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Two of North America's oldest lumber grading agencies merge operations

Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau (PLIB) and West Coast Lumber Inspection Bureau (WCLIB) have merged operations into a single entity. The surviving organization, PLIB, will retain all of the trademarks and services formally offered by WCLIB, including the structural glued laminated timber certification services of the American Institute of Timber Construction (AITC) a role WCLIB had assumed since January 2013. PLIB President Jeff Fantozzi will lead the new combined organization, from its headquarters office in Federal Way, Wash.

PLIB was formed in 1903 and is believed to be the nation's longest standing grading agency. WCLIB was originally established in 1911. The combined organization will represent annual softwood lumber volume of more than six billion board feet.

"While PLIB is officially the surviving entity, this merger is truly a blending of two equals," Fantozzi said. "We will retain and strengthen all of the services we previously had been providing separately and we'll find efficiencies where duplicative services exist. Member companies will notice little in the way of service disruptions."

"This merger is truly an example of the whole being much more than the sum of the parts," said Ken Thorlakson of Tolko Industries, who is chair of the organization's newly formed board. "We are retaining the full depth of experience and breadth of services of the two oldest lumber grading agencies in North America, while gaining efficiencies at the same time. Together we are among the largest agencies in North America in terms of both production and member numbers, and our service base is one of the broadest, extending not only across North America, but throughout Europe as well. Producers of all sizes will be well served to consider joining us."

While long-time WCLIB Executive Vice President Don DeVisser will follow through with a planned retirement Fantozzi said that DeVisser also will be retained as a technical and engineering advisor during the transition period to help with fully integrating the two organizations.

The merger was effective January 1, 2019. The new organization's Board of Directors will have equal representation from both of the previous organizations and Fantozzi said that it will be "business as usual" as far as the marketplace is concerned because all logos, trademarks and copyrights of PLIB, WCLIB and AITC will be retained and all will continue to be used by producers on their products. He said most members of the respective organizations will continue paying the same dues levels as they

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had been paying previously and for the most part they'll be working with the same staff members they'd been working with in the past.

"We'll continued providing grading services as usual," Fantozzi said, listing off a number of examples:

- AITC's certification services remain unchanged
- PLIB's Export R List Grading and Dressing Rules will be published
- WCLIB's Standard No. 17 Grading Rules for West Coast Lumber will be retained and supported
- WCLIB's members in Europe and PLIB's members in Canada will continue to be served
- The new organization will be accredited in the U.S. by the America Lumber Standards Committee as a rules writing and inspection agency and by the Canadian Lumber Standards Accreditation Board as an inspection agency under NLGA rules
- The new organization will also retain WCLIB's accreditation for structural glued-laminated timbers, cross-laminated timber and metal plate-connected wood trusses under the International Accreditation Service (IAS)

The new organization will provide:

- Grading, inspection and technical services to approximately 180 softwood lumber manufacturers and remanufacturers in the U.S., Canada and Europe.
- ISPM 15 certification and inspection services to approximately 300 wood packaging manufacturers in the U.S. and Canada.
- Heat treating (HT) inspection and USDA APHIS HT certification services to over 50 manufacturers and dry kiln facilities.
- Inspection and technical support to seven glulam manufacturers across the U.S.
- Truss inspection services in the U.S.
- Transient inspection services to producers, consumers, and portable sawmill owners, engineers, etc. in the U.S. and Canada.

Fantozzi said that the existing WCLIB headquarters office in Tigard, Ore., which the bureau owns, would remain open as a satellite office for the time being until the building is sold. "We will make a decision on how the locations will be consolidated down the road," he said.

Both PLIB and WCLIB have long, rich histories with longstanding and loyal members. Both organizations have trademarks and rule books that are well established and recognized throughout the world. The combined organization represents members in the western and southeastern United States, British Columbia and Alberta, Canada, and many European countries.

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