



Media Release

Winners Announced in National Forestry Competition

Discoveries of winning student researchers could improve future forest planning and policy, save costs

Montréal, Québec, December 12, 2007 . . . Three Canadian graduate forestry students have discovered new insights that could lead to improvements and cost savings in future forest management efforts across Canada. The discoveries of **Sarah Weber** of the **University of British Columbia (UBC)**, **Ian Curran** of the **University of Alberta (U of A)**, and **Jeanne Moore** of the **University of New Brunswick (UNB)**, have earned the students top spots in a national student research competition organized in Montreal by the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Network.

First-place winner Sarah Weber, Forest Resource Management, University of British Columbia determined that – in light of the recent historic legal victory for the Tsilhqot'in Nation in B.C. – legal changes are required to support greater Aboriginal decision-making authority and stewardship roles in forest management. Changes would require a shift towards more holistic and culturally-sensitive approaches, and more equitable distribution of resource revenues and harvesting rights.

Weber's research – conducted in partnership with Stellat'en First Nation in central B.C. – identified a comprehensive set of First Nations criteria for forest tenure and governance design, which would enable the Stellat'en First Nation to protect their culture and traditional territory for future generations, and support their economic self-sufficiency. Weber's work – carried out with Drs. Ronald Trostler and Thomas Maness of UBC, and SFM Network Principal Investigator Dr. David Natcher of the University of Saskatchewan – suggests that an effective governance system would require elements from each of four alternative governance models: Community Ecosystem Trust Model, Gitanyow Planning Model, BC Community Forest Agreements Model, and the American Aboriginal Reservation Forest Management Model.

The discovery of **second-place winner Ian Curran, Department of Renewable Resources, University of Alberta** may lead to significant cost-savings for forestry companies. Curran has found that natural seedlings of white spruce – a key species in Canadian forestry – are much more common than estimated in Alberta clearcuts. Currently, large amounts of time and resources are spent planting white spruce in boreal mixedwood forests across Canada. Yet, Curran – who examined the conditions under which white spruce is established naturally from seed on a bed of needles, leaf litter or mosses – found that when there is adequate seed available from nearby trees, there can be very good regeneration in cut areas, particularly where there is aspen leaf litter rather than spruce. Many areas that were thought to be regenerating solely to aspen were found to be already regenerating to spruce without the need for planting.

“This unexpected ecological bonus of spruce trees could be an economic boon to forestry companies, allowing them to reduce the amount they spend on tree planting,” said Curran, who is working in collaboration with SFM Network Principal Investigators Drs. Vic Lieffers and Ellen Macdonald at the U of A.

Third-place winner Jeanne Moore, Forestry and Environmental Management, University of New Brunswick is providing forest managers with information that can save them money and keep them out of trouble in the forest, and enable trees to be grown and harvested more effectively. Moore’s work – which focuses on the southeastern New Brunswick-based Fundy Model Forest – improves the precision of forest management by developing new maps which overlay the most recent Geographic Information Systems (GIS) satellite information showing depth-to-water tables on existing soils maps, and aligning them with topography and water features.

“Soils maps at present are rather imprecise,” said Moore, who is working with SFM Network Principal Investigator Dr. Paul Arp at UNB. “There is variability in tree growth despite what the soils maps tell us about growing conditions, which means some sites are either dryer or wetter than the maps show.” Moore’s new maps help forest managers avoid situations where the forest is too wet to harvest or build roads through, and where harvesting equipment could harm the ecology of the site.

Thirty-two graduate students participated in the SFM Network competition nationally. Participants had to demonstrate that they had considered the implications their research would have for industry and society as a whole.

The research projects were evaluated by SFM Network’s Scientific Director **Dr. Jim Fyles** of McGill University, and Scientists-at-Large, **Dr. Paul Barten**, Associate Professor Forest Resources, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and **Dr. George Stankey**, U.S. Forest Service (retired), Seal Rock, Oregon who stated, “it was clear that each student researcher had given considerable thought to the implications associated with their work, both in terms of management applications as well as to future research issues.”

First place winner Sarah Weber will present her findings at an international forest symposium of her choice. Second place winner Ian Curran will present his findings at a national research conference of his choice, and third-place winner Jeanne Moore will receive funding to present her findings at a regional research conference of her choice.

About the Sustainable Forest Management Network (www.sfmnetwork.ca)

The Sustainable Forest Management Network is a national not-for-profit centre of research excellence under the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence Program. The Program is a federal initiative administered jointly through the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in partnership with Industry Canada.

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