



# Environmental Components

## Q&A: FSC Certified Wood for Non-LEED Project

by Libby Maurer

Is there a reason for “green” components if the project won’t achieve a green rating?

**A**s green building becomes more common in today’s framing/building practices, more and more questions are surfacing from manufacturers about complying with “green” products as specified. This question came from a reader who was confused about a specification (rightfully so!). What would you do if faced with his scenario?

### Question: FSC Certified Wood for Non-LEED Project

A component manufacturer in southern Michigan says his company is working on a new wood component framed building on a nearby college campus. The specification calls for FSC certified wood; but curiously, it does not mention that the building will seek LEED or Green Globes certification. The manufacturer does not currently hold FSC Chain of Custody certification and has no other reason to attain it. However, to comply with FSC Chain of Custody rules, technically his operation would have to be certified by FSC to maintain that Chain of Custody and provide FSC trusses for this job. What should he do?

**This lack of understanding of when and how green wood products should be used is more the norm than the exception in our industry these days. The example points to a reality our industry must face: we must be informed about our roles in the green building movement.**

### Answer

There are several issues at play here, and each leads us to the same conclusion. As you know, certified wood is generally more expensive than regular wood. As well, some types, species or grades of certified wood are in short supply, which often makes them difficult to obtain. Ultimately, these two factors will mean higher costs not only for you, but also for your customer and the end user. So while the builder may desire to call the new structure “green” without having to go through the process of obtaining a green rating, it’s a good idea to make sure the customer is aware of the premium for building the trusses from certified wood.

One way to do this is to provide a bid that delineates the costs of various value-added component packages. As shown in Figure 1, showing package prices for regular and certified wood gives the builder a clear picture of the added cost for “green” component products.

There’s also a broader issue that merits discussion. Why would a builder request certified wood if the project won’t be officially green certified? The answer is not clear. In this case, I advised the manufacturer to talk to the project specifier about why certified wood was called out. The architect he consulted with didn’t know why, and in turn, offered to ask the builder. This game of “pass the buck” reveals that there probably was no reason for certified wood to have been specified.

This lack of understanding of when and how green wood products should be used is more the norm than the exception in our industry these days. The example points to a reality our industry must face: we must be informed about our roles in the green building movement. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding of the green building

PERFECTO TRUSS		Customer: Big Green Builder, Inc.			
		Contact:	Dave		
		Job No.:	1280		
		Date:	8/11/2008		
QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PITCH	OVH	UNIT PRICE*	TOTAL Regular Truss Package*
39	30' Common Truss	6	12/12	xx	\$xxxx.xx
2	30' Hip sets	6/8/6	12/12\12	xxxx	\$xxxx.xx
2	20' Scissor Gable	8/4	12/12	xx	\$xxxx.xx
8	20' Scissor Truss	8/4	12/12	xx	\$xxx.xx
2	20' Girder truss	8	0/0	xxx	\$xxx.xx
2	20' Valley Sets	8	0/0	xxx	\$xxx.xx
1	Jobsite Package				
<b>TOTAL:</b>					<b>\$6,440.00</b>
<b>FSC-Certified Package (east coast CM)**:</b>					<b>\$9,016.00</b>
<b>FSC-Certified Package (Midwest CM)**:</b>					<b>\$7,728.00</b>
<b>(Add other value-added options, e.g., mold-free package**:</b>					

Figure 1. Sample Bid or Proposal Form

\* Line item prices were omitted due to the numerous variables that exist in estimating truss cost (size, grade, takeoff method, etc).

\*\* Total prices given are based on rough estimates of certified Southern Yellow Pine derived from sources in Arkansas and Wisconsin, delivered to CMs on the east coast and the Midwest respectively.

market, the process, costs and overall value provided is very typical. The more educated we are, the more we can educate others within our markets about the facts and common sense of green building.

In this case, with help from the SBCA website, the manufacturer had the facts to set the record straight about the comparative costs, ultimate building value and necessity of certified wood in this project. In the end, he convinced the builder to eliminate the certified wood requirement in the spec, while still providing an economical and green structural framing solution—trusses and related engineered components. **SBC**

Visit [www.sbcindustry/greenbuild/php](http://www.sbcindustry/greenbuild/php) for information about green building and component manufacturing. Do you have a question about green building? Email [green@sbcmag.info](mailto:green@sbcmag.info).

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### at a glance

- A manufacturer was asked to build “green” components though there was no intention for the project to be green certified.
- If this happens to you, ask the specifier and builder why “green” wood is desired.
- Consider supplying two bids for the job: one with regular components and one with “green” components.

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