SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT NETWORK | RÉSEAU DE GESTION DURABLE DES FORÊTS | Networks of Centres of Excellence / Réseaux de centres d'excellence

Media Release

Laval University researcher receives $120,000 research award

Dr. Steve Cumming to use computer modeling tools to help preserve wildlife, ensure conservation efforts are cost-effective

Quebec City, Quebec, April 25, 2007 – Principal Investigator Dr. Steve Cumming, Canada Research Chair in Boreal Ecosystems Modeling at the Université Laval, will receive $120,000 over two years to help sustain wildlife in the boreal regions of Québec as well as parts of Ontario and Labrador, through the use of innovative computer tools. This award is part of a $3 million investment over two years by the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Network.

As part of the research project – funded by the SFM Network with partner support from Ducks Unlimited Canada, the Government of Québec, Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd., and Tembec Inc. – Dr. Cumming will develop and apply existing computer modeling tools in order to more accurately assess tradeoffs associated with the conservation of such wildlife as waterfowl, songbirds and woodland caribou. Important new developments will include provisions to measure and respond to the challenges of our changing climate.

This work is significant because most existing conservation planning tools and landscape simulation models are limited in terms of the spatial extent they can consider; typically no more than one million hectares which is quite small in the context of boreal forest management. With Dr. Cumming's technology, however, researchers can consider far larger tracts of land, extending across provincial boundaries. The new technology is also innovative because its models are sensitive to landscape structure, predicted changes in climate and natural and human disturbances, permitting researchers to explore alternate strategies for sustaining wildlife.

"These improved modeling tools will help forest industry executives, politicians, environmentalists, foresters and scientists see and better understand the underlying tradeoffs and risks associated with regional and provincial management decisions, before those decisions are cast in stone," explains Dr. Cumming, adding that another benefit of the models is that they may show both where, and when, conservation objectives are most cost effective.

Dr. Cumming's project team includes: Drs. Marcel Darveau, André Desrochers, Daniel Fortin and Frédéric Raulier of the University of Laval; Pierre Drapeau of the Université du Québec à Montréal; and Sylvie Gauthier of Service canadien des fôrets. The team will have access to data collected for the National Boreal Bird Habitat Modeling Project, Canadian Boreal Ecosystems Analysis for Conservation Networks, Gouvernement du Québec, Ministère des Ressources naturelles et Faune, and many research and monitoring projects focusing on waterfowl, woodland caribou and natural disturbances in eastern Canada.

About The Sustainable Forest Management Network

The Sustainable Forest Management Network facilitates collaborative, applied research partnerships among 32 industry, government, Aboriginal, and non-government partners in supporting the work of more than 190 researchers. Their research efforts are accomplished thanks to 300 highly qualified personnel working at 35 participating institutions across Canada. The SFM Network represents one of the few forums to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal forest resource managers and policy makers around one

table to promote dialogue and the development of a common understanding in a non-confrontational environment.

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