

# Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation: Industry leaders recognize statewide economic contributions of Wisconsin's paper manufacturers

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**MADISON, WI. August 5, 2019**—Officials from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) visited three paper plants and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point today to draw attention to the release of a new report showing the importance of the paper industry to the state's economy.

Drawing on national industry data, the study by the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology (WIST) at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point found Wisconsin ranks first in the nation in the number of paper mills, the number of industry employees and the value of products sold. [Read the full report on the economic contribution of Wisconsin's paper industry.](#)

According to the study, Wisconsin's pulp, paper and converting industries directly generated \$18.2 billion in economic output and employed more than 30,000 workers in 2018. The paper industry's total contributions to Wisconsin's economy—including direct, indirect and induced benefits—came to more than \$28.8 billion and more than 95,000 jobs.

The study also found that 41 of the state's 72 counties are home to at least one paper manufacturing business, whether that is a mill or a converter. In some counties, paper manufacturing represents more than 20% of local manufacturing activity.

“The paper industry continues to play a key role in Wisconsin’s manufacturing economy,” said Governor Tony Evers. “The WIST report provides a prime example of how Wisconsin businesses are incorporating innovation and sustainability to maintain our role as a national—and global—leader..”

Scott Suder, president of the Wisconsin Paper Council, thanked WEDC for sponsoring the report.

“We are pleased to have been able to partner with WEDC and WIST on this important economic survey project,” said Suder. “This economic survey is an important tool that we can utilize to highlight the strength and sustainability of our industry to regulators, thought leaders and the public. We want to thank WEDC and WIST for all of their efforts to highlight the importance of the papermaking industry to our state and nation.”

State leaders began their visits at ND Paper’s Biron Division, where company officials discussed details of their previously announced \$189 million strategic investment to add recycled pulping capacity and convert one of the facility’s two paper machines from lightweight coated papers to containerboard grades.

“We are extremely pleased to contribute to the enduring legacy of pulp and papermaking in the state of Wisconsin,” said Group Deputy Chairman and CEO Ken Liu. “Our strategic investments establish the Biron Division as a leading North American producer of recycled pulp, packaging grades, and printing and writing papers. Furthermore, by utilizing recovered paper as a primary raw material, it serves as a great example of sustainability in our industry.”

The next stop was UW-Stevens Point, where WIST works with paper manufacturers and converters on projects ranging from new product development to training and testing services. WIST is part of the College of Natural Resources, which includes programs in paper science and chemical engineering that prepare students for successful careers in the paper and chemical manufacturing industries.

“These programs provide students in the paper science and chemical engineering majors with high-impact professional experiences and are an important part of UW-Stevens Point’s mission to be relevant and responsive to industry,” said Christine Thomas, dean of the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point.

The leaders also visited the renovated North America headquarters of Ahlstrom-

Munksjö, where company officials described the important role specialty paper products play around the world. (The Finnish company purchased the former Expera Specialty Solutions in 2018.)

“We are proud to be a part of Wisconsin’s rich papermaking history for almost 140 years,” said Addie Teeters, head of marketing and communications for Ahlstrom-Munksjö’s North American facilities. “The innovation our industry is seeing is outstanding. We make smart things out of fiber—and sustainability and innovation are core to the products we are making from food packaging to building and construction materials for customers around the globe.”

The visits concluded at Green Bay Packaging in Green Bay, where construction is under way on a new \$500 million mill.

“Green Bay Packaging is proud to be part of Wisconsin’s papermaking past, present and exciting future,” said Matt Szymanski, vice president of mill operations. “Our company’s investment at our Green Bay mill location will incorporate the latest papermaking technology and process design, focusing on employee safety and engagement, environmental stewardship, and industry-leading product quality.”

Mark R. Hogan, secretary and CEO of WEDC, noted that in addition to sponsoring the WIST study, WEDC has provided financial assistance to all three of the paper companies highlighted today.

“These companies are national and global leaders in the truest sense,” Hogan said. “They are investing in Wisconsin, investing in their communities and investing in the future. WEDC is pleased to support their efforts.”

The report concludes that Wisconsin’s paper industry is better positioned than many of its peers to meet demands for new products due to investments in plant upgrades, technological advances and improved worker training.

“Industry leaders say they are optimistic about the future. Growing consumer concerns about the use of plastic, from straws to single-use bags to food packaging, is creating new opportunities for paper-based materials, while the growth of e-commerce, or the ‘Amazon effect,’ has also created opportunities by increasing demand for shipment packaging,” the report states.