



Tatanka Restaurant and Bar in Aspen, CO. Old Wood collaborated with the restaurant's owner and designer on the custom beams, three-dimensional wall, mesquite end grain flooring, and custom tables. Courtesy photo provided by Old Wood, LLC.

Building a Worldwide Market for End Grain Wood from National Forest Service Lands

David Old was raised on the Viveash Ranch, northeast of Santa Fe, NM. In the 1990s, Old decided to leave a prosperous career in helicopter and aircraft sales and head back to the ranch with his wife to raise their family. However, his vision of continuing to grow the Old family's business, which began as a small sawmill operation in the 1930s, might never have been fully realized.

In 2000—and again in 2013—the family witnessed and fought the Viveash and Tres Lagunas fires, which ultimately consumed thousands of acres of the ranch's forested lands. Rather than be deterred, the family embraced their circumstances. With mountains of fire-

burned trees all around them, they immediately began exploring ways to reclaim the charred timber.

Today, Old Wood, LLC, is a thriving enterprise, producing export-grade end grain wood products from national forests that follow the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for commercial, industrial, and residential applications in the United States and throughout the world.

Embracing End Grain Wood

End grain wood, which shows the growth rings of trees, can be used in a variety of applications, including flooring tiles, wall coverings, and beams. Beyond its inherent beauty, Old explains that the surface of end grain wood is incredibly durable. "On the Janka hardness scale [the standard for gauging a species' ability to tolerate denting and normal wear], the rating of the end grain pine that we use was 1,380," he says. This rating is comparable to that of northern red oak, considered the industry benchmark. Further,

end grain products are often the best use for the lowest grade and fire-reclaimed wood that might otherwise be abandoned.

Old Wood uses ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, white fir, pinion, mesquite, and other species from regional forest management efforts. Ninety-eight percent of the wood they purchase comes from national forest lands, reflecting Old Wood's priorities and its commitment to preserving old and large trees.

Collaboration in Marketing Sustainable Wood Products

Old credits the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, through its Wood Innovations Grants and Collaborative Forest Restoration programs, in assisting Old Wood to reach the marketplace. One such award, totaling more than \$423,000 in grant and cooperative funding, is helping the company develop install-ready end grain panels.

In addition to the Forest Service, Old Wood partners include the USDA's Four Forest Restoration Initiative on the national forests around the Grand Canyon, the Alamo and Ramah Navajo Tribes, Walatowa Timber Industries, and operators throughout New Mexico, Colorado, and Arizona. The company has employed up to 34 individuals and averages 20 year-round employees.

Old Wood has participated in national and international exhibitions and their designs are incorporated in buildings as close as Santa Fe and Aspen, and as far away as Kuwait City and the Republic of Singapore. However, Old says that the company has struggled to get third-party certified timber, costing them a number of significant projects. He explains that these projects prohibit the use of wood from the company's sources.

Despite this barrier, Old says his company is dedicated to the sustainability, improvement, and proper utilization of our forests. "We hope that our model will build well-equipped, trained local capacity in creating global markets for scientifically, socially, and ecologically planned microforest industries", he says.

More information on Old Wood can be found on the company's website at oldwood.us and on Facebook at facebook.com/oldwoodflooring.

More Information

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FAST FACTS

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Old Wood's founder and CEO, David Old, during harvesting of fire-reclaimed timber. Courtesy photo provided by Old Wood, LLC.