

## Woody Harrelson: Wheat-Based Paper From Canada Can Start Forest Industry Revolution

CP | By Dirk Meissner, The Canadian Press  
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Prairie Pulp and Paper Inc., produces paper made from waste wheat straw and Woody Harrelson said he wants to get in on the movement that will see North America's first non-wood pulp-and-paper mill set up in Manitoba. ALAMY

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VICTORIA - Actor Woody Harrelson has played every character from a gullible bartender to an irascible porn publisher to the drunken hero in *The Hunger Games*, but in real life he wants to be a paper industry revolutionary who saves forests from chainsaws.

Harrelson, on the phone from Atlanta, Ga., where he's filming the sequel to *The Hunger Games* and reprising his role as the heavy drinking Haymitch Abernathy, says his support of Manitoba-based Prairie Pulp and Paper Inc., is not an act.

Prairie Pulp and Paper Inc., produces paper made from waste wheat straw and Harrelson said he wants to get in on the movement that will see North America's first non-wood pulp-and-paper mill set up in Manitoba.

"When we build a plant there in Manitoba, it's going to be 100-per-cent wood free. . . really from agricultural waste," said Harrelson, a two-time Academy Award nominee. "I'd like to see a revolution in the paper industry and I think this is an important part of that process."

Prairie Pulp and Paper has commissioned an environmental study that concludes the company's recently launched Step Forward wheat-based paper has the least amount of environmental impact among North American copy papers, including 100-per-cent recycled paper.

Step Forward paper, currently made in India with 80 per cent waste wheat straw and 20 per cent wood fibres, has been available at more than 330 Staples stores across Canada since last summer.

Of the seven categories studied, Step Forward was found to have the lowest environmental impacts with regards to non-renewable energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, wastewater volume and aquatic acidification.

Vancouver-based Offsetters was commissioned by Prairie Pulp and Paper Inc. to conduct the environmental study.

James Tansey, president of Offsetters, said straw-based copy paper is an innovative product that uses waste wheat straw from the agriculture industry and transforms it for use in papermaking.

"We feel confident putting our brand on their claims," said Tansey.

Offsetters was the first official supplier of carbon offsets in the history of the Olympics during Vancouver's 2010 Winter Games.

Harrelson, known for his strict vegan diet and support for anything that involves hemp, said he wants to save trees, which is why he supports making paper from waste wheat because it doesn't involve logging forests.

"I'd like to see it get to the point where we never use trees to make paper because to me it's just a barbaric way to make it," he said. "It'd be nice to just stop using the forest. I hope people don't lose their jobs or can transition into other jobs, but to me, we've taxed the forest enough."

Prairie Pulp and Paper President Jeff Golfman said his \$500 million project could employ 300 people and require between 300,000 and 400,000 tonnes of straw each year.

"This is a huge step forward for our project and for the prospect of making paper in Manitoba that would support Manitoba farmers. We're very excited to be where we are right now," he said in a statement.

Canopy, a Vancouver-based not-for-profit environmental organization, has been supporting the development of a straw-paper industry in North America for more than a decade.

Last year, Canopy helped publish a limited edition straw-paper version of Margaret Atwood's *In Other Worlds*, her collection of science-fiction stories.

Canopy says 90 per cent of logging in Canada occurs in old growth forests and roughly 50 per cent of what's cut goes into paper production. Canopy says making paper from leftover straw can protect forest and create new revenues for farmers and new green jobs in rural communities.

But The Forest Products Association of Canada, the voice of Canada's wood, pulp and paper producers, said the forest industry has made huge strides when it comes to environmental sustainability and continues to explore more improvements.

Canada's forest products industry is worth \$57 billion dollars annually and directly employs 230,000 Canadians in 200 communities.

The association's environmental director, Bob Larocque, said the industry strives to use every piece of timber it harvests, including using wood chips to make paper and turning bark and wood residues into biomass energy that is sold on the electrical power grid.

Some forest operations are turning tree sludges into biogas that powers their mills, he said.

"We're very proud that we don't waste anything," said Larocque. "We use every part of the tree that we harvest. We're really becoming more like a bio-refinery, an integrated industry."

Larocque said he hasn't personally studied straw-based paper, but cautioned that paper needs wood fibres to ensure strength and quality.

There's also questions about the availability of waste wheat to make the paper, he said.

"I think it's going to be a niche product," said Larocque.

Harrelson said he expects the forest industry to protect itself but is convinced wheat-based paper "is an idea whose time has come."

He said he started supporting environmental causes in the 1980s when he was part of the cast of the hit TV comedy Cheers.

He said he attended an American Oceans event on behalf of fellow Cheers cast member Ted Danson, and was hooked.

"I've always felt a strong connection to nature," said Harrelson.