A Call For Responsible Paper in Textbooks

Textbooks are a foundation for learning throughout all grade levels and paper is a key material which supports this process. Given that the virtues of education are meant to cultivate productive and responsible future citizens, it is logical that the paper used in textbooks be produced with the utmost of social and environmental integrity. Accordingly, as concerned educational stakeholders, we are asking all book publishers of textbooks and educational materials to produce books with paper that contains the best environmental attributes possible.

Why Paper and Textbooks?
It is estimated that global growth in pulp, paper, and publishing will increase by 77% between 1995 and 2020 and it has come to our attention that this rate of increase is impacting rare and threatened forest types and communities tied to them in North America and beyond. In the Canadian Boreal Forest, for example, it is estimated that 65% of the trees cut are used to make paper and nearly 80% is consumed in the U.S. marketplace. In the Southeast U.S., forest conversion is taking place at a rapid rate—with natural and biodiverse forests being converted to chemically managed pine plantations. In the face of these impacts, in the printing and writing sector, recycled fiber utilization still stands at less than ten percent. These factors underscore a need to improve the environmental impacts of the paper used in textbooks whose annual consumption is estimated to be 200,000 tons per year.

The Global Warming Connection
It is estimated that nearly 40% of materials found in landfills are paper products—with nearly 4 million tons of office paper landfilled or incinerated in 2004. As this paper degrades, it produces methane—a greenhouse gas with 21 times the heat trapping power of carbon dioxide. As publishers and others increase their use of recycled fiber, it serves to expand the market for this fiber and thereby pull it out of landfills. Using recycled fiber also serves to reduce pressure on forests—and by reducing the demand for virgin fiber, the use of recycled fiber in paper can reduce the frequency at which trees are cut and increase the total stock of carbon in forests. Recycled paper also helps maintain the stock of carbon stored in paper by reusing it multiple times.

Using the Most Ecologically Responsible Materials for Books

Recycled Fiber: It is estimated by Environmental Defense's Paper Calculator that each ton of recycled fiber that replaces a ton of virgin fiber saves the equivalent of 17-24 trees, 2,208 to 3,206 pounds of greenhouse gases and approximately 5,000 to10,000 gallons of water—depending on the process used to make it. Accordingly, we call upon textbook publishers to maximize the use of recycled fiber in book paper over the next three to five years—striving for a 30% recycled content level (majority postconsumer waste), provided the appropriate MSST standards can be met.

Fiber From Forests Managed to the Best Standards: Even with increased recycled fiber, the majority of the fiber in textbooks will still come from forests. Accordingly, we ask that this fiber be verified not to originate from Endangered or High Conservation Value Forests and that the fiber in the paper originates from 3rd party certified well managed forests. Currently Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is widely accepted as the best practice in forest management and as such, FSC certified paper is preferred.

Minimizing Production Impacts
In addition to using the most ecologically responsible fibers possible, we urge publishers to use papers that are Processed Chlorine Free and to print books with soy-based inks.

Closing
We know that clear market signals are crucial in order for new products to be developed at the necessary scale which will allow for cost competitiveness. We anticipate that future bid solicitations and contract negotiations will require textbooks to be produced with recycled and credibly certified fiber and intend for this letter to represent a critical mass and be proactive in its message.

Filling out the information below serves as a formal endorsement for this Statement on Paper in Textbooks.

Organization:_____ Contact: _____ Date:_____

To sign this statement online, please visit http://www.greenpressinitiative.org/
or send an email to Todd@greenpressinitiative.org.