



NEWS RELEASE

USDA FOREST SERVICE • FOREST PRODUCTS LABORATORY

One Gifford Pinchot Drive • Madison, WI 53726-2398 • Website: www.fpl.fs.fed.us

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Contact: Rebecca Wallace, (608) 231-9275

E-mail: rwallace@fs.fed.us

“Green” Home Design Challenge Announced

MADISON, Wis.— Who can design a home with the lowest carbon footprint? That’s the challenge being presented in the Florida Carbon Challenge, a design competition to take place throughout Florida in November and December, 2010. The competition is being presented by APA in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service, Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) and the Southern Forest Products Association.

The competition calls for single-family home designs suitable for construction in Northeast Florida. To aid designers in determining how various building components and designs impact the carbon footprint of a home, APA is working with the Athena Institute to provide a Residential Eco-Calculator, a free software tool that uses life cycle assessment (LCA) methodology to determine the environmental impact of design choices. The software will include data for many combinations of common building materials for floors, walls, and roofs, as well as finish materials.

Complete details and design requirements for the challenge are available online at www.apawood.org/carbonchallenge. Entries must be submitted by Dec. 22, 2010.

The winning entries will be announced in January at the International Builders’ Show in Orlando, Florida. APA will award \$10,000 to the grand prize winner, whose design will also be promoted in multiple trade publications, including Southern Building and Design criteria. In addition, the grand prize winning design will be evaluated in a comprehensive life cycle assessment (LCA) study that compares the design in full wood-frame construction versus construction on concrete slab with concrete block walls. The results of the LCA study will be shared in a series of seminars planned for 2011.

The Florida Carbon Challenge is designed to demonstrate how sustainable building materials such as wood can be used to reduce a building’s environmental footprint, mitigate atmospheric greenhouse gas levels, and decrease fossil fuel use. The majority of single-family

homes built in Florida are constructed with first-story concrete masonry unit walls and concrete slab first floors, due to the perception that concrete construction performs better in hurricane force winds and is more resistant to termites. In fact, wood wall construction can be designed to resist both termites and the same wind loads as specified in the building codes, while also being cheaper to build.

The U.S. Forest Service Forest Products Laboratory was established in 1910 in Madison, Wis., with the mission to conserve and extend the country's wood resources. Today, FPL's research scientists work with academic and industrial researchers and other government agencies in exploring ways to promote healthy forests and clean water and improve papermaking and recycling processes. Through FPL's Advanced Housing Research Center, researchers also work to improve homebuilding technologies and materials. Information is available at FPL's Web site: www.fpl.fs.fed.us.

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