



A CLOSER LOOK AT
**GREEN
GLOBES**

*The “green” building rating
system backed by the chemical,
plastics, and timber industries*

greenwash
ACTION

WHAT IS GREEN GLOBES

Green building is on the rise, and is on track to account for over half of all commercial and institutional construction by 2016. This phenomenal growth has spooked some powerful industries whose current products and practices the green building movement aims to improve. So they invented their own building certification system and are calling it “green.”

Green Globes is a creature of the chemical, plastics and conventional timber industries. It is being peddled as a cheaper and easier alternative to the better-known LEED green building rating system, and claims to deliver the same environmental results. But if you really want to understand Green Globes, you need to know who’s behind it.

Green Globes is administered by an organization called the Green Building Initiative (GBI). Not only have the chemical, plastics and timber industries stacked GBI’s board of directors, their relative handful of “members and supporters” are mostly entities from the same industries that pay-to-play as much as \$50,000 a year. These include trade associations

and lobbying groups like the American Forest & Paper Association, The Vinyl Institute, the American Chemistry Council, and the Society of the Plastics Industry that are themselves funded by the huge and powerful corporations whose interests underlie Green Globes and drive its agenda.

Naturally, environmentalists and true green building leaders are few and far between. That’s because Green Globes isn’t just another option for the market to consider in the quest for a more sustainable built environment. It has its merits, but it was designed by and for vested interests to make green building safe for manufacturers of plastic products with toxic pedigrees and timber from massive, devastating clearcuts.

Please see the following page and take a hard look at who is behind the GBI—and who is not.

ABOUT GREENWASH ACTION

Greenwash Action is a joint initiative of Sierra Club and Greenpeace, and is a project of Earth Island Institute. Our mission is to support progress toward a healthy, biodiverse, climate-stable world by defending programs that represent true environmental leadership and challenging special interests that use greenwash to confuse the marketplace. Greenwash Action’s immediate focus is the green building sector where the threat to leadership is immediate and pressing.



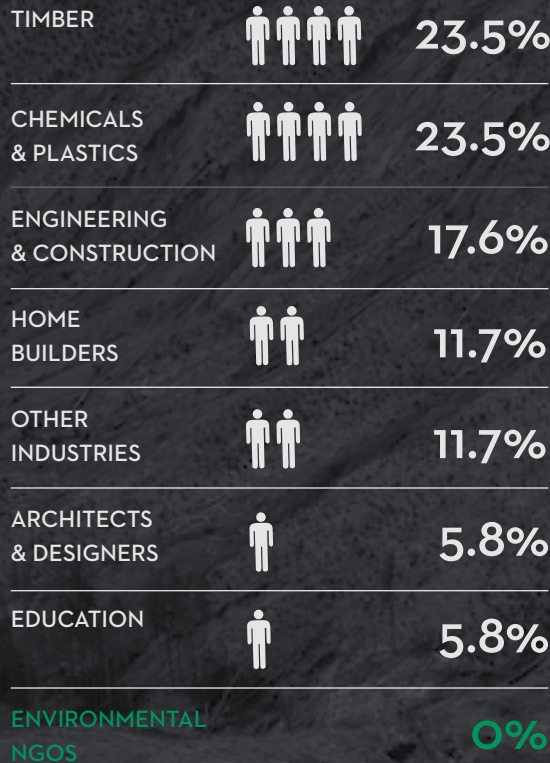
GREENPEACE

THE POWER BEHIND GBI

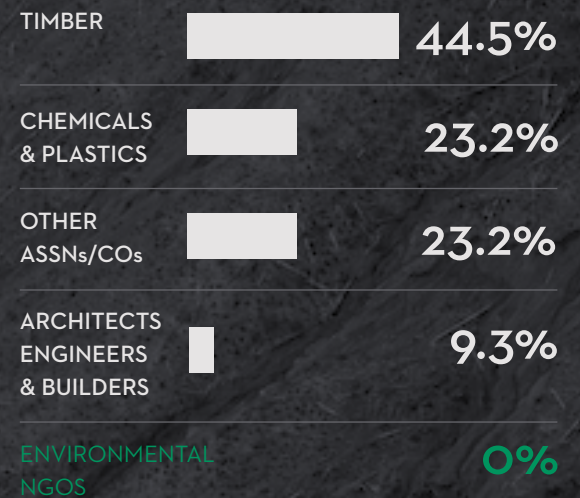
ADRIAN SMITH + GORDON
GILL ARCHITECTURE
AINSWORTH ENGINEERED
AMERICAN CHEMISTRY COUNCIL
AMERICAN GAS ASSOCIATION
AMERICAN WOOD COUNCIL
ANTHONY FOREST PRODUCTS
A/Z CORPORATION
BELCHER HOMES
BLUE RIDGE FIBERBOARD
BOISE CASCADE
CANADIAN WOOD COUNCIL
CANFOR
CAPITAL ONE
CARPET AND RUG INSTITUTE
CERTIWOOD
CHEMICAL FABRICS AND FILM
ASSOCIATION
CONTINENTAL AUTOMATED
BUILDINGS ASSOCIATION
CROSS CREEK INITIATIVE
DEW CONSTRUCTION CORP.
DUNKLEY LUMBER
EXCEL DRYER
GREEN DIAMOND RESOURCE
COMPANY
HAMPTON AFFILIATES
INTERFOR IRRIGATION
ASSOCIATION

JELD-WEN
KIEWIT CORPORATION
LOUISIANA PACIFIC
MANNINGTON (WOOD & VINYL)
MITSUBISHI HEATING & COOLING
MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC
PLASTIC, PIPE & FITTINGS
ASSOCIATION
PLUM CREEK
POWER ENGINEERS
COLLABORATIVE
RAY TONJES BUILDER, INC.
RESILIENT FLOOR COVERING
INSTITUTE
SIEMENS USA
SIKA SARNAFIL
SGA DESIGN GROUP
SOLVAY SPECIALTY
POLYMERS
STEEL RECYCLING INSTITUTE
STIMSON LUMBER
THE VINYL INSTITUTE
URS CORPORATION
WASHINGTON FORESTRY
PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
WEYERHAEUSER
WMA CONSULTING ENGINEERS
WHOLE FOODS
XPEDX

GBI BOARD BY INDUSTRY



GBI MEMBERS (TRADE ASSNs & COs)



SHORT ON REAL SUBSTANCE

At a high level, Green Globes seemingly covers the major areas of green building: site, energy, water, materials, indoor environmental quality, and so forth. But dig beneath the surface and you will find ...

NO MINIMUM BAR FOR PERFORMANCE

Unlike more rigorous green building rating systems, Green Globes has no mandatory prerequisites that ensure that certified buildings meet minimum performance levels.

POINTS NOT LINKED TO POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

Conveniently located access doors get points; so does the use of toxic, endocrine-disrupting chemicals in carpet and other materials.

DENIAL OF MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH CONCERNS

Green Globes for New Construction's Materials &

Resources section emphasizes Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) for materials assessment, but LCA does not address toxic chemicals in building materials or the environmental harm caused by intensive logging practices for wood products.

NUMEROUS POINTS AWARDED SIMPLY FOR FOLLOWING CODE IN BUILDING OPERATIONS

Green Globes for Continual Improvement of Existing Buildings (CIEB) awards numerous points simply for operating a building legally in the jurisdiction where your project is located.

LOW-BAR REFERENCE STANDARDS MIXED WITH HIGH-BAR STANDARDS

In Green Globes low-bar industry-driven reference standards like the Sustainable Forestry Initiative are co-mingled with leadership standards like Forest Stewardship Council and given equal weight.

A FLAWED APPROACH TO ASSESSING ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Green Globes for New Construction's approach

to assessing building energy performance includes flawed pathways that do not fully address actual energy performance and are subject to gaming. Green Globes offers prescriptive methods for addressing energy performance over ones that are more rigorous and holistic, and some measures that earn points are not assessed until after the building is constructed.



SHORT ON REAL SUBSTANCE (CONTINUED)

To assist the design team in creating the most energy efficient building possible, comprehensive and stringent energy performance modeling needs to occur early in the design phase. The inclusion of these flawed pathways is no accident. As with other areas of Green Globes, if you don't want to prove high performance, there are loopholes available to you.

QUESTIONABLE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Green Globes certification is achieved after a “Green Globes Assessor” verifies the project team’s claimed achievements in an on-site, in-person audit (according to the GBI, “a typical site assessment of a 50,000 sq. ft. building takes approximately 4 hours”). The assessor has tremendous discretion in awarding points, and also in deciding which Green Globes criteria are “not applicable”—making it easier to achieve a higher score. The GBI touts the flexibility and feedback that this process provides as a major benefit of their system, but they ignore the conflict of interest that can develop when an assessor works in person with his clients, and the corner-cutting that can occur when the assessor is under pressure to complete a complex audit in a limited amount of time.



GREEN GLOBES IS GREENWASH

Green Globes' leadership claims that they are trying to bring healthy competition and choice to the green building sector, to serve sectors of the building market that have not yet embraced high-performance practices and that find more rigorous green building ratings systems too costly and difficult.

But if it's true that Green Globes is about "growing the pie," then why are they working so hard to "take the pie" from LEED?

It's hard not to conclude that Green Globes' current purpose is to confuse the market and undercut true leadership green building standards—like LEED and Living Building Challenge—by offering an easier alternative that protects the narrow interests of the industries that created it and prop it up.

Green Globes provides no incentive for the chemical, plastics and timber industries to make serious progress toward healthier and more sustainable products and practices. Instead, it protects its sponsors' vested

interests and passes off business-as-usual practices and products as "green." It provides a fulcrum for lobbyists, PR flacks and bought-and-paid-for politicians as they pressure federal agencies and state governments to adopt Green Globes over more rigorous standards. And it blurs the important distinctions between its watered-down requirements and high-bar standards that drive actual environmental progress.

The definition of greenwash is "Disinformation disseminated by an organization in order to present an environmentally responsible public image." Green Globes is greenwash.

We urgently need chemical, plastics and timber companies to develop practices and products that do not ruin ecosystems, pollute our air and water, or threaten the health of our children. But above all else, we need the GBI to change course so that we can deal with the greatest threat we all face: catastrophic climate change.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Greenwash Action is calling on the GBI to:

TELL THE TRUTH

Either strengthen Green Globes so that it embodies the same level of performance (or better) as LEED in the areas in which Green Globes is relatively weak, or reposition it and be forthright about the fact that it is not equivalent to more rigorous rating systems like LEED and the Living Building Challenge.

CEASE THE ATTACKS

The companies and trade associations in the chemical, plastics and timber industries that back the GBI are driving efforts to ban LEED for use by federal agencies and state governments. They are also underwriting negative media campaigns against LEED and U.S. Green Building Council. These attacks need to stop.

HELP US FIND THE SOLUTIONS

According to the world's climate scientists, humanity has limited time to reduce our greenhouse emissions or we will cross a tipping point where climate change becomes self-reinforcing, irreversible, and

uncontrollable. It is urgent that industry, environmentalists, and green building proponents stop devoting our resources to battling one another and instead come together to identify and implement common-sense, common-ground solutions that reduce the energy use of buildings, shrink the carbon footprint of building materials, and promote responsible forestry while curbing deforestation around the world.

The GBI is unlikely to listen unless we join together and speak with one voice.

Get involved.
greenwashaction.org