



American Forest Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, September 29, 2011

Contact: Jennifer E. Jones
jjones@forestfoundation.org
202- 463-5188

**New USDA Study:
Wood is the Greenest Green Building Material**

**Expected to Have Major Impact on Sustainable Wood Markets
Driven by Growing Green Building Sector**

Washington, D.C. – The [American Forest Foundation](#) (AFF) today welcomed a new study from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) showing that wood is truly *the* green building material, with environmental benefits that dwarf other common building materials.

The new study analyzed a life-cycle assessment of green building materials and found that growing, harvesting, transporting, manufacturing, and using wood produces less air pollution – including greenhouse gasses – than concrete, steel, and other material options. The [USDA press release](#) regarding this study is [available online](#).

“Giving the green light to wood as the green building material should dramatically impact the market for sustainably grown wood in this country,” said AFF President Tom Martin. “Healthy forests need healthy markets, and the green building market is expected to grow to a \$173 billion industry by 2015. Secretary Vilsack is a champion for working family forests, and understands their importance to America’s rural economies.”

The [announcement by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack](#) emphasized the value of credible third-party certification systems, including the Sustainable Forestry Initiative[®], the Forest Stewardship Council[®], and the American Tree Farm System[®] (ATFS) certification in verifying sustainability.

ATFS, a program of the American Forest Foundation, is the largest and oldest sustainable family woodland system in America, internationally recognized, meeting strict third-party certification standards. Its network of Certified Tree Farmers produce sustainably managed, locally grown wood on more than 26 million acres.

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Using wood products in building construction can have significant environmental and economic benefits – in particular supporting jobs in rural communities.

- Wood products manufacturing supports at least 25 percent more jobs per unit produced than materials such as steel and concrete. Currently, the use of forest products supports more than one million jobs and contributes more than \$100 billion to the nation’s gross domestic product.
- The analysis highlighted that wood sequesters carbon even after a building is constructed. And, sustainable forest management also means young, growing forests sequester carbon through new forest growth.

“Forest products are an example of where good for the economy is also good for the environment,” said Jad Daley, Climate Program Director for the non-profit Trust for Public Land. “America’s forests and forest products sequester 13 percent of our carbon emissions each year and provide countless other public benefits, like clean air and water, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Strong forest products markets will help keep family forests economically prosperous and maintain these important environmental benefits.”

The new study follows [a letter sent in May 2011](#) [PDF] by more than 40 conservation and forest industry organizations. The letter applauded Secretary Vilsack for the USDA’s green building strategy, and urged the sort of continued leadership seen today. The letter said, “strong markets for wood products, stimulated by green building strategies, like yours, are an essential element for keeping working forests as forests and protecting America’s landscapes.”

The American Forest Foundation[®] (AFF) works on-the-ground with families, teachers and elected officials to promote stewardship and protect our nation’s forest heritage. A commitment to the next generation unites our nationwide network of forest owners and teachers working to keep our forests healthy and our children well-prepared for the future they will inherit. AFF’s [sustainable woodland system](#) helps family forest owners meet stringent third-party standards for managing more than 26 million acres of forestland. AFF works with tens of thousands of teachers every year, giving them a peer-reviewed, award-winning environmental education curriculum through [Project Learning Tree[®]](#) For more information, visit www.forestfoundation.org.

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