

Forest Products Store Greenhouse Gases

THE FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY PLAYS A UNIQUE ROLE IN REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS THROUGH THE MANUFACTURE OF WOOD AND PAPER PRODUCTS THAT STORE GREENHOUSE GASES.

Carbon Transferred from Trees to Products

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that on an annual basis harvested wood products represent almost 30 percent of net sequestration from U.S. forests.

*US Environmental Protection Agency,
Inventory of US Greenhouse Gas
Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2000*

Trees are a renewable resource that play an important role in reducing greenhouse gases by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. In addition to managing forests that store or sequester carbon, the forest products industry also produces products that make an important contribution to carbon sequestration. The harvesting and manufacturing of forest products essentially transfers carbon from one carbon pool – the forests – to another carbon pool – the product pool. The

carbon contained in these products continues to be sequestered from the atmosphere. In some cases- such as building materials- products remain in use for very long periods of time.

Carbon in Product Pool Increasing

As world-wide demand for forest products increases, the amount of carbon stored in the products pool increases, thus offsetting global greenhouse gas emissions. Using United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization statistics, it has been estimated that the harvested wood products produced by the global forest products industry in 1990 contained 346 million metric tons of carbon. More importantly, the analysis indicated that the stocks of sequestered carbon in products in use and in landfills were increasing at a rate of 139 million metric tons of carbon per year. This annual increase in carbon sequestered in products, which is equivalent to removing over 100 million cars from the road annually, also represents an equivalent net removal of carbon from the atmosphere that is substantially more than the annual direct greenhouse gas emissions from the global forest products industry. Thus, product sequestration is an important component of the industry's carbon balance.