

The Sensible Environmentalist

Forest Certification Gives Added Confidence

(NAPSA)—DEAR DR. MOORE:

How can I be sure that the lumber I buy comes from a sustainably managed forest?

If you buy North American lumber, there are many reasons to feel confident that it comes from a sustainably managed forest—first and foremost, because North American forests cover about the same area of land as they did 100 years ago.



Dr. Moore

There's also the multitude of forestry and conservation laws designed to protect the long-term health of the resource. There's the fact that the United States and Canada work closely with the international community to advance ecosystem research and use the information to improve forest policy and practices. For those who want added assurance, there's also the current trend toward sustainable forest certification. In the U.S. and Canada, about 225 million acres have been independently certified—which is equivalent to more than twice the size of California.

To be certified, companies undergo independent audits. Among other things, they're required to demonstrate how they protect soil and water, conserve biodiversity and maintain wildlife habitat. They also have to show that they're harvesting less wood than the forest can regenerate, which is, of course, critical.

It's interesting that forest certification becomes increasingly necessary the farther away you get from an actual forest. In forest communities such as the one I grew up in, people are logically more aware of the efforts that go into forest management—the surveying, planning, public consultation, regeneration, tending—many of which are eclipsed by harvesting in the minds of people elsewhere. Those who live close by see for themselves that North American forests are vast and growing, that foresters are committed to sustainability and that sustainability means more than simply planting trees.

In other countries and even some U.S. cities, people have little idea of the laws that exist to ensure forest sustainability—or they don't believe the laws are being followed. It's up to forest companies to prove themselves and certification allows them to do that.

As a sensible environmentalist, I find the abundance of forests in this country gives me confidence in the laws that govern forest sustainability. I support certification, however, as a way to encourage continuous improvement and show people around the world that North Americans take seriously their role as responsible forest stewards.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com.