



## **FOREST CERTIFICATION & PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

### **General Thoughts**

1. All three main forest certification systems active in BC - CSA, SFI, FSC - and also the ISO 14001 registration system, have brought a positive influence to our SFM debate and practice. Each has different emphases, and strengths and weaknesses, and has evolved significantly over the past 10 years.
2. Since the BC Ministry of Forests, as the main public oversight agency, has had recent major staffing and funding cutbacks, it is more important than ever for people to find ways to be meaningfully involved with SFM.
3. The key question about certification is whether or not it has contributed significantly to SFM through improved science and forest practices. Since most larger and medium-sized companies can become certified under their present 'performance', has certification elevated more than just the debate?

### **Specific Comments**

1. Each certification system has a different perspective on public involvement. CSA has the most specific requirements for public participation through a public advisory group, although all systems require the public to be satisfied with a forest company's plans and practices (as shown through reviews and audits, including public meetings). SFI and FSC do not preclude the formation of a public group.
2. Our Forests Society believes that the real question about all of the certification systems isn't so much what is included on paper in their requirements, but what is the demonstrated rigour and comprehensiveness of the public component.

### **Suggested Test**

To consider whether or not a certification system has a meaningful and effective public involvement process, ask several probing questions:

1. Is the public advisory group given an important and recognized role?
2. Is the group unfettered; is open dialogue encouraged?
3. Is a wide spectrum of 'publics' involved; are they given fair consideration?
4. Is the forest company supportive and responsive?
5. Are the group's recommendations addressed?
6. Are they included in company plans and strategies?

7. Are the C&I as selected by the group used by the company?
8. Are the indicators representative, substantive and meaningful?
9. Are the indicators reported on; do practices change in response to results?

For more information, contact the British Columbia Forests Society – see our website:  
[www.forestssociety.com](http://www.forestssociety.com).