

EcoNotes



SHOREBANK PACIFIC
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An update from ShoreBank Pacific Volume 6, Issue 4 – Winter 2005

We Can't Always Get What We Want, or Need.

By Kathleen Sayce, *Bank Scientist*

Most of this issue is devoted to publications whose content focuses on sustainability issues from several different directions. In this essay I discuss materials that are used to produce those publications, specifically, inks, papers, and paper sources.

EcoNotes is designed to survive mailing, and to be read several times while retaining a good hand, be durable for archiving, and be recycled. This means that the paper is thicker than office papers, and comfortable to hold; it is also matte coated. We use a paper that is 10% hemp/flax, 40% post-consumer waste, 20% pre-consumer waste, and 30% certified sustainably harvested wood, where the recycled fiber is from North America, and the pulp used to make that paper did not travel overseas for sorting, pulping, or papermaking. It is process chlorine-free, and stable. We deliver it by email to about 40% of our readers; printed copies go out by US mail.

All of the publications that we feature in this issue go through a series of similar decisions as they are printed. Part of the query stream is something like this: What recycled content paper can we get with the right hand? Are there suitable soybean-oil based inks available in the colors we need that my printer can use? Will this feel right to the first reader? How about to the fifth reader? How permanent is the paper and the ink when archived as a library copy? What is the source of the pulp? For instance, the pulp might have traveled tens of thousands of miles to get to the location where it was finally made into paper.

Our printer also had many decisions to make, based on desired appearance, inks, stability and printing machinery used to make the publication. The next time you hold a piece of printed paper in your hand, think about what went into printing it: Where the paper came from (original source of fiber; whether and where it was recycled, pulped, and made into new

paper); what the ink choices were like for the publisher and printer; how many people read it before recycling it, if it can be recycled; how it feels to you as a document. Long before you get to layout, content, and publication there were hundreds of decisions made.

Within ShoreBank Pacific, rather than specify a brand of paper, we have chosen to set an internal standard of 100% post-consumer recycled paper for general office use. With offices in several locations, we felt that by specifying this standard, each office is free to find the paper in its area that fits the standard. We also recycle

all the papers used in the offices. Confidential papers are shredded on site and recycled. Other papers are recycled as whole sheets. We have replaced single-side printer/copiers with duplexing units, and ask everyone to print or use both sides of each sheet of paper before recycling it. This also saves on paper.

In addition to the paper EcoNotes is printed on and general office papers, we use mailing envelopes of several sizes and kinds, stationery, and various marketing materials. The

mailers are problematic: small lightweight envelopes are available with recycled content, and can be recycled, but the preprinted mailers from Federal Express, the US Postal Service, and United Parcel Service are not recyclable. That is to say, they are made from recycled fibers, but cannot be recycled because they have glossy paper on one side and kraft fibers on the other.

The geographic source of recycled fibers is not always the same. Some 100% post-consumer fibers (let's call this 100-PCF for simplicity) are sorted out in North America, and, still in North America, are pulped and turned back into new paper stock. Other 100-PCFs are sent as mixed lots to Asia, often to Korea, where they are sorted and pulped, and then come back to the US to become paper once again. This second category

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Prepress work is now computer driven. This issue of EcoNotes shown during preparation.

Year End Thoughts...

David C.E. Williams,
President, ShoreBank Pacific

Reflecting on the last presidential election, I am left with the question that was never asked nor answered: "What is the role of US leadership in a world where we are clearly the dominant empire?"

The US dominates all other countries militarily, culturally, and economically. That dominance can be both positive and negative depending upon its application. Its economic dominance is often viewed negatively when considered from the perspective of consumption, yet the real dominance, mostly positive, is in production. We use Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as a production measure and the US GDP is 1/3 of the world total, equal to the combined GDP of Japan, Germany, and China. The US outsources .4% of its GDP. While not significant to US production, this number is significant to the recipient countries.

With those factors existent, the question which we as a country must face is "How and toward what should the US lead?" Clearly, the answers are "by example" and "toward sustainability".

Sustainability is still being defined. The Natural Step is a good starting point for principles related to the physical/natural environment but there are not similarly well-defined principles for the community and economy legs of sustainability, although the work by Michael Ben-Eli of Cybertec Consulting has real merit.

Because of this immaturity of definition, those of us in the field have to wrestle daily with decisions relative to individual processes and companies. One of the outcomes of that effort is the negative screening system applied by a number of the SRI mutual funds which exclude all companies in certain industries or with certain characteristics. While such screens keep investment from doing harm, they are not particularly helpful in moving companies toward economic and environmental sustainability.

ShoreBank Pacific takes a different approach. We measure companies on where their practices sit on the continuum from "business as usual" to the "sustainable ideal". Such a system, therefore, is not absolute and requires us to grapple with the measurement of every company since none are "all good" or "all bad". The question then becomes "Should we support this company's efforts with our lending 'because' of their good activities 'despite' their less admirable actions, with the goal being to help them move toward more sustainable practices?" This debate is critical because we are committed to our mission of environmental and community health and we report to our stakeholders about every business to which we lend. As a result, we

need to decide if, by working with this company, we are building the sustainability of our communities.

Others may disagree with our assessment and sometimes we disagree internally because of the very nature of this struggle. Nonetheless, we do lend to companies seriously and thoughtfully with the intention of improvement.

What does a tiny bank like ShoreBank Pacific have to do with international leadership? Consider the US economy. While the media focuses on the large publicly traded companies, the real power of the economy is the 3 million little businesses that produce the bulk of the GDP. It is these little companies that employ 97% of all employees in the country. It is these little companies that cause the innovation that results in change in the economy and in products. It is these little companies that, through their diversity, provide the resilience to market changes. And it is these little companies that will move the economy toward sustainability. It is, therefore, that this little bank, in helping those companies define and move toward sustainability, can provide an example for and a forum for the US in defining its role in developing a sustainable world.

In our next issue of EcoNotes we will address particular industries and companies with which we have struggled as we have decided what our role and relationship to them should be.

In 2004, ShoreBank Pacific made loans to companies that fish, process fish, and sell unique fish products; companies that manufacture unique bicycles and bicycle parts and accessories; provide housing for federal criminals returning to society; and provide unique approaches to quality migrant housing. We made loans to companies that manufacture concrete products; install natural stone landscaping; create value-added lumber products in order to make an obsolete sawmill a valuable community asset; and to a national leader in approaches to family care medicine.

Each of these loans had all of the elements of debate about whether the company fostered sustainability. Each company is, in its own way, providing leadership in its industry to improve the sustainability of its and our community. We thank them for providing that leadership.



Getting the Word Out.

Over the past several years we've seen a gratifying increase in the number and quality of publications promoting sustainability. These magazines, books and trade journals are doing a great job of informing, challenging, and creating sustainable communities. We'd like to share some of our favorites with you:

Co-op America

<http://www.coopamerica.org/>

Co-op America is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1982, which provides economic strategies, organizing power and practical tools for businesses and individuals to address today's social and environmental problems. Co-op America is a leading force in educating and empowering our nation's people and businesses to make significant improvements through the economic system.

Co-op America's publications include *National Green Pages*, the largest annual directory of America's leading socially and environmentally responsible businesses; *Co-op America Quarterly*, a nationally acclaimed magazine with information on how consumer power can produce progressive social change; *Boycott Action News*, up-to-date information on new and ongoing boycotts; *Financial Planning Handbook for Responsible Investors*, which helps people make financial decisions that are both "values-added" and meet personal financial needs and goals; and *Co-op America Connections*, which covers the latest information on how socially responsible businesses are responding to today's intensely competitive marketplace.

YES! Magazine

<http://www.yesmagazine.org>

Positive Futures Network is an independent, nonprofit organization supporting people's active engagement in creating a just, sustainable, and compassionate world. The Positive Futures Network (PFN) and its publication, *YES!* magazine, start with the belief that we need deep change if we are to avoid the breakdown of society and the natural world. Powerful innovations are taking hold within agriculture, businesses, criminal justice, schools - virtually every sector of society - yet this work is barely visible in the media and the prevailing political discourse. The work of the Positive Futures Network is to give visibility and momentum to these signs of an emerging society in which life, not money, is what counts; in which everyone matters; and in which vibrant, inclusive communities offer prosperity, security, and meaningful ways of life.

ReDirect Guide

<http://www.redirectguide.com>

The primary purpose at ReDirect, Incorporated is to create tools that will promote the growth of businesses that promote socially responsible, environmentally wise, and healthy lifestyles. The directory lists merchants and organizations that offer environmentally, socially, and

health conscious goods and services in the Portland - Vancouver metropolitan area.

Sustainable Industries Journal

<http://www.sijournal.com>

Sustainable Industries Journal is the Pacific Northwest's first trade publication for sustainable industries. Exploring "economic gain through environmental innovation," SIJ contains engaging news features, hard-hitting special reports and regional news nuggets spanning four core industry sectors: Agriculture & Natural Resources, Energy, Green Building, and Recycled Markets. Their "List of the Month" provides the first-ever detailed look at how businesses and people shaping Northwest sustainable industries rank among their peers. A compilation of lists — ranging from the region's top certified organic farming operations to the region's largest solar power systems — are provided to subscribers each summer in the *Sustainable Industries Overview* book.

Back Home Magazine

www.backhomemagazine.com

Back Home is a great little magazine that delivers useful do-it yourself information on sustainable, self-reliant living. Since 1990, *Back Home* has been the authority for those interested in taking control of their own lives. The bi-monthly issues are packed with information and resources on rural land, mortgage-free building, solar and renewable energy, chemical free gardening, wholesome cooking, home business, home-schooling, small livestock, vehicle and workshop projects, and family activities.

Ecotrust

www.ecotrust.org

The Ecotrust Mission: To Build Salmon Nation. "Citizens of Salmon Nation want to live in a place where economic, ecological, and social conditions are improving, where a 'conservation economy' is emerging." Ecotrust was created in 1991 by a small group of diverse people who sought to bring some of the good ideas emerging around sustainability back to the coastal temperate rain forests of the Pacific Northwest. They set out to characterize the region and articulate a strategy for its prosperity. These efforts are predicated on the notion, gaining an ever-wider currency, that economic and ecological systems are mutually interdependent. To this relationship Ecotrust and others have sought to add a third "e" - social equity - to ensure that economic development awards benefits to all the region's citizens. Economy, ecology, equity: the triple bottom line.

Ecotrust's many publications include *The Forest That Fish Built: Salmon, Timber, and People in Willapa Bay* by Richard Manning and *Salmon Nation: People, Fish, and Our Common Home* edited by Edward C. Wolf and Seth Zuckerman.



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What We Want... *(continued from front page)*

could be called 20K paper; on average it travels 20,000 miles between uses as sheets of paper, across the continent and the Pacific Ocean to Asia and back again. Papers that are recycled in North America travel 5K miles on average. Now it might be cheaper from a cost-of-labor perspective to ship across the Pacific and back, but it's not cheaper from the perspective of energy expended. So we look for non-20K 100-PCF papers for marketing materials, stationery, and other uses. I use the word "look" deliberately. If we can't get 100-PCF for printing, we look for virgin fibers to come from FSC-certified sources, or non-wood, organic sources.

Inks have changed a lot over the years. Printing inks have two main components, pigment and vehicle (solvent base), with other additives. At one time, pigments came from several different metals in several oxidation states, carbon black and colored earths; mixed with vegetable oil solvents to thin them out to the proper consistency. Many of the most brilliant pigments were seriously toxic, being composed of heavy metals. As fossil fuels came into widespread use, vegetable oils were phased out and replaced by a series of petroleum-based compounds. Toxic solvent exposure became a hazard of printing, along with heavy metal exposure. Organic chemistry came up with new formulations for pigments, using complex organic compounds linked to metals to produce a wide range of brilliant colors, improving stability and in some cases reducing toxicity.

A few decades ago, research into the negative human health impacts of prolonged solvent exposure revealed that a range of organic solvents were responsible. These include benzene, toluene, several alcohols and others, too numerous to list here. Chemists began to work on

alternatives, and came up with soybean oil bases, and water bases to provide alternative printing solutions. Today, soybean oil vehicles are available for a range of printing applications on glossy papers. But these solvents are not completely free of petroleum-based chemicals, which provide proper drying speed, adhesion and flow characteristics.

The best we can get right now is a reduction in the amount of petroleum solvent in any particular ink, and this is what we ask our printers to do. Between 10 and 40% soybean oil is typical for most printing applications. The reasons are twofold: printing times are often very fast, so drying must be fast, and some papers are reluctant hold ink, especially glossy papers. The printer's dilemma is to juggle ink, paper, print speed and drying time. They are constantly working out new formulas for printing runs as paper content changes, ink formulations change and customer preferences change, among other variables. Like all of us, they would prefer to work this out once and stay with it; the constant shifts are a source of much printerly frustration.

For decades the "paperless transformation of society" has been foretold. We might get there someday, but the reality is that our species prefers sight to other senses, and tactile + sight where possible. Hard copy will be with us for some time to come; it's up to us to make it low impact as to fiber sources, efficient as to energy used to make, distribute and recycle, and as low in toxicity as possible, while keeping our publications relevant, readable and attractive. That's a lot to accomplish in a few sheets of paper. Enjoy.