WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A matting agent comprising:

silica particles having (i) a particle surface, and (ii) a total pore volume of from 0.40 cubic centimeters per gram (cc/gm) to 2.20 cc/gm, as determined by Barrett-Joyner-Halenda (BJH) method; and

greater than 31.0 weight percent (wt%), based on a total weight of said silica particles, of (i) one or more waxes, (ii) one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii) coated on said particle surface forming coated silica particles.

2. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said silica particles comprise 31.0 wt% to 50.0 wt%, based on a total weight of said silica particles, of (i) said one or more waxes, (ii) said one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii) on said particle surface.

3. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said silica particles comprise silica gel, precipitated silica, or fumed silica particles.

4. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said silica particles have a total pore volume of from 1.50 cc/gm to 2.20 cc/gm.

5. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein the silica particles have a BET particle surface area of at least 100 m^2/g up to 1500 m^2/g, or greater.

6. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said coated silica particles have an average particle size of from 1.0 micron (µm) to 50 µm.

7. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said coated particles comprise said one or more waxes, wherein said one or more waxes comprise a hydrocarbon wax, a paraffin wax, a polyethylene wax, a polypropylene wax, a plant wax, an animal wax, or any combination thereof.

8. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said coated particles comprise one or more polymers, wherein said one or more polymers comprise polydiene, vulcanized polydiene, polyacrylamide, polyvinyl polypyrrolidone, cellulose acetate butyrate, or any combination thereof.

9. The matting agent of claim 1, wherein said coated particles are free-flowing particles.

10. The matting agent of claim 1,

when incorporated into a coating composition and applied onto a substrate, enables the coating composition to form a film having a film clarity ΔL* of less than 7.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, or

when incorporated into a coating composition and applied onto a substrate, enables the coating composition to exhibit a water damage 24 hr ΔL* of less than 5.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, or

when incorporated into a coating composition and applied onto a substrate, enables the coating composition to exhibit a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 1 hr ΔL* of less than 8.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, or

when incorporated into a coating composition and applied onto a substrate, enables the coating composition to exhibit a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 4 hr ΔL* of less than 16.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, or

when incorporated into a coating composition and applied onto a substrate, enables the coating composition to exhibit (i) a film clarity ΔL* of less than 7.0 units, (ii) exhibits a water damage 24 hr ΔL* of less than 4.0 units, (iii) a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 1 hr ΔL* of less than 8.0 units, and (iv) a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 4 hr ΔL* of less than 10.0 units, all measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter.

11. A method of preparing the matting agent of claim 1, said method comprising:

contacting the silica particles with (i) the one or more waxes, (ii) the one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii) so as to form the coated silica particles.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein said contacting step comprises:

dissolving (i) the one or more waxes, (ii) the one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii) in a solvent to form a suspension or dispersion;

incorporating the silica particles into the suspension or dispersion; and

removing the solvent from the suspension or dispersion to form the coated silica particles,

or wherein said contacting step comprises:

melting (i) the one or more waxes, (ii) the one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii) to form a liquid coating; and

incorporating the silica particles into the liquid coating to form the coated silica particles,

or wherein said contacting step comprises:

simultaneously mixing or milling (a)(i) the one or more waxes, (ii) the one or more polymers, or (iii) any combination of (i) and (ii), and (b) the silica particles with heat to form the coated silica particles.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

adding elemental sulfur, a vulcanization promoter, or both to the one or more polymers, wherein the vulcanization promoter comprises elemental sulfur and/or butyl zimate.

14. The method of claim 12 or 13, further comprising:

forming coated silica particles having a first particle size of less than 500 μm;

heat treating the coated silica particles at an elevated temperature for a heat treatment period of time;

allowing the heat-treated coated silica particles to cool; and

milling the heat-treated coated silica particles so as to result in a final particle size of less than or equal to 45 μm,

wherein when the one or more waxes are present, the elevated temperature ranges from 100ºC to 130ºC, and the heat treatment period of time ranges from 1.0 hr to 1.5 hr, or

wherein when the one or more polymers are present, the elevated temperature ranges from 90ºC to 100ºC, and the heat treatment period of time ranges from 2.5 hr to 3.5 hr.

15. A coating composition comprising the matting agent of any one of claims 1, 3, 7, and 8, wherein said composition comprises an aqueous composition.

16. A substrate coated with the coating composition of claim 15, wherein said substrate comprises a wood substrate.

17. A method of improving chemical resistance, thermal stress resistance, weather resistance, film clarity, or any combination thereof, of a waterborne composition applied to a wood substrate, said method comprising:

incorporating the matting agent of claim 1 into the coating composition;

applying the coating composition onto at least one surface of a wood substrate to form a coating; and

drying the coating to form a film on the at least one surface of the wood substrate.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the film exhibits a film clarity ΔL* of less than 7.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, and/or

wherein the film exhibits a water damage 24 hr ΔL* of less than 5.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, and/or

wherein the film exhibits a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 1 hr ΔL* of less than 8.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, and/or

wherein the film exhibits a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 4 hr ΔL* of less than 16.0 units as measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter, and/or

wherein the film exhibits (i) a film clarity ΔL* of less than 7.0 units, (ii) exhibits a water damage 24 hr ΔL* of less than 4.0 units, (iii) a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 1 hr ΔL* of less than 8.0 units, and (iv) a 50/50 water/ethanol damage 4 hr ΔL* of less than 10.0 units, all measured using a portable Spectro-Guide 45/0 colorimeter.