

e c o m m e r c i a l

WALKING

Pull up to the big red barn that houses **CLEARLAKE FURNITURE**'s workshop and gallery in Ludlow, Vt., and you're looking at the company's first big effort at environmental consciousness. The barn dates back to 1891 and formerly was home to horses, cows and the hay that fed them. Rather than tearing down the barn, Brent Karner and Frank Procopio, co-owners of ClearLake Furniture, added on to the structure to provide a sunny workshop for ClearLake Furniture's craftsmen and stunning gallery space to showcase the furniture they build.

THE WALK

| By Frank Procopio |

**A VERMONT
COMPANY
PROVIDES
SUSTAINABLE
FURNITURE
FOR A LEED
PROJECT**



Photos courtesy of ClearLake Furniture, Ludlow, Vt.



ClearLake Furniture crafts an extensive line of residential and commercial furnishings. EACH PIECE IS BUILT BY ONE CRAFTSMAN, from start to finish, and is signed and dated by the craftsman.

Procopio explains ClearLake Furniture's philosophy as follows: "We craft beautiful furniture that will last for generations. This is a step in the right direction in our increasingly 'throw-away' culture. We've decided to go one step further by acquiring our hardwoods from Forest Stewardship Council- [FSC-] certified growers. We're a perfect fit for the increasing number of architects working on the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED®-certified buildings and are pleased to have worked on one major LEED project to date with two more in the works. We are proud to be part of the movement toward environmentally responsible building."

FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

ClearLake Furniture began in Massachusetts in 1991 and moved to Vermont in 1996. Procopio explains that being in Vermont's



rural environment and observing the rapid rate of change and development brought the whole concept of forest preservation home.

"During the past few years, I have watched as a lot of Vermont's pristine spaces have been developed into some form of retail or commercial uses," Procopio says. "We at ClearLake Furniture wanted to do as much as we could to help preserve and conserve our natural resources."

ClearLake Furniture crafts an extensive line of residential and commercial furnishings. Each piece is built by one craftsman, from start to finish, and is signed and dated by the craftsman. When a craftsman receives an order, he'll pick out the wood he'll need from FSC-certified stacks of maple, cherry, walnut, oak and curly maple. If a customer wants a lot of character in the finished piece, a rough piece of wood with sap inclusions or other marks will be chosen. If a clear, noncharacter look is desired, the craftsman will pick through the pile until the proper piece of hardwood is found. He'll use time-proven methods of joining the piece, such as dovetail, mortise and tenon. The piece can be finished with a catalyzed varnish finish or an oil

Time-proven methods of joining pieces, such as dovetail, mortise and tenon, are used by ClearLake Furniture's craftsmen.



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finish. The company can ship anywhere, and its furniture arrives blanket wrapped and will be set in place for the customer.

LEED CERTIFICATION

ClearLake Furniture can be the solution for architects and designers faced with the challenging task of finding furniture that fits their unique design concepts and conforms to the strict parameters of a LEED project. For example, when Jan and David Blittersdorf, owners of NRG Systems, Hinesburg, Vt., chose ClearLake Furniture to make all the furniture for their world headquarters in 2002 it was their opportunity to "walk the walk" dictated by their philosophy of thoughtful and conscious use of materials.

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Since 1982, NRG Systems has been making precise, reliable and proven wind-assessment and turbine-control equipment that helps customers measure and understand the wind. For NRG Systems, it's a commitment to developing the best technology, improving our world and protecting the environment. When the company was building its new world headquarters in Vermont, the

Blittersdorfs contacted ClearLake Furniture to help them meet their goals of reducing environmental impact. The 46,000 square feet (4273 m²) of manufacturing and office space received a Gold certification in the LEED program and is built to incorporate state-of-the-art energy conservation. In addition, the company continually works to minimize and reduce the environmental impacts of manufacturing, transportation and other business activities.

The goals for ClearLake Furniture and NRG Systems are the same: To consciously have the highest quality products with the least negative environmental impact. ClearLake Furniture built about 200 pieces of furniture for NRG Systems, including desks, chairs, library pieces, café pieces and miscellaneous items. The pieces are made of FSC-certified wood, assuring ClearLake Furniture and NRG Systems that the environmental, social and economic impacts of each piece of wood's logging were considered. In addition, FSC certification assures ClearLake Furniture and its environmentally conscious clients that the logging practices used not only do no harm but actually contribute to the sustainability of forests and the continued well being of the communities that abut them.

In a building where you've so carefully considered the source and impact of your construction materials, why settle for a conference table or office chair that's been produced with no consideration for logging's effect on water pollution, wildlife habitat or social impact?" Procopio asks. 🌱

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