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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First partnership of its kind in the U.S....

Minnesota's Sustainable Forestry Initiative® building Habitat for Humanity home in Hibbing; project began today in Cook with harvesting of timber

Cook, Minnesota – January 26, 2008 – What started Saturday morning as a well managed Tree Farm will soon become dozens of 4' x 8' sheets of oriented strand board (OSB), as part of a unique effort by the Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Implementation Committee to build a Habitat for Humanity home.

Later this year, Hibbing's Kelli Ritz and her daughter will move into their own new home in that city – a home that will be built in partnership with Minnesota SFI program volunteers using SFI-certified materials from Minnesota forest products companies.

The wood for the Habitat for Humanity project came from the Cook Tree Farm of Minnesota Sen. Tom Bakk, which he donated. Harvesting was done by Cliff Shermer, one of more than 440 participants in the rigorous Minnesota Logger Education Program, which continually updates loggers on current technologies, environmental regulations and other requirements. The logs were then hauled to the Ainsworth Engineered mill in Cook, where they will soon be made into OSB, compliments of Ainsworth.

As part of the renewable nature of the project, Sen. Bakk's harvested land will be replanted this spring, using seedlings donated by the University of Minnesota.

"I'm happy to donate these raw materials because Habitat for Humanity and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative are such outstanding organizations," said Sen. Bakk. "This partnership with SFI is the first of its kind in the United States to ensure a Habitat home is built using forest products harvested via measures that promote sustainability – from the OSB that Ainsworth is making, to the final piece of trim that will complete the house."

The OSB will be stored at Ainsworth until spring, when the material will be hauled to the home site in Hibbing. SFI and other volunteers will build a one-story, 1,100-square-foot home using additional materials donated by Louisiana Pacific, Marvin Windows and other Minnesota Sustainable Forestry Initiative program participants.

Other Minnesota forest products companies are also contributing, in the form of cash donations to help fund the Habitat for Humanity project. Those companies are Boise, Inc.; Forest Capital Partners, LLC; NewPage Corporation; Sappi Fine Paper North America; UPM, Blandin Paper Mill; and Verso Paper, Sartell Mill.

“This Habitat for Humanity project is a great way to demonstrate how Minnesotans come into contact with practices that promote responsible forestry every day,” said Tim O’Hara, coordinator of the Minnesota SFI Implementation Committee. “More and more people are realizing the importance of responsible forestry, and SFI is pleased to be a leader in that area.”

“SFI is proud to be a partner in this project and support the work of the Minnesota SFI Implementation committee on this incredibly important project,” said SFI President and CEO Kathy Abusow. “This is another example of how our 37 implementation committees across North America are making real, positive differences, not just at the forest management level but also at the community level.”

Nathan Thompson, executive director of the North St. Louis County Habitat for Humanity, said his organization is proud and grateful to be the first Habitat organization in the country to team up with a state SFI committee.

“We’re appreciative of all volunteers who put so much time and effort into building affordable homes with deserving families, but it’s especially gratifying to have the people who supply home building materials taking on a project for us,” said Thompson. “Like SFI, Habitat for Humanity is a great believer in the importance of promoting sustainability.”

The SFI program is one of the largest forestry certification programs in the world, using measurements that include protection of water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat and more. There are more than 143 million acres certified to the comprehensive SFI standard across North America. In Minnesota, there are nearly 6.5 million acres of forestlands certified, making Minnesota the leader in the United States in the amount of acres enrolled in the SFI program.

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