

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- With the support of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative ® (SFI®) Forest Partners(SM) Program, 103,000 acres of land owned by the South Carolina Forestry Commission and Clemson University were recently certified to the SFI and American Tree Farm System® standards. The five South Carolina state forests underwent a simultaneous independent audit to certify to both the ATFS and SFI standards and Clemson University Forests, which have been ATFS certified since 1987, became SFI certified.

Founding SFI Forest Partners National Geographic Society, Time Inc., Macmillan Publishers and Pearson are promoting innovative approaches to make certification more accessible for medium-sized forest landowners and for small- and medium-sized mills. The SFI Forest Partners Program has identified nearly half a million acres of additional lands in Florida, Georgia and Virginia for program participation, with many landowners beginning third-party certification audits by the end of 2013.

"Sustainable management of our natural resources contributes to the long-term success of South Carolina's forestry industry which significantly impacts employment and manufacturing activity," Governor Nikki Haley said. "This successful public-private enterprise reinforces our state's commitment to landowners and timber managers by investing in responsible forest management."

"Thirty percent of U.S. acres certified to the SFI Standard are publicly owned, demonstrating the

value of SFI certification to public working forests, while sending a leadership signal to private landowners as well," said SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow. "We congratulate South Carolina for having the first certificate issued under the SFI Forest Partners Program and for representing significant progress in meeting our goal of certifying five million acres by the end of 2014."

"The Clemson Experimental Forest is dedicated to the teaching, research and demonstration of best practices in forest resource management to benefit society and the environment," said Clemson University President James F. Barker . "We are proud that Clemson's forest has met SFI's science-based standard for sustainability. Our institutional commitment to sustainability is central to our land-grant mission, and SFI certification is another step toward becoming a carbon neutral campus by 2030."

"The ATFS standard is a great tool to encourage family landowners to practice active, responsible forestry, and SFI certification enables our State Forests to contribute certified wood content to the supply chain of many SFI Program Participants," said Gene Kodama, South Carolina State Forester. "Through this initiative, we will better protect and develop our state's forest resource."

"Along with improving services to Tree Farmers, we led an effort to broaden the base of certified lands to reach beyond the small private landowner. The partnership between SFI, the South Carolina Forestry Commission and the South Carolina Tree Farm Committee to dual certify state forest lands and Clemson to the SFI and the Tree Farm standards does just that," said Ken Leach , chairman of the South Carolina Tree Farm Committee.

"The South Carolina Tree Farm Committee and the 2012 National Tree Farmer of the Year Walt McPhail helped spearhead this grassroots initiative, working with SFI's leadership, to promote sustainable forestry of South Carolina's woodlands. The state committee works to educate and actively engage other woodland owners about the value of certification," said Bettina Ring , Senior Vice President for Family Forests with the American Forest Foundation (AFF). ATFS is a program of AFF.

About Sustainable Forestry Initiative SFI Inc. is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)3 organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) program. Across the United States and Canada, 240 million acres are certified to the SFI forest management standard. In addition, the SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI chain-of-custody (COC) certification tracks the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and post-consumer recycled content. SFI on-product labels identify both certified sourcing and COC claims to help consumers make responsible purchasing decisions. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at <http://www.sfiprogram.org/> and <http://sfiprogram.org/Buy-SFI/>.

About American Tree Farm System The American Tree Farm System® is a network of 82,000 family forest owners sustainably managing 24 million acres of forestland. It is the largest and oldest sustainable woodland system in the United States, internationally recognized, meeting strict third-party certification standards. The American Tree Farm System® is a program of the American Forest Foundation. Learn more at www.treefarmssystem.org.

About the South Carolina Forestry Commission The South Carolina Forestry Commission is a state agency charged with the protection, promotion, and development of South Carolina's forestland. Learn more at <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/>.

About Clemson University Ranked No. 21 among national public universities, Clemson University is a major, land-grant, science- and engineering-oriented research university that maintains a strong commitment to teaching and student success. Clemson is an inclusive, student-centered community characterized by high academic standards, a

Written by Australian Business

culture of collaboration, school spirit and a competitive drive to excel. Learn more at <http://www.clemson.edu/>

SOURCE Sustainable Forestry Initiative