

WOOD FIRST TALKING POINTS



Industry has continuously played “catch-up” to many environmental initiatives. Now, at the moment of crisis, the lawmakers with help from the wood industry are pitting one industry against another. The concrete industry is uniquely positioned to meet the challenges of sustainable development. Its products help improve the overall environmental footprint of the built environment. But we have to be a better job of communicating this message.

It’s unfortunate the wood industry has lost ground with the explosive rise of LEED certified green buildings. The FSC vs. SFI argument is not our fight, but it has created a situation where the wood industry has adopted a legislative strategy and is gaining the attention of lawmakers.

Concrete is the only material that can contribute to every LEED category but we should not support legislative action to mandate the use of any material as a preferential material for the same reasons wood should not be legislated:

- It is neither good public policy, nor good construction practice, to prescribe by legislation the material to use for any particular project.
- Locally grown wood can also get credit under the LEED program even if the forest is not certified by the Forest Stewardship Council because it counts towards the regional material credit.
- Given the realities of the import-export markets for forest products, the concept primarily benefits out-of-state and Canadian forest product interests.
- Wood First is a “zero sum game” economically - it seeks to protect jobs in one sector at the expense of those working in another.
- Without LEED, locally produced materials (such as steel) will lose the advantage for local materials and that will in turn open the market to foreign materials (e.g. steel)
- Without the LEED rating system, there will be a loss of federal dollars into the state since Fed projects still required LEED
- The legislation protects jobs in one sector at the expense of those working in other sectors.
- Providing an artificial benefit to any one material can only reduce value for money in construction projects, a cost that legislatures should not impose.
- Artificial preferences for any given material mean less value for taxpayer-funded projects that would otherwise employ alternative construction materials.
- Designing and constructing building projects is a complex process. Trained engineers, architects and fire safety professionals, among others, need to make informed determinations of the best material for the particular job. Building professionals, including fire safety experts, should determine which materials are safe and appropriate for any given type of structure.
- A/E firms in the state have invested millions to register, train and test employees to become LEED Accredited professionals.
- It is not good policy to change building codes except through normal, well-established processes. The building codes, which are developed collaboratively with highly trained professionals with extensive technical testing. Building codes set standards through a science-based, objective and transparent process, with rigorous evaluation of acceptable materials for any particular use.

- The path for new applications of wood in multi-story buildings should run through the expertise of construction professionals and the rigorous processes embodied in the Building Code. That path should not run through the floor of the legislature.