

## Profiles in Sustainable Forestry:

### *The Rainforest Alliance & Mendocino Redwood Company*

In 1998, the newly established Mendocino Redwood Company (MRC) purchased 233,000 acres in Northern California. Located about 100 miles north of San Francisco, the lands had been harvested since the early 1850s and was in such need of repair, that Mendocino and Sonoma county residents had become extremely concerned about the future of their forests.



Despite the many challenges, MRC – which is owned by the Fisher family of San Francisco along with a group of partners – was confident that they had the resources needed to take a long-term approach to the land's restoration. With more than 1.3 million acres of coastal redwood forest in private ownership, the company thought it could provide a successful example of sustainable forestry, restoration investment and economic viability.

Within six months of its formation, MRC had committed itself to winning certification from a group accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international nonprofit organization that sets standards for forestry certification programs worldwide and accredits certification organizations that comply with these standards. MRC's motivation: to bring truly

independent, third-party experts to assess and validate exemplary environmental practices. Given the state of the land, it was an ambitious goal that would take almost two years of effort to achieve.

In 2000, MRC was certified by the Rainforest Alliance's SmartWood program as well as by the Scientific Certification Systems of Oakland, California. Mendocino Forest Products (MFP), an associated but separate company, owns three sawmills that were evaluated and certified by SmartWood in the spring of 2000. This additional "chain of custody" certification ensures that certified wood is being tracked from the certified forest managed by MRC through the production process of MFP to the end consumer.

#### Highlights of MRC's Efforts:

- Significantly reduced annual harvest to one-third of growth and less than 1.5% of inventory.
- Reduced use of chemical herbicides by over 35%, reduced GARLON by over 90%.
- Recorded its first conservation easement, a "forever wild" protection of 90 acres of mature redwood in the town of Comptche, California.
- Distributed important landscape planning documents to the local public in regular community fora and on the MRC Web site.
- Mapped and inventoried important wildlife data such as salmon habitat.
- Identified and protected old growth trees, incorporating public concerns and scientific definitions.
- Completed more than 170 restoration projects, spending over \$2.5 million to control erosion and improve fish passage. Bridges made from recycled railroad flatcars are replacing culverts that once impaired stream flow.
- Hundreds of thousands of seedlings are planted each year in company reforestation projects.

## RISING TO A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

According to Chris Maser, an ecologist who took part in the Rainforest Alliance assessment of MRC's land-management practices, "it was the history of the land that made this particular certification unique." The previous owners had practiced "high grading" – cutting of all trees of value – as well as broad-scale clearcutting in older forest stands of redwood and Douglas fir. This allowed tanoak, which is typically an understory tree, to aggressively take over the forest.

MRC has worked hard to overcome the legacy of short-sighted land management. MRC has begun actively restoring the forest back to a healthy, functioning ecosystem – a process that will take decades to complete – but also the average annual cut is now substantially less than the annual growth of timber.

### S M A R T W O O D



Fifteen years ago, the Rainforest Alliance launched SmartWood, pioneering the concept of sustainable forestry certification by auditing participating forest product companies and awarding its seal of approval to those complying with a rigorous set of environmental, social and economic standards.

This leadership in forestry certification was the catalyst for the founding of the Forest Stewardship Council, and today the Rainforest Alliance continues its leadership as the gold standard in the industry. The Rainforest Alliance operates in all forest types and has certified more than 800 forest operations on nearly 16 million acres (6.5 million hectares) worldwide.



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Through 2002, MRC spent over \$2.5 million on projects to control sediment into the fish-bearing streams, on significant road repair and on riverside revegetation. MRC managers have identified impaired areas, such as damaged logging roads or culverts (pipes that carry streams under a road), which if in need of replacement, can be outfitted with salmon-friendly alternatives. MRC has reduced its use of herbicides and is researching alternative treatments to control the growth of the invasive tanoak, ranging from the application of naturally occurring toxins like eucalyptus oil and acetic acid, to covering tanoak stumps in black plastic to keep light away from the sprouts.



When MRC first took over the land, the company was met with a community that had grown skeptical after a succession of industrial landowners made promises they did not keep. Today, MRC encourages open dialogues with the public about how the forest should best be managed. MRC foresters and scientists accompany community members and stakeholders through the forest to discuss areas of mutual concern. This level of direct involvement with the public is remarkable in large, privately held timberlands and provides further evidence of the company's unusually high level of commitment to working out solutions that are beneficial to the long-term sustainability of the forest and to the people who care for and depend on it.

[www.rainforest-alliance.org](http://www.rainforest-alliance.org)  
[www.smartwood.org](http://www.smartwood.org)

*The mission of the Rainforest Alliance is to protect ecosystems and the people and wildlife that live within them by implementing better business practices for biodiversity conservation and sustainability.*

*The FSC Trademark identifies products which contain wood from well managed forests certified in accordance with the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council.*

Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Forestry

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