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LAND USE

Woody Harrelson, Sustainable Paper Salesman

The laid back Hollywood actor is serious about preventing deforestation. A new kind of paper that uses wheat straw rather than wood might be one of the best way to save trees.

By Bryan Walsh @bryanwalsh | June 21, 2013 | [Add a Comment](#)

You might hear that we're supposedly entering the post-paper age—it's all PDFs and tablets from here—but I for one still have paper laying around my desk. A lot of it. In fact, before I began this post, I had to go fill up the paper cartridge for shared printer. And while I realize that a print magazine may use more paper than the average business, about **70 millions tons of paper and paperboard** are used in the U.S. each year—and 33% of that comes from whole trees or other plants. Around the world, some **4 billion trees** are cut down each year to make paper

Woody Harrelson is trying to change that. The Academy Award-nominated actor is a longtime environmentalist, and trees are his passion. "Ever since I was pulled into the environmental world, protecting trees and stopping deforestation has really been a calling for me," Harrelson told me in a phone call last weekend. Most of his work has been political, lobbying the government to restrict logging in the wilderness. But whenever he and his activist allies would succeed in preventing logging in one forest, paper companies would move to another. Harrelson realized that he needed to do something about demand and supply. "The thing to do is change the supply," he says. "We need to change the way that paper is made."

And that's how Woody Harrelson got into the paper business. Harrelson is a co-founder and investor in Prairie Pulp and Paper, a Canadian-based company that is developing a new form of paper that is made up of 80% wheat-straw waste, along with 20% Forest Stewardship Council certified wood fiber. It's called **Step Forward Paper**, and earlier this week the company announced that it would now be available in the U.S. at **Staples**. For every two boxes of Harrelson's paper that is used to replace conventional copy paper, users will be able to save one tree—so if Step Forward gains a market niche, forests could be saved. "It's going to happen slowly at first, but we think this could really crescendo," says Jeff Golfman, the president of Prairie Pulp and Paper.

Right now the paper is made at a mill in India, but if Step Forward catches on, the company plans to open a factory here in North America. Harrelson hopes to see his company grow. "I'm one of those people who just became attached to the forest," he says. "The knowledge that those forests could one day be gone because of clear-cutting is just too painful for me. We need to do something



PHOTO BY RAWTOGRAPHER

Woody Harrelson poses with the new Step Forward paper

about this.” And for Harrelson, the best thing to do is become a paper salesman. So at least he’s got something to fall back on if this Hollywood thing doesn’t work out.



Bryan Walsh @bryanwalsh

Bryan Walsh is a senior editor at TIME.

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