



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Thousands Demand Change to the U.S. Green Building Council's Green Building Rating System
Petition Calls for USGBC to Open LEED to All Credible Forest Certification Standards

WASHINGTON - An [online petition](#) demanding changes to the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building standard is receiving tremendous support. Since launching on March 16, 2010, the petition has more than 5,000 signatures from across the globe. The petition calls on the USGBC to open LEED to all "wood and paper products certified to independent, respected and credible standards including SFI, ATFS, CSA, FSC, and PEFC." Currently LEED only recognizes certified products from one standard. The petition was launched by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative®.

"Our online petition has sparked a groundswell of support, providing a collective voice to the vast community of those who care deeply about sustainable forestry and feel strongly that USGBC should open LEED to SFI and other credible forest certification standards," said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. "The thousands who have signed this petition are joined by many forestry and sustainability experts in demanding change."

In fact, National Association of State Foresters (NASF) President Steven Koehn recently put out a [letter](#) on behalf of his organization to the U.S. Green Building Council in support of opening LEED. Additionally, Michael Goergen, president of the Society of American Foresters, penned an [op-ed](#) in the April 2 edition of *The Seattle Times* voicing his support for LEED becoming more inclusive.

Even [government leaders](#) are stepping up in support of opening LEED. In a letter to USGBC expressing concern with USGBC's bias towards FSC, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty stated, "Recognizing only FSC-certified wood in the LEED benchmarks will result in discrimination against wood products derived from well-managed lands in green building projects. The USGBC should fairly assess and include all credible forest certification programs, including SFI and ATFS systems."

More than three-quarters of North American certified forests are certified to standards not currently recognized by the USGBC, including the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), American Tree Farm System (ATFS), and Canadian Standards Association (CSA). At this time LEED only recognizes FSC certification, which accounts for less than one quarter of the North American certified lands. The majority of FSC's certifications are outside of Canada and the USA. An unintended consequence of the USGBC's current policy is that builders, architects and designers seeking the LEED forest certification credit cannot get credit for the vast majority of certified domestic sources of supply. "It is counterintuitive that green building discriminates against domestic sources of supply and we hope that the USGBC will come to realize that this doesn't make strong environmental, economic or social sense," Abusow said.



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The petition concludes, “For the sake of our forests, our communities, the tens of thousands of family foresters who make their livelihoods from forestry and the future of green building across North America and globally, it is time for USGBC to do the right thing and recognize all credible forest certification standards: SFI, ATFS, CSA, FSC, and PEFC. “

Selected Comments from the petition:

“There is no doubt that SFI has established credible standards supporting best management practices in forestry along with verifiable data. It is time for science and verifiable data to drive the certification. Good forestry follows good markets as data will show. We will plant, grow, harvest, and replant as the market grows. This will enhance clean air, clean water, wildlife and all the supports of our quality of life. As 2009 National Tree Farmer of the Year and 2010 Governor's Agricultural Stewardship Award winners, Earl and I know firsthand how important sustainability, stewardship and conservation are to our industry, state and nation. “

Wanda T. Barrs

“I strongly urge the USGBC to expand the rating system to wood and paper products certified to independent, respected and credible standards, including the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), American Tree Farm System (ATFS), Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). These organizations are recognized and well respected. We need to take advantage of all these organizations and level the playing field. Only relying on FSC does not provide a competitive business environment or allow suppliers to take advantage of products certified under these other organizations.”

Paul Robbertz VP, EHS Pitney Bowes Inc.

“I respect the LEED standard, but LEED seems not to have respect for SFI, ATFS or PEFC. We all want the same thing...and it is a great shame that LEED wants to lock out these wonderful groups with the highest of standards that include so many good stewards of the land. WAKE UP, LEED!”

Chuck Leavell, Director of Environmental Affairs at The Mother Nature Network, Family Tree Farmer and keyboardist for The Rolling Stones

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About SFI Inc.

SFI Inc. is an independent 501(c) (3) non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program (www.sfiprogram.org). Across North America, close to 200 million acres/80 million hectares are certified to the SFI forest management standard, making it the largest single standard in the world. SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers how much certified, responsibly sourced and/or recycled content is in a product. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally.