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IN BUSINESS

Paper Maker Writes It On the Wind



Photographs by Stewart Cairns for The New York Times

By JEFF GROSSMAN

WHEN the Nature Conservancy produced its latest annual report, it chose to print it on environmentally sound Mohawk Options paper. General Electric made the same choice, in publishing its first comprehensive “citizenship report.” By manufacturing a line of paper created entirely from recycled material with equipment powered by wind-generated electricity, Mohawk Paper Mills has stepped up to satisfy those with ecologic concerns, showing what a big corporation can do to

support alternative energy sources.

“Paper is a major business decision, there’s no two ways about it,” said Kathleen Jamieson, creative director for the Nature Conservancy, a nonprofit group dedicated to global conservation with headquarters in Arlington, Va. “You’re always seeking to have the quality, the price and the environmentally preferable paper, in this case, come together in the happiest junction.”

Mohawk, headquartered upstate in Cohoes, near Albany, started researching wind power in August 2003. Its initial purchase was from a farm in Fenner, east of Syracuse. Begin-



Paper production at Mohawk Paper Mills in Cohoes. Mohawk executives at a meeting: George Milner, left, Joe O’Connor and Craig Slem.

ning this month with a second contract for wind electricity, largely generated in Wyoming, the company now buys a total of 45,000 megawatt-hours of wind electricity each year. That is enough to support 21 percent of its total power needs for its two mills in New York, and half of the power to run a recently purchased plant in Hamilton, Ohio, according to figures provided by Marion Trieste, a wind power advocate working with the company.

According to the most recent national figures collected by the Environmental Protection Agency, Mohawk is second only to Johnson & Johnson in its use of wind energy for manufacturing, said Kurt Johnson, director of the E.P.A.'s Green Power Partnership.

That level of involvement gives the wind-power movement the kind of impetus it needs to keep growing, said Brent Beerley, vice president of Community Energy, the company that markets the electricity produced from the Fenner turbines. "The more customers that sign up," he said, "the more wind farms get developed, so it's a totally customer-driven market."

Community Energy has also established a wind-power buying pool of municipal and county governments throughout the state. The pool has 51 members, with 17 in Westchester County. In 2003, Croton-on-Hudson was the first in the state to join, and the Village of Pleasantville will start using wind electricity for its municipal offices next month. Both Pound Ridge and Irvington get all of their electricity for municipal operations from wind, according to figures provided by Community Energy. Other corporate buyers in New York, Mr. Beerley said, include Brooklyn Brewery and the Durst Organization, a Manhattan-based real estate development company.

Mohawk already has the capacity to turn out a combined total of 175,000 tons of professional-grade paper every year from its three mills. Of that, 70,000 tons, its Options and Color Copy lines, is produced by using electricity generated from wind farms.

"I would say probably almost every large corporation within the past two or three years has started issuing either environmental performance reports, or what they call cor-



A handful of paper pulp.

Photographs by Stewart Cairns for The New York Times

porate social responsibility reports," said George Milner, a senior vice president of energy, environment and government affairs at Mohawk. "Well, the thing is, when you put out a report like that, you've got to make sure that you put it on media that's consistent with the message."

Mohawk pays a premium to use the wind electricity, which comes to less than half a cent a kilowatt-hour, Mr. Milner said. Because it is impossible to trace the source of the electricity flowing into the mills at any given time, the price of the wind power is allocated to the Mohawk Options and Color Copy lines, and no more of that paper is produced than can be supported by wind electricity.

General Electric used Mohawk Options paper for the cover of its annual report and for the entirety of its new citizenship report, which includes discussions of the company's philanthropic endeavors, diversity efforts and environmental activities. "We feel that we need to use an environmentally responsible paper just to be consistent with our own views," said David Frail, a General Electric spokesman. Microsoft, FedEx Kinko's and Ford Motor Company have all used Mohawk Options paper in their equivalent books. British Petroleum has used it for its annual review of world energy, published this month.

"Corporations are becoming more intelligent about the purchases they're making, and that includes

wood and paper products," said David Ford, a former lobbyist for the forest-products industry who now runs Metafore, a nonprofit group that promotes business activities with minimal forest impact. A study that Metafore released last month shows that 40 of the Fortune 100 companies produce a social responsibility report. Of the same group of businesses, 88 percent considered price a factor when buying paper, while 38 percent looked at the amount of recycled content.

"There's a shift beginning to occur, and that is corporations are becoming more intelligent about the purchasing they're making, and that includes the wood and paper products they buy and use to operate their business, or to offer into the marketplace," he said.

The Mohawk Options paper was also used to print the current prospectus for the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Figures on the back page of the book say that the wind energy used in the paper's production was equal to 45 trees being planted or 736 miles driven in an average car.

"The paper manufacturers, and Mohawk would be a good example, could be the best partner we've got in maximizing the environmentally responsible purchasing of the paper that we use," said Ms. Jamieson of the Nature Conservancy. "They can't do it without us, and we can't do it without them."

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