



139 Main Street, Suite 401 • Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
802.254.3636 • www.nerc.org • info@nerc.org

Domestic Recycled Paper Capacity Increases

March 1, 2022

In 2017, when the Chinese government proposed to ban the import of recycled paper, North American paper mills saw an opportunity to expand their capacity to use this resource. While some capacity expansions were already in place due to the need for more e-commerce boxes, the proposed ban spurred additional increases in recycled paper capacity. When NERC first published this list in November 2018, it included new capacity projects at 17 mills, of which three projects were completed. This latest update includes new capacity projects at 28 mills, of which 17 have been completed.

The majority of new capacity increases are for mills producing linerboard and corrugated medium. They will use old corrugated containers (OCC), often called “cardboard boxes”, as their primary feedstock. They are unlikely to use mixed paper unless their stock preparation system allows for its use. Nonetheless, about half of these mills plan to use some mixed paper. Several plan to consume significant amounts of residential mixed paper (RMP) which is collected at curbsides throughout the country, along with OCC.

The list includes several new paper mills. Much of the new capacity, however, is occurring at existing or closed mills. In some cases, the mill is adding new capacity. In other cases, it is converting an existing papermaking machine to produce different end products (e.g., from making newsprint to packaging). The list includes two new mills that are consolidating production from existing facilities. It also includes one new mill that will be using food contaminated paper from commercial sources.

Capacity projections are based on the expanded or new mill running at full capacity. Normally this takes several years after a new machine or mill opens as the manufacturer finds customers for its products. Existing mills that are being expanded or replaced have the advantage of an existing customer base, site and permits.

Announcement of a new mill does not guarantee it will be built. The project must obtain financing which can be challenging. A new paper mill can cost several hundred million dollars to site, permit and build. Five projects have been dropped from this list due to failure to make progress towards breaking ground. Other projects on this list are not likely to be built.

Sources include the Fibre Box Association, articles in Resource Recycling, Paperstock Reports, Recycling Today, Scrap Magazine, Waste 360 and Waste Dive along with company press releases and local or national newspaper articles.

Each facility is listed by name, location, whether new or converted, projected final production capacity in either tons per year (TPY), metric tonnes per year (MTPY) or tons per day (TPD), depending on the source, raw material feedstock and projected opening. Data is often incomplete because the individual companies

determine what information they will release. This list is periodically updated as projects are completed or new capacity is announced.

If you have any questions about facilities on this list, please contact Chaz Miller, Chair, NERC-NEWMOA Regional Recycling Markets Committee, chazmiller9@gmail.com, 301-346-6507.

Completed

Midwest Paper Group

- Combined Locks, Wisconsin
- Conversion of coated paper to packaging
- 400,000 TPY
- OCC, double-lined preconsumer kraft and mixed paper
- 2018

Packaging Corporation of America

- DeRidder, Louisiana
- Conversion of newsprint to linerboard and corrugated medium
- 150,000 TPY
- OCC
- 2018

Hood Container

- St. Francisville, Louisiana
- “New recycling plant”
- 120,000 TPY
- OCC
- 2018

Copamex

- Anahuac, Mexico
- Convert existing graphic paper to recycled containerboard
- 220,000 TPY
- OCC, RMP
- 2019

Pratt Industries

- Wapakoneta, Ohio
- New
- 360,000 MPTY recycled corrugated packaging
- OCC, RMP, double-lined kraft
- 2019

Bio Pappel/McKinley Paper Co

- Port Angeles, Washington
- Closed graphic paper mill
- 250,000 TPY containerboard
- OCC, mixed paper
- 2020

Port Townsend Paper

- Port Townsend, Washington
- Existing mill makes 325,000 tons per year of kraft linerboard, corrugated medium, kraft converting paper and kraft pulp
- Expanding OCC capacity from 400 to 750 TPD
- 2020

International Paper

- Riverdale, Alabama
- Conversion to linerboard and containerboard using some OCC
- 450,000 TPY
- OCC
- 2020

Packaging Corporation of America

- Wallula, Washington
- Conversion of fine paper to linerboard
- 350,000 TPY
- OCC
- 2020

Green Bay Packaging

- Green Bay, Wisconsin
- New mill replacing smaller existing mill
- 685,000 TPY containerboard
- OCC, RMP
- 2021

Georgia Pacific Juno Technology

- Toledo, Oregon
- New
- 300 TPD containerboard
- Extract fiber from waste generated at restaurants, airports, sports arenas, schools, etc.
- 2021

Grupo Gondi

- Monterey, Mexico
- New containerboard capacity
- 441,000 TPY
- OCC
- 2021

Nine Dragons¹

- Fairmont, West Virginia
- New mill to increase production capacity to 220,000 TPY and ship recycled pulp to China
- Existing mill uses sorted office paper, newsprint, and other grades.
- OCC
- 2020

Nine Dragons²

- Biron, Wisconsin
- Convert existing machine to produce corrugated medium and linerboard along with new production of recycled pulp
- 250,000+ TPY linerboard and corrugated medium
- New 400,000 TPY recycled pulp line primarily for export to China
- OCC, mixed paper
- 2020 existing machine converted to recycled linerboard and corrugated medium
- 2021 recycled pulp capacity

Nine Dragons³

- Rumford, Maine
- New recycled pulp facility at existing mill. Rebuilding began early 2020.
- 200,000 TPY pulp for export
- OCC
- 2021

Nine Dragons⁴

- Old Town, Maine
- Convert existing machine to produce 200 TPD/70,000 TPY unbleached recycled pulp
- OCC
- 2021

Graphics Paper, Inc.

- Kalamazoo, Michigan
- New facility to make 500,000 TPY of coated recycled paperboard. Note: this facility displaces an equal amount of capacity that will be closed at other facilities.
- OCC
- January 2022

¹ Nine Dragons 2021 U.S. recycled fiber capacity of 569,000 tons (269,000 packaging and 313,000 tons of recycled pulp).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Awaiting Completion

Celadon Development Corporation/Kamine Development Corporation Sustainable Infrastructure/Nicollet Industries

- Tampa, Florida
- New facility to make 400,000 TPY of recycled pulp for export
- OCC and RMP
- 2022

Norpac

- Longview, Washington
- Converting existing production capacity to now make linerboard, corrugated medium, bags and specialty Kraft papers
- 400,000 TPY OCC and mixed paper
- 2022

Sonoco

- Hartsville South Carolina & Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin
- Conversion at Hartsville and increased capacity at Wisconsin Rapids to produce uncoated recycled paperboard. Note: these conversions displace an equal amount of capacity that will be closed at other facilities
- OCC and mixed paper
- 180,000 TPY recycled paperboard (note – not new capacity because it replaces existing capacity at other facilities)
- 2022

Atlantic Packaging Products

- Whitby, Ontario
- 400,000 MTPY corrugated medium and linerboard
- OCC and RMP
- First quarter 2022

Cascades

- Hanover, Virginia
- Convert closed recycled newsprint mill to recycled lightweight linerboard and corrugated medium
- 400,000 MTPY
- OCC, RMP
- Fourth quarter 2022

Domtar

- Kingsport, Tennessee
- Conversion of existing printed paper mill to packaging grades
- 600,000 TPY of recycled-content linerboard and corrugated medium
- 660,000 TPY of OCC (70%) and mixed paper (30%)
- End 2022/Early 2023

Celadon Development Corporation/Kamine Development Corporation Sustainable Infrastructure/Nicollet Industries

- Savannah, Georgia
- New facility in two phases to make 900,000 TPY of recycled brown pulp for export
- OCC
- 2023?

Crossroads Paper

- Salt Lake City, Utah
- New facility to make containerboard for corrugated boxes.
- 350,000 TPY of “packaging paper” production
- 380,000 TPY OCC and mixed paper
- Second half 2023

Pratt Industries

- Henderson, KY
- New facility
- Approx. 450,000 tpy recycled corrugated packaging
- Approximately 500,000 tpy mixed paper and OCC
- Third quarter, 2023

This is the first of two announced two new Pratt mills that will rely on OCC and mixed paper will be built by 2026. The other location has not been announced.

Celadon Development Corporation/Kamine Development Corporation Sustainable Infrastructure/Nicollet Industries

- Chesapeake, Virginia
- Produce recycled fiber pulp for export
- OCC and RMP
- 2024

Empire Recycled Fiber

- Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania
- New facility to make 300,000 T PY containerboard
- 349,000 ,000 TPY of OCC and mixed paper as feedstock with 70 percent OCC and 30 percent mixed paper
- Second quarter 2024

Conclusion

The total new capacity in this report reflects the potential for more than 8 million TPY of new capacity to use OCC and mixed paper.