Standards, Labels, Certifications, and Seals
An Overview

Mike Brown, PhD
Brown and Wilmanns Environmental, LLC
May 2011
BRAND CAMP

TOWER OF ECO BABEL

NO AIR MILES
POST-CONSUMER RECYCLED LINING CAUGHT
BIO COMPATIBLE WIND CREDITS
PETROLEUM-FREE LOCAL RECYCLABLE NATURALLY DERIVED
BIO DEGRADABLE NO CFC COMPOSTABLE VEGAN FAIR TRADE ORGANIC
CRUELTY-FREE NO SLES RENEWABLE FORESTS
GMO FREE 100% NATURAL OZONE FRIENDLY BIO
CARBON OFFSET NON BIO FREE RANGE NO PARABENS

© 2007 SKYDECKCARTOONS.COM
Types of Labels

• Single attribute, single-criteria
  – Recycled content
  – Energy Efficient
  – Organic
• Single issue, multi-criteria
  – Forestry management
  – Sustainable agriculture
  – Sustainable fishery
  – Fair trade
• Multi-issue, multi-criteria
  – Green product
  – Green business
Label Sponsors

• NGO
  – Green Seal
  – Pharos Project (building materials)

• For Profit
  – Scientific Certification Systems
    • Sustainable Choice, Home Depot EcoOptions
  – Good Housekeeping
    • Green Good Housekeeping Seal

• Govt
  – USEPA Design for the Environment
  – USEPA/USDoE Energy Star
Label Attributes

• Criteria setting process
  – Expertise
  – Internal/external
  – Review
  – Conflicts of interest
  – Updating

• Verification, auditing
  – Independence
  – Review

• Transparency
Standards for Setting Standards

• ISO and other standard setting bodies
• Federal government process
• DIY
• Crowd sourcing
Product Life Cycle

• Value chain through end-of-useful-life
  – Raw materials origins
    • Farm/forest/marine/wellhead
  – Raw material processing
  – Packaging
    • Marketing collateral
  – Manufacturing
    • Ancillary materials (cleaners, lubricants)
  – Transportation
  – Distribution warehousing
  – Retailing
  – Product use
    • Maintenance and repair
  – End-of-useful-life disposition
What Makes for a “Good” Eco-Label?

• “What is a sustainable product?”
  – Attributes vs life cycle assessment
    • Attributes may miss important issues
      – Recovered, remanufactured products and energy
    • LCA may cover more issues but data may be uncertain
      – Industrial systems vs bio-based systems

• What’s good may be who and what you like
  – FSC and SFI
  – LEED, Green Globes, and NAHB

• Stringency and ability to meet criteria
Using Eco-Labels

• Corporate purchasing (office, maintenance, equipment, construction, etc.)
  – Cost-effective way to get environmental value
  – Include certifications in specifications
    • Energy Star appliances
    • DfE cleaning supplies
    • Greenguard furniture
    • FCS lumber
  – Request that suppliers get certified

• Products
  – Research label rather than individual products
  – Customer education
  – Minimize potential for consumer confusion
Final Thoughts

• Preference
  – Multi-criteria
  – Single issue, multi-criteria
  – Single issue, single criteria

• Multi-criteria
  – Corporate responsibility
  – “Safe enough” is not green
  – Materials matter
  – Carbon footprints
  – Life cycle assessment

• “Sustainable” products – still no free lunch
Questions?

mike@bw-environmental.com
eric@bw-environmental.com
805-898-0980