

**For Immediate Release – March 31, 2005**

**Contact:** Scot Quaranda, Dogwood Alliance, 828.251.2525 x18 or [scot@dogwoodalliance.org](mailto:scot@dogwoodalliance.org)

## **Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Draws Criticism from Scientists Across the South**

### *Over 90 Scientists Submit a Letter to the SFI Board Calling for an Overhaul of its Ecologically Unsound Forest Certification Standards*

*Raleigh, North Carolina* – This morning, joint press conferences were held in Raleigh, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee, to release a letter signed by over 90 prominent Southern scientists calling for an overhaul of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative's (SFI) certification standards. The letter calls the SFI a misleading marketing and advertising tool used by industrial logging companies to convince its customers that its products come from well-managed forests.

"Over the past few decades, practices such as large-scale clearcutting, the conversion of forests to plantations and the industrial use of chemicals have compromised the biodiversity and ecosystem services of much of the South's forests," said Dr. Stuart Pimm, Doris Duke Conservation Chair of Ecology at Duke University. "This has many within the scientific community concerned about the long-term ecological future of these forests."

At the beginning of 2005, the SFI released newly revised certification standards. While the revised SFI standards and procedures include some small improvements, many of these changes fail to require concrete on-the-ground outcomes.

- The SFI does not discourage logging the most biologically diverse and sensitive forests,
- The SFI allows for the conversion of native and natural forests to single species pine plantations, and
- The SFI allows for logging practices that can be harmful to habitat and water quality, including large-scale clearcutting and the intensive use of herbicide and fertilizer spraying.

"The forests of the Southern United States are a national treasure and deserve to be protected for this and future generations," said Kelly Sheehan, Campaign Director of Dogwood Alliance. "We join these scientists today in calling on the SFI to cease its misleading advertising and marketing, including the labeling of paper products until the SFI meets basic environmental standards."

The Southern United States has the highest concentration of tree species diversity in North America and is a global center of freshwater aquatic diversity. The paper industry is clearcutting the South's native and endangered forests and replacing them with lifeless pine tree farms. Nearly 6 million acres are logged in the South every year, primarily for paper production and over 32 million acres of forests in the region have been converted to pine plantations.

"The flora of Southeastern US is extremely rich in biodiversity, with many species survived from the Tertiary period. These species are important to understand the biogeographic history and future of the modern flora," said Dr. (Jenny) Qiuyun Xiang, Botanist at North Carolina State University. "Clearcutting of natural forest communities from the region will undoubtedly reduce the abundance of these species, destroy the natural habitats of animal species associated with the communities, and threaten the biodiversity at all levels in this region. I strongly support any actions protecting the natural communities in this region."

The SFI fails to include many elements scientists and conservation biologists consider necessary for credible certification and product labeling. Among other things, the SFI standards fail to

adequately protect old growth and endangered forests, endangered species, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and natural forest characteristics necessary for ecosystem function. They also fail to protect communities and indigenous peoples' rights. Furthermore, the SFI allows labels on wood and paper products from forests that have not even met the SFI's own weak standards, and do not disclose the products' real contents.

**To view the letter and all of the signatories visit:**

[http://pressroomda.greenmediatoolshed.org/objects/view.acs?object\\_id=6000](http://pressroomda.greenmediatoolshed.org/objects/view.acs?object_id=6000)

For a series of fact sheets detailing the pitfalls of SFI, including overviews, background on member companies, and comparisons to other certification systems, visit the Dogwood Alliance press room:

[http://pressroomda.greenmediatoolshed.org/folders/index.tcl?folder\\_id=520](http://pressroomda.greenmediatoolshed.org/folders/index.tcl?folder_id=520)

To speak with a scientist signed on to the letter, please contact Scot Quaranda at (828)251.2525 x18.

The Dogwood Alliance is a regional network of more than 70 community, environmental, faith and student groups working to engender broad-based support for the end of unsustainable forestry practices in the South. Dogwood Alliance is headquartered in Asheville, North Carolina, with member groups throughout the entire Southern region. More information is available at [www.dogwoodalliance.org](http://www.dogwoodalliance.org).

**###**