



## Focus On Resource Conservation Alliance (RCA)

### History

In October 1994, 36 academics, forest conservation activists and business people met in Tomales Bay, California to discuss the need to address industrial and consumer demand for wood products. This conference launched the San-Francisco based Wood Reduction Clearinghouse.

In 1997, the project was moved to Washington, DC and subsequently changed its name to Resource Conservation Alliance to stress the organization's commitment to take an active role in outreach, organizing and education. To be most effective, RCA primarily focuses on large institutional purchasers—such as government agencies, university campuses and businesses—and their demand for wood products. Institutions can implement a number of wood reduction strategies that do not negatively impact Americans' quality of life. Indeed, the opportunities to conserve wood in the United States is great, since this country is a disproportionate user of wood, accounting for only five percent of the world's population, but using 20 percent of the world's wood.

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### Wood Reduction Strategies

RCA advances several wood reduction strategies designed to use the purchasing and market power of large institutions to take pressure off of the world's forests and boost the market for alternative products.

- Demand for wood products can be assessed and opportunities to conserve can be identified. Conservation strategies can include using less paper by implementing dual-sided copying and using wood more efficiently in framing new constructions.
- Products that are purchased should be reusable—providing environmen-

### RCA's Mission

The mission of the Resource Conservation Alliance is to protect natural forests and other ecologically important systems through market-based conservation strategies. These strategies include reduced consumption and increased recycling, redesign and resource diversification. While RCA believes that the forest conservation movement must work on habitat protection, product certification and demand reduction simultaneously and with equal vigor, our work focuses on demand reduction, the least developed of these three strategies.

tal and economic benefits. By buying used furniture from a downsizing business, institutions reduce the demand for new, wood furniture and save money. Other reuse techniques involve using the back side of printed, scrap paper for note-taking and using salvaged lumber for flooring

- Long product life is also secured by requiring product durability. For instance, durable, plastic pallets can replace flimsy, wood pallets. While plastic pallets have a higher upfront cost, their durability ensures that they can be reused, leading to lower costs over the lifetime of the pallets. The best new buildings can also be designed for durability. By making buildings easily adaptable to changing uses, architects can ensure that buildings have a long, productive life, eliminating the need for a new building.
- At times, more fundamental changes or redesigns are needed to reduce the use of wood. Redesigns can include innovative building

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*RCA has held briefings on issues such as demand reduction, industrial hemp and building codes.*

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materials that use wood more efficiently, redesigned products that eliminate the need for extra paper packaging, and a redesigned delivery system that replaces wood-intensive pallets with slipsheets.

- Lastly, alternatives can be used. Entire buildings can be made from timber-free materials, while building products can contain recycled materials. Paper can be made from a blend of recycled and agricultural fibers, such as kenaf, industrial hemp and flax.

#### **Highlights**

RCA's pursuit of these wood reduction strategies, using a combination of education, outreach and organizing, has led to a number of program highlights.

RCA has held briefings and conferences on issues such as advancing the demand reduction agenda for foundations, the role of industrial hemp in replacing wood products for environmental organizations, the need to alter building codes that limit sustainable construction for architects, builders and engineers and the latest developments in wood demand reduction for activists, academics and businesspeople.

These outreach efforts are supplemented with our comprehensive website, [www.rca-inf.org](http://www.rca-inf.org), and our various publications, including *Issues in Resource Conservation*, a series of policy papers, *How to Encourage Forest-friendly Purchasing in Your Community's Institutions*, an eight-page guide for activists working on demand reduction strategies on the local level, *Using Less Wood*, our fact sheet series on numerous topics and *RCA-News*, a monthly email digest of the latest wood consumption news.

In addition, RCA operates a chlorine-free and recycled paper buying club for nonprofits in the Washington, DC area.

#### **Resource Conservation Alliance**

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#### **Views on RCA's Work**

- "I have subscribed [to RCA-News]...I look forward to reading the newsletter. The current issue is very informative." *Mike Roselle, Greenpeace*
- "Wow—what a great collection of links [on the RCA website]! I am very impressed." *Ruth Heikkinen, formerly with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pollution Prevention & Toxics, Environmentally Preferable Purchasing*
- "Thanks very much for all of your wonderful work. We have quite a number of documents from you and we appreciate your excellent research and writing." *Heidi Siegelbaum, Northwest Natural Resource Group and Washington State Department of Ecology*
- "Thanks for taking time to forward RCA's guide 'How To Encourage Forest-friendly Purchasing in Your Community's Institutions.' Nice resource! I especially appreciate the section on recycled and agricultural fiber-based product suggestions." *Katherine Mullen, formerly with Institute for Local Self Reliance*
- "As a purchasing official responsible for researching many different environmental products, I find it extremely helpful when I receive comprehensive guides which provide important information about alternatives which reduce our environmental impact." *Eric Friedman, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Director of Sustainability, formerly of Environmentally Preferable Product Procurement Program*

