



Greetings from the Black River State Forest! In the past few years you may have noticed a change in advertising. It used to be that products were labeled as being new and improved, bigger and better, or 20% more free. Today a product is just as likely to be advertised as being environmentally friendly, energy efficient, organic, or as being green.

Some industries have come up with their own classifications that award products that are more environmentally friendly. The food industry uses the “organic” label as a gold standard. Once found only in Co-ops or specialty groceries now even large retailers are offering organic products. The appliance industry has the “energy star” rating that is awarded if a product reaches a government defined stringent energy efficiency rating.

What does this have to do with the State Forest? Forests also have a desired environmental rating called certified. If you read housing magazines you may be familiar with this term. If you are a fan of the “This Old House” show on PBS you may have heard the term used in their first ever “green” remodeling project this winter. Articles on building green often put the exclusive use of certified wood as the first tenet of environmentally friendly building.

So what do the terms certified wood or forest mean? In simplest terms it means the forest is managed using sustainable guidelines. In other words the products harvested today from that forest can be harvested in future years without damage to the forest’s productivity, wildlife, water resources, or endangered resources. In addition it also includes social guidelines. Forest products must be safely harvested and workers can not be exploited in the extraction process.

In order to achieve certified status a forest must undergo a third party independent audit. There are several organizations that offer this with the most prominent being the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI). Forests are rated using standard environmental, social, and economic criteria. If a forest passes review it is granted certified status.

Wisconsin State Forests achieved certified status under FSC and SFI in 2004. To retain certification status the system is audited on a regular basis. Recently the Black River State Forest was audited by both organizations. Examples of areas auditors look at include are forests being adequately regenerated after a harvest, are water resources such as streams, wetlands, and lakes protected during the harvesting process, and are wildlife resources and needs considered during timber sales. These are just a few of many areas investigated during an audit. While the official report has not come back preliminary discussion are the property passed with flying colors.

Certification is important both from the wise management of our resources and as an economic factor. The demand for environmentally friendly products in the

marketplace is at an all time high. With only 7.5% of all forests in the world being certified demand exceeds supply. Every week the Division of Forestry receives calls from people all over the world seeking a source of certified products. Certification is positive for both our State Forest program and in keeping Wisconsin's wood and paper making industries economically strong.

If you have any questions about this article or the State Forest please call us at (715) 284-1406.