

Study says shortage of FSC wood statewide could lead to price premium for green construction

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It's no secret: the United States is in the thick of a "green trend." Increased awareness of and commitment to sustainability and improving the environment through reduced carbon emissions and energy use have led to more consumer demand for "green" products, including green construction. Even with the downturn in the housing market, a 2008 poll showed that 91 percent of registered voters nationwide would still pay more for a house if that meant a reduced impact on the environment.

The same is true for the commercial building industry, as construction companies prioritize environmental investments as a smart return on investment over the life of the structure. In fact, green building products and services in the United States are expected to grow to \$60 billion in 2010.

Whether private or commercial, most construction projects require a substantial amount of wood. While wood is already considered a renewable, carbon-friendly resource, the use of wood alone is insufficient for most building projects.

Additionally, using wood certified through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) only garners one point toward Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification—the ultimate goal of green builders. Further, sawmills must also seek FSC certification in order for wood to be fully categorized as FSC-certified.

A new study by Pat Penfield of the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University, and René Germain of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, reveals that the low LEED point for use of FSC wood, coupled with both a shortage of FSC-certified sawmills and a shortage of FSC wood in New York state, may cause a bottleneck for green construction. Their paper, "The Potential Certified Wood Supply Chain Bottleneck and Its Impact on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Construction Projects in New York State," was published in *Forest Products Journal*, Vol. 60, No. 2.

"New York has approximately 1.46 million acres of FSC-certified forestland," says Penfield. "But 27 percent of the builders we surveyed report having difficulty locating suppliers for this wood—there simply are not enough FSC-certified sawmills. Nearly half of the builders perceive a shortage of FSC-certified wood in the marketplace."

Penfield and Germain found that builders prefer to buy their wood locally, but more than 30 percent are forced to purchase FSC-certified wood outside of New York State, for which they usually pay a premium price.

"These findings suggest a lack of product in New York state," says Germain. "Lack of supply combined with premium prices could potentially discourage use of FSC-certified wood and increase the use of non-wood, thereby defeating the well-documented benefits of using a sustainable resource."

Penfield and Germain recommend increasing the supply of FSC-certified wood by encouraging more New York state sawmills through price premiums to seek FSC certification. They also recommend raising the points allotted to FSC-certified wood toward LEED certification.

"The ultimate goal should be to increase the use of wood from well-

managed forestlands in construction," says Penfield. "If the shortage is not addressed, the role of FSC-certified wood in green construction in New York state could be detrimentally impacted."

Provided by Syracuse University

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