



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Jane Chavey 360-902-1721 or cell: 360-870-8334

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**Forested State Trust Lands Statewide
Earn ‘Green Certification’
*Eastern Washington certified, western Washington***

OLYMPIA — Washington’s Department of Natural Resources has obtained “green” certification that recognizes the agency’s balanced stewardship of 2.1 million acres of forested state trust lands statewide, Public Lands Commissioner Doug Sutherland announced today.

At an announcement today in Spokane, Jack Ward, a lead auditor representing the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Program conferred upon DNR ‘SFI’ first time certification for forested trust lands in Eastern Washington. At the ceremony, DNR-managed Westside trust lands were re-certified after their original certification in 2005.

“This affirms the careful, sustainable management practices that DNR uses for all forested state trust lands in Washington,” said Sutherland. “The fact that there currently are nine DNR practices that go above and beyond the SFI® standards says a great deal about the agency’s commitment to balancing healthy forest ecosystems, trust revenue, thriving communities and other public benefits.”

He continued: “We appreciate the rigorous standards, and look forward to working with SFI® program representatives over time to continue to meet or exceed those standards.”

The certification process included a desk audit of policies, procedures, and practices that apply to DNR-managed forests; and a field audit during which third party auditors visited more than 30 sites on DNR-managed Eastern Washington forestlands. Field audits are conducted to verify that the forestlands are sustainably managed, and that activities are performed in a way that meets or exceeds the program standards.

“The Washington State DNR enrollment in the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and certification thereof means increased revenues for all the trusts,” said Ted Anderson, Skagit County Commissioner and Board of Natural Resources member. “It also insures vibrant forests that will continue to produce revenue, while at the same time, protect water quality, conserve wildlife and provide biological diversity for future generations.”

“I believe that most Washingtonians endorse this form of land stewardship and fully recognize the need to create sustainable forests and healthy ecosystems that benefit all the people of Washington,” said Dr. Bruce Bare, board member and Dean of the University of Washington College of Forestry.

Auditors laud nine forest management practices

These auditors recognized DNR’s sustainable management by awarding nine ‘notable practices,’ which are exemplary—management practices that go beyond the SFI® Program requirements, and indicate a strong commitment to the intent of the program, that working forests provide renewable resources along with environmental and social benefits.

Highlights from the report included the department’s amendment to the 1997 *Habitat Conservation Plan* in the Klickitat area that was undertaken to address protection of northern

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spotted owl habitat, while dealing with critical forest health issues. Auditors noted that this amendment “effectively balances owl protection and silvicultural needs, while providing increased management flexibility and improved owl habitat.”

Another commended practice was DNR’s publishing the *Washington Natural Heritage Plan*, noting that the plan is “an excellent commitment to wildlife management, conservation of biological diversity, and cooperation between many partners.”

After visiting two cultural sites that have been protected from harvest activities, the auditors acknowledged that DNR “protects all cultural sites associated with the local history and culture of the communities in the regions.”

Dr. Bare continued: “Conservation, protection, restoration and responsible management of our state forests are undertaken to ensure that we continue to sustain all components of the forest ecosystem to meet the growing needs of an urbanizing population.”

Sustainable Forest Initiative®

More than 150 million acres of forestland are third-party certified under the SFI® Standard, making it the dominant certification standard in the United States and North America. For more information about the *Sustainable Forestry Initiative®* program, visit their website at www.aboutsfi.com.

DNR stewardship of 5 million acres of lands and resources

DNR, led by Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland, manages about 3 million acres of state-owned trust forest, agricultural and range lands and commercial properties that earn income to build schools, universities and other state institutions, and help fund local services in many counties. In addition to earning income, trust lands are habitat for native plant and animal species. State trust lands also protect clean and abundant water, and offer public recreation and education opportunities statewide.

For all the people of Washington, DNR is steward of more than 2.4 million acres of aquatic lands—the beaches and lands under Puget Sound and the coastal waters, navigable lakes and rivers. They are managed to protect the fish and wildlife, provide commerce and navigation, and access for all the people of the state.

And DNR manages state Natural Resource Conservation Areas and Natural Area Preserves that protect unique and threatened native ecosystems, and which offer educational and research opportunities. Some natural areas also are open to hikers.

Doug Sutherland is Washington’s 12th Commissioner of Public Lands since statehood in 1889.

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