

## ANSI Dimensional Stone Standard NSC Progress Report - October 2013



The following is an update of the current status of the NSC-funded development of a Sustainability Standard for dimensional Stone. This update includes a brief overview of the current status of the NSC 373 and Chain of Custody (COC) standards, along with a projected schedule of events. A discussion of remaining proposed tasks is presented at the end of this update.

### NSC 373 Standard for the Production of Dimensional Stone

The formal work of the NSC 373 workgroup was completed this summer and the resulting draft NSC 373 Sustainability Standard for Dimensional Stone was balloted in August and passed by the Joint Committee. However, subsequent pilot testing of the standard, along with the activities of the development group for the companion NSC 373 Conformance Document, have identified a number of questions and potential ambiguities within the specific language of the standard. These 'gaps' require clarification within the text of the standard, lest they lead to confusion for companies attempting to certify to the standard, or result in inconsistency in the auditing and approval of companies to the standard.

Working together, Ecoform and NSF International have taken the lead on resolving many of these issues. While many of the changes are minor in scope amounting to slight word changes consistent with the intent of the original language, a few have required more significant modifications to achieve the goals of the standard. For example, the required minimum level for reclamation of water had to be adjusted downward to account for the loss of water to evaporation, which once lost cannot be reclaimed. Other changes to sections on energy, transportation, chemical use, and required documentation are also under consideration. Final changes to the standard are expected to be complete the first week of November. At this point, one of two things can happen:

- 1) If the cumulative changes to the standard are considered significant under ANSI guidelines, the standard will need to undergo another public review round, followed by a final ballot by the Joint Committee. ANSI considers comments to be significant if they substantively change the intent of the standard in some way, or if the changes total more than 5 pages.
- 2) If the changes are NOT considered significant, there is no need to re-ballot the standard. It will be considered approved in its modified version. However, the standard will still be circulated for a final review of the language changes and to solicit comments on the modifications. Every effort will be made to gain consensus from the Joint Committee prior to finalizing the standard.

While every attempt is being made to prevent the need to ballot the standard again, it is likely that the changes necessary will be considered significant when all is said and done. This is particularly true if a decision to combine the COC standard with NSC 373 is made (see below COC). If true, public review of the standard would begin in late November with final balloting occurring in mid January, prior to StonExpo.

## NSC 373 Chain of Custody Standard

A development committee recently concluded work on the development of criteria for the Chain of Custody standard for NSC 373. The need for a companion document to address the portions of the supply chain outside the scope of the Dimensional Stone standard became apparent during the development of NSC 373. The COC establishes criteria for ensuring that adequate documentation and tracking systems exist in the supply chain of sustainably produced stone, to allow a customer to confirm its custody back to its origin.

Some additional work remains to fill in the necessary non-criteria language of the standard, which Ecoform is working to complete by the first week of November. However, release of the standard for comment may be delayed for a brief period pending a decision on whether the COC standard should be combined with the NSC 373 standard. The subject will be considered at a meeting November 14<sup>th</sup>, with a decision expected shortly afterwards.

- If left as a separate document, the NSC COC standard will be ready to review by November 10<sup>th</sup>, with a ballot of the JC for the COC scheduled for mid-December.
- If combined, the document will need to be merged with the existing NSC 373 document, delaying the final combined document until the end of November. However, the COC standard criteria language will be circulated for review on November 10<sup>th</sup>, to solicit comments as early as possible.

## Draft Conformance Protocol – NSC 373

A small committee has been working on the development of a document designed to assist industry members interested in certifying to the standard, and to inform all future determinations of compliance. The committee includes manufacturers involved in pilot testing the standard, NSF, and Ecoform. The conformance protocol defines for each criterion the data and supporting documentation required to prove compliance and the method and boundaries of any necessary calculations. Because differences in interpretation of criteria often arise no matter how careful the standard is written, the protocol also would be a repository for all interpretations of criteria to insure the consistent application of provisions of the protocol.

To-date, progress by the group has been slow given the technical nature of the document and the difficulty of considering the standard from an auditing perspective. As a result, Ecoform has agreed to work directly with NSF to develop a draft document, using the input from the pilot projects, which has been documented by participants. Also, through this process, a number of areas of ambiguity within the standard have been identified and are simultaneously being clarified or corrected. A draft document is scheduled to be completed by early December and will be circulated for review and comment as soon as completed.