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April 6, 2016

USGBC ANNOUNCES NEW PATHWAY TO ENCOURAGE ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT IN LEED

Washington, D.C. — The range of legal and responsible forest products available for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) credit has grown in a positive direction. This is welcome news for architects, builders and consumers seeking legal, responsibly sourced and certified forest products from well-managed forests.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) has issued a LEED alternative compliance path (ACP) that recognizes wood and paper from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) Program as part of an integrated approach to encouraging environmentally responsible forest management and eliminating illegal wood from the building material's supply chain. The ACP will apply to all LEED v4 rating systems including Homes v4 and to all LEED 2009 rating systems.

"We applaud leaders from the U.S. Green Building Council as this change across all LEED rating tools takes a stance against illegal wood and reinforces the value of certified and responsibly sourced forest products," said Kathy Abusow, President and CEO of SFI Inc. "SFI employs rigorous standards that ensure not only a responsibly managed forest, but also that only legal sources of fiber are brought into SFI-certified supply chains."

LEED has seven impact goals that include reversing climate change, enhancing human health, protecting water resources and biodiversity, promoting sustainable material resources, building a greener economy and enhancing social equity and community quality of life. The SFI Standards and SFI's supporting programs are tightly aligned with LEED's seven core criteria. The SFI 2015-2019 Standards, launched in January 2015, include enhanced measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, species at risk and forests with exceptional conservation value. In the social sphere, SFI's work with rural and underserved communities, youth, and indigenous peoples promotes grassroots engagement on environmental issues and helps improve the quality of life for many.

LEED is a proven tool, unparalleled in its ability to drive wholesale transformation across every corner of the built environment and raise the bar for all players," said Rick Fedrizzi, CEO of USGBC. "Requiring architects, builders and consumers to verify the legality of forest products used in LEED buildings is part of its standing as a leadership standard, and the new ACP encourages the use of programs that certify that practice. This new path to LEED credits also recognizes the contributions forest certification standards have made in establishing the infrastructure which makes it possible to verify responsible sourcing."

This move will further strengthen the widely-respected LEED program. It requires architects, builders and consumers to verify the legality of forest products used in LEED buildings, and awards credit for the use of forest products certified to programs like SFI. In order to count towards a LEED point, the user must first know that 100% of the forest products are from legal (non-controversial) sources, 70% from responsible sources and the remainder must be certified sources as evidenced by a chain of custody certification (CoC). SFI Fiber Sourcing certification counts as legal and responsible, while fiber delivered through a CoC certification counts as legal, responsible and certified sources. The new alternative compliance path pilot recognizes SFI, the American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and programs that are endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). The alternative compliance path categorizes the various forest certification standards based on the ASTM D7612-10 (2015) standard which is titled "Categorizing Wood and Wood-Based Products According to Their Fiber

Sources.” ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) International is a globally recognized leader in the development and delivery of voluntary consensus standards.

Responsible forest management practices are also important to architects and builders focused on sustainable solutions that can transform the construction sector. Wood is an increasingly popular choice for construction because of its aesthetic qualities, and numerous environmental benefits — including renewability and a lower carbon footprint than other materials. Because trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as they grow, they sequester and store carbon, reducing greenhouse gases, improving air quality and reducing the construction sector’s contribution to global climate change. But many of these positive attributes of wood construction depend on whether the forest resource is responsibly managed under a certification program. Forests certified to the SFI Standards are found in 42 states and provinces in the US and Canada. The acceptance of more responsibly sourced forest products into all LEED rating tools offers architects and builders greater access to these renewable products for their green building projects.

About the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® Inc. (SFI)

SFI® Inc. is an independent, nonprofit organization that is solely responsible for maintaining, overseeing and improving the internationally-recognized SFI program. SFI works at the intersection of sustainable forests, thriving communities and responsible procurement. The SFI Standards are based on principles that promote sustainable forest management. The SFI Forest Management Standard includes measures to protect water quality, biodiversity, wildlife habitat, special sites, species at risk, forests with exceptional conservation value, and indigenous people’s rights. SFI Inc. is governed by a three-chamber [board of directors](#) representing environmental, social and economic sectors equally. Learn more at sfiprogram.org and sfiprogram.org/greenbuilding.

Media inquiries:

Elizabeth Woodworth
Vice President, Communications and Community Engagement
Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.
elizabeth.woodworth@sfiprogram.org
Tel: 202-596-3452

Green building inquiries:

Jason Metnick
Senior Vice President, Customer Affairs
Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc.
jason.metnick@sfiprogram.org
Tel: 602-374-6539