

Save a Forest: Print Your Emails

It's okay to use paper. Trees are renewable, recyclable and sustainable.

by Chuck Leavell and Carlton Owen

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Well-intentioned email taglines inspired by sincere desire to help the planet have become ubiquitous in recent times: "Please don't print this email," "Save trees: Print only when necessary," or "Please consider the environment before printing this email."

However, the World Wildlife Fund has taken this to the extreme with a new nonprintable electronic document. Patterned after the highly successful PDF (Portable Document Format) that has revolutionized electronic document sharing and storage, the WWF format takes the decision away from you.

This tact is sure to frustrate and increase inefficiency, leaving some saying, "Wait a minute, I really needed to print that document!" What many folks don't realize is that it also may indirectly hasten the conversion of forests to other uses like strip malls, parking lots and housing developments—because the nation's forest landowners can't keep growing trees without markets for this natural, organic and renewable product.

Chuck's email tagline reads: "Notice: It's OK to print this email. Paper is a biodegradable,



renewable, sustainable product made from trees. Growing and harvesting trees provides jobs for millions of Americans. Working forests are good for the environment and provide clean air and water, wildlife habitat and carbon storage. Thanks to improved forest management, we have more trees in America today than we had 100 years ago."

Now, understand that we don't advocate wanton waste of paper or any other material, but avoiding the print option does absolutely nothing to save the planet or forests. More forests are dying of insect infestation and disease or being paved over across this country right now than could be converted to an email print-out in a thousand years.

Paper is good. Around 105 A.D., man discovered that paper traveled

and transcribed better than stone; it became the renewable medium of choice. Frankly, the human eye can only stare at a computer screen for so long.

We appreciate and applaud people who are sensitive to environmental issues. We both love forests and are avid environmentalists. But we are going to continue to print out those necessary emails without guilt.

Honest, it's okay to print. Trees are renewable, recyclable and sustainable.

Mr. Leavell is a musician, tree farmer, environmentalist and author. Mr. Owen is a forester, wildlife biologist and CEO of U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities.