

# Greener Bathroom Tissue Options Plentiful Thanks to Supplier Innovations

8/21/2012 By Glenn Hasek



NATIONAL REPORT—Most toilet paper available today for the away-from-home market includes most, if not all, recycled content. While the percentage of pre and post consumer recycled content in bathroom tissue can vary by brand and supplier, the good news is that, whether pre or post consumer material, the use of recycled fiber keeps it out of the landfill. Some brands of tissue are more eco-friendly than others. With a bit of research, one can determine what to consider, besides cost, when making a green purchasing decision.

The U.S. Department of Energy ranks paper manufacturing as the fifth most energy-intensive industry: a major emitter of greenhouse gases through electric power generated using coal, oil and gas. While its energy use remains a huge challenge, the industry has made giant strides in reducing its environmental impact in recent years. Today, according to Dan Silk, vice president of sustainability for [Georgia-Pacific](#), there are more trees in the United States than 120 years ago. Properly managed forests are certainly important but the transition toward including more recycled content in products has also made a huge difference.

The elimination of chlorine from the manufacturing process—a step now certified by the Chlorine Free Products Assn. and signified by its Processed Chlorine Free mark—has further reduced tissue’s negative impact. In paper making, dioxins are formed during the bleaching process when chlorine combines with organic material. Dioxins can bioaccumulate in the environment and are a proven cause of numerous health problems. Dioxins almost wiped out the eagle population in the United States.

## Byproduct of Recycling Process

While what chemicals are used in the manufacturing process is important to consider, so too is what is done with the byproducts of manufacturing. For example, the de-inking of recycled paper produces a sludge that historically has been sent to landfills. Georgia-Pacific’s Silk says concrete manufacturers are now using his company’s de-inking “waste” as an ingredient in concrete. Joe Tadeo, CEO of [Atlas Paper Mills](#), says his company is providing it to farmers to use on their fields. “It holds water in the soil and adds some degree of nutrient,” he says.

Earlier this year, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) published a report titled, “Don’t Flush Tiger Forests: Toilet Paper, U.S. Supermarkets and the Destruction of Indonesia’s Last Tiger Habitats.” WWF found that American companies and consumers are inadvertently contributing to Indonesian rain forest and tiger habitat destruction by buying toilet paper and other tissue products made with fiber from Asia Pulp & Paper (APP). Products made with APP fiber, such as toilet paper, were increasingly landing in hotels across the country under the Paseo and Livi brand names, WWF said. The WWF report highlights the importance of knowing where the ingredients for tissue come from.

“I would be skeptical of product made outside the United States,” Tadeo says.

Those looking for assurance that companies are indeed doing what they say they are doing from an environmental standpoint should not only look for the Processed Chlorine Free mark but also the Green Seal, EcoLogo, Forest Stewardship Council, and Sustainable Forestry Initiative marks.

## **Recycled—Every Bit as Soft**

One myth about tissue made from recycled fibers is that it is just not comfortable to use but that is not necessarily the case. The properties of bath tissue are driven by the recipe of the product and the fiber selection. “Virgin fiber will always produce a white and soft sheet,” Atlas Paper Mills’ Tadeo says. “The fibers are larger. Tissue made from recycled fibers can be every bit as soft as that made from virgin fibers, even if it is not as white.”

Earlier this year, in April, [Cascades Tissue Group](#) launched Cascades Moka 100 percent recycled unbleached bathroom tissue. Moka is proving that bathroom tissue need not be white to be accepted. Moka is beige in color. In addition to eliminating chemical whitening, Moka is made of a pulp mix composed of 100 percent recycled fiber, 80 percent of which is post-consumer material and 20 percent of which is recovered corrugated boxes.

When asked how the lodging industry has reacted to Moka so far, Isabelle Faivre, marketing director, Cascades Tissue Group Away-from-Home Division, said hotels and lodges have proven to be among the strongest early adopters/purchasers. “People are looking for a measure of intrigue and newness from their daily norms when they travel,” Faivre says. “Similarly, hotels are looking to offer cost-effective encounters and experiences that impress and pleasantly surprise their patrons. Changing the bathroom tissue from the usual white to beige along with a simple explanation of the benefits in the form of a card is an easily implemented solution, and the early reactions have been massively positive.”

## **Cascades Offsets Impact of Moka, North River**

Cascades Moka is just one of the green product lines available from Cascades. The other is North River which offers a North River 2 ply bathroom tissue, JRT North River Jr. 1 ply, and JRT North River Jr. 2 ply. Early this month, Cascades expanded its Moka line to include jumbo rolls for dispensers that are intended for less frequent stocking. Cascades Tissue Group offsets the electricity used to manufacture its Moka and North River products with 100 percent Green-e certified wind-generated energy.

“We began purchasing Green-e certified renewable wind energy credits to offset the electricity used to produce North River products in 2008, and then we extended that investment to Cascades branded products, including Moka when it was introduced earlier this year,” Faivre says. “The environmental inputs that go into products like copy paper are amortized over several recyclings, however, towel and tissue paper are single-use goods, so the importance of green-minded production is all the more important.”

Georgia-Pacific, as part of its Envision line, offers bathroom tissue that is EPA compliant for recycled fiber content. The EPA’s recommended recovery fiber content level for tissue is 20 percent to 60 percent postconsumer fiber and 20 percent to 100 percent recovered fiber. Some of Georgia-Pacific’s tissue products are EcoLogo certified. Georgia-Pacific’s coreless toilet paper helps to reduce packaging waste.

## **Waste Paper Purchased Locally**

Atlas Paper Mills, as part of its Green Heritage line, offers two sizes of 1-ply tissue, plus myriad jumbo roll options. Atlas Paper Mills buys waste paper from the Florida marketplace, de-inks it, cleans it, and then makes tissue products.

“We offer, to my knowledge, the only Green Seal certified tissue made in the State of Florida,” Atlas Paper Mills’ Tadeo says.

Other sources for bathroom tissue that includes recycled paper content include [Kimberly-Clark Corp.](#) and [Wausau Paper](#).

Kimberly-Clark Professional’s Scott brand has earned Green Seal certification for its 100 percent

recycled fiber washroom products. The Scott Naturals brand launched in 2009. With the tagline of Green Done Right, this line of bathroom tissue contains a blend of recycled (40 percent) and virgin fiber.

### **Wausau Paper Options**

EcoSoft tissue from Wausau Paper is made from 100 percent recycled fibers and meets EPA guidelines for post-consumer waste content. The company also has EcoSoft and Dubl-Nature lines that are Green Seal certified. These two lines are also made from 100 percent recycled wastepaper.

While in some cases hoteliers may pay a premium for tissue with a high degree of recycled content, in most cases suppliers can match the price of tissue made from virgin fiber.

“Our costs are extremely comparable, if not identical,” Cascades Tissue Group’s Faivre says. “Because we’re so concerned with lowering our energy inputs and using as little natural resources (fiber, water, etc.) as possible in our production processes, we’re actually able to save costs. There’s no ‘green premium’ in our pricing.”