

Building Bridges to a Sustainable Future: IUFRO at the Science-Policy Interface

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In recent years, the forest science community has begun to take advantage of new opportunities to contribute to the development of forest policies aimed at advancing sustainable forest management at local, national and international levels. The growing emphasis on stakeholder consultation in international policy forums and a wide variety of ongoing regional and national forest policy formulation processes presents both an opportunity and an obligation for forest scientists and research organizations to provide policy-makers and stakeholders with scientifically sound information, both to inform policy discussions and to assess the likely implications of policy options on forest resources and their management.

Recognizing this development, IUFRO established in 1998 a Task Force (TF) on the Forest Science-Policy Interface. During the past 4 years the TF organized a series of regional workshops to evaluate case studies illustrating the linkages between forest research and policy-making processes. During the final workshop, the findings of the earlier workshops were critically evaluated, key messages for improving interactions between the forest research community and both policy-makers and society at large were refined, and advice was developed for forest scientists and organizations to improve communication across the science-policy interface and to develop more effective partnerships among researchers, policy makers and forest stakeholders. A set of guidelines developed specifically for researchers and forest science organizations and based on the findings of the TF, will be presented and discussed during the technical session "Science and Policy: Making the Connection" at the XXII IUFRO World Congress in August.

This "Guidance Document" will provide practical advice to scientists and research organizations related to the development of research programs that address questions that are relevant to current and emerging policy issues,



strategies for enhancing stakeholder involvement in research and the communication of research findings to stakeholders and policy-makers, advice on ways to better understand and more effectively engage in policy processes, and the development of capacity research organizational cultures that enable and encourage constructive interaction at the science-policy interface. Elements of the guidance document, as well as an overview of the Task Force's objectives and work to date, were presented by C. Denise Ingram (USDA Forest Service) at the IUFRO Side Event during the 17th Session of FAO's Committee on Forestry (COFO) in Rome in March.

Additional products of the TF will include a policy brief intended for use by policy-makers, and training materials for use by scientists, research organizations and decision makers to be developed jointly by the TF and IUFRO's Special Programme for Developing Countries (SPDC).

Reports from each of the regional workshops are on the Task Force website <http://www.iufro.org/science/task-forces/sciencepolicy-interface/>. Selected case studies have been published in: *Revista Forestal Centroamericana* No. 37 (2002), published by CATIE, Turrialba, Costa Rica; Parrotta, JA and Campos, JJ. (Eds.) 2003. *Communication Across the Forest Science/Policy Interface. Forest Policy and Economics (Special Issue) 5 (4): 329-460*; and Gamborg, CH, Parrotta, JA and Thorsen, BJ. (Eds.). 2004. *The Forest Science/Policy Interface: Building Bridges to a Sustainable Future. Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 19, (Suppl. No. 4), 1-176.