and results (25 per cent)
4. The communication of the results to the public and the general financial and administrative management of the proposal (10 per cent)

This resulted in a network of 10 proposed model forest sites, representing six of the main forest regions of Canada (Figure 1). The model forests include public forests, and in some cases extensive areas of private forest.

Each model forest is run as a not-for-profit organisation. Except for a small administrative staff, all those involved in the model forest donate their time and expertise, and in many cases also bring financial support. The model forest organisation does not have jurisdiction over the land it encompasses.

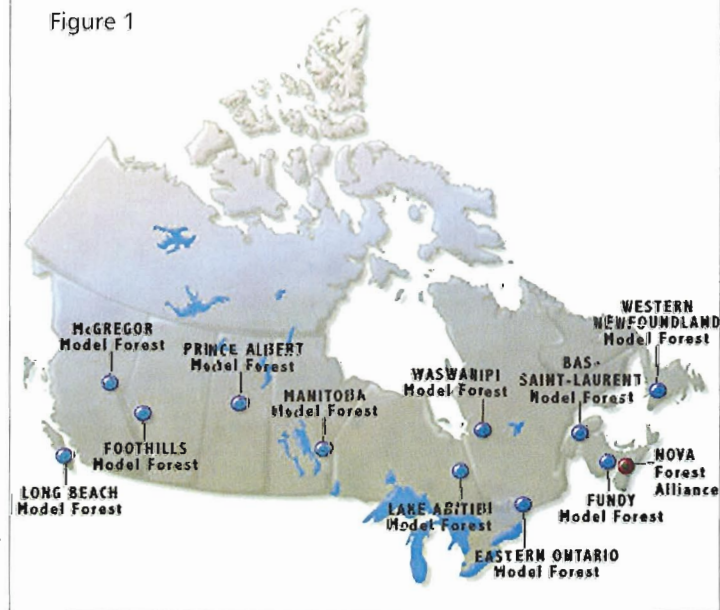
As such, to be successful the model forest must have those who do have jurisdiction as participants. In most cases, the model forest organisation will have industrial companies, park management landowners, all levels of government, academic institutions, aboriginal people, environmental organisations and labour groups. The Canadian Forest Service provide substantial funding to support the administration of the model forests, and for a number of research projects, but in this is augmented by contributions from the partners in each model forest. Each model forest organisation determines its priorities and allocates resources to

meet its particular objectives.

The Model Forest Program has now moved worldwide, administered through the International Model Forest Network, funded by the Canadian government and based in Ottawa. The first country to join was Mexico, with Model Forests in Calakmul and Chihuahua signing on as members in 1993, and Mariposa Monarca in 1995. Russia designated the Gassinski Model Forest in 1994 and the United States designated three Model Forests, Cispus, Hayfork and Applegate in 1995. Countries currently developing Model Forests include Argentina, Malaysia, China, Japan and Vietnam. Other countries expressing interest in developing Model Forests include Australia, Ecuador, Indonesia, Southern African Development Community and the United Kingdom.

Perhaps the time is right for the establishment of model forests in New Zealand so that we bring the wider community into sustainable forest management. We have had consultative processes for forest

Figure 1



management in the past, reflected in the West Coast Accord, processes for environmental certification or through the RMA, but none of these have the long term collaborative nature of the Model Forest Program. How different might the status of forestry in New Zealand be if we had this type of programme?

Model Forest website: <http://www.modelforest.net>