



VEGgieS from the forest

Canadian Model Forest Network - December 20, 2006

Imagine valuing oxygen, water quality and biodiversity in the same way as coffee, oil and real estate. It's called payment for ecological goods and services and it's coming.

A series of five workshops entitled *Valuing Ecological Goods and Services (VEGS) from the Forest* are being organized across Canada to further debate about potential ways to recognize goods and services produced by forests in Canada. The workshop series is a cooperative undertaking of the Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners and the Canadian Model Forest Network.

Each workshop will include a presentation from Michael Kennedy, an advisor on technology and economics with the Latin American and Caribbean Model Forest Network, who will share his knowledge and experience on the provision of ecosystem goods and services in Costa Rica.

"The Costa Rican payment for ecological services program is a working program trying to tackle a very difficult issue," says David Neave, General Manager, Canadian Model Forest Network. "We are hoping that the lessons learned from the experience will help light the way for Canadian communities."

As well, there will be three to five regional speakers who will focus on local issues and describe Canadian initiatives recognizing provision of ecological goods and services.

"Canadian woodlot owners are really impressed by the progress made by farmers with the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot in Manitoba and other provinces," says Peter deMarsh, President, Canadian Federation of Woodlot Owners. "We're very interested in looking at a range of approaches to find one that works best for woodlot owners."

Ecological goods and services of forests include many life-sustaining services often taken for granted such as oxygen, waste assimilation, biodiversity and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, water quantity and quality, generation and maintenance of soils and fertility. Historically, these services have not been fully factored into decision making processes. The use of market mechanisms to value them is a tool enabling the evaluation of trade-offs in a common monetary language, understandable to governments, business people and environmental practitioners.

In an effort to reverse the trends of deforestation and environmental degradation due to dependency on agriculture and tourism, the Costa Rican government passed the 1995 Forestry Law. It set the institutional and financial framework for the payment for environmental services program, which is still in use today.

For more information, please contact:

Karen Mousseau, (613) 947-9030 kmousseau@nrcan.gc.ca