

## **Sustainable Logging...An Appropriate Definition Still Doesn't Exist**

It is a shock to find that when you search for an example of an American logging company that replants the equivalent number of trees they have cut down you come up with a big fat zero number of results. You are wasting your time even further if you endeavor to find a company that plants two trees for each one it removes. It is nice to know the most intuitive, sensible means of practicing “sustainable logging” is hardly used anywhere, or at least not talked about.

In the past decade, the concept of sustainable logging – harvesting trees in a manner that is eco-conscious as well as eco-supportive – has brought the traditional bad guys of the forest, the loggers, out of the shadows into the light of redemption. Forest managers and green activists agree that logging can actually be beneficial to woodlands and are willing to support the industry on the condition they do it responsibly. The only problem is that the definition of sustainable logging has yet to be decided.

While it is possible to debate the most sustainable method of tree harvesting, it seems obvious that the practice of replanting trees at an equal or double rate to the ones you've cut down should be a keystone of sustainable logging. For years, the role of replanting has been left mainly to forest managers and eco-organizations like the Arbor Day Foundation and the Plant-a-Tree organization. According to the United States Forest Service, almost 50% of the replanting done in the United States is by non-industrial organizations. Now that the logging industry is on board with eco-conservation, shouldn't this responsibility of replanting be moved onto the companies that reduced the number of trees in the first place?

As of 2005, the United States had the 4<sup>th</sup> greatest forest cover in the world next to Brazil, Russia, and Canada. It also has one of the fastest disappearing forests in the world, ranking number 7 in the highest deforestation rates, beating out notorious tree-felling countries like the Sudan, Nigeria, and Bolivia. As a forest nation, it is vital that we maintain our wooded areas not only for ourselves, but also for the global community as studies have shown that forests help offset the effects of global warming due to their ability to absorb carbon dioxide.

Due to the country's heightened awareness of global warming, you would think entrepreneurs would develop sustainable business plans, including a solution to the planting issue. Logging companies could donate saplings and assist in planting on land owned by others at a rate of two per tree to offset their culpability by replanting the recipient land owners' plantations and thus help to combat global warming and also serve as future resources for the contributing companies when the wood has matured to begin the cycle anew.

The bottom line is there is too much at stake to wait for the logging community to determine what constitutes sustainable logging. Action must be taken soon, or the United States will continue to rise in the list of most deforested nations on the globe. The failure of the logging industry to act has created an opportunity for a sustainable business plan to set a standard and help shape what future generations think of as sustainable logging practices.