Gov. LePage Seeks Expanded Use of ‘Green’ Building Materials in State Construction

Executive Order expected to help forest industry, jobs

AUGUSTA – Gov. Paul LePage has signed an executive order requiring any new or expanded state building construction to use an expanded set of “Green Building” standards as part of its design, construction, operation and maintenance.

Maine is the national leader in privately owned certified woodlands. The Governor’s order broadens the kind of certified “green” wood products that can be used in state building construction and thus supports Maine’s forest-products industry. The order helps promote Maine’s sustainable forestry initiatives and expand business opportunities for wood products manufacturers. It also will both protect and develop Maine forest industry jobs.

“Our state is a national leader in the manufacture of ‘green’ construction materials that meet a number of national and international standards,” Governor LePage said. “By requiring state building projects to use ‘green’ materials under more certification programs, we are increasing the amount of Maine-produced wood available for public construction projects. This will have positive benefits for Maine wood products producers and our forest industry workers.”

“This executive order recognizes our broadening commitment to the concept of voluntary forest certification,” said Commissioner Bill Beardsley of the Maine Department of Conservation. “It will create an even playing field among the diverse forest certification groups both nationally and internationally. It means that the local community college will be able to build using the certified-wood products from the local sawmill.”

Maine’s forest products industry has an enormous impact on the state’s economy. It directly and indirectly supports 55,000 jobs, annually generates more than $3 billion in earnings and contributes $4.3 billion annually to Maine’s gross domestic product. As the most forested state in the nation, Maine also is among U.S. states with the highest percentage of certified, private forestland.

Forest certification means that the forest management methods used by landowners meet environmental and ecological standards set by a certifying organization. While certification is voluntary, landowners and manufacturers see it as a way to sustain their forestland while improving their competitive position.

Governor LePage’s executive order expands the number of certification systems recognized by the State of Maine for setting “Green Building” standards for state building construction. Those systems include: the Sustainable Forestry Initiative; Forest Stewardship Council; American Tree Farm System; and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Systems.

“We believe that by supporting the full range of forest certification programs, we are advancing Maine’s forest industry and the interests of our forest landowners in local, national and global competition for market share,” the Governor said. “We also are protecting our valuable natural resources and traditional outdoor heritage.”

The executive order also will ensure that new and expanded state building construction will achieve energy efficiency and environmental sustainability by using the “Green Building” standards.

State agencies and departments are required to bring their building construction policies into conformance with the executive order. State buildings include any building owned, constructed or acquired by the State of Maine or any department, office, board, commission or agency, including state-supported institutions of higher learning. School administrative districts and municipalities are not subject to the executive order.