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TO:	Bob Caldwell, Editorial page editor, The Oregonian.

Title: The Truth about Wood Certification in Oregon

It's time to get to the bottom of the wood certification debate. The future of Oregon's forests and timber communities depend on it.

In 1994, the American Forest & Paper Association created the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) to endorse US timber business-as-usual logging practices and undermine the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an NGO-initiated forest certifier seeking real change in international forest management practices. This cynical campaign continues in the opinion piece ("Green buildings: Open wood credits to Oregon products") printed last Thursday in the *Oregonian*.

Brown, et al claim that FSC, SFI and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS), another industry-controlled standard, are equally good choices when choosing certified forest products.

*False.* Let's review the facts.

Fact #1: FSC standards contain more performance-based criteria than any other standard in North America. In cases where SFI and ATFS don't default to state laws and best management practices, they are often purely aspirational in nature, requiring only a plan to do something rather than actually doing it.

Fact #2: FSC follows strict requirements for assessing and conserving old growth and biodiversity. SFI doesn't protect to the extent or provide values associated with old growth, nor a broad range of biodiversity.

Fact #3: FSC limits conversion to non-forest uses and prohibits conversion of natural forests to plantations. SFI allows forests to be converted to plantations and non-forest uses.

Fact #4: FSC sets defined limits on clear cuts providing either numeric limits or the cuts must mimic natural disturbance patterns. SFI only requires that an average cut be less than 120 acres, meaning that SFI clear cuts can be 300 acres or larger.

Fact #5: FSC is dedicated to ensuring the rights of indigenous peoples on public and private lands. SFI provides no protections for indigenous people on private lands.

Brown, et al claim LEED, by requiring FSC certification for the sustainable wood credit, is locking out Oregon forests. They shout “injustice!”

*The fact is that* all of Oregon’s private forests are eligible to be FSC certified – big timber companies like those who created SFI simply choose not to certify under FSC because they don’t want third party control of the certification. Further, non-FSC forest products can always be included and attain points under the LEED certification system under the “local sourcing” credits.

We support competition for the FSC standard. It too should be strengthened, and real competition might spur that. But choosing between uncertified or SFI/ATFS certified forests and FSC forests is really about choosing between business-as-usual and sustainability-driven practices.

Many parts of the country look to the Pacific Northwest as a sustainability leader. Washington State is considering moving all of its state-owned forests under the FSC system. Moving more of our forests to FSC standards or better will produce a value-added product and establish Oregon as a go-to source for sustainable local wood. An FSC forest strives to be both economically productive and ecologically responsible. It is a certification that protects Oregon’s natural heritage and the long-term health of our local communities.

We call on SFI and ATFS to desist with their greenwashing and shelve it for good alongside spurious claims about the health benefits of smoking and safety of offshore oil drilling. In the meantime, we are calling on the design and building communities to choose responsibly when specifying wood and pulp products. For now, the most responsible choice is FSC for projects seeking green certification.

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