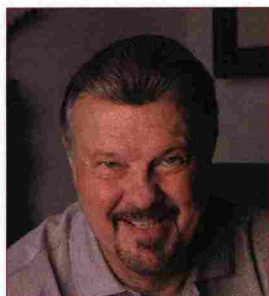


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Responsible Procurement

By Ed Korczak, CAE
 Executive Director/CEO

The illegal logging ban passed this past summer has received a great deal of attention in the media, particularly within the flooring industry. The ban, which is an amendment to the Lacey Act, directly affects anyone dealing in wood flooring and other wood products because it prohibits the import, sale or trade of wood and other forest products that are harvested illegally.

This legislation is significant for a number of reasons. First, it protects our world's forests. Second, it protects buyers who practice due diligence when importing wood from outside the United States. Third, it eliminates the influx of low-cost, low-quality wood flooring produced from illegally harvested wood. Penalties for noncompliance with this new legislation are severe, and can include the forfeiture of the material, a \$500,000 fine, and five years' jail time.

Needless to say, this legislation is a significant step forward in preventing the illegal harvesting of trees, but it does nothing to recognize those companies that work to sustain our forests.

To address this issue, the NWFA established an Environmental Committee and developed the NWFA Responsible Procurement Program (RPP) to promote and recognize environmentally and socially responsible forest management.

The RPP is based on three tiers of increasing participation and certification:

Tier One recognizes companies that source their wood from states east of the Mississippi River. U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service studies concluded that U.S. forests east of the Mississippi River are growing faster than the timber harvested or lost through mortality. The RPP recognizes these U.S. hardwood forests as renewing and will allow Tier One companies to use the "NWFA Verified from U.S. Renewing Forests" seal for off-product marketing. For imported products, a "Verified Legal Imported" seal is available for companies that practice due diligence when importing products from other countries.

Tier Two recognizes those companies that are sourcing wood from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified forests. Companies participating at this level must achieve FSC chain-of-custody certification and meet all FSC standards for the products they source—both FSC-certified and non-FSC-certified wood—and must agree to increase their overall use of FSC-certified wood during the next two years.

Tier Three recognizes those companies that source more than 50 percent of their wood from FSC-certified forests, and whose non-FSC sourced materials meet FSC guidelines.

While the NWFA sponsors the RPP, several key partners were instrumental in its development, including Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), the FSC-US, and the FSC Family Forests Alliance. The NWFA has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with both the FSC-US and FSC Family Forest Alliance to implement the program. Compliance with all program guidelines will be monitored by SCS to maintain the intent and integrity of the program.

For more information about the NWFA Responsible Procurement Program, contact the NWFA. ■

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