Oregon and Washington are home to 149 FSC-certified forest properties, totaling 572,650 acres.
Building with wood is good, and better if it’s climate-smart.
The carbon benefits of building with wood -- a renewable resource and a contributor to drawing down carbon dioxide from the atmosphere -- are well known. Yet not all wood stacks up. Builders have a choice about sourcing materials. They can ensure the wood they select comes from forests that are managed to increase the carbon embedded benefits of the wood, improve the resiliency of forest ecosystems and surrounding communities, improve water quality and quantity, and ensure a robust wood economy for rural communities. About 28% of the nation's softwood lumber production comes from Washington and Oregon’s forestlands. These lands represent only 8% of the total US forestland and contribute nearly double their proportion (15%) to the national carbon net stock in live trees. By choosing a climate-smart management strategy, there is an opportunity to increase carbon storage in these already productive forests.

What is climate-smart forestry?
Climate-smart forestry requires a long-term view of forest management and an appreciation for the array of economic, social, recreational, and health-related benefits forests offer to communities. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is a voluntary program whose guiding principles and forest practices offer the best example, among the available certification programs, for what climate-smart forestry can look like on the ground. Some of the specific FSC practices that align with climate-smart forestry are:

• Managing forests for longer rotations (growing trees for longer periods of time between harvests) with an objective towards maintaining a diversity of native species, ages, sizes, and spatial structure of live and dead trees.
• Managing for larger and more effective buffers around streams and wetlands to protect water quality and aquatic habitats.
• Tightly restricting the use of chemicals and the prohibition of particularly hazardous chemicals.
• Safeguarding High Conservation Value forests, recognizing unique old growth forest characteristics, and protecting and restoring habitat for threatened and endangered species and critical ecosystem services for local communities.

Measurable impacts of climate-smart forestry.
Ecotrust and partners at the University of Washington recently published a study that compared forest management outcomes expected under “business as usual” (compliance with Oregon and Washington forest practice rules) with climate-smart management scenarios of FSC certification. We quantified the outcomes of these forest management approaches on 64 properties spanning western Oregon and Washington for a 100-year period. And here’s what we found:

• FSC scenarios always stored more carbon than business-as-usual approaches.
• We would produce more timber AND store more carbon if we allowed trees to grow for a longer time before harvesting them.
• FSC-certified wood carries an embedded carbon benefit. In addition to the benefits it provides to drinking water, native fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational and employment opportunities in rural areas.

Our study also found that changes to the market must occur for climate-smart forestry to grow. Leaving more trees standing to protect streams, provide better wildlife habitat, or to store more carbon comes at a financial cost. We found that FSC management scenarios would be as financially attractive as business as usual if landowners were rewarded $37 per extra ton of CO2 they stored or if they received a 10% price premium on wood they sold, either through carbon policy incentives or premiums for certified wood.


Build for the change you want to see. Build with climate-smart wood.
With their wood selection, builders have the opportunity to choose FSC wood, initiate more carbon storage and build the market for climate-smart wood. You have a role to play. You can make positive change, start today.

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