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Abstract

A review and synthesis of social indicators for sustainable forest management

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This review synthesizes some of the main themes of social sustainability indicators for forest management, and addresses conceptual categories, issues, and limitations associated with the use of social indicators. Socio-cultural values and conditions associated with quality of life, public access to non-market benefits and resources, governance, and community stability are discussed. The paper illustrates how a selection of social indicators has been prescribed and used within various sustainable forest management (SFM) systems of criteria and indicators (c&i) at different scales from the international to the local in British Columbia. Social indicators are, in general, weakly developed relative to ecological and economic indicators. Standard c&i systems often omit crucial social indicators, or include them without specific definitions or measurable benchmarks. Recommendations are made for future research that examines the fundamental nature of social indicators and their underlying cause-and-effect relationships, and supports improved methods and tools for integrating social indicators into forest management and decision making. The role of forestry in contributing to broader social indicators, such as sense of place and community cohesion, needs to be clarified.

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