

**ENVIRONMENTAL PAPER NETWORK'S
REDUCING PAPER CONSUMPTION INITIATIVE**
NORTH AMERICA
YEAR ONE REPORT

FOUR PROJECTS OFFERING SOLUTIONS TO THE
WASTEFUL OVERCONSUMPTION OF PAPER

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PAPER NETWORK'S REDUCING PAPER CONSUMPTION INITIATIVE

Following the principle of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, there are many opportunities for more efficient paper use to be part of environmental action and achievement for individuals and organizations across the United States. Four projects carried out in 2017-2018 as part of an Environmental Paper Network coordinated initiative are inspirational and informative models for scaling up and expanding source reduction efforts across the country.

The U.S. paper industry has huge resource and environmental impacts. Along with being a major consumer of the U.S. and global industrial wood harvest, it is the nation's largest industrial user and polluter of water and is tied for fourth in energy use by industry. The American Forest and Paper Association calculated that over 22 million tons of paper entered U.S. landfills in 2017.

The Environmental Paper Network and its members have reducing the wasteful consumption of paper as the first pillar of the *Global Paper Vision* for the conservation, climate, and social justice benefits this change delivers. People in the U.S. use four times as much paper as the global per person average and modest gains in paper saving are threatened by the large increase in the use of packaging in e-commerce. In 2017 with support from the *Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund*, the Environmental Paper Network (EPN) and several U.S. groups launched the Reducing Paper Consumption Initiative to ramp up the critically-needed education and engagement of the U.S. public on paper overconsumption and waste. This report shares information about the work and impact of each of the groups in the first year of the Initiative.



THE PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP INSTITUTE/ PHONE BOOK OPT-OUT CAMPAIGN:

It takes about 4.7 million trees per year to print U.S. phone books, many of which are thrown out as soon as they're delivered. Phone books also burden governments and taxpayers, who spend about \$60 million annually for their disposal and recycling. To reduce this waste, **the Product Stewardship Institute (PSI)**, which works to reduce the health, safety, and environmental impacts of consumer products, has been driving reform in the phone book industry since 2006.

Its current project focuses on the industry's own phone book opt-out website, with PSI driving both consumers' use of the site and the industry's accountability when consumers use it. Through outreach and sharing resources from its **online Phone Book Opt-Out Toolkit**, PSI has motivated over 24,000 phone book opt-outs across the U.S. during the project. That's a greenhouse gas savings equivalent to 480,000 vehicle miles if the industry follows through. PSI is surveying people about their experience using the industry's opt-out site and whether their phone book deliveries stop after they use it, information that is critical to holding the industry accountable for opt-outs.



Separately from this project, PSI has also begun work on a new initiative on extended producer responsibility (EPR) to make paper and packaging companies responsible for their products all the way through their ultimate waste or recycling. PSI is currently focused on educating municipal waste managers, haulers, recyclers, producers to increase understanding about what packaging EPR is, how it works, and how we get there, while dispelling myths and addressing fears. This spring, PSI created the **first in a series of infographics** aimed at educating and getting feedback and input from stakeholders in Connecticut, where state administrators have considered EPR as one of the tools in their toolbox for recovering and recycling the 40 percent of the waste stream that packaging represents.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- Continue offering the Phone Book Opt-Out Toolkit online, with resources for individuals, local governments, community leaders, etc.
- Share the results of the survey on people's opt-out experience and industry accountability with the industry site. PSI will publish the survey results and share the information on social media and in its newsletter. PSI will also distribute the results directly to the Local Search Association and major phone book publishers to demand that they improve their opt-out website and ultimately honor people's opt-outs.
- Grow PSI's new initiative on extended producer responsibility to make paper and packaging companies responsible for their products all the way through their ultimate disposal.
- Get extended producer responsibility legislation passed in multiple states.

GREEN AMERICA/ SKIP THE SLIP

Every year 12.4 million trees and 13 billion gallons of water go into making paper receipts in the U.S., and 4 billion pounds of CO₂ are released in their production. The vast majority of paper receipts are also coated with BPA and BPS, with health consequences especially for the workers handling them all day long, but also for customers and anyone else who touches them. **Green America**, which works with consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace to increase social justice and environmental sustainability, created the **Skip the Slip campaign** to reverse the waste of natural resources and health harms of paper receipts. Skip the Slip drives the market toward receipt opt-outs, digital, and non-toxic receipts.



Green America has reached out to several major retailers regarding starting or expanding digital receipt programs and adopting non-toxic options for customers who want paper receipts. Green America released the ***Skip the Slip Report: Environmental Costs & Human Health Risks of Paper Receipts with Proposed Solutions***. The report had 5,000 views its first month. Within the report, they grade the receipt practices of 17 companies. This scorecard has been widely shared through social media and press releases, and earned the attention of some of the companies. Green America will continue to use the attention the report generates as leverage to push these conversations forward. As more pressure may be needed to move the industry, Skip the Slip

is exploring the potential of a targeted focus on a major retailer to drive that company and the rest of the industry to make these needed reforms. The campaign has also interviewed digital receipt companies about their products and experience working with retailers in order to bring this state of the industry knowledge into the campaign.

Skip the Slip also engages the public with the Skip the Slip pledge for individuals and support for workers and businesses owners interested in moving their workplaces away from paper receipts and toxic chemicals. Over 190,000 people have been reached by the campaign in the project period, through the pledge, web page views, and other engagement.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- Connect with at least five major retailers and compel at least two to take steps to reduce or eliminate their paper receipts.
- If dialogue and assistance fail to engage companies, conduct consumer campaigns calling on their 250,000+ consumer activists and the general public to demand target companies make the switch to paperless receipts.
- Reach at least 1 million consumers through digital and social media, articles, blogs, Green America's e-newsletters, website, Green American magazine, and their organization-wide efforts to reach new, younger, and more diverse audiences.
- Work with their Green Business Network members to assist more of them in reducing receipt waste.
- Gather more case studies (from the Green Business Network and beyond) of successful implementation of Green America's three-part receipt-reduction solution to encourage all companies to follow suit.
- Reach out to unions representing retail workers to explore potential partnerships with them around reducing toxins in the workplace through moving employers to digital and non-toxic receipts.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AASHE) AND ROOT SOLUTIONS/ TURNING THE PAGE ON CAMPUS PAPER USE:

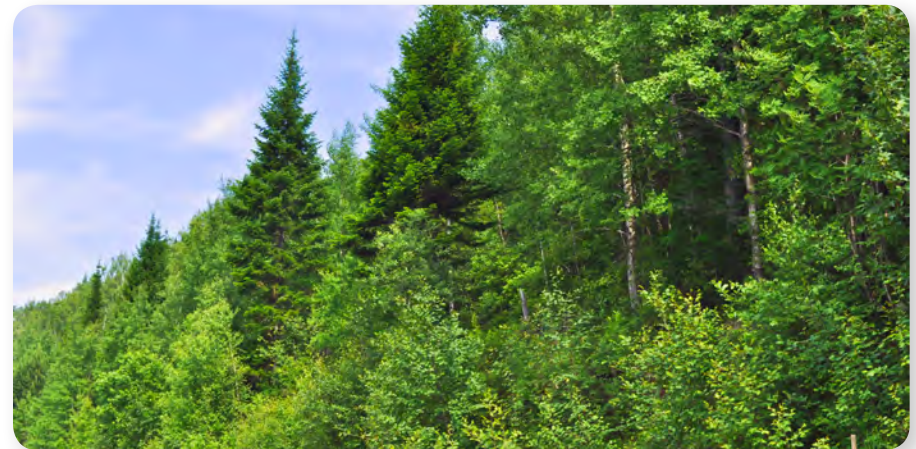
Campuses are a key place for paper-saving as many U.S. colleges and universities use millions of pieces of paper each year, and research shows that approximately a third of these are thrown away immediately after printing or are never even picked up. Campuses have also created powerful paper saving systems. To tap into these opportunities, the **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)** and **Root Solutions** are partnering on the **Turning the Page on Campus Paper Use project** to help colleges and universities create tailored paper saving projects. This project brings together AASHE's expertise in supporting institutions of higher education as they advance their sustainability and Root Solutions' expertise in using behavior design to solve environmental problems.

In this partnership, the organizations are working together and with sustainability staff from different campuses to teach them how to use a human-centered design process and behavioral science to change the way students, faculty and administration interact with paper. They started with a group of 11 campuses that came together for a day-long training at AASHE's 2017 conference. Since then, Root Solutions and AASHE have been offering training and guidance through group webinars and one-on-one assistance to each school as they conducted surveys to determine barriers to specific paper-saving behaviors. Most campuses are currently in the process of analyzing their barriers analysis and choosing which interventions they will implement, while some campuses have completed their barrier analyses and have already begun to implement their campaigns. The partners are also creating a Turning the Page toolkit, including lessons learned and actionable insights so that other campuses can implement their own strategically designed paper saving initiatives. AASHE and Root Solutions are also seeking to recruit

a second cohort of campuses to implement behavior-based paper saving campaigns, this time with an extended timeline to allow more time for campuses to collect and analyze their baseline data and barriers surveys. The partners are learning how to design this project to better take into account the multiple demands sustainability staff are balancing, as well as the institutional review some campuses require for surveys and other communications.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- Double the number of colleges and universities in the Turning the Page on Campus Paper Use program.
- Offer schools more training on how to choose which paper-saving behaviors to focus on and how to engage key campus stakeholders at the beginning of their projects.
- Work with campuses over three semesters (rather than two) to allow for more data collection and analysis, which will lead to more tailored and successful strategies.
- Expand and enhance the Turning the Page toolkit and make it available for any interested school.
- Report on the measured impacts of the interventions that were tested in the original group of campuses in the Turning the Page on Campus Paper Use program.



THE STORY OF STUFF PROJECT/ CATALOG CHOICE

Americans receive an average of 40 pounds of unwanted catalogs, credit card offers, and other junk mail per year. 100 million trees are cut down to produce junk mail, and production and recycling of it also uses 28 billion gallons of water and creates as much CO₂ as nine million cars. **The Story of Stuff Project**, which is benefitting people and the planet by transforming the way we make, use, and throw away consumer goods, is the home of the **Catalog Choice project** which helps people, businesses, and communities opt-out of junk mail.

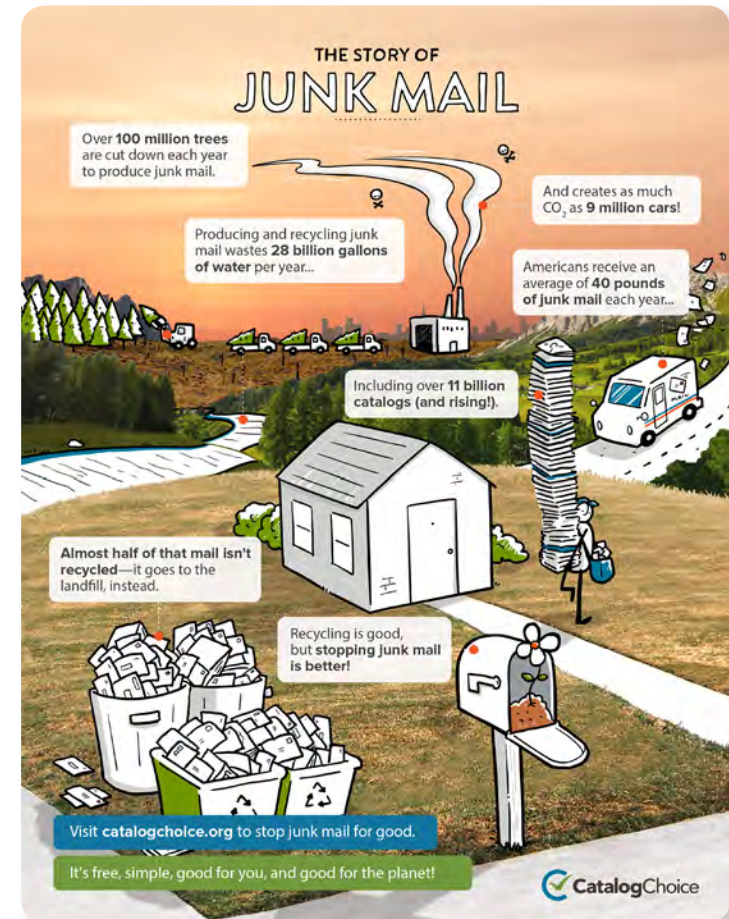
Catalog Choice hosts an online catalog and junk mail opt-out platform and also partners with cities, businesses, and others to promote opt-outs. During the project period Catalog Choice has achieved about 915,000 opt-outs, saving approximately 15,000 tons of wood and 100,000,000 gallons of water, through a combination of efforts. The project partnered with GreeNYC, New York City's office of sustainability, and created tailored software to help residents opt out of junk mail. 50,000 New Yorkers used this software to opt out in 2017, which is half of the 100,000 total opt-outs associated with GreeNYC. The project has also developed reporting tools to audit compliance by merchants and has used the tool to update multiple non-compliant merchants. Catalog Choice has also created **resources** like posters that supporters can print on recycled paper and post on social media themselves, part of their work to engage more people in not only opting out themselves but sharing the message with others.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- Increase work to enforce companies' compliance with Catalog Choice.
- Further ramp up marketing of Catalog Choice to reach new audiences.
- Improvements to the Catalog Choice site to make it even easier for people to sign up and manage their opt-outs.
- Expand support and resources for sustainability

consultants who use Catalog Choice's platform to offer mail stopping services to municipalities and corporate campuses

- Pursue additional partnerships with significant opt-out potential. For example, Catalog Choice is close to creating a partnership with a residential building manager interested in incorporating Catalog Choice into his residential services app for 1.7 million building occupants.
- Develop new program resources – for example, a guide to hosting an "opt-out house party" – to help engaged changemakers do more.



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ENVIRONMENTAL PAPER NETWORK/ REDUCING PAPER CONSUMPTION INITIATIVE COORDINATION

In support of the *Global Paper Vision*, the key work of paper saving groups, and the particular need to reform paper use in the U.S., the Environmental Paper Network (EPN) is working to support and amplify the efforts of these initiative groups and others in coordinating the Reducing Paper Consumption Initiative. The aim is to benefit the individual projects, the organizations, and the effort as a whole.

In the first year of the project EPN has provided opportunities for skills, resource, and success sharing among organizations in the U.S. EPN also facilitated connections between U.S. and international work, including co-hosting an international EPN Summit in China with a key focus on paper consumption, especially around packaging. The initiative has also promoted paper saving through blogs and social media, on EPN's own channels as well as major outlets such as **TreeHugger** and **Care2**, and begun outreach to large government recycling entities. We have produced a *Paper Saving Fact Sheet* which makes the case for organizations to adopt paper reduction strategies and offers case studies from businesses, non-profits, and government agencies who have done so and reaped the many benefits. EPN also partnered with the Green Sports Alliance in creating the *Paper Playbook* to encourage paper saving in sports and entertainment venues.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- Launch a large-scale communications campaign to raise public awareness of the benefits of paper efficiency and reduction and to build support for individual, local, state, and national paper saving policies and practices.
- Connect key state and national recycling and zero-waste leaders with the work and resources of these four projects and other EPN member organizations and

facilitate the integration of paper reduction practices with state-level source reduction goals.

- Expand the coalition of paper saving groups who are working in a coordinated way and facilitate resource, strategy, networking and skills sharing. The four projects in this cohort are just a portion of the work being pursued by many EPN member organizations.
- Promote paper reduction with the new *Paper Playbook* and *Paper Saving Fact Sheet*.

For more information, contact us:

EPN North America

Phone: **828-251-8558**

Email: anne@environmentalpaper.org

Web: environmentalpaper.org

Facebook: [facebook.com/WhatsInYourPaper](https://www.facebook.com/WhatsInYourPaper)

Twitter: [@whatsnyourpaper](https://twitter.com/whatsnyourpaper)

