

Green Grades

A Report Card on the Paper Practices of the Office Supply Sector

Throughout the country, shoppers are turning to the office supply industry for their back-to-school paper needs. But this year, more than ever before, consumers aren't just interested in notebooks and paper. They're looking for environmental responsibility too.

More responsible environmental practices by the office supply companies can reduce greenhouse gases and deforestation. For example, traditional paper industry practices consume more energy and destroy more forests—thus, generating more greenhouse gases—than responsible practices such as maximizing post-consumer recycled content.

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To help reduce the environmental impacts of the office supply industry, including the destruction of Endangered Forests, ForestEthics and Dogwood Alliance have been reforming the industry's paper sourcing practices since 2000. Our successful campaigns against Staples and Office Depot resulted in record-high demand at recycled pulp mills by 2005.¹ Still, we know the work doesn't end

Concern about global warming in particular has skyrocketed—and the paper industry as a whole has a devastating effect on climate change. The industry's energy consumption is the third highest in the world, behind only the petroleum and chemical industries. Deforestation—perhaps the largest single environmental impact of the office supply industry, given the vast amounts of paper it consumes—accounts for 18% of all greenhouse gas emissions annually.

1. *Paperloop*, October 18, 2005: "Operating rate jumps for North American market deinked pulp due to higher big office store demand"



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when a company takes those first difficult steps in response to a campaign. Continual progress requires monitoring benchmarks, pushing for better policies and offering assistance with environmentally sound practices.

Late last year, we conducted a comprehensive survey to determine the current environmental policies and practices of the five major office supply retailers. Based upon the results of that survey, we followed up with each company regarding ways they could improve.

We're pleased to report that this work has led to significant progress by three of the five companies we surveyed. Corporate Express adopted an entirely new environmental policy that, among other advances, calls for shifting their catalog content to 30% post-consumer recycled content. We're also proud to announce that our work with Staples this



year has resulted in a majority of their paper shifting to sustainable sources certified by the Forest Stewardship Council by 2010.

And, in a striking illustration of how our leverage within the industry can lead to unexpected results, our survey helped FedEx Kinko's protect Endangered Forests. The survey identified a link between the products the company buys and the forest destruction that has put British Columbia's mountain caribou on the verge of extinction. With our support and advice and based on its existing policy, FedEx Kinko's moved quickly to eliminate these products from its inventory, sending a strong signal to the supplier of these products that its customers will not accept any products that endanger the caribou.

Though these three companies have made progress, there are still many areas in which all five companies can and should improve. The following report card summarizes the current policies and practices of each company. For a more detailed analysis, please go to forestethics.org/osreport07.



THE CURRICULUM: FIVE CLASSES OF FOREST PROTECTION

Our findings can be divided into five categories:

Chain-of-Custody (CoC)

To ensure that their paper has been sustainably sourced, companies first need to know where their paper comes from. Surprisingly, most buyers and sellers of paper products have no idea where the raw material in those products originates.

Endangered Forests

Protecting Endangered Forests requires scientific analysis of many factors, including species habitat (especially habitat for endangered species), old-growth characteristics, impact on the surrounding ecosystem, and more. Endangered Forests must be kept off-limits to all logging. Our survey found that while some companies have taken important first steps in creating and implementing policies to reduce impact on Endangered Forests, all five of the

companies we surveyed still have Endangered Forest controversy in their supply chains and still have not adopted all practices required to protect Endangered Forests.

Forest Conversion

After a forest is destroyed through the devastating practice of clearcutting, the destroyed forest is too often replaced with a tree plantation: rows upon rows of identical, usually non-native trees that require vast amounts of water and pesticides, depleting and contaminating water resources and making huge swaths of land inhospitable to native wildlife and tree species. This “forest conversion” is also imposed upon ecologically sensitive grasslands and prairies. All of the companies need to more systematically identify and eliminate from their supply chain products from companies responsible for converting natural ecosystems to tree plantations and other non-forest land uses.

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification

There are many forest certification systems, but the FSC, an independent organization, is the only credible certification program, and thus the only way to ensure sustainable sourcing.

Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR) content

Since making post-consumer recycled content does not require logging, it is one of the most effective ways to protect forests.

The Report Card: Who's Done Their Homework

Company	Chain of Custody	Endangered Forests (EFs)	Forest Conversion	Sustainable Management—Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification	Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR) Content	Overall Grade
Corporate Express	Forest source of origin information required from suppliers, but no independent verification required for this information. C	New policy commits to eliminate all EF supply. No EF supplier eliminated yet. EF policy language should be strengthened. C-	New policy requires suppliers to demonstrate no conversion “as a rule.” The company’s FSC preference also implicitly addresses the issue; however, the company still buys from known forest converters. C+	New policy expresses preference for FSC products over products from substandard systems. No specific goals set yet for FSC content of products. B-	Goal by end of 2007 to reach 30% average recycled content for all internal paper use, catalogs and other marketing material. B-	C
FedEx Kinko’s	CoC system needs improvement, especially as it relates to non-FSC-certified sources. C+	Solid EF policy language. Strongest action so far re: products with EF connections; maintains products with links to EFs in U.S. South. B+	Policy prohibits suppliers converting forests. Company’s FSC preference also implicitly addresses the issue. However, some of the company’s suppliers are still linked to conversion in the US South. C+	First company of the five to express preference for FSC over substandard certification systems. Company is also one of the two leaders in buying FSC products. B+	Meets or exceeds ambitious goals for PCR content. Goals for specific products range from 30 to 100% PCR. B+	B
Office Depot	Has the best internal, third-party verified CoC program. A	Action to sever some EF connections; maintains troubling links to EFs in Canadian Boreal and Indonesia. C	Only company among the five to eliminate products specifically because of links to forest conversion; still buys from other known forest converters. B	No FSC preference. Promotes FSC and substandard certification systems equally. D-	Has achieved modest goals for PCR content; still significantly behind Staples and FedEx Kinko’s. B	C+
OfficeMax	No adequately verified system for acquiring forest source of origin information from suppliers. D	No clear, public commitment to EF protection. D-	States “expectation”—but does not require—that suppliers avoid fiber from forest converters. C	No FSC preference. No significant quantities of FSC-certified fiber or products. D-	Policy goal for average 30% PCR content. No public timeline to achieve goal. C-	D
Staples	Has strong internal CoC program, but it isn’t independently verified, and does not appear to be as robust as Office Depot’s system. B	Has taken important action to sever some Canadian Boreal EF links; maintains links to EFs in Indonesia. B	Policy does not prohibit forest conversion. Company is also buying from known conversion sources. Has engaged in initiatives to reduce conversion. D	Company buying more FSC product. Recently adopted goal to make majority of product content FSC-certified by the end of 2010. A-	Has achieved 30% average of PCR content when all product tonnage is included; new goal is 50% average PCR. A	B



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