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Contact: IMRE, 410.821.8220

Christine Costa, christinec@imre.com

Amy Montgomery, amym@imre.com

Increasing Demand for Legal Wood Answered With a RIL Solution

TFF teaches and demonstrates sustainable forest management through Reduced Impact Logging (RIL)

Alexandria, Virginia, February 25, 2009 – Recent changes to the Lacey Act now provide for criminal penalties for any US company that knowingly imports illegally harvested wood. The Tropical Forest Foundation (TFF) has a program in place to deal with the risk by providing a standard for legality and help with independent auditing to confirm to customers and the authorities that wood products are legal for sale in the US. The TFF Legal Verified program provides a widely recognized standard to prove that a manufacturer has performed due diligence and buyers can be assured that their products will pass any test of legality. The TFF Legal Verified program is the first step in a forest sustainability program called Reduced Impact Logging or RIL.

RIL is a set of management practices that result in a more sustainably managed forest by harvesting at an appropriate level and in such a way that minimizes collateral damage to streams, wildlife, and non-harvest trees. Thus, the remaining forest is far more valuable and can provide support for the livelihood of local forest workers again and again. Proper RIL is usually practiced every 25-50 years, depending on forest type, resulting in minimal disturbance to the forest. Timber harvest (and/or carbon credit sales or other ecosystem service credit sales) provides an economic benefit from the forest while retaining a large part of the values associated with an un-harvested forest.

According to TFF's partner, Jeff Waldon, Conservation Management Institute, College of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech, "The challenge is to produce enough economic benefit from the forest to support the local people sustainably. Conventional forestry has often led to slash and burn agriculture, which in the long term has depleted some forests to the point of no return."

TFF partners have carried out long-term studies in Brazil that show RIL provides a steady economic return for local economic development. Waldon explains, "It doesn't provide the maximum short-term economic benefit in many cases, but rather strives to produce the most economic return over the long run while maintaining important ecosystem services like carbon retention and biodiversity protection." TFF has a long history in providing on-site demonstration models to local community and industry members that show the advantages and teach the principles of sustainable forest management in hands-on, small group settings. This demonstration model has proven to be the number one reason for the high success rate in preventing slash and burn agriculture throughout the tropical forests of Brazil. TFF has found that forests managed by communities or industries that have an economic stake in protection of their rights to the forest tend to be more carefully monitored and protected. In many cases, those managed forests receive more protection against illegal activity than national parks.

RIL verification ensures legality & provides a crucial step toward certification

On May 22, 2008 the U.S. Congress passed a new amendment to the Lacey Act that banned importing illegally sourced timber and wood products in to the U.S. Beginning December 15, 2008, importers have been required to provide declaration information about the wood they are sourcing. Declarations are presumed to be the result of investigations to determine legality by the party making the declaration. TFF is helping solve this problem:



- The first step is TFF's Legal Verified program which is designed to verify legality through an independent third-party, and then confirm that an adequate Chain of Custody system is in place.
- TFF's RIL Verification Program results in a confirmation that forest management is taking place using the prescribed reduced impact logging standards. Achieving this level is a major step towards sustainable forest management certification where desired.
- TFF training centers are crucial links in the process providing hands-on training to people and organizations in large tropical regions who would otherwise be unable to receive sustainable forest management training.

Keister Evans, President of TFF explains, "Integrating sustainable forest management processes through proper RIL on-site training, demonstration and community-wide education is crucial in addressing increasing demands for wood from well-managed forest areas." Tropical forests are inextricably linked to the health of the global environment and are one of the last great storehouses of plant and animal diversity. People living in the tropical forests depend on timber harvesting and the economic vitality it creates, says Evans.

For more information and photography please see our electronic press kit at <http://tff.icpresskit.com>.

Tropical Forest Foundation

The Tropical Forest Foundation is a non-profit, educational institution dedicated to the conservation of tropical forests through sustainable forestry. TFF has become widely recognized for establishing demonstration models and training schools to show the advantages and teach the principles of sustainable forest management/Reduced-impact Logging. The Foundation's Board of Directors includes representatives from industry, government, science, academia, and conservation. Each member has an interest in seeing tropical forests renewed and sustained.

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