



Message from the Executive Director



CURRENT PRACTICE AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THE IMFN

This issue of *Connections* is the first since the IMFN Global Forum was held in Costa Rica this past November. Under the theme of *Networks and Networking: Current Practice and Future Directions in the IMFN*, the Global Forum drew together site and country-level representatives from throughout the Network, in addition to institutional

partners and prospective new partners and collaborators. Our hope in having this event, the first such gathering of the Network since 1999, was to take stock of what we had accomplished, as well as what we have not, and look at the future of the Network and how we can realize its potential.

We were not disappointed. By all measures the Global Forum was a great success. For nearly one week close to 120 model forest experts from around the world worked together – most for the first time – to compare experiences, debate shared problems, identify new approaches to problem solving, and genuinely see the importance of each site's contribution to a growing global community of practice in support of sustainable forest management.

By focusing on networks and networking we intended to determine what these terms mean from the model forest site to international levels. We also wanted to question our practices, expectations, and plans for ensuring that networking is in fact something that is dynamic and adds specific value to our individual and collective work.

In this issue of *Connections* we invited model forest representatives of Asia, LAC, Africa, Europe, and Canada to reflect on the Global Forum and on the question of networking. In the months ahead we will be incorporating these and other ideas into actions and strategies that will build on and strengthen the IMFN. My sincere thanks to all who contributed to the success of the Global Forum.

Peter Besseau
Executive Director, IMFNS

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OUR VISION

To support, through model forests, management of the world's forest resources in a sustainable manner, reflecting environmental and socio-economic issues from the perspective of local needs and global concerns.

Approaches to Networking: Experiences and Opportunities Across the IMFN

In recent years, rapid and successful growth of the IMFN demanded more effective participation from its members in terms of governance, program planning, funding and networking opportunities. In response, the IMFN has focussed on the development of regional networks, whose purpose is to define and articulate a regional program of sustainable landscape management that reflects their priorities, strengths, challenges and opportunities that are unique to their part of the world.

To draw out the experiences, opportunities and expectations of model forest stakeholders operating at this level, session II of the IMFN Global Forum focussed on regional networking. Below is a summary of discussions held on regional model forest networking as experienced or envisioned in Canada, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and Northern Europe.

CANADA

By Chris Lee, Manager, Canada's Model Forest Program



Bas-Saint-Laurent Model Forest, Canada

The model forest concept, developed in Canada in the early 1990s, has become a globally accepted approach for the successful management of natural resources on a landscape scale, and for improving the quality of life in local communities. The IMFN Global Forum provided a welcome opportunity for the Canadian delegation to interact with those who have enthusiastically taken up the model forest approach in their own countries.

Traditionally, the Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN) has approached the challenge of regional networking on the basis of common themes and major national and international issues, for example climate change, criteria and indicators of

sustainable forest management, and indigenous and youth participation in natural resource management.

Over the years, our work with model forest sites outside of Canada has become somewhat less proactive; while theoretically part of the larger IMFN, our work was mostly done in parallel, along with providing support and assistance when requested, rather than working more proactively in a true partnership. Significantly, Canadian representatives attending the Global Forum came to clearly recognize that the CMFN should become a fully re-engaged and integral part of the International Network, possibly through a formal North American regional network that includes sites in the U.S.A.

We also found that, despite having pioneered the concept, there is much we can learn from others in the Network. For example, the involvement of indigenous people in the CMFN has been cited as an example of success. However, much work remains to be done to further engage indigenous people, particularly youth. Financing options were another area of interest, such as payments for environmental services.

The Global Forum itself focussed on articulating the concept of networking, strategic approaches to international governance, identifying strategic gaps and how to close them, and explore ways to build resources for the program. Networking recommendations offered by the Canadian delegation to the IMFN included:

- Revising its governance structure to include key partners
- Applying thematic or issue-driven criteria for identifying regions rather than geography alone
- Encouraging of more and better information sharing among model forests
- Providing a mechanism to assist new model forest start-ups (with money, information, credibility, etc.) and a flexible “pay back” expectation
- Planning at the regional level should involve active international support and involvement

As the CMFN moves into a new phase of existence a key part of our emphasis will be a more coordinated and proactive relationship with the rest of the model forests in the IMFN. We look forward to working with and learning from other partners in the Network.

Latin America and the Caribbean

By Santiago Elmúdesi, General Manager, Chiloé Model Forest

The recent International Model Forest Network Global Forum held in Costa Rica provided a magnificent opportunity for understanding the full scope of the model forest concept and



Reventazon Model Forest, Costa Rica, host of the IMFN Global Forum 2005

for seeing the progress achieved by its implementation on different landscapes. It also gave us a chance to feel that we share a philosophy—not just a project—that will help us achieve the dream of a world based on a culture of solidarity, collaboration, participation, inclusion, consensus, respect and appreciation of diversity, tolerance and co-inspiration.

The Latin American and Caribbean delegates agreed that networking offers an opportunity for learning, strengthening our credibility, increasing international support, and enhancing access to sources of financing. It also provides a space for mutual support.

Our discussions led us to the conclusion that model forests are based on a very dynamic concept that is in constant evolution. At this stage there is a growing awareness that a commitment to participate as equal partners is critical for the success of the process. The most successful model forest partnerships are those that are based on equality among the members and that also leave the door open for including new participants and their visions and contributions.

As the model forest concept evolves, a revision of the structure used for launching the development of model forests is warranted. Such a revision would address all levels of governance to ensure they are based on broad partnerships, sharing equal rights and responsibilities horizontally. National, regional and international partnerships have adequate representation from governments, but they lack the participation by private and civil-society organizations that characterizes model forest sites at the local level.

In the context of the Global Forum, the Board of Directors of the Regional Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC-Net) approved the development of a broad participation process for an organizational design that would include model forests in the decision-making structure at the regional level. There is no doubt that this measure will strengthen the LAC-Net and will add efficiency to networking. It will also serve to test a new model for

identifying options aimed at strengthening the structure of the International Model Forest Network.

The challenge is to continue striving to provide opportunities to all who are interested in contributing their views, thereby enriching what has become a powerful approach to sustainable management of our landscapes.

Asia

By Rungnapar Pattanavibool, Ngao Model Forest, Thailand

Within a society, people communicate, collaborate and share experiences and information as part of everyday life, and most of the time “networking” to achieve a goal is established unintentionally. If we consider networking like a spider web there would be innumerable sites of activity all around the world linking individual to individual, individual to web or web to web, depending on the purpose or level of accomplishment of each. When the model forest concept was adopted in Thailand in 2000, the forest community recognized the importance of partnerships and knowledge-sharing in the pursuit of sustainable forest management (SFM). Just as a single thread does not a web make, we saw that without the strong and equal participation of communities and local authorities in the discussions that surround forest management decisions, our SFM goals would never be achieved.

The regional representatives from Asia attending the International Model Forest Network Global Forum in Costa Rica valued the opportunity to meet with our counterparts from around the world and hear first-hand what their model forest experiences have been. All at different stages of maturity, the meeting confirmed that large scale partnerships for sustainable development can work in a variety of cultures, landscapes and economic scenarios, as long as members are patient and committed.



Tree planting, Ngao Model Forest, Thailand

While considerable time has been spent trying to establish an official regional Model Forest Network headquartered in Asia, progress has been slow. Inspired by the work of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Network, the Asian representatives agreed that regional-level networking is essential for knowledge-sharing and strengthening partnerships. Moreover, we felt that an Asia regional network would be an effective tool to link model forest programs with other existing networks or websites, or with regional and international platforms such as trade or climate change. A strong regional network could also act as a driving force for resource mobilization.

Other key issues discussed included monitoring and evaluation of model forest impacts, governance structures, and communications. Working closely with the African delegates, we determined we would move to develop our own networking plan and implementation strategy. If it is adopted by both continents, we look forward to expanding the regional networking concept beyond our six member countries to include African model forests as well.

Africa

By Patrice André Pa'ah, Dja et Mpomo Model Forest and Benjamin Ondo, Campo Ma'an Model Forest

Since 1990, the government of Cameroon has encouraged working in associations. But our efforts have been disjointed, our organization weak and financially unstable. Nevertheless, there is a recent history of networking that facilitates the sharing of experiences and allows members to work cooperatively, reconcile sustainable use and forest conservation with the development needs of local populations, and build institutional and organizational capacities.

The contextual flexibility of the networking concept, as put forth by the International Model Forest Network (IMFN), recently motivated the government of Cameroon to adopt the approach through establishment of its first two model forest sites, namely the Dja-Mpomo and Campo Ma'an Model Forests.

Our participation at the IMFN Global Forum was important, not only in that our two model forests were working closely together, but also because of the opportunity to share with other members of the IMFN from around the world. It was also useful for our budding sites to experience the functioning of Reventazón Model Forest in Costa Rica first hand.

Financing and support are crucial to our success. The development of collaborative channels, as well as the effective financing of our two sites, are possibilities which must be explored with other regions and with the International Network.

For the past decade, other programs have been working to

link local sustainable practices with policy change, but in the end the missing ingredient was a platform to bring people together over a long period of time, where they work together for change through a participatory governance structure. The model forest approach is seen to offer just such a platform.

The Cameroon delegation found the strong Latin American presence inspiring and look to them as an example of what is to come in their part of the world. Many international issues are now coming to the forefront in Central Africa, and the Congo Basin in particular is gaining increasing attention. At the same time, the area is not well connected to the rest of the continent and not as politically unified as West Africa. But the desire to work closely with other African forest states and communities is strong. In that context, Cameroon hopes to create links, through the model forest, on issues of trade and will look to the Network to help them clarify the role of forests vis-à-vis trade in forest products.

Looking ahead, with a relatively stable government, our model forest partners hope that the Cameroon experience will act as a springboard for development of an African Regional Model Forest Network in the Congo Basin. With links to the developing Asia Network we now have a stronger position and knowledge base from which to connect our work in Africa to that of others internationally, providing a vision for the future.

Northern Europe

By Johan Svensson, Vilhelmina Model Forest, Sweden



Komi Model Forest, Russia

Europe joined the IMFN in 2003 with its first model forest, Vilhelmina, in northern Sweden. Immediately our networking task began as we set out to create a northern European model forest network. But during the IMFN Global Forum, discussion frequently turned to the appropriateness of the geographical nature of the existing model forest regional

networks. Alongside our Russian colleagues, the European delegates began to speak about a north Eurasian initiative rooted in the homogeneity of the natural forest composition and conditions, as well as similar wood market and forest technology.

We came to see the North Eurasian Sustainable Boreal Forest Landscape Initiative (NEA Initiative) as a bottom-up, problem-oriented, and issue-driven process. Encompassing Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Northwest Russia, the initiative would be a network of case studies that represent a larger geographical situation to which solutions may be applied, their impacts noted, and then shared with others. It would also be a complementary plan that supports the IMFN circumboreal initiative and the Baltic Forest Project.

The European delegates also spoke of the need to scale-up the language surrounding our efforts from sustainable forest management to sustainable landscape management (with SFM being a natural component). In these terms we broaden both the appeal and more accurately reflect the proposed scale of operation. Along related lines, we would like to

work more closely with others outside of the IMFN pursuing similar themes and goals, for example World Heritage sites, Ramsar sites, national parks, and biosphere reserves.

The model forest concept is complex and, at times, difficult to differentiate from other similar initiatives. Our group felt that boosting the positive, self-sustaining economic nature of model forests could be one way to help distinguish the model forest approach. Or, model forests could act as a mechanism for helping to close the gap between forest scientists and practitioners.

While we have worked closely on issues of common interest with the Canadian Model Forest Network and the burgeoning model forest sites in western Russia, it was invigorating for the European participants to interact with and learn from our Latin American, African and Asian colleagues. As Sweden potentially moves ahead with establishing a second or third model forest site, we will be looking to others in the IMFN for their knowledge concerning model forests as rural development tools.

International Networking Across the IMFN

By Fred Pollett, SFM consultant and originator of the model forest concept

The IMFN Global Forum hosted in Costa Rica demonstrated to all participants the existence of a viable, international network of model forests.

The Global Forum brought together a dynamic group of individuals from across five continents, representing local partnerships rooted in various cultures dispersed throughout developed and developing countries. Many of these individuals arrived in Costa Rica as strangers and several were new to the family of model forests. Remarkably, because of their shared experiences in establishing and working within their own sites, the dialogue was such that within a day, new friends and alliances were forming around the globe. People were hungry to hear about one another's experiences and anxious to find out how they could benefit from each other's successes and learn from their frustrations. The Costa Rican experience, for many involved in the model forest process, was the first real opportunity to share and benefit from international networking. And now, the challenge for the IMFN is to capture and focus this momentum, such that the ideas and concepts articulated at Costa Rica to enhance international networking are acted upon.

To enhance international networking, the directions from discussions in Costa Rica are clear. First, it is important to have mechanisms developed that will enable individual model forests to input all



John Novarly, Margowitan Model Forest, Indonesia and Patrice Pa'ah, Dja et Mpomo Model Forest, Cameroon

levels of networking. In this way viewpoints across the network can be incorporated into the overall direction, governance and growth of model forests. Second, it is imperative that the IMFN more effectively reach outside to other organizations with which it can strategically partner at the international level. By providing a global network of landscape-level platforms the IMFN has the means of contributing to international policy initiatives such as the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions. Additionally, the model forests are encouraged to engage in trans-national resource management issues such as

sustainable forest management within the northern circumboreal region and in the Congo Basin.

The trademark clusters of local partnerships in model forests around the world also offer added opportunities to network internationally on issues including: indigenous peoples, capacity building, fair trade, development and implementation of ecosystem services, and governance.

Global Forum participants have issued a challenge to the IMFN to be more effective and meaningful in its approach to international networking — and, in doing so, to raise its profile and credibility — earning a higher-level of respect and support at the global level.

IMFN Global Forum 2005: Key findings

From November 7-11, 2005 the International Model Forest Network met for the first time in 6 years under the banner of the IMFN Global Forum on Networks and Networking: Current Practice and Future Directions in the IMFN. Using the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the IMFN Secretariat, more than 130 model forest representatives and partners from around the world met in Turrialba, Costa Rica to take stock of the Network as it has evolved over the last decade, and to consider where the IMFN should go from here.

In particular, the Global Forum sought Network members insights and opinions on how to strengthen the networking function of the IMFN by:

1. Bringing together country and site-level representatives of the IMFN to review, assess and discuss issues related to networking at the site, national, regional and international levels
2. Considering future directions and opportunities for networking at all levels, including strategic and niche opportunities within and among model forests, regions, and globally
3. To identify the specific roles, advantages, limits, mechanisms, and opportunities for effective networking at all levels

Key findings

Much had changed since that last meeting in Halifax: then, the Network counted 18 sites, 10 of which were in Canada. There was no Latin American Centre, no activity in Africa, India, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica or Indonesia, and no development in Europe. Today, 38 sites are active or under development across 18 countries on five continents. With an aggregate land base of nearly 50-million hectares and 1 000 partner organizations, the model forest approach can easily be considered the largest sustainable forest management initiative in the world.

With many good news stories under our belts, the Global Forum also confirmed that much work remains to be done. Some key findings that emerged from the Global Forum include:

- The IMFN networking assumption is valid: A common approach provides a sufficient base for networking to take place across regions, cultures, and forest types
- An important global community of practice on sustainable forest management is emerging through the IMFN
- The Network is substantially different from what it was 3-4 years ago: structures and modes of operation need to



Participants at the IMFN Global Forum, Turrialba, Costa Rica, November 2005

- be rethought. Support for new sites is key
- There is a high level of motivation and interest in the Network to work collaboratively on cross-cutting issues
- More and stronger strategic partnerships need to be pursued
- Networking should be encouraged on more than a geo-political basis
- Impact monitoring and evaluation must become consistent and reliable
- Multiple new opportunities for networking exist: mentoring, joint projects, the circumboreal initiative, bio-fuels, payments for environmental services, university links, long-term research, and engagement of youth

Strategic observations

The Global Forum demonstrated that there is considerable talent and energy across the Network and that members want to be more involved in building the Network and its functions as they evolve. In addition, increased interaction between model forests is wanted and needed — strategies must be changed to accommodate this demand. Finally, communications is a substantial and cross-cutting issue that needs to be re-appraised in light of growth and future strategic directions.

The IMFN will develop a strategic plan over the coming months that takes into account:

- Critical alliances / strategic partnerships
- Planned and strategic expansion, including at the regional level
- Financial and human resources (core and support)
- Visibility and credibility

In moving forward, as in the past, the key point of reference will be the model forest sites and their needs.

Baltic Forest Project to Use Model Forest Approach

A proposal signed by a consortium of eight countries aimed at enhancing regional development in the Baltic Sea Region based on management and use of forest resources through the model forest approach will move ahead.

The successful *Forests as a Resource for Sustainable Development and Spatial Planning in the Baltic Sea Region* proposal was submitted in 2005 to the European Union Baltic Sea Region Interreg IIIB Neighbourhood Program, a community initiative that aims to stimulate interregional cooperation in the EU. The project received 2.6 million Euros over 2 years and was launched January 1, 2006. By establishing and employing multi-purpose and trans-national forest sector cooperation, the group hopes to secure forest sustainability and enhance input to regional development and spatial planning. The strategic focus is on small-scale state and private forest units.

Lead by the County Administrative Board of Västernorrland and the Regional Forestry Board of Mellannorrland, north Sweden, signatories to the proposal also include Norway, Finland, Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and



Vilhelmina Model Forest

Poland. If successful, the Baltic forest project could lead to the creation of a northern European model forest network.

The fundamental approach is to view all forest sector goods and services as a whole, including forest managers, governments, researchers and educators, the wood processing industry, market and political processes, and the cross-sectoral exchange of knowledge. The group's position is that a holistic approach is needed to fully appreciate the economic importance and regional development potential of the Baltic forest, as well as to explore innovative routes to local, regional, national and trans-national stability and vitality.

Unique, Pristine, Dry Tropical Forest Joins IMFN

Conservation a priority for Bolivia's first model forest

In November 2005, the Chiquitano Model Forest in Bolivia joined the IMFN's Regional Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC-Net), inaugurating one of the last pristine tropical dry forests regions in all of South America into the Network.



Chiquitano Model Forest

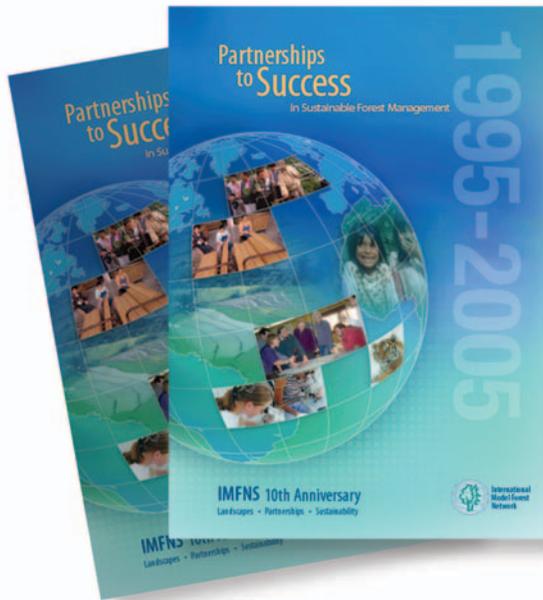
The 20.4-million hectare Model Forest represents an eco-region of high importance vis-à-vis conservation efforts and ongoing collaborative efforts among local, national and international organizations. The Model Forest's primary goals will be sustainable development and conservation of the tropical dry forest landscape.

"Bolivia is developing innovative approaches to advance the sustainable management of its natural forests, including approximately 2 million hectares of Forest Stewardship Council-

certified forests," said José Joaquín Campos, Director of LAC-Net. "Having Bolivia in the Regional Network will increase both the number of actors and mass of experience that makes networking all the more worthwhile."

Located in the south-east of the country, the Chiquitano is not only valued for its unique ecology, but also for its historical and cultural importance. Clearing of land for agriculture, increasing population pressures, oil and gas transportation through the region, and new roads construction are but a few of the ways the landscape is under threat.

Bolivia's membership was announced during the International Model Forest Network Global Forum held from November 7-11 in Turrialba, Costa Rica at the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE). The 40 model forests now situated around the world from boreal to tropical to temperate forests encompass nearly 50-million hectares.



Communications Corner

Where to find it

All IMFN Global Forum products, presentations and related information is now available from the IMFN website. Need copies of the posters from the poster session? Looking for a particular presentation or participant's contact information? It's all at www.imfn.net.

How to get it

To download your copy of the IMFNS 10-year anniversary publication *Partnerships to Success in Sustainable Forest Management*, please visit our website at www.imfn.net.

LAC website launched

The Regional Model Forest Network for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC-Net) has officially launched its website. Visit the leading source on Latin American model forest activities, research, news and more at www.bosquesmodelo.net.

**Content is available in Spanish with Portuguese and English coming soon.

CMFN publication database:

A powerful new networking tool

The Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN) has launched its new and improved online publications database. Whether you are searching for the latest Canadian model forest newsletter or research report, or interested in broader sustainability issues such as indigenous partnerships, climate change, or international collaboration across model forests, visit www.modelforest.net.

IMFN Secretariat communications:

Here to help you

Need some input or advice on strategic communications planning? Building a website? Or just have some news to share with your colleagues and partners across the Network? Contact Christa Mooney, IMFN Secretariat communications officer, at cmooney@idrc.ca for assistance with your communications and outreach activities. You can also visit the Tools and Templates section of our website where you will find PowerPoint presentation templates, guides for writing news releases and web content, a map of the IMFN, and more. Your input on our activities and products is also welcome and encouraged.

CMFN Semi-Annual Meeting Focuses on Future of Canadian Network as Mandate Nears End

Canadian Model Forest Presidents, General Managers, and Communicators came together with Canadian Forest Service (CFS) staff at the end of November 2005 in Fredericton New Brunswick for the latest semi-annual meeting of the Canadian Model Forest Network (CMFN). The focus of this meeting was squarely on the future as the current mandate of the Government of Canada's Model Forest Program ends in March 2007.

From November 27-30, participants heard from experts describing issues and trends in Canadian forestry, updates on international model forest activities, upcoming communications and event opportunities, and CMFN-level strategic initiatives. Key to the discussion was the planning and renewal of the Canadian Network after March 31, 2007. A potential new program framework that would see the Network take a more active involvement in its own development was outlined by model forest managers. The need to move forward with a clear policy direction that will resonate with the Government of Canada and be delivered by Canadian Model Forests was also emphasized by government representatives.

The ability of Model Forests to connect with local communities emerged as a central point, and is one of five directions the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) is championing. It encompasses assessing economic, social and environmental impacts and relationships between forests and communities, facilitating community stability, increasing Aboriginal peoples' participation, identifying risks and developing mitigation strategies, and connecting with urban forest communities. Model forests are uniquely positioned to be key facilitators, partnering with CFS, in developing and advancing this policy challenge.

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