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## **Introduction and Executive Summary: Second Public Comment Period on the Recognition of Certified Wood Products in the LEED Green Building Certification Program**

### **Overview**

From September 15, 2009 until October 14, 2009, USGBC is opening a second public comment period on (1) the revised criteria in the draft USGBC Forest Certification Benchmark and (2) the proposed revisions to LEED Materials and Resources (MR) credits that reward the use of certified wood products (listed below). The revisions open to public comment are inspired by comments received during the first public comment period (August 7 – September 7, 2008).

If the revisions are approved via USGBC member ballot and if a subsequent USGBC evaluation verifies that a forest certification scheme meets the Benchmark's requirements, that scheme's supply of certified wood products will count toward the achievement of those MR credits.

Building project teams will not be required to determine if a particular forest certification scheme meets the Benchmark's requirements. This evaluation process is outlined in the supplementary document titled "Conformance Assessment Process." This document is not open for public comment but is instead meant to provide important background information.

If approved by USGBC member ballot, the revised credit language becomes the basis of credits dealing with wood certification for all projects registered after credit approval. Projects registered after approval will be required to adhere to the revisions without the option of using the original credit requirements. Projects registered prior to the approval may use the revisions as an optional compliance path; this alternative compliance path will exist for projects registered under either a LEED 2009 or a pre-LEED 2009 rating system (LEED for New Construction and Major Renovations v2.2, LEED for Schools 2008, LEED for Commercial Interiors v2.0, LEED for Existing Buildings v2.0, and LEED for Core and Shell v2.0) as well as LEED for Homes.

### **Summary of Proposed Credit Language Revisions**

The focus of the proposed LEED credit language revisions is on transparency, setting forth a clear set of requirements that any forest certification scheme must meet in order to be recognized within LEED. Currently, only wood products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) are eligible for LEED points.

Under the newly proposed credit language, wood certification schemes would be evaluated for eligibility to earn points toward LEED certification against a measurable benchmark that includes:

- Governance
- Standards Substance
- Chain of Custody and Labeling

September, 2009



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- Accreditation and Certification Process

If the revisions are approved by USGBC membership, wood certified under schemes deemed compliant after a third-party evaluation against the Benchmark will be recognized by LEED and could earn a project one or more points toward LEED certification. If a scheme is deemed non-compliant, the certification scheme administrators would have a clear understanding of what modifications are necessary to receive recognition under LEED. Documents for public review and comment clearly set forth the proposed benchmark with great detail in order to facilitate a robust dialogue.

### **Scope of Proposed Credit Language Revisions**

Consistent with the Board of Directors' direction and the LEED Steering Committee's charge to the Materials and Resources Technical Advisory Group (MR TAG), seven individual credits in existing LEED Rating Systems would be updated. Affected credits include:

- LEED 2009, New Construction, MR Credit 7, Certified Wood
- LEED 2009, Schools, MR Credit 7, Certified Wood
- LEED 2009, Commercial Interiors, MR Credit 7, Certified Wood
- LEED 2009, Core and Shell, MR Credit 6, Certified Wood
- LEED 2009, Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance, MR Credit 1: Sustainable Purchasing – Ongoing Consumables
- LEED 2009, Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance, MR Credit 2: Sustainable Purchasing – Durable Goods
- LEED 2009, Existing Buildings: Operations and Maintenance, MR Credit 3: Sustainable Purchasing – Facility Alterations and Additions
- LEED for Homes, MR 2, Environmentally Preferable Materials

### **Background**

The first version of LEED's certified wood credit was introduced into the rating system as a part of the v2.0 release in 2001 and has not evolved significantly since that time.

During the development process supporting the v2.1 update to LEED for New Construction, the MR TAG introduced a proposal for revised credit language for certified wood in LEED. Based on the overwhelming response during the public comment period and the constraints of the development timetable for LEED v2.1, the proposed revisions were set aside.

Over this same five-year period, based in part on the international leadership set forth by the FSC, significant changes occurred in the forest products certification sector that merited review.

Recognizing this fact, in 2006 USGBC's Board of Directors commissioned a white paper on forest products certification and LEED in order to devote the necessary time and focus to study of the issue. USGBC has taken the following actions since that time:



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- May 2006: USGBC's Board charged the LEED Steering Committee (LSC) with reviewing the wood certification credit in LEED and developing revised credit language, if warranted. The Board further specified that any credit language revisions would require a USGBC member ballot, in accordance with USGBC's published consensus processes.
- June 2006: LSC charged the MR TAG with studying the technical and scientific basis for the wood certification credit and, if warranted, developing revised credit language with a clear supporting rationale for any revisions.
- July 2006: The MR TAG began a process of stakeholder engagement in support of the consensus process.
- January 2007: USGBC engaged the Yale Program on Forest Policy and Governance (YPPFG) and Life Cycle Assessment experts at Sylvatica to support the MR TAG in its research and development.
- March 2007: YPPFG undertook a multi-step stakeholder outreach effort over a six-month period to develop a thorough, peer-reviewed analysis of existing forest certification programs.
- September 2007: YPPFG delivered its initial set of policy-making and analysis tools for MR TAG (YPPFG's final guidance document "Assessing USGBC's Policy Options for Forest Certification and the Use of Wood and other Bio-based Materials," can be downloaded at <http://www.yale.edu/forestcertification/USGBCFinal.htm>.)
- October 2007: The MR TAG began the evaluation of the existing forest products certification programs.
- July 2008: The MR TAG completed its analysis and proposed the USGBC Forest Certification System Benchmark and updated existing LEED credit language referring to the proposed certification benchmarks.
- August 2008: The first public comment period began, displaying the first draft of the USGBC Forest Certification Benchmark and the accompanying credit revisions
- July 2009: The MR TAG completed its review of comments from the first public comment period and subsequent revisions to the credit language and Benchmark requirements; the LEED Steering Committee approved the changes for a second public comment period



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- September 2009: The second public comment period began, displaying the second draft of the Benchmark and additional revisions to the accompanying credits

### **Next Steps**

Consistent with USGBC's consensus process for the development of the LEED green building certification program, the MR TAG will review and respond to all comments after the 30-day public comment period. If public comments do not lead to further revisions to the proposed credit language and/or Benchmark, the final proposed credit language revisions and Benchmark requirements will be released for member ballot and ratification. If public comments do inspire further revisions, a third public comment period will follow as necessary. Member ballot will only occur when no additional technical revisions are made to the credits and/or the Benchmark.