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Standing Firm

By John O’Brien, Managing Editor
jobrien@paperage.com

Firm, steadfast, unwavering – just a few synonymous terms for Resolute — as in Resolute Forest Products – a company that has certainly lived up to its name recently in regards to a defamation lawsuit it filed against Greenpeace Canada. The case is pending in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice and a key ruling may take place prior to the publication of this issue of PaperAge.

Resolute alleges that Greenpeace wrongfully informed Resolute’s customers, investors and stakeholders that the company improperly harvested or sourced materials in Canada’s boreal forest, and that these falsehoods caused Resolute to suffer damages. Resolute also alleges that Greenpeace has continuously and intentionally interfered with Resolute’s economic relations by threatening and intimidating its customers.

Resolute seeks general damages of $5 million and punitive damages of $2 million.

Push came to shove in December of 2012 when Greenpeace Canada alleged that Resolute was building roads and logging in areas of Quebec’s Montagnes Blanches region – a region that under the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) is off limits. Greenpeace then published videos and photos it claimed were tagged with GPS data showing the logging taking place on lands covered by the agreement. Resolute responded that this was not the case.

Three months later, in March of 2013, Greenpeace Canada retracted its claims. At that time Stephanie Goodwin, senior forestry campaigner for Greenpeace Canada, said the ENGO (environmental non-governmental organization) had erred in its report by relying on “inaccurate maps” in its analysis. Despite all of this and to this day, Greenpeace has continued to promote those same claims against Resolute and included a few others for good measure.

Interestingly, it seems as though the factions from all aspects surrounding the health and management of the Boreal Forest disagree with Greenpeace. Alan S. Hale of The Daily Press (Timmins, northeastern Ontario) on Aug. 11, 2015 wrote, “Mayors from the member communities of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) met with representatives of communities in Northern Quebec, as well as the forestry industry and First Nations in Timmins [on the afternoon of August 11.] The diverse group came together to discuss ways to counter the messaging of environmentalist groups about forest industry practices. Much of the discussion revolved around one group in particular: Greenpeace, which the Ontario mayors have already gone so far as to accuse of ‘eco-terrorism.’”

FONOM president Al Spacek said, “We decided as communities, industry stakeholders, and First Nations to talk about what the current issues are that affect us in Northern Ontario where we are under attack by environmental groups. We feel strongly that it is a campaign of misinformation about how we conduct forestry in Northern Ontario. We know we adhere to the highest Canadian and provincial standards.”

Hale noted that FONOM tried to make arrangements for a representative from Greenpeace to attend the meeting, but nothing came of the invitation. Resolute’s CEO, Richard Garneau, however, found the time to be there.

Greenpeace continues to move environmental goalposts, and Resolute had the temerity to stand up and say ‘enough is enough.’ Good for them and their CEO.

I understand and appreciate the global mission of Greenpeace, but in this case its reckless actions, irresponsible conduct, and refusal to be held accountable are, well; precisely the iniquities the ENGO is supposed to be fighting against.
If you had to choose a kaolin supplier based on one quality, which would you choose?

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NORTH AMERICA

Glatfelter to Locate New Manufacturing Facility in Arkansas

Glatfelter announced that it is locating a new manufacturing facility in Fort Smith, Arkansas, subject to the approval of the Fort Smith Board of Directors and closing on the purchase of the former Mitsubishi Power Systems building located in Chaffee Crossing.

Glatfelter will create up to 83 manufacturing jobs at the new facility with a total capital investment of approximately $80 million.

Glatfelter’s new Fort Smith facility will supply products to a variety of customers, including those who support the broader wipes and hygiene markets.

“We are truly excited to partner with the people of Fort Smith and Arkansas because we know that investing here makes great business sense for our company,” said Chris Astley, president of Glatfelter’s Advanced Airlaid Materials Business Unit and a senior vice president of Glatfelter. “Locating here benefits our business in a number of ways. It will enable us to expand our capacity to meet our customers’ growing demand for our advanced airlaid products, provide us with closer proximity to key suppliers and customers, and link us to highly efficient transportation routes across the South.”

Glatfelter expects to bring the facility on line in late 2017.

UPM to Close Madison Paper Industries by End-May

UPM-Kymmene Inc. and Northern SC Paper Corp. announced on March 14 the dissolution of their partnership, Madison Paper Industries, located in Madison, Maine. As a result, the partnership’s paper business will end and paper production at the mill is expected to conclude by the end of May at the latest.

Hydro power assets located at the mill site will be sold, UPM said.

The Madison mill has the capacity to produce 195,000 tons per year of supercalendered (SC) paper and has approximately 214 employees located at the mill site.

According to UPM, some employees will remain beyond May to maintain buildings, operate the hydro generating facilities and support activities related to the closing.

“Despite everyone’s best efforts, the difficult decision has been made to cease paper production at Madison,” said Ruud van den Berg, Senior Vice President of UPM Paper ENA (Europe & North America). “Demand for SC papers declined significantly in 2015 and the decline is expected to continue. The Madison mill is not cost-competitive and has lost a significant amount of sales in the recent past.”

Georgia-Pacific Corrugated Acquires Excel Displays & Packaging

Georgia-Pacific has acquired Excel Displays & Packaging, based in Aurora, Illinois. The acquisition includes a state-of-the-art converting plant in Aurora; sales and design office in Bentonville, Arkansas; and a minority interest in Five Star Sheets sheet feeder consortium in New Carlisle, Indiana.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

“This acquisition supports our commitment to help our customers build their brands by bringing new capability in point-of-purchase displays, digital print capability that complements our current print offering, and an additional converting plant,” said Billy Medof, President – GP Corrugated.

Established 1989, Excel is a designer and manufacturer of point-of-purchase displays, high-graphic retail packaging, in-store signage and industrial packaging. The approximately 120 employees are now part of Georgia-Pacific.

Verso Receives Court OK to Continue Normal Business Operations

Verso Corp. in early-March received final approval from the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in the District of Delaware for a variety of first day motions related to its voluntary restructuring under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code. These final orders issued by the court will allow Verso to continue operating its business in the ordinary course as it restructures its balance sheet.

“With the approval of our first day motions, including the authorization of up to $600 million in debtor-in-possession (DIP) financing, Verso has transitioned smoothly into the Chapter 11 process,” said Verso President and CEO David J. Paterson.

“As we move forward with our efforts to strengthen Verso’s balance sheet and position the company for long-term success, the court’s approval of these first day motions provides confidence that Verso has the ability to continue operating our business as usual throughout the restructuring process.”
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**SOUTH AMERICA**

**Klabin Produces First Pulp Bale at New Puma Unit in Brazil**

Klabin recently started-up its new pulp mill in Ortigueira, Paraná, Brazil and produced the first pulp bale at the “Puma Unit” on March 4.

Construction of the pulp mill was completed in 24 months and on budget, Klabin said.

Total investment in the project was R$8.5 billion, which included all facilities, taxes and contractual corrections.

The new mill holds Chain of Custody certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC-C129105).

According to Klabin, the Puma Unit will have the capacity to produce 1.5 million tons of pulp, with 1.1 million tons of bleached hardwood pulp (eucalyptus) and 400,000 tons of bleached softwood pulp (pine), a portion of which will be converted into fluff pulp.

More than 90% of the new mill’s pulp production has already been sold, Klabin added.

Klabin’s hardwood pulp is marketed under the brand LyptusCel, while its softwood pulp is known as PineCel.

Klabin’s fluff pulp, PineFluff, will serve the domestic market — a market that currently is an importer of this grade of pulp.

**Oji to Increase Thermal Paper Production in Brazil**

Oji Holdings Corp. announced that its subsidiary Oji Imaging Media Co. will invest about USD 9 million to increase thermal paper production at Oji Papeis Especiais Ltda. in Piracicaba, Sao Paulo, Brazil. The mill currently produces thermal and carbonless paper.

In a press release, Oji said, “Brazil’s economy continues to be in a recession, but thermal paper consumption continues to be at a stable growth. The reason of this growth is because of major market for thermal paper which is related to POS system and logistics continues to grow. These applications are forecasted to grow even more in the South America region including of course the domestic market in Brazil.”

Currently, Oji Papeis Especiais’ production capacity is 120,000 tons per year of specialty papers (thermal and carbonless), and the mill operates two thermal coaters. However, as a result of the announced expansion plans, mill’s production capacity will increase by 10% in order to meet the forecasted growth in the thermal paper market in Brazil.

Oji expects to complete the expansion project in July of 2017.

**Sonoco Expands Fiber Certification Program to Brazil and Mexico**

Sonoco announced that it has expanded its fiber certification program into Brazil and Mexico, as of mid-February 2016.

“Although most of the raw material used in our mills is 100 percent recycled fiber, this certification also requires that Sonoco select suppliers of virgin fiber and virgin fiber components that avoid trading or sourcing raw material that is: a) illegally harvested, b) harvested in violation of traditional and civil rights and c) harvested where global conservation priorities are threatened,” the company said in a press release.

In Brazil, Sonoco’s paper mill in Londrina and rigid paper converting operation in Araras were both chain-of-custody certified to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC).

In Mexico, its Atizapan paper mill and Mexico City rigid paper converting operation were also chain-of-custody certified to the FSC and PEFC, plus the North American-based Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

**EUROPE**

**Metsä Board Starts-up New Folding Boxboard Machine at Husum**

Metsä Board in February started up a new folding boxboard production line at its Husum mill in Sweden. The company said that it is aiming the 400,000 tons per year volume of the production line at the Americas, as well as at food service end-uses such as cups, plates and trays globally.

“Metsä Board is well-known for its high-quality, lightweight folding boxboards, used widely in packaging globally. Thanks to the new production line and our recent product development, we are now able to respond to food service packaging requirements and demand better than ever before,” said CEO Mika Joukio.

According to Metsä Board, the folding boxboard machine BM1, supplied by Valmet, is the most significant part of the EUR 170 million investment program carried out at the Husum mill site. As part of the program, enhancements have also been made at the pulp mill and the mill site’s own port. As a whole, this investment program completes the company’s transformation process to a pure paperboard company.

Last November, Metsä Board also announced investing an additional EUR 38 million in a new extrusion coating line and related infrastructure in Husum. Start-up for this line is expected at the beginning of 2017.

The Husum mill employs 780 people and has an annual capacity to produce 400,000 tonnes of folding boxboard; 300,000 tonnes of linerboard; 750,000 tonnes of bleached kraft pulp.
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EUROPE

Holmen to Sell Newsprint Mill in Madrid to International Paper

Holmen has agreed to sell a paper mill in Madrid, Spain, including energy and recycled paper operations, to International Paper. Currently, the mill produces newsprint.

According to Holmen, IP will continue to produce newsprint at the mill until the second half of 2017, then begin a grade conversion project for the production of recycled containerboard. During this period, Holmen will sell newsprint produced at the mill to its customers.

“This transaction allows us to focus on developing our successful specialty paper strategy at our Swedish mills,” said Henrik Sjölund, CEO and President of Holmen.

Included in the deal is the recycled paper collector Cartón y Papel Reciclado S.A. (Carpa) and Holmen’s 50% shareholding in the energy producer Peninsular Cogeneración S.A.

The deal is subject to regulatory approval.

WEPA Group to Install New Tissue Machine in Poland

WEPA announced that it will invest about EUR 30 million to install a new tissue machine at the group’s Piechowice plant in Poland.

Toscotec has also been selected to be the supplier of the new machine. The scope of supply includes a stock preparation system for virgin pulp, an AHEAD 2.0S tissue machine, various auxiliary units, electrification and control system.

According to WEPA, the new machine is designed for 2,200 metres/minute at a working width of 2.8 metres, and will have an annual capacity of 32,000 tons of tissue paper.

The new plant will produce high quality, super soft toilet paper and will be able to handle virgin pulp as well as recycled fiber as a raw material.

Commissioning of the new paper machine is scheduled for the first quarter of 2017.

With 11 plants in Europe, the WEPA Group manufactures high quality tissue and towel paper.

Stora Enso Investing EUR 63 Million in Consumer Board and Biomaterials Operations

Stora Enso announced that it is investing a total of approximately EUR 63 million to further improve competitiveness in strategic growth areas in China and Sweden in the Consumer Board and Biomaterials divisions.

Stora Enso will invest EUR 31 million in a new polyethylene (PE) coating line in the new consumer board mill in Beihai, China. The Beihai Mill is expected to be in operation during the second quarter of 2016.

Stora Enso said the investment will enhance its strategy for profitable growth and supports competitiveness by enabling short lead-times and full quality control for PE-coated prime Food Service Board (FSB). The project is expected to be completed in mid-2017.

Stora Enso is also investing EUR 16 million in a new chemical plant at its consumer board mill in Skoghall, Sweden to further improve the environmental performance of the mill. The investment is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

In the biomaterials division, Stora Enso is investing EUR 16 million to improve the environmental performance by reducing sulphur emissions of its mill in Skutskär, Sweden. The investment is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.
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EUROPE

Södra to Invest SEK 1 Billion in Mörrum Pulp Mill Project

Södra announced that it will invest SEK 1 billion in an upgrade project at the company’s pulp mill in Mörrum, Sweden. The investment is the second stage of a long-term initiative at Södra Cell Mörrum and will increase the mill’s capacity by 45,000 tonnes per year, bringing the total production of paper and dissolving pulp to 470,000 tonnes.

According to Södra, the project includes a new evaporator, and a modernization of the brown stock washing system in the dissolving pulp line, where pulp for textile uses is produced. A new evaporator will make it possible to increase the production rate, as well as deliveries of energy products, such as electricity, district heating and biofuels, the company explained.

“The investment will allow us to meet customer demands for both paper and dissolving pulp,” Sandberg said. “Our facility at Mörrum produces high-grade pulp with unique properties. We will now be able to offer higher volumes of these sought-after products to the market.”

The project will begin in spring 2016 and is scheduled for completion by November 2017.

ASIA

International Paper to Sell Asian Corrugated Packaging Business

International Paper has entered into a definitive agreement to sell its corrugated packaging business in China and Southeast Asia to Xiamen Bridge Hexing Equity Investment Partnership Enterprise.

IP’s corrugated packaging business in Asia has 18 plants and a workforce of approximately 3,000 employees.

Under terms of the deal, International Paper will receive a total of approximately RMB 1 billion (approximately US$150 million at current exchange rate), subject to post-closing adjustments and other payments, including the buyer’s assumption of the liability for loans of approximately US$50 million to be paid to International Paper within six months of closing of the sale.

The transaction is expected to be completed in the next few months, subject to satisfaction of closing conditions, including obtaining required governmental approvals.

Temperature, Time Testing Proves Corrugation Process Destroys Bacteria

A new study shows the process of combining linerboard and medium to make corrugated packaging is sufficient to destroy common food pathogens, effectively meeting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) requirements for chemical sanitizers.

The laboratory study, conducted by NSF International under the direction of Maryann Sanders, senior regulatory specialist and microbiologist at Haley & Aldrich, Inc. and sponsored by the Corrugated Packaging Alliance (CPA), evaluated both temperature and time to determine if typical corrugated manufacturing processes, which combine a fluted or arched layer of paper sandwiched between two smooth layers, were sufficient for sanitization.

The study employed a temperature and time profile representative of manufacturing practices where linerboard reaches temperatures of 180 – 200 degrees Fahrenheit for approximately nine seconds. That profile was attained in the laboratory by placing corrugated material between two one-inch thick, pre-heated aluminum plates for the specified time. Under these conditions, linerboard contaminated with a cocktail of various thermotolerant organisms, including both E. coli and Salmonella spp., reached the specified temperature for the identified time resulting in a five-log reduction in the number of organisms present on the liner surface, effectively meeting the EPA’s defined requirement for sanitization.

“This research confirms what we have known for decades,” said CPA Executive Director Dennis Colley. “The corrugation process has sufficient temperatures and dwell time to kill microbes. Clean boxes have been consistently verified at box plants and at customer locations.”

This study is the latest in a line of both field and laboratory-based research studies performed over the past several years demonstrating the cleanliness of single-use corrugated packaging. A study conducted from 2010 – 2014 showed that over 400 microbiological test results collected from 40 paper and box facilities all met acceptable standards for clean packaging.

Another study released in February 2015 revealed that 100 percent of corrugated boxes from six different box suppliers tested at six different customer locations in three different U.S. regions met standards for clean packaging.

For more information about the cleanliness of corrugated packaging, visit: www.corrugated.org.
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Kemira to Supply Chemical Technology to Kotkamills

Kemira has been awarded a start-up contract in the “Flying Eagle” project at Kotkamills in Kotka, Finland. The project involves the grade conversion of PM2 (printing paper machine) to produce 400,000 tons per year of recyclable folding boxboard and barrier board grades.

Kemira will supply the start-up with sizing, retention and drainage, board hygiene, and microbe control technologies.

“Kemira is proud to have the opportunity to participate in the new Kotkamills board machine start-up,” said Kimmo Strengell, Marketing Manager, Strength & Tissue Additives, Pulp & Paper EMEA. “With our expertise, service capability and broad portfolio of board making chemistries, we are able to support Kotkamills in reaching the desired quality and productivity targets of the new board grade.”

Kemira noted that its microbe control programs ensure hygienic quality of the food service board. Hygienic quality control is critical for FSB machines — if the final board doesn’t meet the expected hygienic quality standards, converters can reject the whole production. Optimal retention and drainage programs are a prerequisite for improved runnability, productivity and board quality. Kemira sizing technologies are applied to control liquid resistance and to improve the printability of the board.

The repurposed machine is scheduled to come on stream in June 2016.

Voith to Supply Suzano with Two Tissue Machines

Voith said that it has received orders for the delivery of two new tissue machines to Suzano Papel e Celulose. The machines will be installed at Suzano’s Imperatriz and Mucuri mills in northeast Brazil.

The machine to be located in Imperatriz is scheduled for start-up in June 2017, whereas the machine designated for Mucuri is expected to go on-line in September 2017.

Voith will be responsible for supplying the complete tissue lines, which will be equipped with NipcoFlex T shoe presses and the EcoChange system to allow a reliable reel spool change.

The scope of Voith’s supply also all auxiliary equipment and services.

When operational, each tissue machine will have a manufacturing capacity of nearly 220 metric tons of paper daily, at a speed of 2,000 meters per minute.

Valmet to Supply Pro-Gest with New Containerboard Machine in Italy

Valmet will supply an OptiConcept M containerboard production line and a mill-wide Valmet DNA automation system to Pro-Gest S.p.a. for the company’s new Mantova site in Italy. The new production line is planned to produce high-quality, lightweight recycled containerboard.

The value of an order of this type is typically around EUR 60-80 million, Valmet said.

The new machine will have a width of 7.6 metres (reel) with an installed capacity of 550,000 tons per year.

An extensive machine clothing package for start-up is also included in the delivery, Valmet said.

Progressive Converting Celebrates 25 Years of Growth

Wisconsin-based Pro-Con announced that 2016 marks its 25th year of operation. The company was founded by an entrepreneurial group of printing professionals who shared an understanding of paper, printing and the demands of mills. Their vision was to offer fast turnarounds of high quality sheeted paper and board.

Pro-Con set up shop in 1991 with a sheeter in Neenah, Wisconsin, and within two years had outgrown the Neenah facility and moved to its current location in Appleton.

In 1996, Pro-Con opened a plant in Hazleton, Appalachia, which was followed by a third facility in Reno, Nevada in 1998. In 2006, Pro-Con relocated the Reno plant to Pomona, California to better serve the print market.

In 2009, the company opened a rewinding facility in Raphine, Virginia, and then another rewinding facility in New Hope, Minnesota in 2010.

Today Pro-Con operates five facilities with a combined 1.2 million square feet of manufacturing, warehouse and distribution space that include over 300,000 tons of sheeting capacity and 176,000 tons of rewinding capacity. The company offers a full range of packaging capabilities from cutsize and digital to folio and large format. To learn more, visit: www.pro-con.net.
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Case Paper Company announced that Kim Guarnaccia has joined the company as Marketing Director. Guarnaccia comes to Case Paper from the Markens Group, where she served as the director of marketing and communications primarily for the Paperboard Packaging Council (PPC).

Catalyst Paper has appointed Sean Curran as Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing, effective April 18. He replaces Jim Bayles, who retired on April 1. Curran was formerly the Vice President, Sales & Marketing with Canfor.

Glatfelter announced that Samuel L. Hillard joined the company as Vice President, Corporate Development & Strategy. Hillard most recently served as Vice President – Business Development with Dover Corporation.

International Forest Products said that Bill MacDevette has joined the company as Director of Sales for its Recovered Fiber Division. MacDevette joins IPF with more than 40 years of experience in the forest products industry.

Monadnock Paper Mills announced that William Peterson has joined the company as Vice President of Human Resources. He replaces Joe Fletcher, who retires after 23 years of service to Monadnock. Peterson has many years in human resources and previously worked for Boise Cascade, MeadWestvaco, Twin Rivers Paper, and most recently Lincoln Paper and Tissue.

PaperWorks Industries announced two senior-level promotions: Karl Broderick has been named Vice President of Sales and Peter Jesus will now be Vice President of Packaging Development and Support Services. Previously, both Broderick and Jesus held positions with Boehmer Box Company, which was recently acquired by PaperWorks.

Rottneros has named Lennart Eberleh as its new President and Chief Executive Officer. Eberleh, who will join Rottneros no later than October 1, 2016, currently serves as head of the Corrugated Solutions business for BillerudKorsnäs. Per Lundeen, acting President and CEO, will continue as CEO until Eberleh takes over the position.

Södra has appointed its CFO, Jörgen Lindquist, as interim President of Södra Wood, replacing Håkan Svensson. Lindquist will serve as the interim Business Area President in addition to his role as the CFO.

UPM has appointed Winfried Schaur as Executive Vice President, UPM Paper ENA (Europe & North America). Schaur has served as Senior Vice President responsible for Newspaper publishing business unit within UPM Paper ENA since 2013. UPM also appointed Anu Ahola as Senior Vice President responsible for SBU Newspaper Publishing, UPM Paper ENA. Ahola previously held the position of Senior Vice President responsible for Strategy & Energy within UPM Paper ENA.

WestRock has named Shan Cooper as Chief Supply Chain and Technology Officer. Cooper was recently vice president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company and general manager of its Marietta, Georgia facility.

Fisher International has appointed Marko Summanen to lead its European business development. Previously, Summanen held the position of Services Director at Valmet.

The American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA) has elected Packaging Corp. of America (PCA) Chairman and CEO Mark Kowlzan as the new AF&PA Board chairman for 2016. Kowlzan is a 35-year industry veteran and has been with PCA since 1996. He has served as PCA’s CEO since 2010 and assumed his role as PCA board chairman in January.
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APRIL 26-29, 2016
PPC Spring Outlook and Strategies Meeting
Paperboard Packaging Council (PPC)
Miami Marriott Biscayne Bay
Miami, Florida, USA
www.paperbox.org

MAY 1-4, 2016
International Pulp Week
Pulp and Paper Products Council
Fairmont Hotel Vancouver
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
www.internationalpulpweek.com

MAY 4, 2016
Global Forest & Paper Industry Conference
PwC
Hotel Vancouver
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
www.pwc.com

MAY 15-18, 2016
PaperCon 2016
TAPPI
Duke Energy Convention Center
Cincinnati, Ohio, USA
www.papercon.com

JUNE 5-8, 2016
PPSA Annual Safety Conference
Pulp and Paper Safety Association
The Battle House Renaissance
Mobile, Alabama, USA
www.ppsa.org

JUNE 8-10, 2016
PACWEST Conference
Western and Pacific Coast
PAPTAC Branches
The Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge
Jasper, Alberta, Canada
www.pacwestcon.net

JUNE 13-16, 2016
International Conference – Nanotechnology for Renewable Materials
TAPPI
World Trade Center of Grenoble
Grenoble, France
www.tappi.org

SEPTEMBER 18-22, 2016
Pulp and Paper Reliability and Maintenance Conference
IDCON
Durham Convention Center
Durham, North Carolina, USA
www.pprm.net

SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2016
Specialty Papers US 2016
TAPPI and Smithers Pira
Chicago, Illinois, USA
www.specialtypaperconference.com

OCTOBER 4-6, 2016
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The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) on Feb. 23 released the preliminary results of a survey of paper mill buyers in North America who are responsible for sourcing recovered fiber for their paper mills. The buyers provided valuable insight in regards to their thoughts and experiences with materials from mixed waste processing centers.

ISRI pointed out that mixed waste processing centers inform their residential customers that there is no need to separate recyclables from solid waste (including organics) prior to collection, claiming that the valuable recyclables will be successfully separated in a Material Recovery Facility (MRF)-like environment post-collection.

While there have been other recent studies about mixed waste processing centers, this is the first known study that exclusively solicited views of recovered paper buyers regarding their opinions and views about the ability to successfully use the recyclables sorted from such “one-bin” programs.

“We gained an incredible amount of learning from the survey participants regarding their experiences and preferences concerning the procurement of recovered fiber for their paper mills,” said Robin Wiener, President of ISRI.

“In 2014, ISRI issued a policy statement discouraging the use of one-bin collection systems due to anecdotal statements and strong feelings from our member companies regarding the degradation in quality of recyclables recovered from such systems, but it wasn’t until the completion of this survey that we finally gleaned hard data from paper mills about the poor quality and contamination that they are actually experiencing, and the resulting impact on their purchasing and sourcing decisions.

“It is clear from this study that in communities where mixed-waste processing systems are put in place, the recycling of paper is significantly diminished, both in quality and quantity.”

– Robin Wiener, President of ISRI.
1 to 6 mills, and 49% of respondents purchase material in the range of more than 100,000 tons of recovered fiber per year, but less than 500,000 tons of recovered fiber per year.

- Of the respondents, 25% purchase “some” material from dirty MRFs, but these mills purchase less than 10% of their required tonnage from mixed waste processing centers.

- Of those that purchase recovered fiber from mixed waste processing centers, 70% find the quality to be WORSE than most other recovered paper, and 90% of those mill buyers have had to DOWNGRADE or REJECT the paper from the mixed waste processing centers, at a higher rate than recovered paper from “regular” MRFs.

- 62%, or nearly 2/3 of those surveyed feel that ISRI specs should contain a statement as part of the paper specifications that states: “paper recovered from one-bin programs, separated in mixed-waste processing centers, is not fit for use in USA paper mills.”

- Of the 75% of respondents who do not purchase recovered fiber from mixed waste processing centers, the top 8 reasons given, for NOT purchasing it, were as follows:
  1. Contamination;
  2. Odor;
  3. Low Quality;
  4. Exhibit a higher level of prohibitives and Outthrows versus what is acceptable;
  5. Internal quality standards prevent purchasing;
  6. Too risky;
  7. Excessive moisture; and
  8. Quality will not meet the mills’ customers’ needs.

The survey was conducted confidentially via an online survey to North American paper mill buyers between January 11 and January 31, 2016. An independent, third-party research firm was utilized to conduct the survey. In order to achieve a high response rate, the survey was limited to less than 10 critical questions. All major mill groups using recovered paper in North America were invited to participate in the survey, both members, as well as non-members of ISRI.

The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc. (ISRI) is the Voice of the Recycling Industry™. ISRI represents more than 1,600 companies in 21 chapters nationwide that process, broker and industrially consume scrap commodities, including metals, paper, plastics, glass, rubber, electronics and textiles. To learn more, please visit: www.isri.org.

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While Benjamin Franklin’s old adage – “Nothing is certain except for death and taxes” – holds true, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has made some big changes in how U.S. citizens must complete the tax process.

The IRS has plans to move to widespread electronic communication in the next five years. A “government of the people” should, above all others, know and meet the needs of its constituents. Many Americans today lack computer skills, have concerns about online security, and prefer to have paper documentation of transactions. The rush to digitize government interaction is shortsighted and disenfranchises too many Americans, with 30 percent of American adults without broadband access at home. For citizens over 65, this number rises to 53 percent, and 45 percent of seniors do not even own a computer. And interestingly, computer savvy Millennials are, according to recent surveys, more likely to file their taxes on paper than any other age group.

In the midst of completing the necessary and onerous tax process, people should be able to choose the manner in which they receive information and services from the federal government. The American Forest & Paper Association has been working with members of Congress, as well as Consumers for Paper Options, to protect the right of all U.S. citizens to have access to paper.

For the 2014 tax year, the IRS announced that it will no longer mail tax forms to U.S. taxpayers. In addition, the IRS discontinued sending the Tax Instruction Guide for individuals (Publication 17) to individual filers through the mail, and stopped equipping libraries or post offices with the booklet for distribution, as it has done in the past. Publication 17 is a critical resource for every American who files his or her own tax returns. The only place to find the instructions on paper is through the Government Printing Office, where a hard copy version can be ordered for $23.

Our country expects its citizens to fulfill their obligation of filing annual taxes. In turn, our government has a responsibility to supply the necessary information in a manner that people can access, which must include paper.

Nina E. Olson leads the Taxpayer Advocate Service and, in her appointed position as the National Taxpayer Advocate, is required by statute to report to the U.S. Congress twice a year. In her most recent National Taxpayer Advocate report to Congress, Olson wrote, “Based on our internal discussions with IRS officials, we have been left with the distinct impression that the IRS’s ultimate goal is ‘to get out of the business of talking with taxpayers.’”
Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI) has taken a lead in protecting taxpayers’ right to choose paper communication. He has introduced a bill, the Personal Access to Paper Election Reform (PAPER) Act, to require the IRS to mail paper forms to any individual who filed a paper return for the preceding taxable year.

Congressman Benishek has also been active in the media, calling for the reinstatement of the paper tax guide for individuals.

**TAX TIME SAVINGS BOND PROGRAM**

The Tax Time Savings Bond program allows taxpayers the option to receive their tax refunds in the form of a paper U.S. savings bond. The program is set to expire at the end of the 2016 tax season. The U.S. Treasury Department ended the over-the-counter sale of paper savings bonds in 2012 and this program is now the only way to obtain a paper savings bond.

Citizens who do not have bank accounts or reliable Internet access will lose this savings opportunity if the program is allowed to lapse.

Bills in both houses of Congress have been introduced to preserve the Tax Time Savings Bond program. In the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Matt Cartwright (D-PA) has introduced the Save Access to a Valuable Investment Needed to Generate Savings (SAVINGS) Act, and its companion was introduced in the Senate by Sens. Patty Murray (D-WA) and Susan Collins (R-ME).

**TAKE ACTION**

Help these members of Congress bring attention to the attempts of the IRS to abandon those without reliable Internet access and limit its interaction with Americans. You can use the AF&PA Grow the Vote website, http://bit.ly/growvote, to find your legislators. Ask your:

- U.S. Senators to co-sponsor the PAPER Act (S. 2478); and
- U.S. House of Representatives to co-sponsor the PAPER Act (H.R. 3673) and SAVINGS Act (H.R. 1652).

The IRS should not be allowed to impose digital-only access as a one-size-fits-all requirement for taxpayers. Data shows that there are Americans who simply can’t access digital-only information, and they have no less right to information than anyone else. Support of these bills will help safeguard Americans’ opportunity to choose the manner in which they receive information and services from the tax collector.
Domtar’s Kingsport Mill Commemorating 100th Anniversary in 2016

Domtar’s Kingsport, Tennessee, mill is celebrating its 100th year of operation in 2016, a milestone that is directly tied to the city’s own growth, and one that could not have been reached without the support the mill has received from the Kingsport community.

In January, the mill kicked off its year-long commemoration by donating 5,000 pounds of copy paper to The United Way of Greater Kingsport and 30 of its member agencies. Additional activities and events will be announced throughout the year as Domtar’s Kingsport mill continues to demonstrate its commitment to the community with a number of special events and philanthropic efforts.

Over the years, Domtar has been diligent in promoting a mill culture that supports a sustained commitment of giving back to the local community. The Kingsport mill was a key proponent of the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing and the Kingsport Higher Education Center. In addition, the company has contributed more than $5 million to the community in the form of land, financial donations and labor for numerous recreational and social efforts.

“For an entire century, this mill has grown with the local community, and much of that progress is due to the strong support we have received from the community,” says Bill MacPherson, Kingsport mill manager. “The activities we have planned for this year are intended to connect with our city’s residents and nonprofit organizations on multiple levels, and align with the culture of community involvement and support that is cultivated by our employees.”

The Kingsport operation began in 1916, when local businessmen constructed the mill, known as the Kingsport Pulp Co., to process fiber from a wood alcohol extract operation. Although the mill changed hands multiple times over the years, each of its owners made continuous investments in the facility and its operations.

In 1972, under the Mead Corporation name, the Kingsport plant operated five paper machines, one of which was considered to be the fastest in the world. After being acquired by Willamette Industries, the mill underwent an upgrade in 2000 to make it more environmentally friendly and energy-efficient. In 2002, new owner Weyerhaeuser invested $475 million to install a new...
uncoated free-sheet machine, recovery boiler, and bleached hardwood pulp line — essentially rebuilding the mill, and making it the newest and most modern paper facility in North America.

In 2007, Domtar took over the Weyerhaeuser Fine Paper group. Today, the plant has the capacity to produce nearly 420,000 tons of paper and more than 300,000 tons of pulp annually. The Kingsport mill and the Ridgefields converting facility employ 390 people, making Domtar the third-largest manufacturing company in Kingsport.

Domtar has also been responsible for creating an additional 750 indirect jobs in Kingsport and the surrounding area and has an estimated regional economic impact of $190 million per year.

“I thank all of the Kingsport mill employees for their work and focus on optimizing this mill and driving continuous improvement in a highly competitive market,” says Michael Garcia, president of Domtar’s pulp and paper division. “We all have a role to play in ensuring this mill remains a competitive economic engine in the region.”

Today, the Kingsport mill has the capacity to produce nearly 420,000 tons of paper and more than 300,000 tons of pulp annually.

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Uncoated Freesheet Market Balanced as Imports Ease and Demand Drop Spurs

Tariffs slow imports, while there was a pleasant surprise last year as the contraction in demand slowed. With little push expected on the cost side from fiber or energy, prices may have a hard time moving up much, although the slowing of imports and upcoming capacity reductions could tighten supply.

By Harold M. Cody

Uncoated freesheet markets will likely continue to face challenges as the long term expectation is that demand will continue to contract in developed markets such as the U.S. However, the outlook for 2016 and into next year is reasonably positive as the market is largely in balance. A slowing of imports has certainly been a key factor in particular from a U.S. producer’s viewpoint since it allowed U.S. shipments to pick up some slack. In addition, however, there was a very surprising development as U.S. demand for uncoated freesheet actually stabilized a bit last year, which is almost shocking in light of the demand trend line all graphic grades have exhibited for several years.

There was a very surprising development, as U.S. demand for uncoated freesheet actually stabilized a bit last year, which is almost shocking in light of the demand trend line all graphic grades have exhibited for several years. Demand last year, instead of following the steady trend of a 3-5% annual drop, remained more level with 2014 demand levels.

U.S. uncoated freesheet demand slipped about 0.3% according to estimates, remaining near the 8.2 million-ton level, similar to the 2014 level. It could end up being a little larger allowing for revisions in year-end statistics and adjusting for inventory changes but it is nevertheless a stark contrast to the 5% decline posted in 2014. That drop is equivalent to 400,000 tons or the capacity of a large paper machine or medium size mill. In addition, it runs counter to the direction of overall U.S. printing and writing paper demand, which fell about 5% last year, pulled down by double digit declines posted by both coated and uncoated mechanical grades coupled with a modest decline of a bit over 2% for coated freesheet grades.

As demand stabilized — or at least the decline slowed and imports eased — it had a positive impact on operating rates and U.S. production. It is also pretty obvious that demand could return to its long term secular decline over the next couple of years. Nevertheless, it kindled hope that unlike coated paper and newsprint grades, underlying demand could be stabilizing or at least the decline has decelerated. There is no clear or overarching reason for this and this may just be a one-year fluke. The most likely reasons would seem to be that office paper demand for uses including presentations and other applications could be flattening in part due to painfully slow gains in employment.

It’s not all rosy however, as uses for fine paper in some market grade
sectors continue to fall due to the impact of technology. Another could be a slowing in the drop in direct mail use as advertisers fight clutter that is endemic with the spread of digital advertising. USPS standard mail weight fell by 1.6% in the last year (USPS fiscal year ending in September), but this compares to a 5.7% decline in 2014.

**RECENTLY IMPOSED TARIFFS**

As noted, the impact of tariffs enacted on imports of uncoated freesheet papers from areas including Asia, South America and Europe has likely had the largest impact on the current market and will be a major influence going forward. Tariffs were finalized in early 2016 on imports from several nations but the levels varied considerably. In some cases the impact on imports will be minimal and in others higher tariffs will have a more dampening effect. Imports of grades such as cut-size papers eased considerably in the second half of 2015 falling to a level representing about 10% of demand vs. prior levels of about 20%. While imports from Canada and Europe will be less affected, a drop from other areas make it likely that imports will continue to decline substantially this year and next. Some projections call for total imports to fall to half of 2014 levels which would be well under one million tons annually from levels that have approached 1.5 million tons.

So, the 64-dollar question is what happens this year and into 2017? A lower level of imports coupled with lower capacity from mid-2016 on is likely to sustain a balanced market even if demand returns to its recent trend line decline. The capacity change will result from Domtar’s $160 million investment to convert 364,000 tpy of uncoated freesheet capacity to produce 516,000 tpy of fluff pulp at the Ashdown, Arkansas mill. Domtar is the largest producer of uncoated freesheet in North America producing about 3.4 million tons of paper.

In 2015, freesheet prices ended the year down about 2% or $25 per ton from 2014 levels as prices weakened mid-year. It’s likely that supply will be sufficient so that no major gain in prices will occur, but producers did announce a $60/ton increase for April shipments. If partly enacted it would propel prices back to year earlier levels. Certainly there is a case to be made that lower imports, which came under fire as unfairly low prices, would contribute to a tighter market and could allow for a window of some positive price movement.

*Harold Cody is a contributing writer for PaperAge. He can be reached at HaroldCody@paperage.com.*
The Whole Package

From linerboard, corrugated medium or paperboard, to boxes for shipping or consumer packaging, to printing, finishing and design, WestRock offers an impressive array of packaging solutions.

By John O’Brien, Managing Editor

News of RockTenn and MeadWestvaco combining their operations was first announced on January 26, 2015. Steve Voorhees, then Chief Executive Officer of RockTenn, said, “This transaction brings together two highly complementary organizations to create a new, more powerful company with leadership positions in the global consumer and corrugated packaging markets.”

Voorhees was named Chief Executive Officer of the new company, and on July 1, 2015, WestRock officially began operating. It didn’t take long before Voorhees and his team made their first move. On Aug. 11, WestRock announced an agreement to acquire SP Fiber Holdings, Inc., a producer of recycled containerboard and kraft and bag paper. The deal included SP Fiber’s 48 percent interest in Green Power Solutions of Georgia, LLC.

The acquisition of SP Fiber closed on Oct. 1 and twelve days later, Voorhees announced plans for a joint venture with Grupo Gondi in Mexico. The deal brings together WestRock’s three facilities in Mexico that produce corrugated packaging, and Grupo Gondi’s ten production sites that hold six paper machines, seven corrugated packaging plants and four modern high graphic folding carton plants with pre-printing capacity. WestRock also will contribute cash to the joint venture in exchange for a 25 percent equity participation in the combined entity, which will operate as Grupo Gondi.

To round out the strategic deal-making for 2015, WestRock in December said it would acquire Cenveo Packaging, a provider of folded carton and litho-laminated display packaging solutions with seven facilities in North America.
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Voorhees leadership has driven strategic moves that created a company that can deliver a vast array of products to customers while increasing the integration process from board to box or packaging to highly-finished product. In light of the aforementioned accomplishments, Steve Voorhees is PaperAge’s Executive Papermaker of the Year.

I understand you’re an avid fan of baseball and that you played first base in a senior league for the Greater Atlanta Braves. Are there takeaways from baseball that you could say apply to the way you manage your business?

The most important takeaway is that, in baseball, having the right team made up of the right players in the right positions makes or breaks a successful season. The same is true for business, and at WestRock, we have an exceptional team of 41,000 highly capable individuals. We work together to win together both for our company and for our customers from more than 250 operating and business locations spanning North America, South America, Europe and Asia. I am proud to be able to work with them every day.

What are the major strategic benefits of the merger between RockTenn and MeadWestvaco?

WestRock combines two successful companies that will be much more successful together than either company would have been on its own. With the combination, we have the #1 or #2 positions in corrugated packaging and consumer packaging in North America, Brazil and India. We are focused on sustainable execution of our key capabilities of commercial excellence, operating excellence, innovation and talent development. Our differentiated products and services support our customers’ success in their markets. WestRock has what it takes to achieve our aspiration to be the premier partner and unrivaled provider of paper and packaging solutions in consumer and corrugated markets.

How is the integration process going? Any pleasant surprises?

I have been pleasantly surprised by the consistency of enthusiasm about the potential for our company which has been embodied by the phrase “Winning Together”. We are building a winning team of individuals that want to win with each other, our customers, suppliers, communities and investors. I believe even more strongly today in the strategic rationale of the merger than I did when we announced the merger more than a year ago.

You’ve targeted the end of fiscal year 2018 to achieve $1 billion in synergy and performance improvements. Where will the bulk of these savings come from?

We are making excellent progress toward our goal to achieve $1 billion in annualized synergy and performance improvements by the end of fiscal 2018. We were at an annual run rate of $250 million at the end of December and expect to be at a run rate of $450 million by the end of September of this year. The savings are coming from across the company as we integrate the operations of our consumer packaging business, realize the procurement and logistics benefits available to a larger and more integrated company, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our administrative and corporate functions.
We are all proud to congratulate Steve Voorhees, Executive Papermaker of the Year!

As the leading global developer and supplier of technologies, automation and services for the pulp, paper and energy industries, we are proud to help WestRock deliver unparalleled packaging solutions. At Valmet we are committed to serve and move our customers’ performance forward.

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Why is packaging a good business?

Packaging matters. Our research shows that consumer buying habits are changing. Consumers are relying on social media and the internet for information and are increasing the amount of their purchases online. Consumers are still making the vast majority of their purchases in-store. The look and feel of packaging is mattering more and more to the consumer’s view of the quality of the product they are purchasing. We have the opportunity to bring value every day through the on-time delivery of quality products to our customers that allow them to sell more product. Because of our product offering that can adapt to the changing needs of our customers, WestRock is well-positioned to be a very successful paper and packaging company.

WestRock offers such a broad range of packaging products and services. How do you determine the company’s threshold of what it can effectively and/or efficiently deliver to customers?

We have chosen to focus on providing paper and packaging solutions for our customers — and this covers a wide range of products and services. We can handle so many of our customers’ packaging needs — from premium paperboard, to primary and secondary packaging solutions, to retail displays. We focus on providing the right product to the customer at the right value and balance the overall cost of providing our products and services with the overall value we provide our customers.

On October 1, 2015, you announced the completion of the acquisition of SP Fiber. The deal included mills in Dublin, GA, and Newberg, OR that produce lightweight recycled containerboard, and kraft and bag paper. What did that acquisition provide from a product portfolio perspective?

We are excited about enhancing our offering of paper solutions for food service, corrugated packaging and other markets. The Dublin, Georgia mill produces outstanding kraft paper products and lightweight containerboard. The mill provides flexibility and efficiency to our mill system.

On October 12, 2015, you announced a joint venture with Grupo Gondi in Mexico. What roles will WestRock and Grupo Gondi assume in the JV?

Grupo Gondi is the premier paper and packaging company in Mexico. We are proud to be their partner. Together, we will build upon our combined relationships and capabilities to grow in the paper and packaging markets of Mexico. As the majority shareholder in this joint venture, Gondi’s management team, led by Eduardo Posada, will be responsible for the management of the joint venture. WestRock will offer technical and commercial support, and will work with Gondi to support multinational customers located in Mexico.

WestRock completed the acquisition of Cenveo Packaging in January of this year. What does this business bring to the table?

Cenveo serves customers with a focus on markets that value high-color printing and packaging capabilities, including food, beverage, pharma/nutraceutical and other consumer markets. The addition of Cenveo expands our consumer packaging network and expands our capabilities to include MiraFoil®.
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**WestRock has assets in Brazil, i.e. the Tres Barras virgin containerboard mill. How is that operation going and what is your strategy in that region?**

Our corrugated packaging business is integrated from seedlings to trees to paper making to box making. We have operated in Brazil since the 1950s and have maintained strong financial performance in the face of challenging economic conditions – all due to timely investment decisions that have supported our highly capable team. Our strategy is to grow our business with disciplined execution and capital investment.

**WestRock is one of the largest (if not the largest) paper recyclers in North America. How large a role does this segment of your business play in WestRock’s operations?**

We operate a comprehensive recycling system incorporating 23 recycling facilities, including 5 single stream processing locations, and a global brokerage operation that, in total, manages nearly 8 million tons of recyclable material annually. Our recycling business is profitable and plays a critical role in our supply chain for our recycled containerboard and paperboard mills.

**Looking ahead, what areas do you see future capital investments headed towards?**

We expect to generate $950 million to $1 billion in free cash flow in FY16 after capital expenditures. We will invest to maintain and improve our core paper and packaging businesses.

You’ve taken pride in pointing out that WestRock’s culture and values drive the success of the company. How would you describe WestRock’s culture, and what values do you consider most important?

The WestRock culture is best described by the phrase “Winning Together”. We are building a winning team of individuals that want to win with each other, our customers, suppliers, communities and investors. We are aligned and focused on achieving our aspiration to be the premier partner and unrivaled provider of paper and packaging solutions in consumer and corrugated markets. Our core values are integrity, respect, accountability and excellence. Every time I walk through one of our facilities I see these values lived out by many WestRock people.

**What do you think of being named the “Executive Papermaker of the Year”?**

My first reaction was that I am not a papermaker. Then I saw that PaperAge selects its Executive Papermaker of the Year based on corporate vision, strategic objectives and strong leadership both within the individual’s company and in the paper industry as a whole—and it clicked for me that this is an award for all of the 41,000 WestRock people around the world.

Just like in baseball, we need the right team made up of the right players in the right positions to be successful. WestRock has an exceptional team of 41,000 highly capable papermakers, printer operators, accountants, customer service representatives—the list goes on—we have the right team made up of the right players in the right positions to be even more successful in the years to come. I am proud to be able to work with my teammates every day and appreciate the recognition that PaperAge is providing all of us at WestRock.
WestRock puts a smile on everyone’s face.

Congratulations Steve Voorhees for being honored as Papermaker of the Year. And what a year it was!

Under Voorhees’ leadership, two industry-leading companies came together in 2015 to form one of the world’s leading providers of consumer and corrugated packaging. Voith Paper is proud to be a supplier to WestRock, and we are excited about doing our part to help your company grow and prosper.

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Seiko Epson Corporation announced that it has developed what it believes to be the world’s first compact office papermaking system capable of producing new paper from shredded waste paper without the use of water.

Utilizing the fiber created from the paper it shreds, PaperLab has the ability to produce the first new sheet of paper in about three minutes after hitting the start button. According to Epson, the system can produce about 14 A4 sheets per minute and 6,720 sheets in an eight-hour day.

Epson did not reveal the quantity of paper required to produce a new sheet or how exactly PaperLab works internally, but the novel approach to the three R’s of the environment — reduce, reuse, recycle — shows a great deal of promise.

DRY PAPERMAKING PROCESS
Using an original mechanism, shredded paper is transformed into long, thin cottony fibers in a process that also completely destroys documents. Since the PaperLab does not use water, it does not require plumbing facilities, although a small amount of water is used to maintain a certain level of humidity inside the system, Epson noted.

Then, a variety of different binders can be added to the fiberized material to increase the binding strength or whiteness of the paper or to add color, fragrance, flame resistance, or other properties needed for a given application.

Users can produce sheets of A4 or A3 office paper and even paper for business cards as a result of forming technology that allows them to control the density, thickness, and size of paper, Epson said.

The prototype Paperlab machine is about 2.6 meters in length, 1.2 meters wide and 1.8 meters tall.

Epson plans to put the new PaperLab system into commercial production in Japan in 2016, with sales in other regions to be decided at a later date.

NOTES
1 Epson believes it is the world’s first paper production system to use a dry process.
2 The system can use ordinary A3- and A4-sized copy paper as raw material.
3 A small amount of water is used to maintain a certain level of humidity inside the system.
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