



PO Box 21707
Columbia, SC 29221
(p) 803.896.8800
(f) 803.798.8097
www.trees.sc.gov

Henry E. (Gene) Kodama, State Forester

November 3, 2009

Mr. Richard Fedrizzi
President and CEO
US Green Building Council
2101 L St. NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr Fedrizzi,

South Carolina's forests are vitally important to our state's social, environmental and economic vitality. Several recent studies have documented that our 13 million acres of forestland support a vibrant forest industry, leading our manufacturing economy in South Carolina and providing over \$17 billion in economic impact. In addition, well managed forests provide clean air and water, opportunities for recreation and support a quality of life that attract other businesses to the Palmetto State.

In September 2009, the US Green Building Council (USGBC) released the second set of draft benchmarks to assess forest certification standards in its LEED green building rating system. My concern is that the current draft benchmarks appear to favor FSC certification only, rather than including a fair assessment of all credible forest certification programs as well as wood from well-managed forests. With only 18% of the US forests certified under any forest certification standard, I believe USGBC needs to embrace, reward, and recognize all forest certification programs in the USA.

We are very proud of the environmental record of the forest products industry in our state and our inclusive approach to forest certification. The State of South Carolina currently has 2.1 million acres certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and American Tree Farm System (ATFS) programs. Since 59% of South Carolina's forestland base is owned by private individuals, ATFS certification is much more accessible for the majority of our forest owners. If the final benchmarks issued by USGBC contain the same restrictive language that favors only FSC certification, only 6000 acres of forestland in South Carolina will qualify.

I urge you to quickly make a board-decision to adopt a set of benchmarks to recognize well-managed wood from our state as well as all credible forest certification programs, including SFI, FSC and ATFS. In doing so, USGBC can join other government agencies and green building rating programs in their recognition of wood as an environmentally friendly building material and in their recognition of all credible forest certification standards.

Sincerely,

H. E. Kodama
State Forester

cc: Ms Gail Vittori, Chair
USGBC Executive committee

Our mission is to protect and develop the forest resources of South Carolina.