



DOES PRINT THREATEN FORESTS?

There's a very popular myth out there about the relationship between print on paper and forests. You may have even heard your clients say, "Cutting trees for paper threatens forests." Lots of people think this. Many companies have even used this myth to motivate customers to switch from paper bills to electronic bills. But the reality is, it's just not true. Here's why.

Think in Terms of "Tree Farms," Not "Old Growth Forests"

In the U.S. today, trees are grown as a crop. As Bob Lindgren, President of Printing Industries Association, Inc. of Southern California (PIASC) explains, "When we consume vegetables, whether that be wheat, corn, spinach or broccoli, that farmer is going to grow more wheat, corn, spinach and broccoli. In the same way, if we're using paper by putting ink on that paper, this means that a tree farmer is going to grow more trees."

Strong wood markets, including the demand created by print, provide an incentive for private foresters to hold their land rather than sell it for other use. With over half of U.S. forestland being privately owned—and 62% of this private land owned by families and individuals—this financial incentive is vital.¹

"By using print on paper," adds Bob, "we are giving that tree farmer income so that they can manage, renew and take care of that forest in a very responsible manner."

Millions of Trees are Planted Every Day

In spite of the ongoing demand for wood-based products, there are actually more trees in the U.S. today than there were 100 years ago. According to the USDA Forest Service, four million trees are planted every day in the United States. Of this amount, the wood and paper products industry plants an average of 1.7 million trees daily.²

The people who believe that cutting trees for paper threatens forests don't realize that our industry plants more trees than are used. For every tree that is cut down, three or four are planted. The obvious benefits are huge: cleaner air and less carbon footprint. The benefit is not only from a sustainability standpoint for our environment, but also sustainability for the mills. After all, if the mills are going to cut down trees and never replant, they would be going out of business.

Conclusion

The bottom line is, cutting trees for paper does not threaten forests. The real threat to forests is that people will stop using paper, thereby reducing the market for wood products and making it economically unviable for landowners to continue to grow trees.

¹ Two Sides North America, Print and Paper: The Facts.

² Paper Because, Truth or Fiction?, accessed May 2016.