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

Montreal Researcher Receives National Award for sustaining Canada's forests in the long term - Dr. Christian Messier's discovery maximizes both timber production and ecosystem protection at the same time

MONTREAL, Dec. 5 /CNW Telbec/ - Dr. Christian Messier, Professor Biological Sciences at the Université du Québec à Montréal and a Principal Investigator with the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Network, today is being awarded the inaugural Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Chairs'Award by the federal government for his innovative simulation models that have the potential of ensuring the sustainable management of Canada's forests in the long term.

The Honourable Maxime Bernier, Minister of Industry, congratulated Dr. Messier at the NCE annual meeting in Ottawa. "Canada's New Government is proud to recognize and support our best and brightest scientists who are at the foundation of Canada's economy," said Minister Bernier, in presenting the awards at the NCE annual meeting in Ottawa. "It is a great privilege to honour the work of the researchers who are contributing to Canada's role as a world environmental and technology leader."

Dr. Messier's discoveries have the potential to make Canada's forest companies more competitive by helping them to obtain the strictest environmental certifications such as FSC Certification. His work also has the potential to protect jobs for people living in over 300 Canadian forest dependent communities, protect Aboriginal Peoples' culture and livelihoods as well as maintain the natural complexity of forests to maintain ongoing timber supply, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, economic development, multiple use, aesthetics and fire proofing.

In one of his research projects, he brilliantly illustrates the way to increase native tree species diversity in intensive forest plantations that use only 20 percent of a landscape area while implementing both ecosystem management and protected areas for the remaining 80 percent. In so doing, Messier shows how Canada can increase both timber production and ecosystem protection at the same time.

Dr. Messier developed this scenario through a mix of laboratory and field experiments that he conducted in four countries including Canada, Finland, France and Panama. He also collaborated to create two new highly sophisticated computer simulation tools to both analyze the data from these large landscape experiments and to predict how a complex mixture of native tree species will develop over time.

Dr. Messier's computer simulation models include highly specialized ecophysiological information, the basic research information about how plant cells become woody, and the latest information to test the impact of various silvicultural treatments both locally and regionally.

"As physicists can create a computer simulation of complex physical reactions based upon the knowledge of minute details, we can now do the same for forests," says Messier.

Dr. Messier's research involved ecologists, biologists, environmentalists, economists, social scientists and forest managers from various organizations and levels of government as well as Aboriginal People.

"Dr. Messier's research epitomizes the successful implementation of NCE goals by showing what can be achieved by engaging researchers with industry, Aboriginal and government agency partners," says SFM Network Board Chair Fraser Dunn.

"A visionary, Christian Messier regards our forests and their ecosystems with profound loving respect. He knows how to share his passion with the general public. He has been very successful in meeting the social, economic and environmental challenges of tomorrow's forests that are so much more than just trees," stated Université du Québec à Montréal, Vice-Rector of Research, Michel Jébrak.

"Messier's research results will have significant value and impact toward sustaining Canada's boreal forest for the future," says SFM Network Scientific Director Dr. Jim Fyles.

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