



The Environmental Impact of Print: Myths vs. Reality

There are many popular misconceptions about the impact that printed materials have on the environment. However, the idea that print is detrimental to the environment is factually wrong.

Myth: Paper is Made from Fresh-Cut Trees

Reality: Paper is Made Primarily from "Waste" Products

In the United States, the vast majority – a full two-thirds – of the fiber used to make paper comes from sources other than fresh-cut trees. One-third comes from wood chips and sawmill scraps, one-third comes from recycled paper and just one-third comes from "new growth" trees.¹

Of course, these statistics are based on industry averages. There are 200 mills in the United States that use recovered fiber exclusively.²

Myth: Print Leads to Deforestation

Reality: Print Promotes Trees

Contrary to commonly-held belief, paper mills are not cutting down old-growth forests in order to make paper. Nearly all the wood used in paper production comes from "tree farms" – acres of trees grown as a renewable crop, like broccoli or wheat. Print actually gives private landowners a financial incentive to grow trees rather than selling off their land for other uses, such as development.³ As Dr. Patrick Moore, Co-Founder of Greenpeace, has stated, "Using wood sends signals to the marketplace to grow more trees."

Myth: The Tree Population is Shrinking

Reality: More Trees and Forests Exist Today Than 20 Years Ago

With the increased demand for printed goods that we've seen over time, many people believe that the forests must be shrinking. This is simply not true. There are 12 million more acres of forest in the U.S. today than there were 20 years ago; between 1953 and 2006 we saw a 49% increase in the number of trees still standing after mortality and harvesting.⁴

¹U.S. EPA, Office of Solid Waste.

²American Forest and Paper Association.

³Edward L. Glaeser, Professor of Economics, Harvard University, "A Road Map for Environmentalism," *Boston Globe*, May 21, 2007.

⁴Down to Earth.