

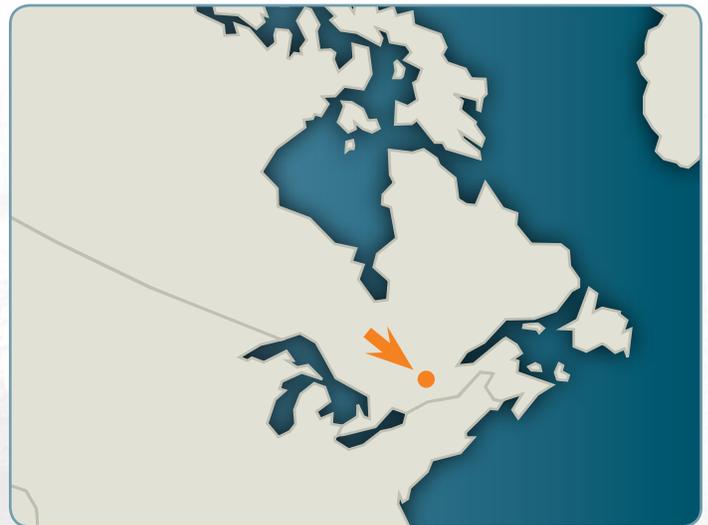


# PROMOTING FOREST CERTIFICATION FOR SMALL LANDOWNERS

## The Challenge

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest faces many hurdles in promoting the sustainable management of forests in the region. The fragmented nature of the forests is one, with urban expansion coupled with agricultural and other development pressures continuing to fragment the landscape. Getting messages about the importance and value of forests to the million or so inhabitants within the area, as well as good forest management practices to the estimated 160,000 small woodlot owners in Ontario, presents additional challenges.

When it was first being implemented, forest certification was an activity that was primarily being pursued by large-scale industry in the northern forested regions of Canada. There was little attention being paid to how this might apply to private land forests that were located in more southerly areas such as eastern Ontario. As certification advanced and became more of a requirement for accessing markets, one concern was that the private woodlot sector would not have an opportunity to be part of certification efforts.



**Eastern Ontario Model Forest, Canada**

Established: 1992 | Area: 1.5 million ha

## Facts

- Canada has the largest area of independent third-party certified forests in the world and 42% of the world's certified forests.
- In the province of Ontario, over 24 million ha of forest are certified under three certification programs: Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Canada's National Sustainable Forest Management Standard (CSA) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).
- In southern Ontario, 160 000 hectares of private and community forest are FSC-certified.

There are two main challenges to applying forest certification systems to private land forests. First, certification costs can be prohibitive and individually, many small woodlot owners cannot afford to become certified. Secondly, many small woodlot owners lack the technical knowledge and skills to implement forest operations on their land as well as the forest management standards required by certification organizations.

## Finding a solution

In 2000, people involved the Eastern Ontario Model Forest began talking about forest certification and decided that they needed to do some exploratory work and experiment with certification to see how it could be applied to small private forest holdings.

Through the Model Forest, representatives of industry, communities, woodlot owners, First Nations, government—both provincial and federal—and other wood consumers such as mill operators proposed approaches that eventually evolved into the forest certification program that is being implemented today.



## Results and impact

For over a decade, the Model Forest has successfully managed a growing “Group Forest Management Certificate”. By 2003 the Program had 18 landowners and covered 2 500 hectares. The Certificate now includes more than 135 landowners and covers over 55 000 hectares of private, community and urban forests.

The increase in the FSC-certified land base over time, coupled with the trend by customers for FSC-certified products, have served as an incentive for local forest industry players to seek chain of custody certification. The Model Forest is playing a central role in mentoring forest industries interested in pursuing chain of custody certification. The Model Forest has assisted six local sawmills, one pulp mill and 18 value-added wood product manufacturers in Ontario to obtain their chain of custody certification so they now have the ability to market and sell their forest products as FSC-certified. “Certification has helped us to gain some footholds overseas and even now in North America. So, it’s about market access” says Kris Heideman, sawmill owner and operator, from Heideman Forest Services.

## How does forest certification work?

Forest certification encourages the sustainable management of forests. Independent auditors evaluate forest management practices to determine whether forest owners and managers are complying with sound forestry standards. Owners and managers who meet the standards have their forests certified and can apply a logo on the wood or wood products they sell.

There is also a mechanism to track materials along the “production chain” from the certified forest, where the wood or non-timber forest product originates, to the final product. Chain of custody certification provides assurance to the consumer that the goods they purchase have been produced following environmental and other sustainability criteria.



The Model Forest is also leading the way in the certification of maple syrup, one of many non-timber products that are found in eastern Ontario's forests. The FSC-certification of maple products represents a first for Canada. Seven maple producers in the Model Forest area are now able to market and sell their products with the FSC logo. Certified maple syrup has now become a popular gift given to international delegates by Canadian politicians and others as a symbol of both the uniqueness of Canada and its commitment to forest sustainability.

The Model Forest has gained the trust of forest owners and has developed and nurtured the relationships that have resulted in the growth and success of the Forest Certification Program. In addition to serving as a framework for supporting responsible forest management, the Program has a strong education and training component. Forest health, forest operations, carbon sequestration, issues of taxation, flora identification and ecological goods and services offer a sample of some of the topics delivered at workshops and training sessions.

According to Brian Barkley, Past President of the Canadian Model Forest Network, "The work that's been done on certification in the Eastern Ontario Model Forest has been quite important nationally because it has demonstrated to other Model Forests, in other jurisdictions, exactly how certification could be developed in their areas." From Nova Scotia to Finland to Russia, Model Forest partners have shared their forest certification experiences and information resources. The Eastern Ontario Model Forest prides itself on widely transferring practical products for use and uptake by others. Extending their knowledge also takes the form of mentoring FSC certificate applicants, delivering training sessions, hosting interactive workshops on FSC certification, and guiding others through the process of achieving FSC certification.

The Eastern Ontario Model Forest was a pioneer in creating a Group Forest Certification Program and saw it as an opportunity to bring small woodlot owners together and provide them with a much-needed framework for forest management. Barkley concludes, "Canada is a world-leader in certification as a result of all this work."

## To find out more

- International Model Forest Network: [imfn.net](http://imfn.net)
- Eastern Ontario Model Forest: [eomf.on.ca](http://eomf.on.ca)
- Video: [youtu.be/sUJG7Kx2PZO](https://youtu.be/sUJG7Kx2PZO)

*The International Model Forest Network brings people together to test and apply innovative approaches to the sustainable management and use of the world's landscapes and natural resources.*

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