



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Debt Ratings Disfavor Weyerhaeuser and Plum Creek; New Course Details Timber Growing Equities

ATHENS, GEORGIA – September 11, 2009 – Debt ratings provide an incomplete picture of the business models associated with timberland-owning firms. Fitch downgraded Weyerhaeuser's debt to below investment grade on September 3<sup>rd</sup> to BB+ from BBB-, citing negative free cash flow, looming debt maturities in 2012, and poor prospects in the housing and lumber markets. Plum Creek, a publicly-traded timber-growing real estate investment trust (REIT), maintained its investment grade BBB- debt ratings with sufficient liquidity on hand to survive the recession. Regardless, Fitch maintains a negative outlook for Plum Creek. To help investors, Forisk Consulting offers a new course, "Investing in Timber REITs," that teaches frameworks for valuing the assets and evaluating the cash flows of publicly-traded timber REITs.

Timber REIT investment analysis benefits from a quantitative perspective on the market values and expected cash flows unique to timberland assets. In addition, a supportable methodology for evaluating relative performance is critical. Why? Because timber REITs represent but one avenue for investors interested in adding timberlands to their investment portfolios. Alternatives included ETFs, direct timberland ownership, indirect ownership through commingled funds, and C-corporations. However, the investment characteristics, portfolio benefits, and participation requirements vary. For example, the Forisk Timber REIT Index (FTR Index), a market cap weighted index of public timber REITs, shows a 5.5% year-to-date return for the asset class.

"Investing in Timber REITs" details approaches to help analysts and investors compare timberland investment vehicles, evaluate timber REIT operating performance, and assess relative financial performance with non-timber asset classes. In addition, the course discusses investment theses associated with inflation hedging, mergers and acquisitions (M&A), and short selling. To learn more about the Atlanta-based "Investing in Timber REITs" on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, visit [www.forisk.com](http://www.forisk.com) and click on "Continuing Education."

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About Forisk Consulting: Forisk provides research, consulting, and educational services to operating, finance and strategy executives and analysts making decisions associated with timber REITs, timberlands, and wood-using bioenergy and manufacturing facilities.

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