

Keweenaw Land honored for 20 years of forest certification

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Ralph Ansami/Daily Globe

DAVE BUBSER, of the Rainforest Alliance, left, presents a wooden plaque commemorating 20 years of forest certification to Keweenaw Land Association manager of forest operations Brian Glodowski Friday at the company's office in Ironwood. Also shown is David Ayer, chairman of the KLA board of directors

IRONWOOD - Keweenaw Land Association was recognized Friday afternoon for being a leader in forest management certification.

In fact, Keweenaw was the first publicly-traded company in the country to be certified by the Forest Stewardship Council through KLA's participation with the Rainforest Alliance, a nonprofit organization. That was in 1994.

While many states have addressed forest certification in the past few years, Keweenaw was far ahead of the curve 20 years ago.

Brian Glodowski, manager of forest operations at Keweenaw Land's office in the [Ironwood](#) Industrial Park, said certification means customers are receiving products from properly managed forests, with sound logging practices being followed.

David Ayer, chairman of Keweenaw Land's board of directors, flew in from Idaho Friday to attend a Rainforest Alliance plaque presentation from Dave Bubser.

Ayer said forest certification "has now become a standard business practice."

It has been implemented by Midwestern states through Departments of Natural Resources.

Bubser said Rainforest works almost entirely with the private sector.

The Rainforest Alliance was organized in 1986 and has 350 people on its staff. It covers 14 countries. Its first forest certification went to an Indonesian plantation.

In addition to forest products from firms like Keweenaw, Rainforest certifies cocoa and bananas,

and numerous crops with its distinctive green frog seal.

Five percent of Fortune 500 companies buy Rainforest-certified crops.

"You're our oldest U.S. client," Bubser said. "We're paying tribute to your 20 years of work. This assures your shareholders that the forest practices are sustainable."

Bubser described what his company does for businesses like Keweenaw Land as an annual "third party audit."

To retain so-called Smartwood certification, Keweenaw Land must meet 180 criteria, said Bubser, who works out of Minnesota.

A total of 35 million acres in the U.S. are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Among the accomplishments Bubser singled out by Keweenaw are stream protection and habitat for goshawks and wolves.

He said the company kept local logging contractors working during the lean recession years and it opens its lands to hikers and hunting.

Company officials said the sustainable forestry practices began in the early 1950s "to maximize the value of timberland assets over the long-term."

Glodowski said sustained yield management ensures that Keweenaw never harvests more than it grows.

He said the company has acquired an additional 5,000 acres in the past year. It manages 168,000 surface acres.

About half of the land managed by Keweenaw is in [Gogebic County](#).

Keweenaw employs 17 full-timers and contracts with many local logging firms, truckers and road builders, contributing to the local economy.

Michigan's forestry products industry contributes \$14.6 billion annually to the state's economy. The industry makes up 10 percent of the state's manufacturing sector.