



NERC releases update on domestic recycled paper capacity increases

The majority of new capacity is for mills producing linerboard and corrugated medium.

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The Northeast Recycling Council (NERC), headquartered in Brattleboro, Vermont, has released an update to its "Summary of Announced Increased Capacity to use Recycled Paper" report, which it says reflects continuing progress toward using more recycled paper in North America and includes completed projects as well as those approaching projected opening dates.

NERC first published the list in 2018, which at the time included new capacity projects at 17 mills—three of which had been completed. The [previous update](#) was in June 2021, and the most recent update includes 28 new mills, including four new mills among 17 completed projects. Much of the new capacity is occurring at existing or closed mills. In some instances, mills are adding new capacity, and, in other cases, they are converting existing papermaking machines to produce different end products. This list includes two mills that are consolidating production from existing facilities and one that will use food-contaminated paper from commercial sources.

According to NERC, announcement of a new mill does not guarantee it will be built because of high costs of siting, permitting and building a new mill. Economic circumstances and demand for final products will determine the viability of each project.

The following projects have been completed since the June 2021 update to the report:

- **Nine Dragons** has converted an existing machine to produce 200 tons per day and 700,000 tons per year of unbleached recycled pulp in Old Town, Maine. The facility will consume old corrugated containers (OCC).
- **Graphic Packaging International** has launched a new facility to make 500,000 tons per year of coated recycled paperboard in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

According to NERC, the following projects have been announced and are awaiting completion:

- **Kamine/Celadon** is opening a facility in Tampa, Florida, to make 400,000 tons per year of recycled pulp for export. The site will consume OCC and residential mixed paper (RMP) and is expected to begin operations this year. Celadon also has announced facilities in Savannah, Georgia, and Chesapeake, Virginia. The facility in Georgia—with operations expected to begin next year—will open in two phases to produce 900,000 tons per year of recycled brown pulp for export. The Virginia facility is expected to open in 2024 and will produce recycled fiber pulp for export and will consume OCC and RMP.
- **NORPAC** is converting existing production capacity to make linerboard, corrugated medium, bags and specialty kraft papers. It is expected to consume approximately 400,000 tons per year of OCC and mixed paper at the site in Longview, Washington, and is expected to begin operations this year.
- **Sonoco** is converting a facility in Hartsville, South Carolina, and increasing capacity in Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, to produce uncoated recycled paperboard. The sites will consume OCC and mixed paper. Operations are expected to begin this year.
- **Atlantic Packaging Products** is opening a facility in Whitby, Ontario, to produce 400,000 metric tons per year of corrugated medium and linerboard. Operations are expected to begin this year.
- **Cascades** is converting a closed recycled newsprint mill in Hanover, Virginia, to produce 400,000 metric tons per year of recycled lightweight linerboard and corrugated medium. The facility will consume OCC and RMP and is expected to open in the fourth quarter of this year.
- **Domtar** is [converting an existing printed paper mill](#) in Kingsport, Tennessee, to produce 600,000 tons per year of recycled-content linerboard and corrugated medium. The facility will consume 660,000 tons per year of OCC (70 percent) and mixed paper (30 percent). It is expected to come online in the first quarter of next year.
- **Crossroads Paper** plans to make containerboard for corrugated boxes, producing 350,000 tons per year of packaging paper at a new mill. It would consume 380,000 tons per year of OCC and mixed paper and, as of the latest report, is expected to come online in the second half of next year. (*Editor's note: Bill Moore, president of Moore & Associates, previously told Recycling Today he suspects this project has been canceled.*)
- **Pratt Industries** is planning to open a new facility in Henderson, Kentucky, which will produce about 450,000 tons per year of recycled corrugated packaging. It will consume approximately 500,000 tons per year of mixed paper and OCC and is expected to come online in the third quarter of next year. (*Editor's note: This is the first of two announced Pratt mills that will rely on OCC and mixed paper to be built by 2026. The other location has not been announced.*)
- **Empire Recycled Fiber** is opening a facility in Fairless Hills, Pennsylvania, that will make 300,000 tons per year of containerboard and will consume 349,000 tons per year of OCC (70 percent) and

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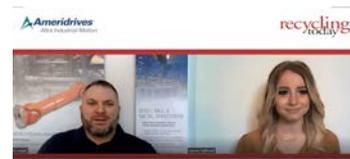
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mixed paper (30 percent). It is expected to open during the second quarter of 2024.

The majority of new capacity increases are for mills producing linerboard and corrugated medium and will use old corrugated containers (OCC) as their primary feedstock. According to NERC, the facilities are unlikely to use mixed paper unless their stock preparation systems allow for its uses, but about half of the announced mills plan to use some mixed paper.

If all projects are completed, they will use more than eight million tons per year of OCC and mixed paper.

The full report can be accessed [online](#).

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