

Introduction

The Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests collectively provide a mutual understanding and implicit definition of what is meant by sustainable forest management. They are tools for assessing trends in forest conditions, and they provide a common framework for describing, monitoring and evaluating progress toward sustainability. It is important to note that the criteria and indicators are not performance standards for certifying management or products.

Criteria are essentially large-scale categories that represent a reflection of public values and scientific principles. They serve to define conditions or processes by which sustainable forest management can be assessed, and are characterized by the set of indicators that they comprise. Indicators in turn provide the means for measuring an aspect of a criterion. They represent quantitative or qualitative variables that can be used to describe present characteristics and to demonstrate trends when monitored over time. In addition, indicators are intended to be flexible elements of resource monitoring that can be periodically adjusted to provide the most accurate assessment of changing environmental, economic and social conditions.

The Montreal Process countries identified the following seven criteria as essential components in the sustainable management of forest ecosystems. These criteria contain a total of 67 indicators (refer to the table of contents for the full list of indicators):

1. Conservation of biological diversity (9 indicators).
2. Maintenance of productive capacity of forest ecosystems (5 indicators).
3. Maintenance of forest ecosystem health and vitality (3 indicators).
4. Conservation and maintenance of soil and water resources (8 indicators).
5. Maintenance of forest contribution to global carbon cycles (3 indicators).
6. Maintenance and enhancement of long-term multiple socio-economic benefits to meet the needs of societies (19 indicators).
7. Legal, institutional and economic framework for forest conservation and sustainable management (20 indicators).

The USDA Forest Service has committed to work with State, local, and other partners to use criteria and indicators to report on the status of forested landscapes throughout the nation. In addition, the National Association of State Foresters, in a 1997 resolution passed at their national meeting, endorsed the seven criteria established by the Montreal Process. Also in 1997, the USDA Forest Service published the First Approximation Report for Sustainable Forest Management based upon the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. Findings from this report indicated that some information was available for most indicators, but that data was completely lacking for others. In some cases, data was only available for recent years making it impossible to determine trends. In other cases, data had not been measured using consistent definitions or methodologies at different locations or at different times. These types of data issues made it inappropriate or impossible to draw conclusions at that time.

Illinois Report on Sustainable Forest Management: Criteria and Indicators

The USDA Forest Service's 2003 National Report on Sustainable Forests represents a follow up to the First Approximation Report and is also based on the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. To facilitate the preparation of this report, the USDA Forest Service and other federal agencies entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Sustainable Forest Management Data. This MOU provided a forum for federal agencies to coordinate activities and resolve issues related to collecting, monitoring, analyzing, and reporting data related to the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators. Other parties that entered into this MOU include the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Environmental Security), and the Office of Policy Analysis.

The intention of the development of the Illinois Report on Sustainable Forest Management was to provide a source of reference information for state legislators, other policy makers, resource managers and concerned citizens, as well as to evaluate the usefulness of the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for assessing sustainability at the state level. This report presents a comprehensive overview of Illinois' forests and provides information for further analysis and discussion about the sustainable use of our forests for present and future generations. In addition, the project identifies shortfalls in resource data and other areas that must be addressed before we can assure the sustainability of Illinois' forest resources.

Although the criteria and indicators were designed for national and international use and are therefore sometimes rather broad in scope, they have proven to be useful tools for assessing trends in forest conditions as well as providing a common framework for describing, monitoring, and evaluating progress towards sustainable forest management in the state of Illinois.

Readers are encouraged to refer to the sources listed below for further information and updates concerning the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests and their application. The authors would like to reiterate that the Montreal Process Criteria and Indicators are not designed to be static. Rather, they represent a dynamic set of variables that can be adapted to ever-changing environmental, economic and social conditions.

- The Montreal Process website. Available at: <http://www.mpci.org/> as of 9/10/03.

The Montreal Process is the Working Group on Criteria and Indicators for the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Temperate and Boreal Forests. The Montreal Process website provides background and current information concerning

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the development and implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management at the international level.

- The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests website. Available at: <http://www.sustainableforests.net/> as of 9/10/03.

The Roundtable on Sustainable Forests represents a partnership of public agencies and private organizations in the United States. The Roundtable supports the goal of sustainability through the implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management. It serves as a forum for the sharing of information to facilitate better decision-making at the national level.

- USDA Forest Service. Sustainable Resource Management website. Available at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/sustained/msie4.html> as of 9/10/03.

The USDA Forest Service has been invested with the lead role in the development of the 2003 National Report on Sustainable Forests. This report and other relevant information concerning sustainable forest management in the United States is available at the Forest Service's Sustainable Resource Management website.

- USDA Forest Service Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry. 2002. Sourcebook on Criteria and Indicators of Forest Sustainability in the Northeastern Area. NA-TP-03-02. 64 p. Available at: <http://www.na.fs.fed.us/sustainability/> as of 9/10/03.

The Sourcebook represents an effort to address the issue of measuring forest sustainability at the regional and state levels. It provides an invaluable source of information concerning such efforts. In addition, it identifies a set of base indicators within the Montreal Process framework that can be used to assess sustainability across the Northeastern region. The Sourcebook is a useful starting point for states and other organizations in their efforts to use criteria and indicators to assess forest sustainability.