



Partnership Between Great Lakes Tissue, Carton Council, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, as part of NextCycle and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Will Improve Recycling Infrastructure in Michigan

CHEBOYGAN, Mich., July 25, 2022 – With an eye on constantly evolving to be even more sustainable, Michigan-based paper mill, Great Lakes Tissue, sought to recycle more food and beverage cartons, and to find a better use for the small percentage of polyethylene (plastic) and poly/aluminum in cartons. Great Lakes Tissue has been utilizing 100% recycled materials to make tissue products for approximately 30 years, including cartons and other post-consumer products. Made primarily of paper and containing some of the highest quality fiber in the recycling stream, recycled food and beverage cartons can be used to make new paper products (as well as sustainable construction materials in other facilities).

This led to a collaboration between [Great Lakes Tissue](#), [the Carton Council of North America](#), and the [Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy \(EGLE\)](#), a part of [NextCycle Michigan](#), to help improve the infrastructure for recycling and manufacturing in the state. The [Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development \(MDARD\)](#) also provided matching funds for the project.

Funding from the Carton Council, EGLE and MDARD provided the paper mill with new equipment to better handle the poly and poly/aluminum residual from the pulping process. In addition to allowing the company to process more cartons, the new equipment also removes more moisture from the polyethylene and poly/aluminum, decreasing its weight significantly and allowing for more efficient transport with lower greenhouse gas emissions. The company is also able to recapture the water and recycle it back into the process for reuse.

“The new equipment has allowed us to reduce the water content in our material from 65% to 17%, far exceeding our goal of 25%,” said Julie LaFond, plant engineer and general project manager, Great Lakes Tissue. “This lower moisture allows for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as we can haul the same volume of materials in fewer loads.”

“This is a great example of our mission to support efforts to build a robust circular economy in Michigan through partnerships and innovation,” said Matt Flechter, recycling market development specialist, EGLE. “We encourage our residents to recycle their food and beverage cartons to meet the increased demand for cartons. The close proximity of Great Lakes Tissue provides an option right here in our backyard for cartons to have a second life as new paper products, reinforcing the value behind our recycling programs.”

“MDARD is proud to invest in technology helping reduce food and beverage cartons from ending up in landfills while supporting a Michigan-based business,” said Gary McDowell, director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. “This is a great model of the innovation that can happen when public agencies and private businesses collaborate to improve the infrastructure for recycling and manufacturing to combat climate change.”

“Our goal is to keep cartons out of landfills and ensure they are able to go on to have a second life,” said Jason Pelz, VP of recycling projects, Carton Council North America and VP of sustainability, U.S. Canada, Central America and Caribbean for Tetra Pak. “We are delighted to help fund these efforts and believe it is a model that could be replicated in other locations.”

The small amount of poly/aluminum residue is currently sent to St. Mary’s Cement in Charlevoix where it offsets the use of coal as fuel, further helping the environment versus being sent to landfill. Great Lakes Tissues is continuing to explore alternative uses for the material with a goal of eventually using it to make new products.

Food and beverage cartons are highly recyclable materials that come in two kinds: refrigerated cartons that store, milk, juice and egg substitutes; and shelf-stable cartons that are packaged for broths, milks, juices, soups and even wine. Made mostly from paper, a renewable resource, cartons have become popular containers for food and beverage products as they are lightweight and compact, with a low carbon footprint.

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ABOUT GREAT LAKES TISSUE

Great Lakes Tissue Company is a manufacturer of 100% recycled tissue and towel products located in Cheboygan, MI. Our parent rolls and converted products are catered to the away from home market with an emphasis on consistent quality, timely delivery, and excellent value. Our goal is to provide you with a product that is unsurpassed for its combination of quality, dependability, and excellent value for the money. Here at GLT we also take pride in protecting our natural resources. In addition to being manufactured from pre- and post-consumer content materials, we generate much of our own power through our in-house hydroelectric generators. All our products exceed the Environmental Protection Agency’s recommended guidelines for recycled towel and tissue products.

ABOUT MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT, GREAT LAKES, AND ENERGY

Working side-by-side with partners at local, regional, state and federal levels, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) safeguards our state’s environment while supporting economic growth and development crucial for Michigan’s future.

ABOUT THE CARTON COUNCIL

The Carton Council is composed of four leading carton manufacturers, Elopak, Pactiv Evergreen, SIG and Tetra Pak. Formed in 2009, the Carton Council works to deliver long-term collaborative solutions in order to divert valuable cartons from the landfill. Through a united effort, the Carton Council is committed to building a sustainable infrastructure for carton recycling nationwide and works toward their continual goal of adding access to carton recycling throughout the U.S.

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