

FOREST ETHICS

Mid-term Reflection to the Hidden Leaf Foundation, April 29, 2011

The success of our inner work has always been measured in part by its manifestation in the outer world. The relationships we forge with allies and corporations, the policies we secure, the size of the marketplace we shift to sustainable practices and the acres we save all serve as benchmarks that are inextricably linked to the mindfulness we bring to those endeavors. The past six months have been no exception. Just weeks ago, we announced that seven major companies (four from the Fortune 500) have publicly committed to dropping the greenwashing label created by logging companies to trick consumers, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. This announcement resulted in not just dropping a fake eco-label but shifting to more sustainable paper, in fact more than \$100 million in purchasing power was shifted to more sustainable paper sourcing.

In examining and measuring the progress of our inner work directly, we find that the past six months represent some of the most profound growth our organization has ever experienced. Our progress is most clearly evidenced – and quantified – in the number of retreats, trainings and virtual meetings we've had that have been specifically devoted to deepening our inner practices and expanding the capacity and range of our transformative change work.

Much of this work has centered around a customized training program developed with Walter Link to support our staff in functioning at a higher level through greater personal and interpersonal awareness and development, with a specific emphasis on meditation. In addition to bi-monthly training sessions between Todd and Walter, our program consists of two half-day senior management workshops, four full-day regional workshops for our entire staff (two for our northern and southern staffs), and monthly 60-90 minute staff calls. Outside of this formal program, we're also using mindfulness as a foundational element of ongoing spokesperson and storytelling trainings (two of which have been convened so far this year).

95% of our staff—all but two members who could not participate due to travel constraints—has traveled to either San Francisco or Bellingham in the past month to participate in the first round of Walter's intensive, day long retreats. An average of 70% of our full-time staff (15 of 22 full time staff members) has been participating in regular 'open space' calls with Walter to deepen the principles we have been exploring with him since October. Campaign related meeting conflicts (i.e. meetings with First Nations, elected officials, CEOs, etc.) have made full attendance challenging. Todd's continued leadership around transformative change in one-on-one and group conversations, as well as his own individual meditation practice, continue to set the tone for the organization.

Our transformative change work is also apparent in ways that are less precisely quantifiable but still very measurable. We've seen a substantial increase in the number of one-on-one and group conversations, department dialogues and email communications that explicitly discuss and intentionally employ the mindfulness practices we've developed in our inner work calls and trainings. The practice of inquiry – one of the primary tools Walter has introduced to ForestEthics – is now an active component of our Senior Management Team's weekly meetings.

As a result, mindfulness has moved to the forefront of our dialogues in general, and now that it's fully "out in the open" we're finding that we consistently coach one another—within and across departments and seniority levels—on ways that inner work can enhance our activities, communications and personal lives. We're changing the personnel policies in our employee handbook and our supervision practices to explicitly reflect our transformative change values.

Regular surveys conducted by Walter have been the primary form of evaluation to measure the efficacy and implementation of this work thus far. Additional benchmarks will be evaluated during our annual staff retreat this June. Robert Gass' Urgency Index, which measures the degree to which each employee is addicted to stress and thereby habitually overlooking the present moment, will be administered for the fifth year in a row. Since increased mindfulness is directly correlated with decreased urgency, this may be the single most important metric we have for measuring our inner growth on an individual level. As always, a portion of the staff retreat will also be specifically dedicated to revisiting and reflecting on our transformative change work.

Our greatest success in integrating inner work is the very factor that makes benchmarking challenging. Transformative change permeates everything we do. Tracking such far-reaching, multi-layered change in its entirety is beyond our present capacity; we would need outside assistance to develop a larger system of criteria for scientific benchmarking. Measuring our progress against trends in the field is also difficult, but for a different reason: We're the only front-line campaigning organization we know of that's doing this type of work at this level of commitment.

While the full extent of our progress cannot yet be done justice by the metrics at our disposal, it is readily apparent in every facet of our work. Our relationships within and outside the organization have deepened. Our personal and professional lives have become richer and more sustainable. And it's no coincidence that as our inner work has expanded, our ability to catalyze change in the world at large, already unparalleled, has become more effective and empowered than ever before. We are deeply grateful to the Hidden Leaf Foundation for making this groundbreaking progress possible.