

A WASTE OF FORESTS

Every year, all the recyclable paper packaging thrown in the trash represents approximately 260 million trees, or roughly 375,000 acres of forest land.

Did you know that **only 25% of paper-based consumer packaging is recycled? The rest – 9.1 million tons is wasted each year, which equals about 73 lbs for each person in the United States.**

IMPACT ON FORESTS AND CLIMATE

What is the environmental impact of all the wasted paper? Using calculations from the Environmental Paper Network's **Paper Calculator** (<http://c.environmentalpaper.org/hom>), the paper packaging thrown away each year represents approximately 260 million trees, or roughly 375,000 acres of forest land.[1] To put that into perspective, this would like clear-cutting an area 17 times the size of New York City, or just under half the size of Rhode Island, each and every year.



If we recycled all this paper instead of using virgin paper, we could save approximately 11.3 million tons of carbon dioxide from going into the atmosphere. This is the equivalent of taking 2.2 million cars off the road each year or the amount of energy that it takes to power 533,000 homes for a year.[2]

Using recycled content paper in place of virgin fiber requires less energy and less water, and produces fewer air and water emissions. It also reduces the need to log forests and convert them into tree plantations and allows the forests to remain as an ecosystem that provides carbon storage, greater recreational value, and wildlife habitat..

Standards that require or incentivize companies to use high recycled-content in their packaging can help save forests by creating markets for recycled instead of virgin paper.

LOG OLD GROWTH FORESTS TO MAKE PACKAGING?

Believe it or not, the demand for paper-based products is still causing ecological destruction of old growth forests and sensitive wildlife habitat here in the United States and around the world. Paper production is currently the single largest threat to our forests.[3] Forests are destroyed or converted to monoculture plantations for large-scale, short-term paper production – with a significant amount going to create packaging.

Fortunately, there is a sustainable forestry certification process run by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). FSC certifies forests throughout the world to meet tough standards that protect our forests for recreation, wildlife and future generations, while ensuring that they remain productive and healthy.

The Make It, Take It Campaign is working to ensure that companies source their paper packaging from high recycled content and FSC-certified fibers, as well as helping to create the infrastructure to recycle or compost all paper-based packaging.

[1] Calculations derived from *Municipal Solid Waste in the United States: Facts and Figures, 2013*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: 2014 and the Environmental Paper Network's Paper Calculator. The calculation is based on the avoided logging of trees if the packaging was recycled instead of wasted. **Disclaimer – this number was extrapolated from estimates based on using recycled copy paper, not paper packaging. Further analysis could yield a more accurate number.*

[2] Ibid.