



# HOUSE BILL 255 | GREEN BUILDING & GEORGIA GROWN WOOD

Last Updated: June 5, 2015

## PURPOSE & PROVISIONS

HB 255 amends O.C.G.A. 50-5-63 by codifying Governor Deal's 2012 Executive Order mandating that green building standards be used in construction of state buildings and prohibiting the use of green building standards that do not give equal credit to wood products certified to any of several forest certification standards.

Unlike the Governor's Executive Order, however, HB 255 does not require that state buildings be built to "green building standards" but simply says that when they are built using "green building standards," all wood grown and harvested under all forest certification programs will be given equal credit.

- » [House Bill 255](#)
- » [Governor Deal's 2012 Executive Order](#)

## OUR POSITION

Georgia's private timberland owners should have every opportunity to supply their sustainably grown and harvested timber to the state in which forestry interests generate \$604 million in tax revenues.

The economic, environmental and social benefits of Georgia's sustainably grown and harvested timber is clear. Georgia's working forests:

- » Contribute \$28.9 billion to our state's economy annually,
- » Provide \$37.6 billion in vital ecosystem services including cleaning our air and water,
- » Support more than 130,000 jobs and the communities in they are located across Georgia, and
- » Offer unparalleled recreation activities.

Foresters have been doing 'sustainability' since long before people called it (or thought much about) sustainability. The best thing we can do to keep the 24 million acres of private working forests to support the markets for the trees harvested from and replanted on those lands. Those markets must include the very government buildings supported by tax revenue generated by our state's working forests.

The particular green building standard which disadvantages the vast majority of Georgia's certified wood is the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED standard. While the LEED building standard gives a credit preference to Forest Stewardship Council certified wood, of which there is comparatively little in Georgia, other reputable green building standards equally recognize Forest Stewardship Council

(FSC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and American Tree Farm System (ATFS) certified wood. The predominant certifications used in Georgia are SFI and Tree Farm.

For purposes of comparison, here's how Georgia-grown wood stacks up in terms of forest certification at this time:

	Certified Acres	% of Certified Acres	% of Private Forests
Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)	31,757	.8%	0.14%
Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)	2,359,404	54.6%	10.8%
American Tree Farm System (ATFS)	1,928,067	44.6%	8.8%
<b>Total Certified Acres</b>			4,319,228
<b>Total Private Forest Acres</b>			22,000,000

## OTHER FACTS

In the 2014 Georgia Sustainable Forest Management Report prepared for the General Assembly, the State Forestry Commission noted that:

- » Georgia has 24.3 million acres of timberland available for commercial harvest
- » Annually, Georgia's forest growth exceeds removals by 41 percent
- » We have 49% more cubic feet of wood growing in Georgia than we did 40 years ago.
- » Approximately 91 percent of Georgia's forests are privately owned, more than any other state in the nation.
- » The loss of forestland to urbanization continues to be the greatest single factor for conversion to other (non-forest) uses.

## CONTACT

**Steve McWilliams**  
President  
Email: [steve@gfagrow.org](mailto:steve@gfagrow.org)  
Cell: 404-312-8715

**Matt Hestad**  
Director of Public Relations  
Email: [matt@gfagrow.org](mailto:matt@gfagrow.org)  
Cell: 678-378-3513