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Administration endorses “wood as a green building material”

Washington, DC – The Obama Administration has announced its endorsement of wood as an environmentally preferable building material, and plans to immediately begin promoting it as such.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, in a statement at an event marking 2011 as The International Year of the Forest said, “Forest Service studies show that wood compares favorably to competing materials. Wood has a vital role to play in meeting the growing demand for green building materials.” Vilsack said this policy shift for USDA is consistent with President Obama's executive order on Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance issued in 2009.

“We’re excited that the Administration has finally gotten on board,” said Deb Hawkinson, Executive Director of the Hardwood Federation. “Study after study has shown that our responsibly managed forests are abundant and sustainable, and that wood is carbon neutral, requires significantly less energy for manufacturing, and can be recycled or repurposed. It’s a magnificent building material!”

In his announcement, Secretary Vilsack has asked the Forest Service to help identify demonstration projects that utilize wood in non-residential construction. He’s asked his agency to make certain that research and development projects on alternative building materials include wood. And he’s directed all other USDA agencies “to incorporate the Forest Service policy of using domestic sustainable wood products as the preferred green building material for all USDA facilities and buildings”.

“This has been a long time coming, and the recognition for our industry is well-deserved,” said Jamey French, the former chairman of the Hardwood Federation and President of Northland Forest Products. “For too long wood has been discriminated against in green building standards or ignored by environmentally-conscious consumers. The Administration’s endorsement of our environmental credibility, coming on the heels of similar endorsements from both houses of Congress, will go a long way to reassuring our customers, both here and abroad, that American wood is good and it makes good sense to use it.”

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