

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR



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STATE OF ALABAMA

November 12, 2010

Mr. Richard Fedrizzi
President and CEO
U.S. Green Building Council
2101 L St NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20037-1599

Dear Mr. Fedrizzi:

The State of Alabama takes great pride in having forest that is productive, diverse and sustainable, providing tremendous economic, environmental, and social benefits. Over 80% of the 22.7 million acres of forestland are owned by non-industrial private landowners and support a timber industry that is the second largest manufacturing industry in the state. In Alabama, we are extremely proud of the environmentally sound practices utilized by our landowners and forest industry. Currently Alabama's landowners manage almost 2.4 million acres under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) standards, 2.8 million acres under the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) standards and almost zero under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). In total, 23 percent of Alabama's forests are being managed under a third-party verified forest certification standard.

I applaud the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) in its promotion of energy and natural resource conservation in all forms of new construction and retrofits. However, I am concerned that the most recent draft of the USGBC benchmarks to assess forest certification standards in its LEED green building rating system appears to only favor Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification. As currently written, these benchmarks would be detrimental to Alabama's forest landowners and our forest industry, potentially threatening the jobs of 59,000 of our citizens.

Furthermore, since the USGBC does not require other building products, such as steel and concrete, to have third-party environmental certification to achieve a credit, USGBC is discriminating against a product that is more energy efficient and provides numerous public benefits, including climate change mitigation.

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If the USGBC maintains the current restrictive language that favors only FSC certification, none of Alabama's forests will qualify under the FSC standard. Contrary to USGBC's stated goal, I believe this discourages, rather than encourages efforts to promote sustainable forest management.

I would encourage the USGBC to recognize all credible forest management certification systems, including SFI and ATFS, and cease discriminating against domestically produced wood building products. These systems, along with other credible third-party forest management certification standards, essentially do the same thing – prove that a forest is being managed sustainably and legally. All contain environmental standards that, when followed, will sustain the many social, environmental and economic values found in a forest. Their differences do not detract from the basic sustainability principles found in each system.

I therefore urge that the final standards issued by USGBC be revised to recognize well-managed forests in our state by recognizing all credible forest certification programs. Wood is an environmentally friendly building material and should be treated as such. Doing so will help ensure strong markets for domestic lumber producers and our forest landowners, which is vital to the future of our forests and our forest industry workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Riley". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Bob Riley
Governor of Alabama

BR/DS/psd