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## ***Press Release***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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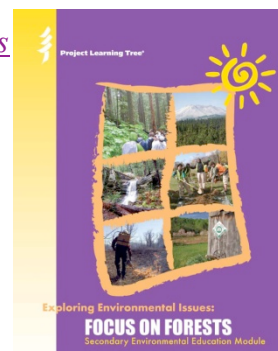
### **PROJECT LEARNING TREE RELEASES NEW HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM EXPLORING ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: FOCUS ON FORESTS**

#### **Integrates Teaching About Forests into a Multitude of Subject Areas Using Hands-On Classroom Studies and Outdoor Field Investigations**

Washington, D.C. – Do students know the water from their faucet might be naturally filtered by a forest instead of a water treatment plant? Do they know they can calculate the carbon sequestered by the trees in their own backyard? Do they know that one of the biggest threats to America’s forests is the transfer of family property between generations?

These big-picture, thought-provoking questions are examples of some of the topics explored in a new Project Learning Tree® (PLT) environmental education curriculum resource for high school teachers.

Nine activities in PLT’s *Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests* guide teach students about forest health, watersheds, climate change, who owns America’s forests, and more. In the “Forest to Faucet” activity, students evaluate the extent to which their own community’s water supply is affected by forests and forest management. In “Climate Change and Forests,” students use a carbon footprint calculator to analyze their personal effect on carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, and explore how carbon sequestration by trees can affect carbon dioxide levels. Another activity “Who Owns America’s Forests?” examines the critical issue of changing forestland use and ownership. Through local interviews, students capture relevant data for their region, and offer possible solutions to help conserve forestland in their community.



High school educators and junior college professors can obtain a copy of PLT’s *Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests* curriculum by attending a [PLT professional development workshop](#) in their area. PLT’s 50-state network trains more than 30,000 PreK-12 educators every year through 1,500 workshops held across the country.

“PLT helps teachers incorporate a hands-on approach to learning core subject matter and basic skills by exploring complex, real-world environmental issues,” says Kathy McGlaufflin, Director of Project Learning Tree. “*Focus on Forests* investigates the profound changes occurring in North American forests today, and students apply what they learn to their own community investigations.”

PLT uses experiential learning, inquiry-based investigations, outdoor education, and service-learning to help educators make the learning relevant and fun for students. Through its state programs, PLT provides teachers the professional development and tools they need to supplement a well-rounded, enriching education, including environmental education lesson plans and content tied to state and national academic standards, and connections to local professional educators and natural resource specialists.

The 176-page *Focus on Forests* guide helps teachers provide students with meaningful experiences related to classroom content. Lesson plans address a multitude of subject areas, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) subjects, civics, and social studies. A “knowledge primer,” ready-to-use student worksheets, and hands-on classroom lessons and field investigations help students develop an understanding and appreciation for stewardship and informed decision-making on issues that affect forests. The activities develop students’ critical thinking skills, and students engage in debates about real-life forest management decisions.

“*Focus on Forests* provides students and teachers with tools to consider and assess the social, economic, and environmental value of trees and forests, and their relevance for people not just locally, but globally as well,” says Jackie Stallard, Manager of Education Programs for Project Learning Tree.

“The activities within this [*Focus on Forests*] curriculum provide a wealth of information for the student, as well as the educator,” said Chad Garick, Geography Professor at Jones County Junior College in Ellisville, Mississippi, and one of 38 teachers who field-tested the activities with students. “The activities are presented in a balanced approach, and require students to utilize higher order thinking skills.”

Since 1976, PLT has provided environmental education training and academic curricula for teachers and other educators working with youth from preschool through grade 12, and college students. To ensure that PLT meets the needs of educators, hundreds of professional educators and technical experts help develop, review, field test, and independently evaluate all of PLT’s curriculum materials. The process includes research, surveys, writing workshops, and reviews with educators and resource professionals; revisions based on pilot testing and field testing; and formal assessment of impact on student learning by independent evaluators.

“I was thoroughly impressed with the questions provided within these activities, which in turn guided some amazing debates,” said Susan Duffy, 11-12<sup>th</sup> Grade Biology Teacher at Hillsboro High School in North Dakota. “The discussions and discourse among my juniors and seniors was wonderful! The students and I really learned a lot.”

The United Nations General Assembly designated 2011 as International Year of Forests to promote broader understanding of the importance of forests and bolster global efforts to promote sustainable forest management and conservation. When teachers head back to school, they can

take advantage of the International Year of Forests and this new Project Learning Tree curriculum guide to get their students outside exploring first-hand environmental issues focusing on forests.

Support for the development of PLT's *Exploring Environmental Issues: Focus on Forests* was provided by the American Forest Foundation, the USDA Forest Service, and Idaho Forest Products Group.

A high-quality product shot of the curriculum is available at <http://www.plt.org/FocusonForestsCover>.

*About Project Learning Tree*

*Project Learning Tree® (PLT) uses forests as a window on the world and provides educators with environmental education curriculum resources that can be integrated into lesson plans for all grades and subject areas. PLT teaches students how to think, not what to think, about complex environmental issues, and helps them acquire the skills they need to make sound choices about the environment. Developed in 1976, PLT's 50-state network includes more than 500,000 trained educators using PLT materials that cover the total environment. PLT is a program of the American Forest Foundation. For more information, visit [www.plt.org](http://www.plt.org).*

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