



## Advisory Committee Update

On 3 May 2023, the North Carolina House of Representatives passed the bill entitled [Promote North Carolina Sawmills \(HB 295\)](#) with a near unanimous vote -- 115 in favor, 2 opposed. The Senate is now reviewing the bill.

This legislation would require the NC Building Code Council to permit the use of dimension lumber during the construction of one- and two-family dwelling units. Approved dimension lumber lacks a stamp by a lumber grading bureau yet meets or exceeds the Council's lumber requirements for one- and two- family housing construction. HB 295 defines "sawmill" as any mill that produces less than one million board feet of lumber each year.

If HB 295 passes the Senate and is signed into law, sawmill operators could sell their dimension lumber directly to an individual who owns a family dwelling unit that is to be constructed (or to the owner's approved representative). The sawmiller must provide that individual with a certificate that identifies (1) the species of wood milled into lumber, (2) how much wood was milled, and (3) where the wood was milled. That certificate must also state the dimension lumber meets all requirements of the NC Building Code, even though the lumber lacks a grading stamp from an accredited lumber grading bureau.

Before sawmill operators could sell their wood, however, they must receive a certificate from **a state-approved lumber grading training program**. That certificate must certify that the dimension lumber conforms with product and inspection standards under American Softwood Lumber Standard PS20. The state-approved lumber grader must mark the dimension lumber with the following information:

- the mill number, name, or abbreviation;
- the species of wood (or combination of species used) to mill the lumber;
- if the lumber was dry or green when manufactured, as required by American Softwood Lumber Standard PS20; and
- whether the lumber conforms with PS20 standards.

In addition to the above certification, the sawmill operator must have a code enforcement official review the lumber. That official must approve the dimension lumber's use for building construction before it can be sold.

***What is the state-approved lumber grading training program?***

It is a program that the NC Cooperative Extension Service would have to create, in partnership with the NC Forest Service, within 180 days of the bill's passage. Specifically, the Extension Service and NC Forest Service would have to agree on (1) the training program's content (2) who is qualified to instruct the program, and (3) the standards that program participants must meet to successfully complete the program.

The NC Extension Service would have to offer the training program at least once a year. It can even authorize the use of a private training program in place of its own. That private provider's training program, however, , must adhere to all of the standards that the Extension Service established in partnership with the NC Forest Service.

All individuals who successfully complete the training program must register with the NC Forest Service before they can grade dimension lumber. Additionally, they must get re-certified every five years. Both requirements also apply to individuals who complete a training program in another state and work in North Carolina.