



## Sustainability Looks Good in Blue

Rough and rugged, the Pacific Northwest has a tradition in microbrews and wood. They meet as Breakside Brewery trend-sets with a tasting room paneled in blue stain pine, supporting rural communities and sustainable practices.

Historically, in pine mills selling to window and door plants, blue stain is not a good thing. But some buyers have no interest in the traditional. Breakside is just one of the hip new clientele sporting blue, with applications showing up in universities, residential buildings, and even Google HQ.

“I think what people really like about blue stain pine is a look and feel that’s more natural,” explains Ryan Temple, founder of Sustainable Northwest Wood. “Designers will see the staining and say, ‘what do you put on it? What’s the chemical?’ The awesome thing is, the answer is ‘nothing.’ Nature did that.”

Blue stain naturally develops in pines after beetles or forest fire kills them. There’s a window for harvest: the bluing peaks 2 to 3 years postmortem, but in 5 years the wood will begin to decay. Moreover, a dense forest of brittle, dead



beetle-kill pine is kindling for forest fires, which ravage America’s west coast every summer. There is certainly no shortage of supply.

“Fire and disease are always going to be part of our forests, there are always going to be standing dead trees. It’s nice we can find a market for them,” says Temple, matter-of-factly.

Before starting his business, Temple ran a nonprofit’s support network for locally-owned sawmills. While all that outreach was helpful, he discovered the mills really needed customers. Thus Sustainable Northwest Wood was born to become the buyer mills wished they had.

Temple now works with mills to reframe their blue stain pine from blight into boon. Wood that isn’t marketable goes unused or is chipped and pulped—a very low-value use. But Ryan Temple asks for the worst of it and offers to pay double, governed by a simple principle: “By creating more value, you’re creating jobs and opportunity with volume that you otherwise would not have.”

Now that’s a trend we’d like to see stick around. ■