

Paper mill reopens and creates new paper product

By **MONICA SAMAYOA**
Oregon Public Broadcasting

An Oregon paper mill company has successfully created a new, nonwood paper product that uses agricultural waste to produce paper.

The West Linn-based Willamette Falls Paper Co. made its first nonwood paper product using pulp from wheat straw fibers.

The new product uses 10% of fibers which are collected from the shaft of the wheat and broken down into microscopic fibers, which are then used to make both coated and uncoated paper.

"We want to be the first coated paper mill to offer nonwood grades made in the U.S. and sourced with local agricultural waste, in this case, straw," said Phil Harding, the director of technology and sustainability at the mill. "Our long-term focus is sustainable

paper-making, and successful trials using nonwood raw materials is another step toward this goal."

The 130-year-old mill reopened two months ago after it closed two years ago.

The company originally planned to hire 85 employees at the restarted mill but now employs 120, according to Harding.

Additional machine and press trials are ongoing to refine the paper properties and specifications. However, early outcomes from press room trials and initial customer feedback has been very positive.

According to Harding, the company used local wheat as a way to help reduce the carbon footprint of shipping and importing materials from other locations.

"We are delighted to at once create a novel product offering while also reducing agricultural waste," Harding



Ian K. Kullgren/The Oregonian

Willamette Falls Paper Co. as seen from atop the hydroelectric dam near the east bank of the Willamette River.

ing said.

The mill has been working with Trinseo, its key supplier on developing paper grades that will have similar characteristics to the

mill's standard grades.

"Finding innovative ways to increase the use of sustainable materials is a critical focus for us, the industry, and modern soci-

ety, so we're thrilled to continue our support in their development and commercialization of this new product," Trinseo's Todd Crook said.

The mill is expected to start making its new product available to customers by the end of November.

The Oregonian contributed to this report.

Port of Portland gets \$93.6M over workers' unlawful labor practices

By **MAXINE BERNSTEIN**
The Oregonian

A federal jury awarded \$93.6 million to the former operator of the Port of Portland's container terminal, finding the dock workers union sabotaged shipping traffic and caused productivity to plummet through years of labor slowdowns and stoppages.

The Philippine-owned ICTSI Oregon, which signed a 25-year lease in 2010 to operate Terminal 6, left the port in March 2017, idled by the labor strife it says the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and its Local 8 chapter encouraged.

That marked the effective end to the frequent use of Oregon's only container terminal accessible by large ocean-crossing cargo vessels. Terminal 6 now mostly runs as a truck-to-train operation with containers unloaded from trucks onto trains bound for the ports of Tacoma and Seattle.

The verdict reached Monday followed a two-week civil trial before U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon in Portland and years of protracted disputes in court and before the National Labor Relations Board.

"The ILWU went too far. They have given that middle finger to the port, to the National Labor Relations Board and to its own community, and you are here to hold them accountable," ICTSI's lawyer Amanda T. Gamblin told jurors in her closing argument.

The union "beat ICTSI into the ground," Gamblin said.

But the union's lawyers said declines in productivity at Terminal 6 resulted from a range of factors: market forces, geographic limitations of the port situated so far inland with a shallow river depth for big vessels and dismissive management that caused a demoralized workforce.

"ICTSI is trying to use the ILWU as its piggybank," attorney Susan J. Harriman argued on behalf of the union. "It decided to make its money from this lawsuit, instead of making Terminal 6 a success."

The international union and its Portland chapter had been clashing for years with the terminal operator, starting shortly after the port hired the company to run its container terminal.

In 2012, longshore workers claimed ICTSI Oregon should give them the jobs plugging, unplugging and monitoring refrigerated containers, taking the so-called "reefer" work away from an electricians union.

The large marine terminal on the Columbia River, about 100 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean, was equipped to unload and load seagoing vessels and to store incoming and outgoing containers while awaiting shipment by land or sea.

The "reefer" containers have electrically powered refrigeration units attached to safely ship perishable agricultural commodities and other goods all over the world. Workers had to plug the containers into electrical receptacle banks at the terminal and periodically check to make sure they were kept at the proper temperatures.

The terminal operator argued that the union deliberately disrupted work to get the company to grant longshore workers the sought-after "reefer" jobs: truckers driving at a walking pace, workers taking extensive time loading containers and others showing up late, delaying crane workers from getting started.

A judge already determined that the union was guilty of unlawful labor practices from May 21, 2012, through Aug. 13, 2013, to get the work on the refrigerated containers.

The eight-member jury was asked to decide if those

unlawful practices continued through March 2017 and if damages should be awarded for losses suffered.

Jurors found the unlawful labor practices did continue and awarded the damages after deliberating for about 3 1/2 hours. It also found that the international union and local chapter were jointly liable, with ILWU responsible for 55% of the damages, and Local 8, the other 45%.

According to testimony, Leal Sundet, one of the leaders of the international union, had threatened the port operator's chief executive officer Elvis Ganda on May 21, 2012, that "I am the guy who can (expletive) you badly" and that ICTSI "would pay the price" if it didn't give the refrigerated container work to the longshore workers union.

Three days later, Local 8 President Jeff Smith demanded ICTSI assign the dockside refrigerated container jobs to his workers and if not, the union would put ICTSI out of business and run every Hanjin container out of Portland, according to ICTSI's lawyers.

ICTSI sought damages of between \$97 million and \$135 million for its estimated operating losses.

The company shut down its container operations at Terminal 6 on March 31, 2017, and laid off much of its staff after major shipping companies pulled out of Portland.

South Korea's Hanjin Shipping, the terminal's largest customer, and Hapag Lloyd America, its second-largest customer, ceased using the terminal in the 2015. The two accounted for about 98% of the terminal's business.

The union argued that the company's estimated damages were based on faulty assumptions and inflated numbers and urged jurors to award no more than \$1.3 million.

Harriman, the union's lawyer, said its workers "wanted to succeed but they were treated like donkeys and belittled and fired without cause. ... They helped build Terminal 6 and they literally broke their backs trying to make Terminal 6 a success."

She said any job actions were related to collective

bargaining for a new union contract, which was lawful. "Labor and employment practices were driving slowdowns, not reefer work," she told jurors.

After the jury returned the verdict, Harriman urged the judge to formally delay entering the judgment.

The union intends to

argue that the damage award would impose a heavy financial burden with serious consequences, including possibly bankrupting the longshore workers union, she said.

The judge allowed both sides to submit briefs on the matter and said he'd wait until next Tuesday before entering a judgment.

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