

**PACIFIC LUMBER INSPECTION BUREAU  
GRADE & TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

October 30, 2019

Via webcast/conference call

The Pacific Lumber Inspection Bureau (PLIB) held a meeting of the Grade & Technical Committee on Wednesday, October 30, 2019 via webcast/conference call, commencing at 8:00 a.m. PLIB President Jeff Fantozzi presided with the following members present:

Aaron Dummer – Seneca Sawmill Co.

Christof Richter – Binderholz

Clement Frank – Frank Lumber

Eric Fritch – Fritch Mill

Goran Bodirogic – Ilim Timber

Heiko Kerner – Mercer Timber

Jason Smith – South Port Lumber Co.

Joe Honochick – Zip-O

Steve Harms – Weyerhaeuser

PLIB Staff present for the meeting: Don DeVisser, Henry Morris, Ben Haynes, Skeet Rominger, Jim Gomes, Jon Hartley, Will Moore, Glen Walton, Jeff Fantozzi

1. Welcome and Introductions – Mr. Fantozzi welcomed everyone to the first PLIB Grade and Technical Committee meeting and provided an update on the merger between PLIB, WCLIB and AITC. He also reported that rules writing authority for *Standard No. 17 Grading Rules for West Coast Lumber* have been transferred to PLIB through the merger. In addition, PLIB publishes the *Export R-List*. Revision made by PLIB to the Standard No. 17 are sent to the American Lumber Standard Committee (ALSC) for approval.
2. Anti-Trust Statement – Mr. Fantozzi reviewed the PLIB anti-trust statement.
3. Board Appointment and Purpose of the Committee – Mr. Fantozzi explained that the PLIB Board of Directors established this new committee at its June 2019 meeting for the purpose reviewing and discussing items related to grade rules and standards related to those published by PLIB as well as rule changes related to other rules such as the NGR, as well as to review technical items that may impact PLIB members. This committee will report to the PLIB Board of Directors and initially plans are for it to meet once or twice a year.
4. Items Related to Standard No. 17, Paragraphs 130 Beams & Stringers and Paragraph 131 Posts & Timbers – Mr. Rominger explained that Standard No. 17 Grading Rules for West Coast Lumber include two sets of rules for Beams & Stringers (B&S) and Posts & Timbers (P&T). The original rules are in paragraphs 130 and 131. In 2014 WWPA adopted new rules for B&S and P&T that were based on the displacement method for measuring knots, like the NGR dimension grade rules. In 2015, WCLIB adopted these WWPA timber rules in Standard No. 17 under paragraphs ALT 130 and ALT 131. Staff prepared new written interpretations for paragraphs 130 and 131, attached to the minutes, and asked the committee to consider adopting them for the ALT rules. A question was asked whether ½ applied to the diameter of the knot or area and Mr. Rominger stated that it applies to the diameter.

There was discussion on whether any of these proposed changes could potentially create issues with customers. The consensus of the group was that these changes would increase recovery and should not affect the end use or appearance. Clement Frank motioned and Eric Fritch seconded to

approve the revisions. In further discussion, Steve Harms pointed out a couple of typos and asked if we should look at having a less stringent requirement for twist and bow in Select Structural, right now none is permitted. Skeet explained that a product leaving a plant may be straight but upon reaching a customer may develop slight crook, twist, or bow. It was proposed that “very light” twist or bow may be an acceptable tolerance for Select Structural. Clement Frank and Eric Fritch agreed to modify the motion to include “very light” twist or bow for the grade of Select Structural. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Fantozzi noted that these revisions to the interpretations will move next the PLIB Board for approval prior to being submitted to the ALSC Board of Review.

5. Depth criteria for checking moisture content for DRY timbers – Mr. Fantozzi explained that staff was asked by a member whether there was a written policy regarding the correct depth to measure the moisture content in timbers and if not, to consider one. There is concern that some mills are using small pins that penetrate just a fraction of an inch to measure moisture content in large timbers and this could lead to incorrect moisture readings and misrepresentation of the product as “dry”. Staff reported that they had checked ASTM D7438-13 *Standard Practice for Field Calibration and Application of Hand-Held Moisture Meters* for guidance on how to measure the MC of timber sizes. It was found that in Appendix X2.3 it recommends measuring MC at approximately 1/4 to 1/5 the total thickness of the timber. The moisture gradient through the cross section in recently manufactured timbers gradually increases as you move from the surface to the core. The theory is that by targeting 1/4 to 1/5 of the total thickness you are getting a measurement that represents the average MC across the cross section. It was also recommended that resistance type meters use insulated pins to ensure MC measurements are accurate. After some discussion by the group there was general agreement that this would be an acceptable process to adopt by the committee. PLIB staff will draft a policy for measuring MC in timber sizes based on the guidance provided in D7438. The document will be circulated to the committee members for comment.
  
6. Precision End Trimmed Interpretation of 1/16” Over/Under in 20% of Pieces – The definition of precision end trimmed (PET) lumber as defined in Voluntary Product Standard PS 20 and in paragraph 748 of Standard No. 17, Grading Rules for West Coast Lumber was reviewed. Staff explained that according to the definition, 20% of pieces sold as PET lumber can be +/- 1/16”, resulting in a possible 1/8” variance between some of the pieces. Mr. Rominger noted that staff has fielded questions about whether a full unit that is uniformly 1/32” over or under length is acceptable and/or any worse than the potential 1/8” variance that the current definition allows. Staff felt that a consistent product that was 1/32” over or under would be no worse than what the current definition allows and suggested that such a change to the definition could be helpful to the producer and consumer. The committee members were asked if they had received complaints from customers with regards to PET that should be considered, or if anyone had comments on the proposed change. There was general agreement that this would be a beneficial revision based on the fact builders often want a consistent product. It was also pointed out that when using a tape measure, it can be difficult to measure with an accuracy of 1/32”.

Staff noted that as this definition is written in PS 20, any change to the definition would have to be brought before the National Grading Rule Committee or the PS 20 Committee. Both of these committees meet infrequently. It was also noted that it was unlikely that the NGR Committee would want to replace the current definition for PET but that they likely would consider amending it to allow for 1/32” over or under length in a full unit.

A motion was made by Eric Fritch and seconded by Steve Harms to move forward with proposing this revision to the NGR. The motioned passed unanimously. It was emphasized that the proposal was for allowing 1/32" over or under, not both at the same time. PLIB staff will take the proposed changes to the definition of PET to the NGR Committee.

7. Timber Breaks in No. 2 Wide Widths – Mr. Fantozzi noted that this agenda item was brought up by a member mill. A member has asked whether small timber breaks, limited to the size of a hole for example, could be allowed in No. 2, particularly wide width lumber. Currently timber breaks are not allowed in the grade of No. 2 Joists and Planks and very small timber breaks often result in the downgrading of lumber, particularly European spruce. Mr. Rominger reported that many years ago limited testing had been done on boards containing timber breaks but further testing and changes to the rules were not pursued at that time. Mr. DeVisser mentioned that, compared to other strength reducing characteristics, it can be difficult to predict how timber breaks affect the strength of boards as there is often not a strong correlation between the size of the timber break and how it will affect strength. He suggested that if we wanted to pursue this it would be a good idea to develop a comprehensive sampling and testing plan. Clement Frank agreed noting that in their experience timber breaks are often difficult to quantify and test. It was noted that as No. 2 is part of the NGR, any change to the timber break rules would need to be approved by the NGR Committee. After further discussion, Mr. Fantozzi suggested that staff contact other agencies to get a sense for how they feel about allowing small timber breaks in wide width material and if there is general agreement to consider it, PLIB could prepare a sampling plan. If there does not seem to be interest from other agencies then the item will be sent back to the committee for further consideration.
8. Water Stain in R List Western Red Cedar Paragraph 401, No. 2 Clear & BTR - Due to time constraints this issue was been tabled until the next meeting.
9. ALS Enforcement Regulations for Excess Below Grade, Moisture, Species and Illegible Stamps at Mill and Destination Checks – Staff received a request from a member to clarify the percent of below grade, excess moisture, etc. that is permitted in order to ship lumber under various inspection types such as mill inspections and destination/port inspections. Mr. Fantozzi reviewed sections 5.8.2, 5.12 and 5.12.1 of the ALSC Enforcement Regulations regarding the criteria used to determine when lumber is held for regrading. He confirmed that ALSC and PLIB are implementing the rules in these sections in the same manner and noted that for a period of time, ALSC was holding lumber that was 5% off grade in 2017 and 2018 while there were below grade issues with lumber coming from Europe.

A question was asked about stamp legibility and what criteria a PLIB or ALSC inspector uses to judge whether a stamp is legible or not. Mr. Rominger pointed out that a stamp is considered legible when all the information on the stamp can be read and understood. Mr. Fantozzi added that ALSC is concerned with the five elements of a lumber grade stamp being legible, namely the grading agency logo, mill name/number, species, grade, and seasoning.

It was mentioned that in Standard No. 17 or on the PLIB or WCLIB websites there is no reference to the ALSC Enforcement Regulations. It was also pointed out that criteria such as off-species or excess MC are not mentioned in Standard No. 17. Mr. DeVisser explained that in Standard No. 17, section 3 it does reference PS-20 and that would then include the ALSC Enforcement Regulations. Staff agreed to consider including a more definitive and clear reference to the ALSC Regulations in Standard 17 and/or on the website and this could be discussed at the next meeting.

10. Adding QC Procedures for Specific Gravity Monitoring in the MSR Standard – Mr. DeVisser reported that for many years it has been permitted for a mill to claim a higher specific gravity (SG) value than what is published in the rule book if there is ongoing daily QC monitoring. He noted that one of the PLIB Members has been monitoring SG values for many years and uses statistical process control such as X-bar and R charts and the PLIB Supervisor monitors this QC data during monthly inspections and semi-annual audits; however, the MSR Quality Control Standard does not provide guidance on how specific gravity (SG) is to be monitored or tested as part of the daily quality control procedures.

A question was asked about when it is required to include the SG, Fc perp or Fv value on the grade stamp. Mr. DeVisser explained that if a mill does not include a SG value on the grade stamp, the assigned value from Table 14 in Standard No. 17 will apply. If a mill wants to claim a higher value than is listed in Table 14 for a particular grade, they are required to put that information on the grade stamp. A document outlining the method for monitoring SG will be completed by DeVisser, Morris and Haynes and then submitted to the committee for review. Once approved by the committee it will be incorporated into the PLIB MSR Quality Control Standard.

11. MSR Withdrawals - Due to time constraints this issue was been tabled until the next meeting.
12. MSR Visual Overrides with Machines That Evaluate by Measuring Acoustic Waves - Due to time constraints this issue was been tabled until the next meeting.
13. Development of Grader Recognition Program - Over the past few years, both the WCLIB and PLIB Boards of Directors have discussed developing a grader recognition program, similar to the “Master Lumberman” program that WWPA has had for many years and both boards had approved moving forward with developing a program prior to the merger. Mr. Fantozzi and Mr. Rominger reviewed some of the background on the Grader Recognition Program as well as framework originally put together by WCLIB before the merger. The criteria WCLIB had begun to develop nominating eligible candidates included:
- a. Employed by a PLIB member mill in a quality control or managerial position for a period of ten years or more.
  - b. Demonstrated proficiency and in-depth knowledge of good lumber practices including grading, production, drying and planning.
  - c. Certified lumber grader with a minimum of 20 years of production experience.

There was discussion of developing a plaque for recipients and whether they might be invited to a board meeting to be formally recognized. A point was made about trying to attract younger workers and whether the number of years required could be lowered. Another option discussed was using a tiered approach. It was agreed that staff would move ahead with drafting a document for this program and will bring it to the committee for review when completed.

14. Recent Changes to the NGR and Interpretations and PS 20 – Mr. Fantozzi and Mr. Rominger provided a report on recent changes to the NGR that were provided as part of the meeting materials. One noteworthy revision involves the conversion of Imperial units to Metric units. It is now required to convert to the nearest tenth of a millimeter. For example, the metric size for a nominal 2” thick lumber would be 38.1 mm and not 38 mm as shown in the tables in PS 20. It was also pointed out that the list of agencies had been updated to remove WCLIB and the number of members allotted to PLIB was increase to two.

15. Reprinting Standard No. 17 & Interpretations – Staff reported that there was about a year or more supply of Standard No. 17 and the NGR interpretations that go along with it and that a decision would have to be made concerning whether to reprint the entire book or print an erratum for the changes to the NGR and interpretations. In addition, staff was considering incorporating other changes to Standard No. 17, changing the number to Standard No. 18 and incorporating the interpretations into the next printing as some other agencies have done. Staff noted that they would be going back through past interpretations that had not been published yet and would likely be bringing some of these interpretations to the committee for discussion
16. New Business – There was no new business to come before the committee.
17. Next Meeting - After some brief discussion it was agreed that the next meeting should occur in the Spring prior to the next PLIB Board Meeting.

Upon motion by Clement Frank, the meeting was adjourned.