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July 15, 2010

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Pressure Mounts on USGBC to Open LEED to SFI, Other Credible Standards
Members of Congress Weigh In as USGBC Receives Petition with Nearly 6,000 Signatures

WASHINGTON – In a [letter](#) steered by Congressmen Kurt Schrader (D-OR) and Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) to the U.S. Green Building Council, 79 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, representing 35 different states, have urged the organization to “accept all credible forest certification systems for qualification under the LEED rating system” including the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. On the heels of the letter from this bipartisan group of Members of Congress, USGBC today received a [petition](#) with nearly 6,000 signatories calling for LEED recognition of all “wood and paper products certified to independent, respected and credible standards including SFI, ATFS, CSA, FSC, and PEFC.” In addition, six members of Congress have sent their own letters urging an inclusive LEED policy.

“From the halls of Congress to other elected officials across North America to architects, builders, family tree farmers and forestry and sustainability experts around the world, the support for a change in LEED has grown exponentially,” said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI Inc.). “Wood should be recognized for its environmental merits, and third-party certified forest products should be given additional credit.”

More than three quarters of certified forests in North America are certified to standards not currently recognized by USGBC. The letter from the House members states that maintaining the status quo will mean builders seeking LEED certification “would be discouraged to use third-party certified SFI and ATFS products” grown in the U.S., while opening LEED to other forest certification programs “could stimulate the market for American produced forest products and the communities and jobs that depend on both.”

In a letter to USGBC President Rick Fedrizzi that was delivered with the SFI petition, Abusow wrote that it has “stimulated a tremendous outpouring of support, tapping into a broad and diverse community” and that “it’s difficult to ignore the voices of almost 6,000 people from around the world who took the time to respond.”

U.S. Governors and Canadian Officials Support Opening LEED

In addition to the petition signers and Members of Congress, 10 U.S. Governors – representing Arkansas, Idaho, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Oregon, Virginia and Washington – have written letters to the USGBC to voice their concerns over the current approach to wood product certification. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers as well as individual provincial ministers have also written letters to the USGBC to show their support for all credible forest certification standards. To see a complete summary of the professional organizations and governments that have chimed in on this issue, visit sfiprogram.org/leed.

Global Recognition of Multiple Credible Certification Standards

Numerous green building rating systems around the globe have recognized all credible forest certification programs. This includes ANSI/ICC 700-2008 National Green Building Standard, ANSI/GBI Green Building Assessment Protocol for Commercial Buildings, Built Green Canada, CASBEE in Japan, BREEAM in the United Kingdom and the Australian Green Building Council's Green Star Program. In addition, green building codes, including the draft International Green Construction Code (IgCC) and ASHRE 189.1, also recognize multiple forest certification programs.

“The road through the USGBC review process has not been short or uncomplicated, and in the end, we hope the organization gets past this outdated process and the politics around the LEED forest certification policy. 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, including SFI, ATFS, PEFC, CSA and FSC,” said Abusow. “It’s what other green building programs and codes globally already have applied. Multiple forest certification programs push each other to do better, and they serve different needs.”

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About SFI Inc.

SFI Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization, and is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the Sustainable Forestry Initiative program (sfiprogram.org), that is internationally recognized and among the largest in the world. It is one of the fastest-growing forest certification programs with close to 200 million acres/80 million hectares of SFI-certified forests across North America. The SFI Standard also includes unique fiber sourcing requirements that promote responsible forest management on all suppliers' lands. SFI chain-of-custody certification tracks certified, uncertified and recycled content as applicable in the product. The SFI forest standard is endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification, a global umbrella organization that has strict requirements for endorsement. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber board of directors representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally.