

# Rainforest Relief



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## RAINFOREST SAFE™ WOOD CERTIFICATION FINAL REPORT AND EVALUATION FOR **PACIFIC GREEN™, INC., FIJI** JULY 1, 2010 CERTIFICATE # RFSW-2010-001

### INTRODUCTION

**Rainforest Relief** has been focused on consumers since our inception in 1989. Our years of experience in the marketplace and concurrent research of tropical woods and temperate rainforest woods in trade led us to explore a way to certify companies, government entities and individuals that committed to not trading in wood or wood products originating from endangered forests\*, especially tropical forests and temperate rainforests. In 2000, we initiated the **Rainforest Wood Safe™** (RFS) certification program.

Any company, government entity or individual concerned about their impact, or seeking third-party verification of reduced impact, on the world's forests can benefit from the program.

Until recently, certifications have focused mostly on retailers. The present certification is the first RFS certification of a producer.

**Pacific Green™** (hereafter, "PG"), based in Australia, produces furniture and architectural millwork from coconut palm trees salvaged from copra plantations.

#### **Pacific Green™**

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### PACIFIC GREEN™ AND COCONUT PALM HARDWOOD

PG was founded in 1991 by Bruce Dowse and Peter Ryan as a means to create furniture from a resource that was going to waste: "senile" coconut palm trees. In the late 1980s, concerned about the loss of the world's rainforests, driven largely by logging for timber, Dowse and Ryan "discovered" the availability of a vast amount of trees in abandoned coconut palm plantations in the South Pacific. Research has suggested that 80 billion board feet of coconut palm hardwood is available from senile coconut trees in the plantations of the South Pacific alone. Typically, these trees are left to rot on the ground or are burned.

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*Exposing and Challenging Rainforest Consumption*

**R A I N F O R E S T   R E L I E F**

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Quoting the PG website:

In the late 1980s, with the world waking up to the threat posed by mass deforestation, Pacific Green went on a search to find a viable ecologically-sound substitute for tropical hardwoods. In the South Pacific we came across vast abandoned plantations of coconut palm trees. These trees were originally planted in the early 1900s to provide a crucial component (copra) for manufacturing, however demand for copra has long since ceased.

Our initial testing showed that the stems were exceptionally strong and durable — as hard as conventional hardwoods — yet flexible enough to withstand tropical cyclones. Here was the perfect ecological substitute; there could no longer be any excuse for the destruction of the remaining forests of the world.

PG was the first company to attempt to use this valuable resource commercially on a large scale, to reduce the use of tropical hardwoods, increase the income of coconut producers, and reduce waste in coconut plantations.



PHOTO © BY TIM KEATING/RAINFOREST RELIEF

**Figure 1. Truck carrying old-growth logs, Viti Levu, Fiji.** As it is elsewhere, logging is a major cause of deforestation in Fiji.

PG researched the use of coconut palm around the South Pacific and uncovered a unique, all-natural hardening treatment that enabled ‘Palmwood’™ to last far longer than it might otherwise.

In 1993, PG opened a factory in Fiji to bring this wood to market in furniture and other products. Since then, PG has been the leading company in the world utilizing Palmwood™. PG’s area of focus for obtaining palm trees has been Fiji, a country with of thousands of acres of coconut palm plantations.

According to the PG website:

Pacific Green established the world’s first Palmwood factory in Sigatoka in the Fijian Islands.

Palmwood® is the name we gave to our finished hardwood product. Since starting the factory, our research team has continued to enhance the durability, versatility and consistency of Palmwood. Processing breakthroughs have produced a produce that is suitable in both wet and dry climates and impervious to white ants and other wood-boring insects.

These advances mean Pacific Green offers a complete Palmwood lifestyle concept, from furniture and homewares, to architectural materials like columns, flooring, panels and cladding.



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**Figure 2. Old coconut palm plantation, Taveuni, Fiji.** RR staff visited this plantation in 2000. This is typical of many of the small-scale plantations in Fiji from which Pacific Green obtains palm logs.



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**Figure 3. Coconut palm logs heading to PG, Ovalau, Fiji.** The truck was disembarking the ferry between the islands of Vanua Levu and Viti Levu.



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**Figure 4. Pacific Green factory entry sign, Sigatoka, Fiji.**



PHOTOS © BY TIM KEATING/RAINFOREST RELIEF

**Figure 5. Coconut palm logs in the factory yard and moving logs to the saw.** Pacific Green treats the logs with a proprietary solution, created using knowledge from indigenous people in the South Pacific. Mark Paterson, Pacific Green furniture designer, is pictured in the photo on the left.





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**Figure 6. Rough coconut palm planks after milling and drying in the yard.**



PHOTOS © BY TIM KEATING/RAINFOREST RELIEF

**Figure 7. Finished planks ready for use in the factory and re-milled blanks awaiting use in furniture.**



PHOTOS © BY TIM KEATING/RAINFOREST RELIEF

**Figure 8. Palmwood™ table being finished and Palmwood™ loveseat after assembly.**

In the company's quest to create beautiful and sustainable furniture from a resource typically going to waste, it developed an ethic of environmental awareness.

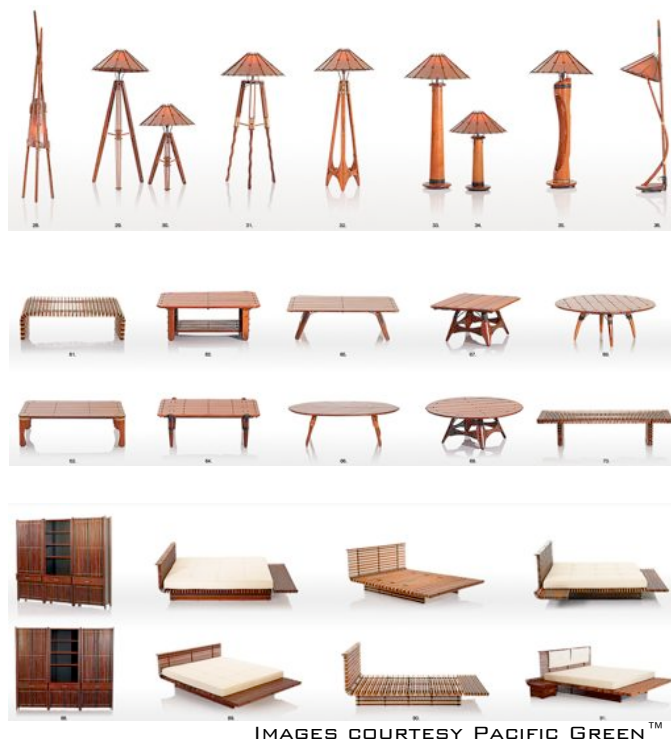


Figure 9. Offerings from the current Pacific Green™ catalog.

## OUR EVALUATION

RR first contacted PG in 1999 and subsequently conducted a site visit at their factory in Fiji in 2000. Present for the site evaluation were Tim Keating, Executive Director of RR, and Jeff Lockwood, RR's Vice President and Director of the Northwest Chapter.

Initially, RR was interested in evaluating the potential of palm hardwood to reduce demand for tropical hardwoods. While at Pacific Green, the idea of RR certifying the company as **Rainforest Wood Safe™** was initiated. Follow-up has included numerous email and phone discussions to clarify PG's past, current and future plans for the use of wood.

As an organization, **Rainforest Relief** has found PG to be extremely transparent and accessible. When issues have arisen, PG personnel have been extremely responsive.

For example, during the site visit, we found only one use of questionable wood: plywood used sparingly for small pieces of internal forms in a few pieces of furniture. RR raised the issue with PG staff and we were asked to investigate the origins of the material. RR staff tracked the plywood to a company on the island of Vanua Levu in Fiji and ascertained that the plywood was being produced, in part, from old growth wood logged from the dwindling old growth rainforests of Fiji. PG immediately shifted to pine plywood for this (rarely-used) element of their furniture.

After our initial site visit, it was clear that PG could achieve our **Rainforest Wood Safe™** certification. However, both PG and RR did not further pursue the project until 2008, when we were contacted by PG company representative, Dominic Ryan. Since then, RR and PG have worked on a final evaluation. This included a series of questions to ascertain further details of the company's use of wood products (see below).

In addition to PG's commitment to avoid all wood from endangered forests, the company also has a commitment to social responsibility, which we observed during our site visit.

Quoting PG's website:

Pacific Green pioneered the creation of a socially-responsible industry for the Pacific region. By recycling unproductive coconut palms, old plantation land was returned to the local villages to replant with young fruit-bearing palms and other cash crops. The regenerated land, combined with the money paid for each log, has created a viable sustainable indigenous economy.

The factory was built in consultation with the surrounding villages and employs only local people. There they learn business and manufacturing skills, and teach us their traditional handcrafting methods. The land we use is leased (leasing, unlike buying, respects local ownership).

Our manufacturing processes are environmentally sustainable and use no toxins or chemicals. The finishing oils are 100% natural. Packaging materials are fully recyclable. Even the sawdust is used as a nutrient-rich agricultural fertiliser.

Today, Pacific Green Industries is a public company listed on the South Pacific Stock Exchange. Its majority owners are the Fijian people. Its policies are to respect and assist quality progress within the community. We have also addressed the United Nations on the social responsibility of manufacturing companies.

Pacific Green's mission is to provide inspirational sustainable products. We are committed to promoting Palmwood as an ecologically-sound substitute for endangered hardwood, and highlighting its inherent and unique beauty. Our furniture evokes exotic locations and pays homage to the traditional handcrafting skills of the world's indigenous peoples and we will continue to help these communities to keep alive these special crafts.

Starting in 2010, Pacific Green will begin work on an ecological park, open to the public, which will encompass our manufacturing and processing facility in Sigatoka.

Rainforest Relief is entirely satisfied with Pacific Green's concern for the welfare of Earth's endangered forests, the company's minimal impact on rainforests, the company's utilization of building materials that would otherwise go to waste, their openness to discuss change, their transparency and desire to continue to improve their environmental performance.

Therefore, RR is awarding PG our **Rainforest Wood Safe™** certification. Questions and answers regarding PG's use of wood are below. Maintaining this certification will entail annual updates from PG and site visits from RR, as needed.



PHOTOS © BY TIM KEATING/RAINFOREST RELIEF

**Figure 10. Assembling leather-wrapped wire strapping / Palmwood®. Pacific Green went so far as to phase out the use of toxic glues in their furniture, switching to metal wiring wrapped in natural leather. A close-up of solid Palmwood flooring with a natural wax finish.**



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Please identify the wood products the subject company currently uses. For each, please indicate:

- The species and country or countries of origin

*Coconut trees from plantations in Fiji and surrounding Pacific islands.*

- The use for which you purchase the wood or wood product (i.e., manufacturing, packaging, facilities construction, etc.).

*For manufacture of home furniture and architectural materials.*

2. What other wood products does the subject company plan to use within the next two years, if any?

*We are considering manufacturing a range of products using plantation-grown mahogany from Fiji but this is only at the idea stage at the moment. All our products use Palmwood and we are committed to being the world leader in manufacturing using plantation coconut trees.*

3. To your knowledge, does any of the wood in these products originate from natural tropical forests, old-growth temperate forests, temperate rainforests or endangered forests\* of any kind?

*No.*

4. If the products are from tropical plantations, how old are the plantations and what is/was the purpose of establishing them?

*The plantations are approximately 80 years old. They were planted for copra (a crucial component in early manufacturing industries). However, the demand for copra has long since disappeared (once synthetic alternatives were produced). The plantations now have no use and lay abandoned, occupying valuable land that the islanders could otherwise replant with new crops.*

5. Is the subject company currently certified by any organization providing certifications involving wood (such as a certifier accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), etc.)?

*No.*

6. Does the subject company plan to be certified by any such organization in the near future?

*We are undecided currently and would like to take Rainforest Relief's guidance on whether to do so.*

7. Does the subject company currently use or plan to use any wood products supplied by companies certified by any such organizations?

*No we don't use any other wood products in our furniture.*

*I looked into other wood that we use in our operation. We don't use a lot of hand tools – primarily just small machines to assist with our knotting, etc. Most of our tools have either steel or Palmwood handles. All our farm implements have Palmwood handles.*

*Our packing is recyclable cardboard with strengthened cardboard edges. Inner frames of the furniture are Palmwood. We have from time to time used plywood in the frames but this is not common practice.*

8. Does the subject company currently use or plan to use any wood products in the construction of the company's facilities?

*No.*

\* For the purposes of the **Rainforest Relief Rainforest Wood Safe™** Certification, "endangered forest" means any forest between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, excepting plantation forests that are less than 100 years old and more than 25 years old; any forest that retains most of its "old growth" characteristics, including species diversity, vegetative structure and composition, and hydrological and ecological functions; other rare or ecologically critical forests; and forests of particular cultural value.