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The forest on the left is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, held to higher standards than other private forests. The Oregon forest on the right is not FSC-certified.

Timber's crossroads

Push for green forestry practices coincides with international timber conference, where advocates want Ted Wheeler to promote eco-friendly logging

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A rally aimed at highlighting what organizers say are weak logging laws in Oregon will be held March 20 outside the main entrance to the International Mass Timber Conference.

The third annual conference is expected to draw elected officials, city planners, architects, academics, engineers and timber industry leaders from around the globe. It is scheduled for March 20-22 at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland.

Oregon Wild, the environmental group behind the rally, says it wants visitors to know that some of the Oregon wood products being promoted as green during the conference are anything but.

Activists plan to display banners and posters that show images of industrial clear-cuts and distribute fact sheets that outline how they say Oregon forest practices are harming rural drinking water sources and destroying fish habitat and biodiversity across the state.

The March 20 rally will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. The group is also hosting its own "Responsible Forestry Forum" directly across the street from the conference, at 500 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., from 6 to 8 p.m. March 21. Presenters will discuss the impacts of industrial logging on rural Oregonians, as well as focus on eco-friendly foresters who have found ways of harvesting wood products with less impact on wildlife habitats and watersheds.

One focus of Oregon Wild's advocacy efforts is a popular topic at this year's International Mass Timber Conference: Oregon's growing cross-laminated timber industry.

Formed when multiple layers of lumber are fused together under high pressure and temperatures, this wood product offers a more sustainable alternative to concrete and steel in high-rise construction.

In Portland, Mayor Ted Wheeler has championed the use of this product, investing



ONLINE

An interview with Oregon Wild's Jason Gonzales: The environmental watchdog's bold new ads on buses and a MAX train aim to promote a more ecologically responsible approach to logging. Read it at news.streetroots.org/clearcutexpress

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LAMAR ADVERTISING

\$6 million in public funds toward the construction of The Framework building in the Pearl District. At 12 stories, it will be one of the nation's tallest building made with cross-laminated timber, and will house 60 affordable units for low-income renters.

Wheeler is scheduled to give a keynote address during the final day of the timber conference, where he'll discuss the history and future of the timber industry in Portland.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has also thrown her weight behind the promotion of cross-laminated timber, with the intent of boosting rural economies. The state has loaned \$100,000 to Southern Oregon company D.R. Johnson Lumber, the first supplier of cross-laminated timber in the U.S., for a new production line. The state has also invested thousands in the development of the production process and a design competition aimed at encouraging more developers to use

the new structural wood product.

But local environmental groups have pointed out that the process of making cross-laminated timber emits toxins into the air and that the wood used to make the product is harvested from industrial clear-cuts.

For the product to be as green as its proponents say it is, Oregon Wild argues it should be sourced from forests certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. These forests are held to higher standards than other private forests, which are governed by the Oregon Forest Practices Act.

Oregon has the fewest FSC-certified acres of the three West Coast states, and many millions fewer acres than states with the most certified acres, according to FSC data.

A spokesperson for the certification council said this is likely because states with laws that more closely mirror FSC standards tend to have more acres that qualify for certification. In Oregon, forest protection laws are not as stringent as they are, for example, in California.

Earlier this month, Oregon Wild and Audubon Society of Portland met with the mayor's staff, advocating for Wheeler to address their concerns about lumber sourcing during his speech at the timber conference.

"If the city is going to use public money to subsidize the use of CLT (cross-laminated timber) in buildings, that money should be tied to the wood coming from sustainable sources," wrote Steve Pedery, Oregon Wild's conservation director, in an email to Street Roots. "Subsidizing CLT projects if the wood is coming off industrial clear-cuts is not green, and it is not in keeping the values of most Portlanders."

Pedery said that while there are dozens of panels on various topics during the three-day timber conference, "not a single one is devoted to the importance of getting the wood from environmentally sustainable sources. ... It

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