

THE COOPERATIVE FORESTRY RESEARCH UNIT: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MAINE'S FOREST MANAGERS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SINCE 1975

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Maine's large forest landowners have long recognized the need to support a strong research effort as part of their managing Maine's forests. In 1975, a small group of visionary forest industry leaders and representatives of the University of Maine formed the Cooperative Forestry Research Unit (CFRU). It is now one of the oldest industry/university forest research cooperatives in the United States, and continues to serve as a model of joint leadership and cooperation between Maine's largest industry and the University of Maine.

The CFRU is composed of about 24 private and public forestland management organizations from across the state that guide and support research on key forest management issues facing Maine's forest landowners and managers (www.umaine.edu/cfru/). The mission of the CFRU is to *"conduct applied scientific research that contributes to the sustainable management of Maine's forests for desired products, services, and conditions."* The CFRU has been generously supported for 29 years through the voluntary financial and in-kind contributions of its members.

During that time, the CFRU has researched and solved a number of crucial issues facing Maine's forest managers. In recent years, the CFRU also has become the primary research and development effort supporting third-party forest certification in the state. CFRU research has had two primary objectives: 1) develop information and tools to improve the efficiency and productivity of forest management and 2) provide science-based information about the ecological effects of forestry practices.

Research focusing on the ecological effects of forestry practices has allowed the CFRU to provide scientific information that has been instrumental in helping the forest industry meet the requirements of certification by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council. In addition, this research has provided key information for policy makers addressing a number of important forestry issues in Maine and elsewhere. Current CFRU research continues this tradition with a focus on improving silviculture in the Maine forest and improving our understanding about the influence of forest management on wildlife habitat and conservation of biodiversity.

In addition, CFRU-sponsored research on the University of Maine campus has provided scores of undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty in forestry and wildlife with the opportunity to learn about and help solve some of the most important problems facing forest managers in the state. This investment has provided a wealth of expertise that has been drawn upon by forestry organizations, government agencies, and the public when information and advice was needed about key sustainable forestry issues. The CFRU has had a positive and lasting influence on the forestry culture at the University of Maine by providing a direct link between the university and the people managing Maine's forest land.