

## VIEWPOINT

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### GUEST OPINION

## More Oregon timber takes the LEED

Expanded timber certification is good for state's forest products industry

Decisions by private certification bodies are rarely noticed and almost never make news. But a recent decision by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) may give a much need boost to Oregon's forest products industry.

In April, the USGBC, the governing body for the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard, announced a new pilot program. It will expand the amount of sustainable wood eligible to earn a LEED credit, including wood from American Tree Farm System (ATFS) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certified forests.

Using LEED, construction projects must earn a certain amount of points to be certified. Before, only wood products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) were eligible for the credit. Or they could use less environmentally friendly products, such as concrete.

Allowing wood from ATFS and SFI certified forests is a huge change.

On the forestry side, this new path will help small family landowners, such as myself.

Despite what many think, small family landowners are the largest ownership group of forests in this country. Collectively, in plots of under 100 acres, we own more forests than either the federal government or corporations.

We are also land stewards. We view it as our responsibility to conserve clean water, air and wildlife habitat and ensure forest health.

Many of us earn income by selling wood fiber to local mills. Nationally, family owned forests support more than one million jobs and \$223 billion in sales. In fact, 47 percent of all timber removed from forests in the U.S. comes from family lands.

What's more, there are 21 million



THINKSTOCK



Scott Hayes, of Arbor House Tree Farm, is chair of the Oregon Tree Farm System and past president of the Oregon Small Woodlands Association. The views he expresses are his own.

acres of forest land managed under ATFS. This includes 4.7 million acres in Oregon. For example, I sell about 100,000 board feet of sustainable timber to a local mill every decade from my 40-acre tree farm west of Portland.

By making forest products grown on ATFS land eligible for LEED credit, I expect there will be more demand for our wood products, making them more valuable.

This could have a big effect on the number of families involved in ATFS, encouraging good forest management.

USGBC's decision will also benefit

the industry side. This could mean more use of innovative mass timber products, such as cross laminated timber. CLT is now being manufactured in the U.S., right here in DR Johnson's new facility in Riddell.

What I call "plywood on steroids," CLT is the foundational skin and bones of futuristic mid-rise and high-rise construction. One great example is the new 16,000-square-foot Albina Yard office building in the Pearl District.

CLT is a showcase for the many environmental benefits of wood. This includes carbon storage and renewability, its strength and fire resistance and, well, its beauty. People love to live and work in wood buildings.

With the USGBC's new path, domestic CLT producers will have more ATFS-certified wood to make their product.

The USGBC's decision is a win for both ATFS-certified family woodland owners and Oregon's forest products industry. Our challenge will be to take the opportunity presented to us and run with it.