

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Jumping on the Certified Wood Products Bandwagon by Libby Maurer

Dear Editor:

We are working on a facility for the Sustainable Institute in Charleston and are interested in a wood truss system to replace an existing structure. Do you have any members in the Southeast area who are manufacturing products with certified lumber?

Sincerely,
Allen Taylor, LS3P
Associates Ltd.

Inquiries like architect Allen Taylor's have become more prevalent in the last few years. "Working with lumber from certified forests is a relatively new idea for us, so I contacted WTCA with the hope of finding a truss manufacturer in the area who is doing this type of work," said Taylor. "I can see where this could prove costly to a component manufacturer, but we are looking at more and more of these projects. It doesn't hurt to know what's out there," he said.

THE GREEN COMMUNITY'S IMPACT ON COMPONENT MANUFACTURERS

With pressure from environmental groups and consumers to support conservation through proper forestry management, various certification programs aimed at wood product manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors are gaining momentum and popularity. Two such certification programs, detailed below, allow component manufacturers the

opportunity to market their lumber products as forestry certified. We found that while both programs aim to encourage the use of wood originating from managed forests, their subtle differences rest in the definition of how to track certified wood products through the chain of distribution. Decide for yourself.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL (FSC) CERTIFICATION

FSC Certification operates on the premise of a Chain-of-Custody (COC) network. COC operates like a chain that begins with well-managed forests, certified by an independent third party and connects each step of the process, from the retailer to the distributor, with FSC certification. How do you know that your vendor is using wood from an FSC Certified forest? FSC has created and implemented a tracking system in which each piece of lumber or wood product that meets the certification criteria is branded with an FSC logo and a certification number.

Said FSC Market Development Specialist Ian Hanna of their role in the COC process: "We try to act as the conduit between the green community and specifiers. We maintain a database of qualified forests and wholesalers and put ourselves out as a free specifying service. Then we work with clients to create matches for the particular certified wood they require based on their market and the availability of the wood."

What if a specifier contacts a component manufacturer, asking if they could do a single project

with certified wood? Hanna explained that it is possible for component manufacturers to become FSC Certified on a project-by-project basis only if they don't take legal ownership of the product during the manufacturing process. "In order to pursue that type of certification, the contractor has to purchase the lumber from a certified wholesaler. The truss manufacturer would create the product for the particular job specified by the contractor, and the contractor in turn would use the finished wood product in a residential or commercial building project that specifies FSC certified wood," said Hanna.

How can component manufacturers interested in using certified wood products incorporate this into their line of products? According to Hanna, "In order to be compliant with FSC, [component manufacturers] need to look at this as a new product line. They need to be interested in pursuing the green market." Hanna also suggested that the call for this type of green product line might be more prominent in certain regions than in others. For instance, Hanna recalled that wholesalers and manufacturers in the southeast region are generally resistant to the idea of seeking wood from certified forests.

AMERICAN FOREST & PAPER ASSOCIATION'S (AF&PA) SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE (SFI)

AF&PA's SFI certification program abandons the chain of custody inventory control method and holds the program participant accountable for monitoring all levels of the supply system. Unlike the FSC program, the SFI recognizes non-industrial private landowners as the major suppliers of raw materials to the industry. In an article written by Michael Virga of AF&PA that appeared in the [December 2000 issue of WOODWORDS](#) (now SBC Magazine), Virga put chain of custody into perspective, calling it a "flawed concept." Virga explained the difficulty in managing chain of custody: "Most wood-using mills depend on [non-industrial landowners] for a significant source of their supply—hundreds and sometimes thousands of them supply each of these mills. Adherence to strict chain of custody thus becomes extremely difficult to implement logistically and economically."

What does SFI do to encourage non-industrial landowners to participate in proper forestry management?

Led by an independent group of conservationists, forestry industry leaders, academicians and other experts, AF&PA's Sustainable Forestry Board (SFB) has included Procurement System Requirements in their SFI Standard (SFIS) that pertain to both company-owned land and the private landowner.

Under the SFIS, all participants must have an auditable system in place that monitors management and harvesting activities throughout the supply system. In addition to monitoring management activities, participants must also subject their procurement systems to independent third party audits. Participants must encourage landowners to reforest and use Best Management Practices (BMP). They must evaluate the results of promoting reforestation and the use of BMP for a company's entire wood supply system. Finally, they must not use wood from any unknown suppliers.

CONCLUSION

The FSC and SFI certifications are just a sample of the options that exist for those searching for a way to incorporate certified wood products in their businesses. And even if you are just interested in learning more about responsible forestry management, researching certification programs like these will give you a taste of just how much impact the green community has had on raw materials suppliers around the United States. To take a closer look at responsible forestry management or to find suppliers who sell certified wood products, log on to www.afandpa.org or www.certifiedwood.org.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Here are some interesting statistics about the use forest products in the United States:

- The United States is the world's leading producer and consumer of forest products, accounting for 25% of the world's production and about 30% of the world's consumption.
 - Non-industrial private landowners hold 58% of the total 504 million acres of timberland in the U.S. The remaining 42% is owned by federal, state and local governments (29%) and the forest products industry (13%).
 - In 2000, Americans used an average of 718 pounds of paper per person.
 - Of the nearly 1.6 million single-family homes built in 2000, over 90% were constructed with wood framing.
 - The largest wood and paper products export markets for the U.S. in 2000 were Canada (\$5.6 billion), Mexico (\$2.8 billion), Europe (\$2.6 billion) and Japan (\$2.3 billion).
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WTCA's Policy on Forest Certification

1) Forests are a renewable resource that provide valuable products that touch each of our lives every day, and that sustainable management of the forest resource is a very positive and environmentally sound approach to forest management.

2) WTCA and its members, in concert with discussions held with several lumber mill owners, believe the need for or endorsement of forest certification to be of questionable value. The proof of the lumber industry's good stewardship to date is in the health of today's forests, clean water, abundant wildlife and the renewable, energy-efficient products derived from those forests.

3) Forests that have economic value will be managed forests. The greater the economic value of the forest, the more care forests will receive, and the more people will be inclined to invest in the business of growing and managing current and newly developed forests.

4) Forests that have little value will not be managed and may be converted to other activities

that have greater value. Tropical deforestation is a classic case of forests being converted to other economic uses – the primary conversion being to use wood as a fuel for heating and cooking.

5) If certification costs make the prices for the end-use of forests too high, the logical next step is that these end-users will find more economical substitute products and will cause good forest management to have increasingly less value.

6) As forest management practices continue to evolve and improve, it remains unclear what tangible value forest certification provides to the forest owner, the lumber buyer and processor and the public overall.

7) Industry must not permit forest certification to become yet another tax on society clothed in the emotion of deforestation and clear cutting.

8) For those companies that desire to be certified, having voluntary certification programs available to them should be sufficient. The market can then choose whether or not it will reward those companies that choose to participate in such voluntary certification programs.

9) There are products in the market whose use aids in sustainable forestry. Wood trusses, for instance, use predominately 2x4 lumber, which can be manufactured from smaller diameter trees so that more of the forest resource is used. Also, trusses are a very environmentally sensitive and valuable product because they save, on average, one board foot per square foot of structural area trussed when compared to traditional conventional framing methods.

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