

## How to Encourage Forest-friendly Purchasing in Your Community's Institutions

**D**o you want to save our forests for future generations? While, most people are not chopping down trees, they do use countless wood products.

One of the best ways to preserve forests is to reduce the demand for unnecessary wood products. Begin at home and in the office. There are many simple ways you can reduce your own consumption of wood products. Co-op America's WoodWise Consumer booklet is an excellent step-by-step guide to cutting your personal wood consumption (see page 8).

If you are looking for even more opportunities to save forests, one of the biggest contributions you can make is to convince large organizations to reduce their demand for unnecessary wood products. Every community has large purchasers such as governments, businesses and colleges. These institutions buy so much that they can leverage their purchasing power to stimulate the market for wood-friendly products, driving down the price of products through economies of scale and increasing availability of alternative products.

For instance, the government is the single largest purchaser of products—federal, state and local government purchasing

accounts for approximately 20 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP). When the federal government passed executive orders on environmental purchasing, it made 30 percent post-

consumer recycled paper the de facto standard, increasing its availability for local government and non-governmental purchasers.

You should begin your effort locally where your goals may be more attainable. Working on the local level, you will have direct access to decision-makers—the ability to go to their offices or call them without the expense of travel and long-distance telephone calls. You may also have more contacts and a greater knowledge of the workings of your community. Who has influence over whom? What local businesses manufacture wood products? What kind of motives, barriers, opportunities, etc., are decisionmakers in your community facing?

Use this guide as a road map to steer you through the process of making local institutions greener consumers. While it focuses primarily on forest-friendly purchasing, it also briefly covers others steps, such as reducing consumption and recycling, which complement forest-friendly purchasing.

### Forest Destruction & the Role of Consumption

**Less than one-third of the world's natural forest cover remains. Many forests survive in isolated pockets and are slashed with roads, degraded by soil erosion and beleaguered by destructive invasive species. The largest threat to forests is logging, driven by the world's consumption of wood products. Wood consumption in the United States in particular is enormous. With only 5 percent of the world's population, the United States consumes 20 percent of the world's wood.**

### Ancient Forests

**Ancient forests (also called old growth) are the most threatened of all forest ecosystems and are sharply declining worldwide. Because of their high value—the price of ancient forest timber has increased by more than 266 percent in recent decades—wood from ancient forests is highly prized. Even so, the majority of ancient trees cut yearly produce low-value products—such as shipping pallets, cheap paneling, pulp, woodchips, toilet paper and even toothpaste.**



## Approaching An Organization About a Forest-friendly Purchasing Policy

There is no one fool-proof formula for encouraging an organization to implement a forest-friendly purchasing policy. However, some successful approaches are described here.

### “ Select the Organization You Will Target.

Choose an organization you know well and can influence. If you are not sure which organization to target, study your community. Read your local newspaper, attend city council meetings and speak with leaders of civic organizations. Look for environmentally responsible organizations (i.e., those working to improve their energy efficiency or reduce toxics). Also, look for individuals who are reforming their organization or entire organizations that are tackling new ideas. Consider government agencies, businesses, schools, churches, hospitals, charities, etc.

### “ Do Your Homework.

Do some preliminary research. Identify how the organization may benefit from the purchasing policy. Benefits may include improved community relations and employee morale. Determine what wood products they purchase—furniture, paper, building materials, etc., and research alternatives. (Contact the organizations in the resources section, page 8, for insights into these topics.)

“ **Call a Contact Person.** If you know people in the organization, call them first. Try to locate the person in charge of purchasing. If purchasing is decentralized, scout out those

responsible for paper and other supply orders, building renovation and construction and/or packaging. Search for someone who may be a good “champion” of green purchasing.

Determine whether the organization already has a purchasing policy and what issues it covers. If they have a policy, obtain a copy and ask about its implementation. Even if the organization does have a forest-friendly purchasing policy, it may not be enforced. If the policy is not enforced, see if you can help the organization implement it.

### “ Arrange the Meeting.

Be prepared to discuss deforestation and wood consumption, as well as potential solutions. Prepare handouts on deforestation. Suggest the creation of a forest-friendly purchasing policy and list the benefits. Brainstorm about who could aid in this effort. Assign tasks. Set the next meeting.

### “ Adopt a Green Purchasing Policy.

While the implementation may take several years, encourage the organization to adopt and announce a new forest-friendly purchasing policy in a timely manner. A meaningful policy should have specific dates, goals and mandatory policies. It should ban purchases of wood from ancient forests, encourage the use of environmentally sound, non-wood products and recycled products. It should require all wood purchases to be certified.

### Stay Organized

Use this Guide as a checklist. Keep meticulous notes of your research, particularly resources. When placing telephone calls, record the name of the person with whom you spoke, the information discussed and the date. Take meeting notes and send a summary to all who attended to keep track of accomplishments and agreements.



## Resource Conservation Alliance (RCA)

RCA works to protect forests by advancing environmentally sound market-based strategies, such as recycling, redesign and resource diversification and reduced consumption. RCA encourages the use of recycled, straw, kenaf, hemp, and other products that contain less or no wood. PO Box 19367, Washington, DC 20036; 202-387-8030, 202-234-5176 (fax); [www.rca-info.org](http://www.rca-info.org).

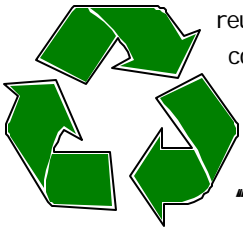
## Implementing A Forest-Friendly Purchasing Policy

■ **Form a Green Dream Team.** Ask individuals in the organization and the community to be on your green dream team. Select people who are knowledgeable about procurement, wood alternatives and/or the inner-workings of the organization. Ideally, include decision-makers and representatives from those who may be most affected. However, be careful not to have too many people. A group of five to seven people would be ideal.

■ **Set Deadlines.** Set deadlines for the completion of each task to ensure that the process stays on track. Deadlines can be set on the order of weeks, months or years. Give yourself enough time without being too lax.

■ **Reduce Consumption & Packaging.** By making double-sided copies, writing and printing on scrap paper and distributing memos via email instead of paper, organizations can drastically reduce their paper consumption. Wood consumption can also be reduced by reusing old buildings, reducing wood use and waste in new construction and scaling down building size. Reducing packaging and disposable wooden pallets, in particular, can greatly reduce consumption.

■ **Reuse, Recycle, Buy Reused or Recycled.** Reusing and recycling reduces the waste stream, while recycling also provides the raw materials for recycled goods. Buying reused and recycled reduces your consumption of virgin wood. At a minimum, buy recycled paper (with 30 percent post-consumer content).



■ **Investigate Purchases.** To determine which products contain wood,

list all purchases and eliminate any that definitely do not contain wood. Contact suppliers and work with them to investigate the content of any questionable products. Wood can be found in surprising places, such as fabrics and foods.



■ **Audit Suppliers.** Ask suppliers about the forest from which the products were made. (Suppliers are becoming more knowledgeable about this issue.) If there are only a few suppliers, call them directly. If there are many suppliers, send a questionnaire which addresses the type of wood (e.g., veneer, chips, etc.), the wood species, the forest which supplied the wood and whether it is certified for its management techniques (see page 4).

■ **Purchase Alternatives.** Alternative products exist for all of the largest wood uses. Determine if any alternatives are produced locally—local purchases benefit your community. Look for used, reusable, recycled, recyclable or remanufactured products, products made from agricultural fibers, as well as, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products (see page 4).

Paper should contain post-consumer recycled pulp, pulp from agricultural fibers (“tree-free”) such as hemp and kenaf and/or pulp from an FSC-certified forest. Paper should also be chlorine-free (chlorine releases dioxin, a toxin, into the environment). Look for Processed Chlorine-Free (PCF) and Totally Chlorine-Free (TCF) paper. Beware of Elementally Chlorine-Free (ECF) paper which can still release dioxins into the environment.

### Overcoming Institutional Barriers

The organization will face various institutional barriers. Barriers may include a resistance to change, shortage of time, poor communication within and between departments, lack of enthusiasm from employees or supervisors, deficient knowledge about the organization’s own products or processes, confidentiality concerns of suppliers and the potential costs of some alternatives. Be aware that these real barriers could be impediments to the adoption of the policy, and be prepared

## Implementing A Forest-friendly Purchasing Policy, Continued

Choose alternative building materials such as bamboo, wheat straw and cork or recycled materials such as glass or newsprint. Furniture can be made from agricultural, reused or recycled materials, as well as, FSC-certified wood and can also be made for disassembly and recyclability. Pallets can be recycled and/or made of recycled materials. Packaging can be eliminated or made from recycled or agricultural materials.



■ **Request Certification.** Work with suppliers to ensure that all wood products come from forests certified by the FSC which accredits responsible forestry certification schemes. (FSC insists on third-party certification, maintains strict standards and is favored by most major environmental organizations over other certification schemes.)

■ **Implement Supplier Agreements.** One way to green wood purchases is to have suppliers sign agreements guaranteeing that their wood products come from FSC forests.

■ **Use Innovative Financing Options.** Innovative funding methods can finance alternatives that may be more expensive. Apply savings generated from the new policy toward forest-friendly purchases. For example, the money saved by reducing paper expenditures due to double-sided copying can be used to purchase recycled or “tree-free” paper.

Buy in bulk to lower costs. If the organization's purchasing is spread out, consider centralized purchasing. Also, consider forming a buying cooperative with other organizations. Locate a supplier that will give a price break and will also be

flexible—ideally, allowing each member to order individually and have products delivered directly.

■ **Ensure Conferences are Green.** Pay attention to wood use during special events. Use recycled paper folders for conference materials, send the proceedings via email and use washable dishes instead of paper plates. And, publicize these actions in the conference materials to educate participants about hosting a green conference.

### Share Your Knowledge with Others

You will learn valuable lessons about how to implement a forest-friendly purchasing policy. Keep notes, so you can help others who are doing similar work. Let others know what you have accomplished, as well as what obstacles you faced and how you overcame them. Since you will have undoubtedly counted on the generosity of others to share their knowledge and time with you, be generous with those now seeking your advice and

■ **Educate Employees.** Since people learn in different ways, provide educational materials in different formats, such as workshops, meetings, flyers, brochures and email. Encourage employees to participate by letting them know the results of their new purchasing habits. For instance, let them know how much was saved by the reduced paper use (and the equivalent in the number of trees saved). For further incentive, break down the numbers by department which may stimulate competition within the organization to excel at forest-friendly practices.

■ **Publicize the Purchasing Policy.** Inform the community about the organization's forest-friendly purchasing. Send press releases, detail the policy in the annual report and other publications and spread the news through word-of-mouth. When appropriate, nominate the organization for environmental awards (sometimes given by nonprofit organizations or government agencies). If the organization is recognized for its program, it may help to keep the effort invigorated. Furthermore, the publicity may encourage other organizations to follow suit.



**M**any government agencies have been examining their purchasing practices for years. For instance, at the federal government level, Executive Orders 12873 and 13101 promoted the purchase of environmentally preferable products. (See the “Resources” section of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Environmentally Preferable Purchasing website at [www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp](http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp).) However, while Federal agencies and most states do officially have some type of environmental purchasing policies, all policies may not be uniformly enforced or they may have loopholes. Therefore, you must ensure not only the existence of forest-friendly policies, but also their proper implementation.

**Select the Level of Government.** Determine where to focus your efforts—city, county, regional or state. Preferably choose an agency that you already know well. Or, you may want to canvass several agencies to see where you get the most positive response and begin there.

**Research Other Government Mandates.** While you must determine if there is an existing policy for any organization you contact, take this research one step further with government agencies. Research whether the government agency you are working with is mandated to perform environmentally preferable purchasing by an outside source. For example, a city may be required to abide by any decisions made by a regional governing body or the state government. Alternatively, federal government agencies must abide by executive orders. Contact the government agency and ask if they must green their purchases due to a mandate.

Also, contact the environmental department of the next higher level of government to determine if they have a purchasing policy or mandate which affects lower levels of government.

### **Take Advantage of Existing Resources.**

Government agencies have begun to attempt to lead by example. Research the purchasing policies of other governments to avoid “reinventing the wheel.” Begin your research by contacting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Association of Counties and nonprofit organizations such as the Institute for Local Self Reliance (see resources section, page 8). Their resources can provide you with examples of other green government purchasing efforts. The experience and advice of other government officials, particularly those operating at the same level of government, can be very informative.



**Require Contractors to be Green.** Government agencies work with many contractors. By requiring them to abide by the same forest-friendly practices, you will leverage the purchasing power of government agencies. Furthermore, these requirements will force contractors to become educated on the alternatives—a good outreaching opportunity.

### **King County Case Study**

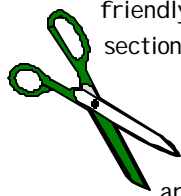
**In 1989, King County, Washington, often considered a leader in municipal procurement of recycled and environmentally preferable products, adopted its Environmental Purchasing Policy. Their objective is to “to bring about fundamental change in the procurement priorities of the more than 12,000 employees of King County and its contractors.”**

**The County purchases various paper products including photocopy paper, printing paper, janitorial paper, envelopes, file folders, notepads and other office paper. In ten years, its purchase of recycled paper has grown from 8 percent in 1989 to 94 percent in 1998—and the majority of the paper contains 20 percent or 30 percent post-consumer waste. Recycled copy paper purchases specifically have reached 99 percent. Most paper is centrally purchased, enabling agencies to negotiate products at low and consistent prices. In 1998, King County purchased \$1.6 million worth of recycled paper**

Some businesses have begun to implement environmentally preferable practices including forest-friendly purchasing. Businesses benefit from environmentally preferable purchasing because it helps them to do their part to protect the environment, remain ahead of their competitors, save money, do business in various markets (such as Europe which has stringent environmental protections) and improve their “brand image.”

**Select the Business.**

Determine which business you will target by assessing not only whom you know, but also which businesses are likely to be the largest wood purchasers in your community. Some of the largest corporate purchasers of wood, such as home improvement centers, furniture manufacturers, builders, and many more businesses have committed to reducing their wood consumption and/or purchasing wood made from well managed forests. Locate local businesses that have already implemented forest-friendly practices to learn how they accomplished their goals. (Contact Co-op America for help in locating businesses with forest-friendly purchasing practices, see resources section, page 8).



**Cut Across Departments.** Perhaps more so than other organizations, businesses that are instituting a new purchasing policy on forest-friendly products must coordinate efforts in

various departments to ensure a successful program. Not only must the purchasing department be engaged in the process, so must the design and technology department and public relations department. To ensure success, your green dream team should include representatives that cut across departments.

**Exert External Pressure as a Last Resort.**

Some businesses may need an additional incentive to undertake a forest-friendly purchasing policy. For instance, when several environmental organizations, led by the Coastal Rainforest Coalition (see resources section, page 8), asked a group of large corporations to commit to ending their trade in ancient forest products, the

companies stalled their decision for years. When the groups eventually threatened to publicly expose these companies in a newspaper advertisement, many agreed to make the commitment.

Pressuring companies through boycotts, protests and media campaigns to change their purchasing habits may be an effective technique. But, use it only as a last resort since it may test your future working relationship, making it difficult to ensure the company implements its policy expeditiously.

**Bank of America Case Study**

**Bank of America successfully reduced its paper use, increased recycling and centralized its purchasing. The bank reduced packaging (saving \$80,000 in one instance), replaced hard copy documents with electronic versions and curtailed the number of forms it uses. Furthermore, the bank has reduced the weight of its ATM receipts from 20-pound to 15-pound, saving an estimated \$500,000 annually. The bank has also purchased photocopiers since 1995 that have a double-sided copying feature.**

**In addition to reducing paper consumption, the bank recycles its office paper (when recovered paper prices were high in 1995, the bank earned more than \$700,000). Since 1997, 75 percent of its paper purchases contain recycled content, averaging 20 percent post-consumer content.**

**By instituting centralized purchasing, the bank was able to maximize its leverage with suppliers (saving more than \$20 million dollars in the first two years) and better track its suppliers' environmental commitments.**



Universities, which spend \$175 billion annually on products, offer unique possibilities for implementing a forest-friendly purchasing policy. The effort can provide a multi-disciplinary, experiential learning opportunity for students—a revolutionary way to educate. Students can apply their classroom knowledge to real world problems on their campus, thereby obtaining valuable job skills.

**Contact Student Groups.** Environmental, agricultural and business groups may be interested in a forest-friendly purchasing policy, since this issue covers deforestation, alternatives to wood including agricultural products and working with various businesses to achieve its results. State Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), advocacy groups located in many states, may also be helpful. Contact a PIRG or other campus organization to find out if they would work on this issue.

**Take Advantage of the Departments.** Environmental departments may be interested in advancing an important solution to an environmental crisis. Agricultural studies departments may be interested in studying or promoting agricultural crops which can replace timber (e.g., hemp and kenaf is used in paper and wheat straw is used in building products). Business departments may be interested in studying purchasing and working with suppliers.

Arrange to meet professors and explain why a forest-friendly purchasing policy pertains to them. Some professors may want to have their students formally participate.

**Engage University Presses.** If your university has a press, it is purchasing large quantities of paper in order to publish its books. Contact the press to discuss the importance of a forest-friendly purchasing policy. As large users of paper, their support will be an important part of your effort.



**Obtain the Support of the Administration.** Most university presidents have open office hours, so if you are a student, arrange a meeting.

Alternatively, ask a faculty member to arrange a meeting. Explain the problem of deforestation, the use of forest-friendly purchasing policies by other universities and their benefits. Offer to work with school officials to ensure the policy's enforcement. Obtain the President's agreement.

**Enlist Donors.** If you need to put additional pressure on the administration, contact university donors who may be sympathetic to your efforts and ask them to write a letter to the university. Helpful professors or administrative staff may be willing to contact donors or recommend some to you.

**Use the University's Shareholder Proxy.** If the university has invested in companies which purchase large amounts of wood, such as lumber retailers, the university can use its shareholder proxy to influence the company. For instance, it can introduce a resolution to ban ancient forests wood product purchases.

**Cornell University Case Study**

**In March, 1999, Cornell University Press published the first book (titled, *Living Wage*) on paper that was FSC certified.**

**Cornell has also used its shareholder proxy as a means to encourage Home Depot to end its trade in timber from ancient forests. Due to the pressure of this and other large advocacy campaigns by environmental groups, Home Depot and other Do-It-Yourself chains have committed to ancient forest free purchasing.**

## Resources

**California Institute of Earth Art and Architecture** educates the public on environmentally oriented architecture. 10376 Shangri La Avenue, Hesperia, CA 92345; 760-244-0614; [www.calearth.org](http://www.calearth.org).

**Center for Environmental Citizenship** encourages environmentalism in students and hosts the *Blueprint for a Green Campus*. 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Ste. 3-B, Washington, DC 20009; 202-234-5990; [www.envirocitizen.org](http://www.envirocitizen.org).

**Center for Health Environment & Justice** works to eliminate dioxin. 150 S. Washington, Ste. 300, PO Box 6806, Falls Church, VA 22040; 703-237-2249; [www.essential.org/cchw](http://www.essential.org/cchw).

**Certified Forest Products Council** has a database of FSC-certified products suppliers and aids in developing purchasing guidelines, bid specs, etc. 14780 SW Osprey Dr., Ste. 285, Beaverton, OR 97007; 503-590-6600; [www.certifiedwood.org](http://www.certifiedwood.org).

**Coastal Rainforest Coalition** works to protect ancient forests. 2180 Dwight Way Berkeley, CA 94704; 510-540-8730; [www.coastalrainforest.org](http://www.coastalrainforest.org).

**Co-op America** publishes the WoodWise Consumer and works with green businesses. 1612 K St. NW, Ste. 600, Washington, DC 20006; 1-800-58-GREEN; [www.woodwise.org](http://www.woodwise.org).

**Environmental Building News** publishes articles on energy- and resource-efficient, and healthy building practices. 122 Birge St., Ste. 30, Brattleboro, VT 05301; 802-257-7300; [www.ebuild.com](http://www.ebuild.com).

**Fiber Futures** lists tree-free paper, textile and building item suppliers. Presidio Box 29363, San Francisco, CA 94129; 415-561-6546; [www.fiberfutures.org](http://www.fiberfutures.org).

**Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy** conducts research and education on agriculture and trade issues. 2105 1st Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55404; 612-870-0453; [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

**Institute for Local Self Reliance** Carbohydrate Economy Clearinghouse provides information on plant matter-based products, government purchasing, etc. 1313 5th Street SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414-1546; 612-379-3815; [www.carbohydrateeconomy.org](http://www.carbohydrateeconomy.org).

**National Association of Counties** publishes the *Environmental Purchasing Starter Kit*, 440 First Street, NW, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20001; 202-393-6226; [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).

**National Wildlife Federation's** Campus Ecology has resources for green campus purchasing. 8925 Leesburg Pike, Vienna, VA 22184; 703-790-4000; [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org).

**Natural Resources Defense Council** published the *Efficient Wood Use in Residential Construction*. 40 West 20th St., New York, NY 10011; 212-727-2700; [www.nrdc.org](http://www.nrdc.org).

**Rainforest Action Network** works to protect rainforests and reduce wood consumption. 221 Pine Street, Ste. 500, San Francisco, CA 94104; 415-398-4404; [www.ran.org](http://www.ran.org).

**Reuse Development Organization** works to create a national reuse network. PO Box 441363, Indianapolis, IN 46244; 317-631-5395; [www.redo.org](http://www.redo.org).

**United States Environmental Protection Agency's** Environmentally Preferable Purchasing program has various resources. Dept. of Pollution Prevention, US EPA, 401 M Street SW (7409), Washington, DC 20460; 202-260-1023; [www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp](http://www.epa.gov/opptintr/epp).

**World Resources Institute** published *The Last Frontier Forests*. 10 G Street, NE, Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20002; 202-729-7600; [www.wri.org](http://www.wri.org).

**Worldwatch Institute** researches consumption, forestry, paper use, etc. 1776 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20036; 202-452-1999; [www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org).