Support Local Jobs & Millions of Family Forest Owners who Supply our Wood Products

Change Federal Policy to Support Wood in US Green Building

Wood is good for the environment, rural jobs, and the economy. Wood products are environmentally friendly building materials, especially when compared to alternatives like concrete and steel. Wood helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stores carbon. Wood products manufacturing supports 25 percent more jobs per unit produced than alternative materials.

The federal government has policies that discourage the use of wood in building construction. Federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Defense, and the General Services Administration, have policies that require U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system.

LEED does not encourage builders to use wood products over other, less environmentally friendly materials like steel and concrete. If a builder does decide to use wood products, they can get a “certified wood credit” for using wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council but not for wood from American Tree Farm System® or Sustainable Forestry Initiative certified forests. Most certified forests in the U.S. are certified by ATFS and SFI.

The federal government is one of the largest supporters of LEED. Government-owned or occupied LEED buildings make up almost one-third of all LEED projects.

Family forest owners need markets for their sustainably grown wood products. Forests serve as a line of defense in the protection of clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities. Shutting family forest owners—who own the majority of the nation’s private forests and supply most of the nation’s timber—out of the rapidly expanding green construction markets makes it harder for families to keep their land and provide the benefits all Americans need and value. And this market is growing fast—the U.S. green building market value is projected to balloon from $7.1 billion now to $173 billion by 2015.

There are other options. Two LEED alternatives, the Green Building Initiative’s Green Globes rating system and the National Association of Home Builders’ National Green Building Standard, encourage the use of wood products. The federal government should allow all credible options that encourage “building green,” rather than pick winners and losers.

We need help from Congress. We have tried to work with USGBC to no avail and over 100 political leaders have weighed in with USGBC as well.

Please urge the federal agencies, especially USDA, DOD, and GSA, to level the playing field and allow use of other green building rating systems that encourage the use of wood products.
Wood Products: Good for Jobs, Rural Communities, and the Environment

More Jobs than other Materials: studies have shown that wood products manufacturing supports at least 25 percent more jobs per unit produced than other materials such as concrete and steel.¹

- The wood products industry sustains over 344,000 family-wage jobs in rural communities across the U.S.
- Yet, we are losing this industry, as markets collapse and the economy struggles—since 2000, the industry has declined by 45% for a loss of 280,000 jobs and more than 150 mills shut downs. These mills are often the life-blood of rural communities and economies.

One of the most environmentally friendly building materials: Using wood for construction results in less carbon emissions, reduced energy use, and reduced pollution, when compared with alternative materials such as steel and concrete. Additionally, wood acts as a sink by storing carbon for long periods of time.³

- Less Embodied Energy: Wood Home Construction = 17% less embodied energy than a matching steel-frame home and 16% less embodied energy than a matching concrete home.⁴
- During their life-cycle, steel and concrete products release 10% and 12% more pollutants into the air and generate 300% and 225% more water pollutants when compared to wood.⁵

Keeps Forests as Forests: Using wood products helps keep the over 11 million U.S. private and family forest owners on the land so they continue to provide the clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and places to hike, hunt, and fish, that every American enjoys.

- With strong markets, landowners will invest in their forests and work to keep them healthy for future generations.
- Fifty-seven million acres of private forests are expected to face significant development pressures in the next 20 years, without income to help families keep these forests as forests, we risk losing this fabric of our rural communities.

²Sylvain Labbe, Canada Wood Group, March 2010. All data compiled from USEPA (2006)
³Birdsey et al. 2006.
⁵CORRIM, September 2004.

| Net Carbon Emissions Per Ton of Material Produced | ⁴ |
| Material | Net Carbon Emissions (kg C/metric ton) |
| Softwood lumber | 33 |
| Recycled steel (100% from scrap) | 220 |
| Concrete | 265 |
| Concrete block | 291 |
| Steel (virgin) | 694 |