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Cascadia Guidance on the Certified Wood Issue

Background: For several years, the LEED Certified Wood Credit (MR7 in LEED-NC) has been undergoing a process of revision. At the center of this process is the USGBC forest certification benchmark that, if the revision is approved, will be used to judge which forest certification systems are worthy of recognition under the Certified Wood Credit.

The final draft of the benchmark and associated documents are now available to the public for a vote. **The ballot will remain open until Nov. 23, 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Voting eligibility: USGBC recently adopted new rules for balloting changes to LEED. In the past, all USGBC members were eligible to vote. Now, in order to be eligible, representatives of USGBC member organizations must have opted in to a “consensus body” this past spring.

Cascadia’s position: We believe that the final draft represents a significant “lowering of the bar” relative to the previous version released. Urgent action is needed to ensure that only the highest standards are accepted to protect our forests. We strongly believe that a leadership standard like LEED should only support wood certified to a forest certification system that is **as stringent or more stringent** than the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard. We request that you vote ‘No’.

Here are the crucial action steps we are asking you to take:

- 1) If you are a representative of a USGBC member organization and “opted in” to the consensus body, you can cast your vote by logging into your personal USGBC account. If you opted-in and have not yet received information from USGBC regarding voting procedures, please email woodissues@usgbc.org.
- 2) Locate the voting page for LEED Credit Revisions for Certified Wood.
- 3) **Vote “Negative with reason” on the ballot.**
- 4) Please include a personal message as to why you chose to vote negative with reason. You are also welcome to cut and paste the language below that reflects Cascadia’s position on the proposed language.

“The proposed benchmark is a step in the wrong direction for LEED. Currently, only wood certified under standards set by the FSC is accepted for a credit toward green certifications in LEED. The proposed revisions would make some fundamental principles of sound forest management (ranging from deforestation to issues surrounding indigenous rights) optional rather than mandatory for exemplary wood credits. Only wood certified to a forest certification system that is as stringent or more stringent than the FSC standard should be recognized by LEED.”



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Thank you for taking action!

What's at stake: On the surface, this is the difference between competing forest certification systems: principally, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which is supported by most major environmental groups and many in the green building movement as the highest standard currently available in forest certification, and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), which is backed by the mainstream timber industry and its trade associations.

What is being debated are **fundamentally different approaches to forests and forest management** that are delineated in the competing systems' standards and procedures. At its lowest common denominator, the SFI sanctions intensive and extensive industrial forestry at or barely above the standard set by state or provincial law. By contrast, FSC imposes environmental and social requirements that are well above the "floor" of law and tends to advance ecological alternatives to the industrial forestry paradigm.