



The Atlantic Forest Conservation Dialogue:

A regional dialogue of “The Forests Dialogue”

August 2005

Background

From October 9 through October 11, 2003, thirty representatives from environmental groups, the forest products industry, landowners and academia met in Santa Cruz da Cabralia, Brazil, to discuss issues related to forestry and biodiversity conservation. This meeting was convened by The Forests Dialogue (TFD), an on-going international multi-stakeholder dialogue process focused on forestry related issues. The Dialogue focused on exploring opportunities for collaboration between environmental groups and the forestry industry on biodiversity conservation. The Dialogue concluded with a commitment of all participants to implementing and reporting on practical actions that combine leadership, conservation planning and priority setting approaches, biodiversity information tools, social and political factors, and funding and related economic incentives to achieve measurable conservation outcomes.

The success of the 2003 Forest & Biodiversity Dialogue inspired three Brazilian organizations who participated in the Dialogue – Instituto BioAtlântica, The Nature Conservancy do Brasil and Conservação Internacional do Brasil – to propose a follow-up Dialogue involving more regional actors and focused specifically on developing a shared vision for forestry and biodiversity conservation in the Atlantic Forest.

This proposal was met with enthusiasm by the TFD Steering Committee, and now the three proposing organizations are in discussions with corporate and conservation leaders to bring this concept to life within Brazil. The hope is that this “Atlantic Forest Conservation Dialogue” will both generate tangible conservation and business outcomes for the participants and the Atlantic Forest, as well as serve as a model for other regionally focused dialogues for the Forest Dialogue.

The expected outcome of the Atlantic Forest Conservation Dialogue is a new, shared vision between leading forestry companies and conservationists at work in the Atlantic Forest that results in concrete actions which increase the scale of conservation efforts while delivering value to participating forestry companies.

About the Atlantic Forest

Once a continuous stretch of tropical and subtropical rainforest covering over 1.3 million square kilometers (130 million hectares), equivalent to almost 15% of Brazil, the Atlantic Forest stretched from the northern state of Piauí to Rio Grande do Sul. Today, only approximately 7% of the original forest cover remains. In spite of this fragmentation, the Atlantic Forest is still one of the biologically richest eco-regions in the world, and is home to a vast array of plants and animals including many endemic species such as the woolly spider monkey and the golden lion tamarin. Significant threats to the region include population growth, deforestation from agriculture expansion and for pasture for cattle, poaching in protected areas, the rapid expansion of the plantation forestry industry, and urban and industrial development.

Over the past 50 years, the plantation forestry industry has become a major economic driver throughout the Atlantic Forest. High growth rates for hardwood and softwood species, favorable weather and soil conditions, low labor costs, and government incentives for forestry projects have all contributed to the industry's success to date. The Brazilian forestry sector, composed of segments such as lumber, veneer, plywood, particleboard, fiber board, cellulose and paper, is responsible for an annual revenue of US\$11 billion (1995 numbers), equivalent to 5.3% of the GNP, and generating foreign exchange credits worth approximately US\$2.3 billion yearly. The forestry sector provides 600,000 jobs (WFI, 1995). Within Brazil, there is approximately 4,790,000 ha of forestry plantations, with 53% in eucalyptus and 34% in pine (FAO 2002). The vast majority of these plantations are found within the Atlantic Forest region of Brazil.

The Atlantic Forest Conservation Dialogue

Many plantation forestry companies in the Atlantic Forest are already undertaking innovative projects to protect biodiversity, but there is little collaboration or shared vision between the industry and conservation organizations. Conservationists agree that ensuring the survival of the Atlantic Forest requires an increase in the scale of effort seen to date, which means working in partnerships and collaborations to achieve a greater scale. Therefore, the Forests Dialogue is planning a regional dialogue series focused on conservation of Atlantic Forest to bring together local representatives from the forestry industry, conservationists, and community groups. Over the course of 4 two-day meetings, during a period of 24 months, the Atlantic Forest Dialogue will focus on sharing practical and cost effective ways to generate biodiversity conservation outcomes in priority areas and achieve sustainable business outcomes, as well as create a closer working relationship between forestry companies and their stakeholders.

The Dialogue will be held in Portuguese, with English translation available as necessary. Dialogue participants will take part in the 24-month process organized around the two general themes listed below. Each company or organization will be asked to commit to participate in every meeting, thereby building important relationships between this “work group” of people from companies, NGOs and community groups – all focused on building a shared vision for the forestry industry and biodiversity conservation within the Atlantic Forest.

This Regional Dialogue series will be coordinated by Instituto BioAtlântica, Conservation International and The Nature Conservancy, and is planned to commence in October 2005. To ensure balance in perspectives, these groups will engage 3 companies to participate as coordinators, as well.

Each meeting will include a series of expert presentations on a topic of focus, and then a group discussion to distill key findings and recommendations on each topic. When possible, each meeting will also include a field trip to ground the discussions. In addition to the core participants, this format allows for specific topic experts (academia, government, other experts) to participate in meetings that focus on their expertise.

Dialogue Areas of Focus

The Dialogue will be a participative, member-driven process, with an initial focus on the general topics and questions listed below. The Dialogue will combine case studies and sharing of past experiences with the development of a common vision of future activities and partnerships between companies, NGOs and communities that will support the conservation and restoration of the Atlantic Forest.

Conservation and Restoration Technology Development:

- What are some examples of successful conservation and restoration collaborations between companies, local communities, governments and conservationists in the Atlantic Forest?
- How can companies and conservationists exchange data, knowledge and technology about forest restoration and conservation?
- Can we set common priorities for conservation and business expansion?
- What practical methodologies and tools already exist that forestry companies can apply to identify, restore and conserve the most important forest remnants on their lands to maximize biodiversity gains?
- Is there a way to develop indicators and a common monitoring protocol to measure results and drive future strategy?
- How can we help build capacity within local communities to empower their participation in regional land use issues?
- How else can conservationists assist companies with this important topic?

Economic Incentives and Public Policies:

- What are the opportunities that exist today for compensation for ecosystem services from land held by forestry companies and their suppliers (“fomentados”)?
- What is our common experience of creating incentives and tools for forestry companies to include their small and medium scale suppliers in conservation and restoration efforts, and to bring them into compliance with Brazilian law (legal reserves, APPs)?
- What is our vision for future markets and incentives?
- Are there public policies that we should consider proposing individually or as a group to the correct government agency?

Expected Results

At the end of the 24-month process, the Dialogue will have helped to create a new consensus on conservation planning in key regions, identified technology for restoring Atlantic Forest, and proposed new public policies and incentives. It will also have sparked new relationships and projects which have tangible conservation benefits. A variety of opportunities for sharing experiences within the industry and across different civil society groups will have been realized, creating invaluable personal relationships as well as increasing the level of individual ownership in conservation issues. The net result of the Dialogue will be a shared vision of forestry and biodiversity conservation within the Atlantic Forest, and a set of commitments on the part of the participants to work together to realize that vision.

The Dialogue will also produce a short, practical publication of Forestry and Biodiversity Principles for the Atlantic Forest, which will focus on presenting tools and the recommendations of the Dialogue for the forest products sector within Brazil. This handbook will be made available in Portuguese and English to the participants, and will be distributed widely within Brazil and abroad. At the end of the process, TFD International will plan and implement a communications campaign to communicate the results of the Dialogue, promote the handbook, and attract positive attention to the participants.

Lastly, the outcomes of the Dialogue should serve as a model and benchmark for other regional dialogues to be established across the world.

Participants

Dialogue Coordinators: Conservação Internacional (CI Brasil), Instituto BioAtlântica (IBio), The Nature Conservancy (TNC Brasil), and 3 forestry companies (TBD)

The Atlantic Forest Conservation Dialogue will invite companies with planted forests within the Atlantic Forest to participate, along with select NGOs that participate in the international Forest Dialogue process or have biodiversity conservation programs that span the Atlantic Forest biome. Regional NGOs, academia, government agencies, and other experts will be engaged on a meeting specific basis to discuss topics or a particular region on which they have expertise.

Company Invitees:

Aracruz
Cenibra
International Paper
Klabin
Masisa
NorskeSkog
Rigesa/MeadWestvaco
StoraEnso
Suzano/ Bahia Sul
Veracel
VCP
Weyerhaeuser

NGO Invitees:

Associação Flora Brasil

Associação Preservação do Meio Ambiente do Alto Vale do Itajai - APREMAVI

Fundação Biodiversitas

Instituto de Estudos Sócio-Ambientais do Sul da Bahia – IESB

Instituto Floresta Viva

Instituto de Pesquisas da Mata Atlântica - IPEMA

SOS Mata Atlântica

Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental - SPVS

WWF Brasil

Special Invitees:

Friends of Earth (FOE)

Greenpeace

IUCN

Benefits for Participating Companies

A variety of benefits will accrue to participating companies. First and foremost, a regional, shared vision for conservation of biodiversity within the Atlantic Forest will be created that partners forestry companies with conservationists on shared objectives.

Additional benefits will also include:

- Positive Public Relations coverage through earned media, events, and publications.
- Opportunities to highlight the good work already being done at the regional, national and global levels with key customers, business partners and stakeholders.
- Increase in the impact, or “return on investment” of their existing conservation programs and investments through connections with larger scale, regional efforts.
- Learning and sharing opportunities with other forestry companies.
- Association with internationally recognized environmental NGOs.
- Global recognition of the sustainability and world class standards applied to pulp and paper products from the Atlantic Forest, providing opportunities to attract new, environmentally conscious customers.
- Leverage lessons-learned and experiences with their suppliers.