



SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE

Good for you. Good for our forests.®

www.sfiprogram.org

SFI-00001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2013

CONTACT

Monique Hanis
Chief Operating Officer and VP of Marketing
and Communications
202-596-3457

Mississippi Endorses Inclusive Approach to Forest Certification

Joins Georgia, Maine, and Oregon in Ensuring Green Buildings Are Good for Forests

WASHINGTON, DC – Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signed [legislation](#) Wednesday specifying that rating systems used in green building projects funded by the state government “shall not exclude certificate credits for forest products certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forest Stewardship Council or the American Tree Farm System.” The new law positively positions Mississippi wood products in green building projects while providing a market incentive for landowners to adopt or maintain sustainable forest practices.

“Kudos to the Mississippi legislature and Governor Phil Bryant for their leadership on this important issue,” said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Inc. ® “The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) currently recognizes only the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard in its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating tool. As such, LEED as currently worded does not meet the criteria of Mississippi’s new law. For more than a decade, the overwhelming majority of responsibly managed certified forests have not been eligible for the LEED forest certification credits, undermining communities, conservation and working forests.”

More than 100 elected officials, including 14 Governors and 89 Members of Congress, [have already urged the USGBC to support all credible forest certification standards](#), including the SFI Standard.

“Mississippi has 3.5 million acres certified to the SFI or ATFS standards. LEED’s exclusion of SFI and ATFS is unfounded and unfair to thousands of Mississippians whose livelihoods depend on the forest products sector,” said J. Tedrick Ratcliff Jr., Executive Vice President of Mississippi Forestry Association. “We applaud Representative Reynolds (D-Water Valley) for initiating this effort and the state’s decision to take a stand for the use of local sustainably harvested wood products in state green building projects.”

“This legislation promotes markets for home-grown products from responsibly managed forests,” said State Forester Charlie Morgan. “Our legislature and our Governor recognized the opportunity to do something positive for our forests, Mississippi school trust lands and our local communities by prohibiting the use of a rating system, like USGBC’s LEED that currently discriminates against 97% of Mississippi’s forests.”

Mississippi joins Georgia and Maine in blocking the use of green building rating systems that do not give equal credit to all forest certification standards, and Oregon in promoting wood products grown and manufactured in the state. The Mississippi law adds to the drumbeat of pressure on USGBC to adopt a more encouraging policy toward wood products as it prepares the fourth version of LEED, a process for which USGBC is currently accepting public comments.

“The most effective way to promote responsible forest management is to recognize forest owners who practice it,” Abusow said. “USGBC should heed the growing chorus of elected officials, professional foresters, conservation groups, labor representatives and academics who oppose LEED’s discrimination against well-managed domestic forests.”

In North America, widely-accepted forest certification programs include the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, the American Tree Farm System, the Canadian Standards Association, the Forest Stewardship Council and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification.

About SFI Inc.

SFI Inc. is an independent non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally recognized Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) program. Across North America, more than 200 million acres (81 million hectares) are certified to the SFI forest management standard. The SFI program's unique fiber sourcing requirements promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI chain-of-custody certification tells buyers the percentage of fiber from certified forests, certified sourcing and/or post-consumer recycled content. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at www.sfiprogram.org.