



Building green through forest certification

Wood from responsibly managed forests, like those certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Standard, is an excellent choice for any new construction or renovation project. Wood's outstanding environmental lifecycle characteristics, and its desirable aesthetic and construction characteristics make it one of the most popular building materials.

Green building with SFI.

A growing number of buyers — whether public or private, commercial or residential — want to know they are sourcing products from responsibly managed forests. As the largest single forest certification standard in the world, the SFI program is well positioned to meet this growing demand, and is committed to promoting responsible forest management in North America and beyond. The SFI Standard integrates the perpetual growing of trees with the protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. SFI program participants practice responsible forestry on the lands they manage and influence millions of additional acres through the training of loggers, foresters and family forest landowners in best management practices.

The non-profit SFI program is overseen by an independent Board of Directors that equally represents social, environmental and economic interests.

SFI: A single, science-based standard.

The SFI program is based on the premise that responsible environmental behavior and sound business decisions can coexist to the benefit of communities, customers and the environment, today and for future generations.

“While in different manners, the ATFS, FSC, and SFI systems include the fundamental elements of credibility and make positive contributions to forest sustainability. NASF (National Association of State Foresters) members are forest experts who have first-hand knowledge of how these standards actually work on the ground throughout the nation. Based on our expertise and direct experience, we find all three standards credible and recognize the positive contributions they make to forest sustainability.”

— Steven W. Koehn, Maryland State Forester and Member, SFI Board of Directors

The SFI 2010-2014 Standard promotes responsible forest management with measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and Forests with Exceptional Conservation Value.

Government and green building programs recognize SFI-certified products.

Every day, more programs and governments around the world are promoting inclusive policies and recognizing SFI.

- In January 2009, Public Works and Government Services Canada stated that wood used in its projects must be certified to one of three programs operating in Canada, including SFI¹.
- Many organizations have an inclusive approach to forest certification, including the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)² and National Association of State Foresters³. GSA encourages the use of wood certified to SFI and FSC for all new installations of wood products.
- Multiple green building standards around the globe, including ANSI/ICC 700-2008: National Green Building Standard (U.S.), ANSI-GBI 01-2010 Green Building Assessment Protocol for Commercial Buildings (U.S.); Green Globes (U.S. and Canada), BREEAM (United Kingdom), Built Green Canada, Built Green Colorado and CASBEE (Japan) recognize the strength of SFI and other forest certification standards⁴.
- The International Green Construction Code (IgCC), Public Version 2.0, which was developed by the International Code Council with support from the American Institute of Architects and ASTM International, recognizes wood and wood products labeled in accordance with SFI and other standards.

Opening the LEED Rating System

Within the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating tools, the only products eligible for the certified wood credit are those certified to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard.

In December 2010, USGBC announced their Forest Certification Benchmarks did not pass the member ballot process. SFI was among those who voted against it, since it was an overly complicated set of benchmarks that failed to produce a workable solution.

Following the vote, SFI Inc. called on USGBC to work with all stakeholders to recognize the value of wood and all credible forest certification standards as a proof of responsible forestry. SFI recommends the building community forgo the one point in the certified wood credit so they can continue to use SFI-certified products in LEED buildings and demonstrate pride and support for North American forests, communities and jobs.

In June 2011, USGBC took a step in the right direction with the release of a pilot credit for the use of non-structural certified products such as furniture, flooring and windows. Pilot Credit 43 includes a section on “pre-approved certifications and labels” which lists SFI along with FSC, American Tree Farm System (ATFS), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Builders and architects can achieve a point under the Innovation in Design section of LEED for using this pilot credit.

Pilot credits are used to test an idea before it becomes an official credit so builders, architects and others who appreciate the value of recognizing multiple forest certification standards are encouraged to post comments about Pilot Credit 43 on the LEED user site www.leeduser.com/credit/Pilot-Credits/PC43.

USGBC is currently revising their LEED rating tools in what is called LEED 2012, but initial drafts indicate that wood, and SFI products in particular, continue to be disadvantaged. Those who register support for Pilot Credit 43 should ask specifically that the same language used for non-structural wood products be extended into all LEED 2012 rating tools so structural products are included as well.

It's time to support local communities.

FSC-certified forests account for about one quarter of North America's certified forests, and the rest are certified to other credible standards such as SFI, ATFS and CSA. Since the majority of FSC's global supply comes from outside the United States and Canada, an unintended consequence of the USGBC's FSC-only policy for structural wood and paper products is that building professionals seeking LEED certification may have to purchase wood and paper products from overseas — 60 percent of FSC-certified lands are outside of the United States and Canada.

¹ www.tpsgc-pwgscc.gc.ca/biens-property/questions-eng.html

² www.gsa.gov/portal/category/100000

³ www.stateforesters.org/node/1032

⁴ www.sfiprogram.org/green_building/green-building-acceptance.php

North American certified wood and paper products and FSC offshore products should have equal access. Using domestic products is especially important for government agencies, which have a responsibility to deliver economic benefits to their communities, as well as meet environmental goals. Almost 30 percent of all LEED projects are government-owned.

An FSC-only stance is not based on science and does not differentiate between the 26 different FSC standards globally, many of which are less rigorous than FSC standards in North America. SFI has a single standard for North America, it supports domestic forests and communities, and it is recognized by forestry professionals, state agencies and conservation groups. In a 2008 resolution, the National Association of State Foresters stated that “requirements for certification should recognize ATFS, FSC, SFI, and all other credible options;” the resolution goes on to state that “there is no single ‘best’ forest certification program.”

It's time to recognize all credible forest certifications.

In an article in The Seattle Times, Michael Goergen, CEO and Executive Vice President of the Society of American Foresters, stated: “A Forest Stewardship Council-only stance... is not good for green building, our environment or states... that are rich in forestland.”

Thousands of family forest landowners, foresters, conservationists and others have also voiced support by signing a petition demanding that LEED open up its certification credit to all credible standards. Leaders from across North America and beyond, including more than 100 U.S. governors and members of Congress, have sent letters to the USGBC expressing their concerns related to the treatment of certified wood in the LEED rating system.

Green building councils in jurisdictions around the world – including the Spanish Green Building Council and the Green Building Council Italia – promote the benefits of all certified forest products. At the start of 2010, the Green Building Council of Australia began to give equal consideration in its Green Star rating tool to forest certification standards accepted by PEFC as well as FSC.

Forestry experts, government officials, conservationists and many others are urging USGBC to fully open LEED to SFI and other credible standards in order to promote responsible forestry in North America. For the sake of North America's communities, forests, the forest sector and the future of green building in general, it is time for USGBC to do the right thing and fully recognize all credible forest certification standards.

For more information, please visit sfiprogram.org/LEED.



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