

True North Media Release

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Contact: Gary Winget, General Manager / Minnesota Wood Education Project / Cell: 651-249-5707
Email: Gary@MinnesotaWoodEducationProject.com

New certification program will assist Minnesota producers, manufacturers and distributors of forest-based products

True North FSC Certification Program aims to offer wider access to “green” market niche

ST. PAUL, Minn. (5 Jan 2009)--A [Forest Stewardship Council](#) (FSC) group certification program is being organized for Minnesota producers/manufacturers/distributors of wood and forest-based products and owners of forestland by the Minnesota Wood Education Project in cooperation with True North Woods®.

The Project's True North FSC Certification Program will allow participating members to access and supply a growing, higher-value, green market segment niche – architects, builders and remodelers, property developers, and homeowners seeking to have their projects certified under the national [LEED](#) (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) or statewide [MN GreenStar](#) certification programs. A prime example of a recently completed LEED project in Minnesota is the Great River Energy headquarters building in Maple Grove that was awarded the first platinum LEED certification in the state this past October.

The current economic downturn is impacting most industry segments, but the forest-based industries that supply the building industry were among the first and most severely affected.

Large and small companies alike are feeling the impact of the current recession. For example, [Ainsworth Lumber Company](#) closed its OSB (oriented strand board) mill in Grand Rapids last August and in October temporarily curtailed operations at its OSB plant in Bemidji due to, among other reasons, the general business outlook, reduced customer demand, and the decline in the US housing market.

“Just keeping our small forest-based businesses alive during this deep recession,” according to John Rajala of Rajala Companies, “is a major challenge. Obtaining FSC certification and access to the LEED and MN GreenStar market segments is part of a short- and long-term strategy to both survive the current downturn and position ourselves to take advantage of this market segment when the housing industry starts to rebound.”

The new Administration's focus on developing a new energy policy is expected to, among other things, lead to the increased use of the LEED and MN GreenStar certification programs as well as more local, green forest products. Ron Hanson, president of the Minnesota Wood Education Project, states that “the time is right to open up increased access to FSC certification for our Minnesota forest product producers and to position ourselves for increased access to the local and green market segment in Minnesota and the surrounding states.”

Without being FSC certified, Minnesota forest-based businesses are excluded from consideration as suppliers to LEED and MN GreenStar building projects that are sourcing FSC certified products. With FSC certification, businesses participating in the True North FSC Group Certification Program will not only gain immediate access to existing green building projects but also position themselves to reap increasing benefits when the economy recovers and the building industry starts to rebound.

Producers/manufacturers/distributors of wood and forest-based products, as well as owners of forestland, interested in learning more about FSC certification, should contact the Minnesota Wood Education Project at info@TrueNorthFSC.com or 1-888-223-5629. Interested persons should also plan to attend one of two free workshops:

- Thursday, January 15 in Grand Rapids, or
- Friday, January 16 in St. Paul.

For additional information email visit www.TrueNorthFSC.com.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About True North FSC Group Certification Program. The program seeks to increase the utilization of Minnesota forest-based products in LEED and MN GreenStar building and remodeling projects in Minnesota and within a 500 mile range of Minnesota by assisting individual producers/manufacturers and owners of forestland (1) obtain FSC certification and (2) market their FSC certified products to architects, builders and remodelers, property developers and homeowners.

About Forest Stewardship Council. The group is an international organization that supports environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. www.fscus.org.

About Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The program is a national Green Building Rating System for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. LEED addresses all building types and emphasizes state-of-the-art strategies in five areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials and resources selection, and indoor environmental quality. www.usgbc.org.

About MN GreenStar. The program seeks to transform the Minnesota residential building industry into one where healthy and sustainable building practices are understood, economically advantageous and socially desirable. www.mngreenstar.org.

About Rajala Companies. The company owns and cares for 35,000 acres of northern Minnesota forestland and for 85 years has been producing high-quality lumber and millwork for local, national, and international customers. www.rajalacos.com. Email jarajala@rajalacos.com.

About Minnesota Wood Education Project. The group is a non-profit organization committed to raising awareness of the value of sustainable management and harvesting of our northern forests and to improve the economies of our forest-based communities. The group was founded in 2004. www.MinnesotaWoodEducationProject.com.

About True North Woods®. True North Woods is a certification brand program of the Minnesota Wood Campaign that producers/manufacturers use to promote the natural qualities and sustainability of Minnesota's northern forest-based products and the talents of the people who make them – local, green, quality products. www.TrueNorthWoods.com.