

Statement in Response to IP Third-Party Certification

Response to International Paper's forest certification announcement, including a summary of the long history of unsustainable practices in the region...

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Statement from Dogwood Alliance on IP's
Third-Party Certification of its US Paper Mills

Asheville, NC – International Paper's long history of unsustainable forestry practices have scarred the Southern landscape for decades. Practices such as large-scale clearcutting, logging of endangered forests, intensive use of toxic chemicals in forest management and the conversion of native forests to monoculture pine plantations have had a detrimental impact on the quality of life of local communities, wildlife habitat, water quality and our forests ability to store and sequester carbon to reduce the impact of global climate change.

For over ten years, Dogwood Alliance and our broad-based network have called on IP to change these practices and join the effort to protect our local communities and forests in the region. Today's announcement of intent to pursue Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) chain of custody certification is a positive first step towards greater protection of the forests and communities that define our region. However, it is not clear from today's press release to what extent that certification will reach and anything short of all of their mills is unacceptable.

Some of the most unique and special places in the South, from the Great Dismal Swamp in Virginia to the Green Swamp of North Carolina to the Cumberland Plateau of Tennessee and Alabama have been irreparably harmed by the company's practices. Endangered forests have been logged, swamps have been ditched and drained to make way for plantations, and tens of thousands of acres have been sprayed with toxic chemicals all in the name of paper production.

The number one paper product originating from Southern forests is packaging. IP is the largest producer of packaging in the region and prominent mills along the Atlantic Coast, including the Riegelwood Mill in NC and the Franklin Mill in VA have led to countless acres of endangered forests being logged to produce a product that is used once and thrown away. The time is ripe for IP to declare and end to these destructive practices and embrace a truly sustainable future.

Large customers of paper products from the Office Supply Industry, the Book Industry, the Catalog Industry and more have embraced FSC as a positive solution for reducing their companies' impacts on Southern forests and forests worldwide. Companies embracing FSC as the only legitimate certification system include Williams Sonoma, the Limited Brands,

Home Depot, and more. FSC is the only certification system also embraced by the wider environmental community.

While we support International Paper's stated intent to pursue FSC certification, it is important to point out that today the company is still focused on its Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification. The SFI is an industry founded certification system that continues to allow for such egregious practices as logging of endangered forests, large-scale clearcutting, and conversion of native forests to sterile pine plantations. It is not endorsed by the broader environmental community.

Dogwood Alliance is pleased that our work to improve International Paper's business practices in the Southern US has resulted in today's announcement and we will continue our work to convince even more of IP's largest corporate customers to phase out products originating from endangered forests and instead to purchase products made with high recycled and FSC certified content. We call on the company to aggressively pursue FSC certification for all of its fiber sourcing in the Southern US and make a greater effort to end all logging of endangered forests and instead start the important process of restoration of these forests.

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For further info on Dogwood Alliance and its work to transform the paper industry, visit: <http://www.dogwoodalliance.org/>

For more info on FSC and its certification system, visit: <http://www.fscus.org/>

For more info on the shortcomings of the SFI, visit: <http://credibleforestcertification.org/home/>