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Contact: Steve Lovett
202-258-1536
stephenlovett@verizon.net

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Industry Approves Check-off in USDA Referendum

Washington D.C. - The Blue Ribbon Commission for Check-off announced today that the softwood lumber industry voted to approve the creation of a check-off to fund a unified softwood lumber promotion program in USDA's referendum which concluded on June 10th.

"I am gratified and encouraged that this vote demonstrates that softwood lumber manufacturers across North America are committed to working progressively together to build a better future for the industry," said Jack Jordan, chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission for Check-off (BRC) and executive vice president of Jordan Lumber & Supply, Inc., in North Carolina. "The check-off is a strong, well-thought-out idea that will create enormous opportunities. It is a game-changing investment in the future growth of softwood lumber markets in North America."

This first-ever national forest industry check-off takes advantage of a provision in the 1996 Farm Bill that provides the opportunity for a fair, unified, binational North American check-off program with cross-border equity with respect to financial contributions, process, and governance. Funds collected through the check-off will be used to create a promotion program targeting building industry professionals and key influencers. The program aims to increase the share for softwood lumber in key building markets such as non-residential construction and overseas markets, and facilitate the development of innovative technologies such as cross-laminated timber.

"This program represents a unified North American effort to significantly grow markets for softwood lumber and improve cross-border cooperation," said Duncan Davies, vice chair of the BRC and CEO of Interfor.

Check-off programs have been used by agricultural commodities – beef, pork, eggs, etc. – in the United States for more than 50 years with strong records of perception-changing success. The softwood lumber promotion program, funded by the

check-off will be governed by a board of manufacturers that represents the full diversity of the industry. Government involvement assures funding stability over time, which has been a major shortfall of past voluntary softwood marketing programs.

The BRC, a working committee of 21 North American softwood lumber industry leaders, first met more than two years ago to ascertain the viability of a check-off program. Several factors led to the decision to pursue the option today, including eroding market share, the existence of untapped markets, and the pervasiveness of misinformation from competing products throughout the marketplace.

The research, marketing and communications program elements are expected to include clear and consistent messaging, pro-wood environmental marketing and a focus on the natural strengths, affordability and practicality of softwood lumber.

“To grow the pie, a program of this size and scope is exactly what we need to ensure a successful future for the softwood lumber industry,” Jordan concluded.

For more information on the proposal for a softwood lumber check-off please visit www.softwoodlumber.org.

For more information on the results of the Softwood Lumber check off vote, visit www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/news

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