

Where Will We Get Tomorrow's Wood?

By Kevin Chudyk

Every year, each of us uses wood and paper products equivalent to what can be produced from one tree that is 18 inches in diameter and 100 feet tall. Wood and wood products are part of furniture, toilet paper, books, cosmetics and even shampoo.

Forestry is the business of cutting down trees to use for lumber or other products. Once we cut down a tree, it will not be there to reproduce or to continue its part in the local ecosystem. Trees are a renewable resource, which is another way of saying that they can be replaced as we cut them down. And **sustainable forestry** is the replacement of trees at least as fast as we use them. Sustainable forestry allows us to cut down trees to use and still have them as a resource in the future.

In the United States, at least five new trees are planted each year for every person. That is about 1.5 billion trees a year! There are now more lands covered by forest in this country than there were seventy years ago, due to sustainable forestry.

In the last ten years, our nation's forest products companies banded together, forming the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Program. The aim of this long-term program is to combine growing and harvesting of trees with protection of wildlife, plants, soil, and water quality. There are currently 107.8 million acres of forestland in North America enrolled in the SFI program, an area larger than the state of California. The SFI program is North America's largest sustainable forestry program and among the largest in the world. Members in the SFI program determine how much wood they can harvest each year and match that amount to the rate of tree replacement, so that over the long term the forest stays healthy.

Across the whole world, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) acts in much the same way as the SFI. Both programs promote labeling of wood products that are produced with care to preserve the environment. The FSC also covers all types of forest products.

Since forest products are renewable resources, efforts to keep our forests healthy can provide resources for the future. Maintaining healthy forests also provides jobs such as lumber jacking and wood engineering (forming wood materials into structural pieces). Sustainable forestry can be useful in many other parts of the world, and its success is spreading to other nations.

