

Verso Paper Corp.
Form 10-K
March 05, 2009

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20549

FORM 10-K

(Mark One)

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2008

or

TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

For the transition period from _____ to _____

Commission file number: 333-148201

Verso Paper Corp.

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware
(State or other jurisdiction of
incorporation or organization)

75-3217389
(I.R.S. Employer Identification
Number)

6775 Lenox Center Court, Suite 400
Memphis, Tennessee 38115-4436
(Address of principal executive
offices) (Zip Code)

(901) 369-4100
(Registrant's telephone number,
including area code)

Securities registered pursuant to
section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class
Common Stock, \$.01 par value per
share

Name of each exchange on which
registered
New York Stock Exchange

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes No

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Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§ 229.405) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of "large accelerated filer," "accelerated filer," and "smaller reporting company" in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act. (Check one):

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company
(Do not check if a smaller reporting company)

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

The aggregate market value of the voting and non-voting common equity held by non-affiliates, computed by reference to the price at which the common equity was last sold on the last business day of the most recently completed second fiscal quarter (June 30, 2008), was approximately \$118,298,718.

As of February 28, 2009, there were 52,046,647 shares of common stock outstanding.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE:

The information required by Part III is incorporated by reference from portions of the definitive proxy statement to be filed within 120 days after December 31, 2008, pursuant to Regulation 14A under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 in connection with the 2009 annual meeting of stockholders.

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Forward-Looking Statements

In this annual report, all statements that are not purely historical facts are forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933 and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. Forward-looking statements may be identified by the words “believe,” “expect,” “anticipate,” “project,” “plan,” “predict,” “estimate,” “intend,” “could,” “may,” “might” and similar expressions. Forward-looking statements are based on currently available business, economic, financial and other information and reflect management’s current knowledge, assumptions, beliefs, estimates, expectations and views with respect to future developments and their potential effects on Verso. Actual results could vary materially depending on risks and uncertainties that may affect Verso and its business. For a discussion of such risks and uncertainties, please refer to “Risk Factors,” “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations” and other sections of this annual report and to Verso’s other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Except as required by applicable law, we assume no obligation to update any forward-looking statement made in this annual report to reflect subsequent events or circumstances or actual outcomes.

Market and Industry Information

Market data and other statistical information used throughout this annual report are based on independent industry publications, government publications, reports by market research firms or other published independent sources. Some data are also based on our good-faith estimates which are derived from our review of internal surveys, as well as the independent sources listed above. Although we believe these sources are reliable, we have not independently verified the information. Industry prices for coated paper provided in this annual report are, unless otherwise expressly noted, derived from Resource Information Systems, Inc., or “RISI, Inc.” data. “North American” data included in this annual report that has been derived from RISI, Inc. only includes data from the United States and Canada. U.S. industry pricing data included in this annual report has been derived from RISI, Inc. data; this data represents pricing from the eastern United States only (as defined by RISI, Inc.). Also, any reference to (i) grade No. 3, grade No. 4 and grade No. 5 coated paper relates to 60 lb. basis weight, 50 lb. basis weight and 34 lb. basis weight, respectively, (ii) lightweight coated groundwood paper refers to groundwood paper grades that are a 36 lb. basis weight or less, and (iii) ultra-lightweight coated groundwood paper refers to groundwood paper grades that are a 30 lb. basis weight or less. The RISI, Inc. data included in this annual report has been derived from the following RISI, Inc. publications: 2008 RISI World Graphic Paper forecast and RISI, Paper Trader: A Monthly Monitor of the North American Graphic Paper Market, January 2009.

PART I

Item 1. Business

Unless otherwise noted, the terms “Verso,” “Verso Paper,” “Company,” “we,” “us,” “our” and “Successor” refer collectively to Verso Paper Corp., a Delaware corporation, and its subsidiaries, and references to the “Division” or “Predecessor” refer to the Coated and Supercalendered Papers Division of International Paper Company, or “International Paper.”

Background

We began operations on August 1, 2006, when we acquired the assets and certain liabilities comprising the business of the Coated and Supercalendered Papers Division of International Paper. We were formed by affiliates of Apollo Management, L.P., or “Apollo,” for the purpose of consummating the acquisition from International Paper, or the “Acquisition.” Verso Paper Corp. went public on May 14, 2008, with an initial public offering, or “IPO,” of 14 million shares of common stock at a price of \$12 per share which generated \$152.2 million in net proceeds.

Our principal executive offices are located at 6775 Lenox Center Court, Suite 400, Memphis, Tennessee 38115-4436. Our telephone number is (901) 369-4100. Our web site address is www.versopaper.com. Information on our web site is not considered part of this annual report.

Overview

We are a leading North American supplier of coated papers to catalog and magazine publishers. The coating process adds a smooth uniform layer in the paper, which results in superior color and print definition. As a result, coated paper is used primarily in media and marketing applications, including catalogs, magazines, and commercial printing applications, such as high-end advertising brochures, annual reports, and direct mail advertising.

We are North America's second largest producer of coated groundwood paper, which is used primarily for catalogs and magazines. We are also a low cost producer of coated freesheet paper, which is used primarily for annual reports, brochures, and magazine covers. In addition, we have a strategic presence in supercalendered paper, which is primarily used for retail inserts. We also produce and sell market kraft pulp, which is used to manufacture printing and writing paper grades and tissue products.

We operate 11 paper machines at four mills located in Maine, Michigan and Minnesota. The mills have a combined annual production capacity of 1,693,000 tons of coated paper, 106,000 tons of supercalendered paper, 44,000 tons of ultra-lightweight specialty paper, and 878,000 tons of kraft pulp.

Our net sales (in millions) by product line in 2008 are illustrated below:

We sell and market our products to approximately 100 customers which comprise approximately 650 end-user accounts. We have long-standing relationships with many leading magazine and catalog publishers, commercial printers, specialty retail merchandisers and paper merchants. We reach our end-users through several distribution channels, including direct sales, commercial printers, paper merchants and brokers.

Industry

Based on 2008 sales, the size of the global coated paper industry is estimated to be approximately \$55 billion, or 53 million tons of coated paper shipments, including approximately \$12 billion, or 12 million tons of coated paper shipments, in North America. Coated paper is used primarily in media and marketing applications, including catalogs, magazines and commercial printing applications, which include high-end advertising brochures, annual reports and direct mail advertising. Demand is generally driven by North American advertising and print media trends, which in turn have historically been correlated with growth in Gross Domestic Product, or “GDP.”

In North America, coated papers are classified by brightness and fall into five grades, labeled No. 1 to No. 5, with No. 1 having the highest brightness level and No. 5 having the lowest brightness level. Papers graded No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 are typically coated freesheet grades. No. 4 and No. 5 papers are predominantly groundwood containing grades. Coated groundwood grades are the preferred grades for catalogs and magazines, while coated freesheet is more commonly used in commercial print applications.

Products

We manufacture three main grades of paper: coated groundwood paper, coated freesheet paper and supercalendered paper. These paper grades are differentiated primarily by their respective brightness, weight, print quality, bulk, opacity and strength. We also produce Northern Bleached Hardwood Kraft, or “NBHK,” pulp. The following table sets forth our principal products by 2008 tons sold and as a percentage of our 2008 net sales:

Product (tons in thousands, dollars in millions)	Tons Sold		Net Sales	
	Kts	%	\$	%
Coated groundwood paper	961	49	\$ 938	53
Coated freesheet paper	581	30	556	31
Supercalendered paper	105	5	81	5
Pulp	255	13	147	8
Other	51	3	45	3
Total	1,953	100	\$ 1,767	100

As a result of our scale and technological capabilities, we are able to offer our customers a broad product offering, from ultra-lightweight coated groundwood to heavyweight coated freesheet and supercalendered papers. Our customers have the opportunity to sole-source all of their coated paper needs from us while optimizing their choice of paper products. As our customers’ preferences change, they can switch paper grades to meet their desired balance between cost and performance attributes while maintaining their relationship with us.

We are also one of the largest rotogravure lightweight coated paper manufacturers in North America. Rotogravure printing is a technique for transferring ink onto coated papers, which typically results in a sharper image with truer colors and less ink trapping than in other printing processes but generally requires a smaller and higher-quality paper. Additionally, we are the only manufacturer in North America with the technological expertise to supply both rotogravure coated groundwood and coated freesheet.

Coated groundwood paper. Coated groundwood paper includes a fiber component produced through a mechanical pulping process. The use of such fiber results in a bulkier and more opaque paper that is better suited for applications where lighter weights and/or higher stiffness are required, such as catalogs and magazines. In addition to mechanical pulp, coated groundwood paper typically includes a kraft pulp component to improve brightness and print quality.

Coated freesheet paper. Coated freesheet paper is made from bleached kraft pulp, which is produced using a chemical process to break apart wood fibers and dissolve impurities such as lignin. The use of kraft pulp results in a bright, heavier-weight paper with excellent print qualities, which is well-suited for high-end commercial applications and premium magazines. Coated freesheet contains primarily kraft pulp, with less than 10% mechanical pulp in its composition.

Supercalendered paper. Supercalendered paper consists of groundwood fibers and a very high filler content but does not receive a separate surface coating. Instead, the paper is passed through a supercalendering process in which alternating steel and filled rolls “iron” the paper, giving it a gloss and smoothness that makes it resemble coated paper. Supercalendered papers are primarily used for retail inserts, due to their relatively low price point.

Pulp. We produce and sell NBHK pulp. NBHK pulp is produced through the chemical kraft process using hardwoods. Hardwoods typically have shorter length fibers than softwoods and are used to smooth paper. Kraft describes pulp produced using a chemical process, whereby wood chips are combined with chemicals and steam to separate the wood fibers. The fibers are then washed and pressure screened to remove the chemicals and lignin which originally held the fibers together. Finally, the pulp is bleached to the necessary whiteness and brightness. Kraft pulp is used in applications where brighter and whiter paper is required.

Other products. We also offer recycled paper to help meet specific customer requirements. Additionally, we offer customized product solutions for strategic accounts by producing paper grades with customer-specified weight, brightness and pulp mix characteristics, providing customers with cost benefits and/or brand differentiation. Finally, we have recently expanded our offerings to include ultra-lightweight uncoated printing papers and ultra-lightweight coated and uncoated flexible packaging papers.

Manufacturing

We operate 11 paper machines at four mills located in Maine, Michigan and Minnesota. The mills have a combined annual production capacity of 1,693,000 tons of coated paper, 106,000 tons of supercalendered paper, 44,000 tons of ultra-lightweight specialty paper, and 878,000 tons of kraft pulp. Of the pulp that we produce, we consume approximately 493,000 tons internally and sell the rest. Our facilities are strategically located within close proximity to major publication printing customers. The facilities also benefit from convenient and cost-effective access to northern softwood fiber, which is required for the production of lightweight and ultra-lightweight coated papers. All mills and machines operate seven days a week on a twenty-four hours per day basis.

The following table sets forth the locations of our mills, the products they produce and other key operating information:

Mill/Location	Product/Paper Grades	Paper Machines	Production Capacity*
Jay (Androscoggin), ME	Lightweight Coated Groundwood	2	366,100
	Lightweight Coated Freesheet	1	246,600
	Pulp	-	404,600
Bucksport, ME	Lightweight and Ultra-Lightweight Coated Groundwood and High Bulk Specialty Coated Groundwood	4	466,900
	Ultra-Lightweight Specialty		44,000
	Coated Freesheet	1	395,400
Quinnesec, MI	Pulp	-	473,400
	Lightweight and Ultra-Lightweight Coated Groundwood	1	217,700
Sartell, MN	Supercalendered	2	105,600

* We have the capacity to produce 878,000 tons of kraft pulp, of which approximately 493,000 tons are to be consumed internally and the remainder is available to be sold as market pulp. This data does not include our production capacity for other pulp grades, the entirety of which is consumed internally in the production process for our coated paper.

The basic raw material of the papermaking process is wood pulp. The first stage of papermaking involves converting wood logs to pulp through either a mechanical or chemical process. Before logs can be processed into pulp, they are passed through a debarking drum to remove the bark. Once separated, the bark is burned as fuel in bark boilers. The wood logs are composed of small cellulose fibers which are bound together by a glue-like substance called lignin. The cellulose fibers are then separated from each other through either a mechanical or a kraft pulping process.

After the pulping phase, the fiber furnish is run onto the forming fabric of the paper machine. On the forming fabric, the fibers become interlaced, forming a mat of paper, and much of the water is extracted. The paper web then goes through a pressing and drying process to extract the remaining water. After drying, the web receives a uniform layer of coating that makes the paper smooth and provides uniform ink absorption. After coating, the paper goes through a calendering process that provides a smooth finish by ironing the sheet between multiple soft nips that consist of alternating hard (steel) and soft (cotton or synthetic) rolls. At the dry end, the paper is wound onto spools to form a machine reel and then rewound and split into smaller rolls on a winder. Finally, the paper is wrapped, labeled and shipped.

Catalog and magazine publishers with longer print runs tend to purchase paper in roll form for use in web printing, a process of printing from a reel of paper as opposed to individual sheets of paper, in order to minimize costs. In contrast, commercial printers typically buy large quantities of sheeted paper in order to satisfy the short-run printing requirements of their customers. We believe that sheeted paper is a less attractive product as it requires additional processing, bigger inventory stocks, a larger sales and marketing team and a different channel strategy. For this reason, we have pursued a deliberate strategy of configuring our manufacturing facilities to produce all web-based papers which are shipped in roll form and have developed relationships with third-party converters to address any sheeted paper needs of our key customers.

We utilize a manufacturing excellence program, named R-GAP, to ensure timely and accurate reporting, encourage faster operator involvement and provide an overall culture of continuous process improvement. We use multi-variable testing, lean manufacturing, center of excellence teams, source-of-loss initiatives and best practice sharing to constantly improve our manufacturing processes and products. Since 2001, three of our four facilities have participated in OSHA's Voluntary Protection Program which recognizes outstanding safety programs and performance.

Raw Materials and Suppliers

Our key cost inputs in the papermaking process are wood fiber, market kraft pulp, chemicals and energy.

Wood Fiber. We source our wood fiber from a broad group of timberland and sawmill owners located in our regions as well as from our 23,000-acre hybrid poplar fiber farm located near Alexandria, Minnesota.

Kraft Pulp. Overall, we have the capacity to produce 878,000 tons of kraft pulp, consisting of 405,000 tons of pulp at the Androscoggin mill and 473,000 tons of pulp at the Quinnesec mill, of which a total of approximately 493,000 tons are consumed internally. We supplement our internal production of kraft pulp with purchases from third parties. In 2008, these purchases were approximately 166,000 tons of pulp. We purchase the pulp requirements from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on any single supplier to satisfy our pulp needs.

Chemicals. Chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of coated papers include latex, starch, calcium carbonate, and titanium dioxide. We purchase these chemicals from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on any single supplier to satisfy our chemical needs.

Energy. We produce a large portion of our energy requirements, historically producing approximately 50% of our energy needs for our coated paper mills from sources such as waste wood and paper, hydroelectric facilities, chemicals from our pulping process, our own steam recovery boilers and internal energy cogeneration facilities. Our external energy purchases vary across each one of our mills and include fuel oil, natural gas, coal and electricity. While our internal energy production capacity and ability to switch between certain energy sources mitigates the volatility of our overall energy expenditures, we expect prices for energy to remain volatile for the foreseeable future. We utilize derivative contracts as part of our risk management strategy to manage our exposure to market fluctuations in energy prices.

Sales, Marketing and Distribution

We reach our end-users through several sales channels. These include selling directly to end-users, through brokers, merchants, and printers. We sell and market products to approximately 100 customers, which comprise approximately 650 end-user accounts.

Sales to End-Users. In 2008, we sold approximately 42% of our paper products directly to end-users, most of which are catalog and magazine publishers. These customers are typically large, sophisticated buyers who have the scale, resources and expertise to procure paper directly from manufacturers. Customers for our pulp products are mostly other paper manufacturers.

Sales to Brokers and Merchants. Our largest indirect paper sales by volume are through brokers and merchants who resell the paper to end-users. In 2008, our total sales to brokers and merchants represented 45% of our total sales. Brokers typically act as an intermediary between paper manufacturers and smaller end-users who do not have the scale or resources to cost effectively procure paper directly from manufacturers. The majority of the paper sold to brokers is resold to catalog publishers. We work closely with brokers to achieve share targets in the catalog, magazine and insert end-user segments through collaborative selling.

Merchants are similar to brokers in that they act as an intermediary between the manufacturer and the end-user. However, merchants generally take physical delivery of the product and keep inventory on hand. Merchants tend to deal with smaller end-users that lack the scale to warrant direct delivery from the manufacturer. Coated freesheet comprises the majority of our sales to merchants. In most cases, because they are relatively small, the ultimate end-users of paper sold through merchants are generally regional or local catalog or magazine publishers.

Sales to Printers. In 2008, our total sales to printers represented 9% of our total sales. Nearly all of our sales were to the five largest publication printers in the United States. Printers also effectively act as an intermediary between manufacturers and end-users in that they directly source paper for printing/converting and then resell it to their customers as a finished product.

The majority of our products are delivered directly from our manufacturing facilities to the printer, regardless of the sales channel. In order to serve the grade No. 3 coated freesheet segment, we maintain a network of distribution centers located in the West, Midwest, South and Northeast close to our customer base to provide quick delivery. The majority of our pulp products are delivered to our customers' paper mills.

Our sales force is organized around our sales channels. We maintain an active dialogue with all of our major customers and track product performance and demand across grades. We have a team of sales representatives and marketing professionals organized into three major sales groups that correspond with our sales channels: direct sales support; support to brokers and merchants; and printer support.

The majority of our products are sold under contracts with our customers. Contracted sales are more prevalent for coated groundwood paper, as opposed to coated freesheet paper, which is more often sold without a contract. Our contracts generally specify the volumes to be sold to the customer over the contract term, as well as the pricing parameters for those sales. Most of our contracts are negotiated on an annual basis, with only a few having terms extending beyond one year. Typically, our contracts provide for quarterly price adjustments based on market price movements. The large portion of contracted sales allows us to plan our production runs well in advance, optimizing production over our integrated mill system and thereby reducing costs and increasing overall efficiency.

Part of our strategy is to continually reduce the cost to serve our customer base through e-commerce initiatives which allow for simplified ordering, tracking and invoicing. In 2008, orders totaling \$474.3 million, or approximately 30% of our total paper sales, were placed through our online ordering platforms. We are focused on further developing our technology platform and e-commerce capabilities. To this end, we operate Nextier Solutions, an Internet-based system that allows for collaborative production planning, order placement and inventory management throughout the supply chain. Participants use the system to maximize supply chain efficiencies, improve communication and reduce operating costs and pay us subscription and transaction fees for system usage.

Customers

We serve the catalog, magazine, insert and commercial printing markets and have developed long-standing relationships with the premier North American retailers and catalog and magazine publishers. The length of our relationships with our top ten customers averages more than 20 years and no single customer accounted for more than 10% of our net sales in 2008. Our key customers include leading magazine publishers such as Condé Nast Publications, Inc., Hearst Corporation, National Geographic Society and Time Inc.; leading catalog producers such as Avon Products, Inc. and Sears Holding Corporation; leading commercial printers such as Quad/Graphics, Inc., and RR Donnelley & Sons Company; and leading paper merchants and brokers, such as A.T. Clayton & Co., Unisource Worldwide, Inc., the xpedx and Bulkley Dunton business units of International Paper, and Clifford Paper, Inc.

Our net sales, excluding pulp sales, by end-user segment in 2008, are illustrated below (dollars in millions):

Research and Development

The primary function of our research and development efforts is to work with customers in developing and modifying products to accommodate their evolving needs and to identify cost-saving opportunities within our operations.

Examples of our research and development efforts implemented over the past several years include:

- high-bulk offset and rotogravure coated groundwood;
- lightweight grade No. 4 coated groundwood;
- ultra-lightweight grade No. 5 coated groundwood; and
- rotogravure coated freesheet.

Intellectual Property

We have several patents and patent applications in the United States and various foreign countries. These patents and patent applications generally relate to various paper manufacturing methods and equipment which may become commercially viable in the future. We also have trademarks for our names, Verso® and Verso Paper®, as well as for our products such as Influence®, Velocity®, Liberty®, Advocate® and Trilogy®. In addition to the intellectual property that we own, we license a significant portion of the intellectual property used in our business on a perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive basis from International Paper.

Competition

Our business is highly competitive. A significant number of North American competitors produce coated and supercalendered papers, and several overseas manufacturers, principally from Europe, export to North America. We compete based on a number of factors, including:

- price;
- product availability;
- product quality;
- breadth of product offerings;
- timeliness of product delivery; and
- customer service.

Foreign competition in North America is also affected by the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar relative to other currencies, especially the euro, market prices in North America and other markets, worldwide supply and demand, and the cost of ocean-going freight.

While our product offering is broad in terms of grades produced (from supercalendered and ultra-lightweight coated groundwood offerings to heavier-weight coated freesheet products), we are focused on producing coated groundwood and coated freesheet in roll form. This strategy is driven by our alignment with catalog and magazine end-users which tend to purchase paper in roll form for use in long runs of web printing in order to minimize costs. Our principal competitors include NewPage Corporation, Abitibi Bowater Inc., UPM-Kymmene Corporation and Sappi Limited, all of which have North American operations. UPM and Sappi are headquartered overseas and also have overseas manufacturing facilities.

Employees

As of December 31, 2008, we had approximately 2,900 employees, of whom approximately 35% are unionized and 75% are hourly employees. Employees at two of our four mills are represented by labor unions under a total of four collective bargaining agreements. In 2007, we completed successful labor negotiations for three agreements that were up for renewal during the year. The new agreements will expire in 2011.

We have not experienced any work stoppages during the past several years. We believe that we have good relations with our employees.

Environmental and Other Governmental Regulations

We are subject to federal, state and local environmental, health and safety laws and regulations, including the federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, or "Clean Water Act," the federal Clean Air Act, the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, or "CERCLA," the federal Occupational Health and Safety Act, and analogous state and local laws. Our operations also are subject to two regional regimes designed to address climate change, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the northeastern United States and the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord, and in the future we may be subject to additional federal, state, local or supranational legislation related to climate change. Among our activities subject to environmental regulation are the emissions of air pollutants, discharges of wastewater and

stormwater, operation of dams, storage, treatment and disposal of materials and waste, and remediation of soil, surface water and ground water contamination. Many environmental laws and regulations provide for substantial fines or penalties and criminal sanctions for any failure to comply. In addition, failure to comply with these laws and regulations could result in the interruption of our operations and, in some cases, facility shutdowns.

Certain of these environmental laws, such as CERCLA and analogous state laws, provide for strict, and under certain circumstances, joint and several liability for investigation and remediation of the release of hazardous substances into the environment, including soil and groundwater. These laws may apply to properties presently or formerly owned or operated by an entity or its predecessors, as well as to conditions at properties at which wastes attributable to an entity or its predecessors were disposed. Under these environmental laws, a current or previous owner or operator of real property, and parties that generate or transport hazardous substances that are disposed of at real property, may be held liable for the cost to investigate or clean up such real property and for related damages to natural resources. We handle and dispose of wastes arising from our mill operations, including disposal at on-site landfills. We are required to maintain financial assurance for the expected cost of landfill closure and post-closure care. We may be subject to liability, including liability for investigation and cleanup costs, if contamination is discovered at one of our paper mills or another location where we have disposed of, or arranged for the disposal of, wastes. We could be subject to potentially significant liabilities under, or fines or penalties for any failure to comply with, any environmental rule or regulation.

Compliance with environmental laws and regulations is a significant factor in our business. We have made, and will continue to make, significant expenditures to comply with these requirements. We incurred environmental capital expenditures of \$9.7 million in 2008 and \$3.4 million in 2007, and we expect to incur additional environmental capital expenditures of \$1.9 million in 2009. We anticipate that environmental compliance will continue to require increased capital expenditures and operating expenses over time as environmental laws or regulations, or interpretations thereof, change or the nature of our operations require us to make significant additional capital expenditures.

Permits are required for the operation of our mills and related facilities. The permits are subject to renewal, modification and revocation. We and others have the right to challenge our permit conditions through administrative and legal appeals and review processes. Governmental authorities have the power to enforce compliance with the permits, and violators are subject to civil and criminal penalties, including fines, injunctions or both. Other parties also may have the right to pursue legal actions to enforce compliance with the permits.

Available Information

Our web site is located at www.versopaper.com. We make available free of charge through this web site our annual reports on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K, and amendments to those reports filed with or furnished to the Securities and Exchange Commission, or "SEC," pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as soon as reasonably practicable after they are electronically filed with or furnished to the SEC.

Item 1A. Risk Factors

Our business is subject to various risks. Set forth below are certain of the more important risks that we face and that could cause our actual results to differ materially from our historical results. These risks are not the only ones that we face. Our business also could be affected by additional risks that are presently unknown to us or that we currently believe are immaterial to our business.

We have limited ability to pass through increases in our costs to our customers. Increases in our costs or decreases in coated or supercalendered paper prices could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Our earnings are sensitive to price changes in coated or supercalendered paper. Fluctuations in paper prices (and coated paper prices in particular) historically have had a direct effect on our net income (loss) and EBITDA for several reasons:

- Market prices for paper products are a function of supply and demand, factors over which we have limited control. We therefore have limited ability to control the pricing of our products. Market prices of grade No. 3, 60 lb. basis weight paper, which is an industry benchmark for coated freesheet paper pricing, have fluctuated since 2000 from a high of \$1,100 per ton to a low of \$705 per ton. In addition, market prices of grade No. 5, 34 lb. basis weight paper, which is an industry benchmark for coated groundwood paper pricing, have fluctuated between a high of \$1,120 per ton to a low of \$795 per ton over the same period. Because market conditions determine the price of our paper products, the price for our products could fall below our cash production costs.
- Market prices for paper products typically are not directly affected by raw material costs or other costs of sales, and consequently we have limited ability to pass through increases in our costs to our customers absent increases in the market price. In addition, a significant portion of our sales are pursuant to contracts that limit price increases. Thus, even though our costs may increase, we may not have the ability to increase the prices for our products, or the prices for our products may decline.
- The manufacturing of coated paper is highly capital-intensive and a large portion of our operating costs are fixed. Additionally, paper machines are large, complex machines that operate more efficiently when operated continuously. Consequently, both we and our competitors typically continue to run our machines whenever marginal sales exceed the marginal costs, adversely impacting prices at times of lower demand.

Therefore, our ability to achieve acceptable margins is principally dependent on (1) managing our cost structure, (2) managing changes in raw materials prices, which represent a large component of our operating costs and fluctuate based upon factors beyond our control and (3) general conditions in the paper market. If the prices of our products decline, or if our raw material costs increase, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

The paper industry is cyclical. Fluctuations in supply and demand for our products could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

The paper industry is a commodity market to a significant extent and is subject to cyclical market pressures. North American demand for coated and supercalendered paper products tends to decline during a weak U.S. economy. Accordingly, general economic conditions and demand for magazines and catalogs may have a material adverse impact on the demand for our products, which may result in a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, currency fluctuations can have a significant impact on the supply of coated paper products in North America. If the U.S. dollar strengthens, imports may increase, which would cause the supply of paper products available in the North American market to increase. Foreign overcapacity also could result in

an increase in the supply of paper products available in the North American market. An increased supply of paper available in North America could put downward pressure on prices and/or cause us to lose sales to competitors, either of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Recent global market and economic conditions have been unprecedented and challenging with tighter credit conditions and recession in most major economies expected to continue throughout 2009. Continued concerns about the systemic impact of potential long-term and wide-spread recession, energy costs, geopolitical issues, the availability and cost of credit, and the global housing and mortgage markets have contributed to increased market volatility and diminished expectations for the U.S. economy. These factors have led to a decrease in spending by businesses and consumers alike, and a corresponding decrease in demand for our products. (See "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations - Selected Factors that Affect Our Operating Results"). Continued turbulence in the U.S. and international markets and economies and prolonged declines in business consumer spending may further adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We have a limited operating history as a separate company. Accordingly, our Predecessor's combined historical financial data may not be representative of our results as a separate company.

We operated as a division of International Paper prior to the Acquisition. Therefore, we have a very limited operating history as a separate company. Our business strategy as an independent entity may not be successful on a long-term basis. Although International Paper, after the completion of the Acquisition, generally no longer sells coated or supercalendered paper, we cannot assure you that our customers will continue to do business with us on the same terms as when we were a division of International Paper or at all. We may not be able to grow our business as planned and may not remain a profitable business. In addition, the historical combined financial data included in this annual report may not necessarily reflect what our results of operations, financial condition and cash flows would have been had we been a separate independent entity pursuing our own strategies during the periods presented. Our limited operating history as a separate entity makes evaluating our business and our future financial prospects difficult. As a result, our business, financial condition and results of operations may differ materially from our expectations based on the historical financial data contained in this annual report.

Our cost structure following the Acquisition is not comparable to the cost structure that we experienced in prior periods. Our management has limited experience managing our business as a separate company with a significant amount of indebtedness. We cannot assure you that our cost structure in future periods will be consistent with our current expectations or will permit us to operate our business profitably.

The markets in which we operate are highly competitive.

Our business is highly competitive. Competition is based largely on price. We compete with foreign producers, some of which are lower cost producers than we are or are subsidized by governments. We also face competition from numerous North American coated and supercalendered paper manufacturers. Some of our competitors have advantages over us, including lower raw material and labor costs and fewer environmental and governmental regulations to comply with than we do. Furthermore, some of our competitors have greater financial and other resources than we do or may be better positioned than we are to compete for certain opportunities.

Our non-U.S. competitors may develop a competitive advantage over us and other U.S. producers if the U.S. dollar strengthens in comparison to the home currency of those competitors or ocean shipping rates decrease. If the U.S. dollar strengthens, if shipping rates decrease or if overseas supply exceeds demand, imports may increase, which would cause the supply of coated paper products available in the North American market to increase. An increased supply of coated paper could cause us to lower our prices or lose sales to competitors, either of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

In addition, the following factors will affect our ability to compete:

- product availability;
- the quality of our products;
- our breadth of product offerings;
- our ability to maintain plant efficiencies and high operating rates;
- manufacturing costs per ton;
- customer service and our ability to distribute our products on time; and
- the availability and/or cost of wood fiber, market pulp, chemicals, energy and other raw materials and labor.

If we are unable to obtain energy or raw materials at favorable prices, or at all, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We purchase wood fiber, market pulp, chemicals, energy and other raw materials from third parties. We may experience shortages of energy supplies or raw materials or be forced to seek alternative sources of supply. If we are forced to seek alternative sources of supply, we may not be able to do so on terms as favorable as our current terms or at all. In addition, the prices for energy and many of our raw materials, especially petroleum-based chemicals, have been volatile and have increased over the last year. Prices are expected to remain volatile for the foreseeable future. Chemical suppliers that use petroleum-based products in the manufacture of their chemicals may, due to a supply shortage and cost increase, ration the amount of chemicals available to us and/or we may not be able to obtain the chemicals we need to operate our business at favorable prices, if at all. In addition, certain specialty chemicals that we purchase are available only from a small number of suppliers. If any of these suppliers were to cease operations or cease doing business with us, we may be unable to obtain such chemicals at favorable prices, if at all.

The supply of energy or raw materials may be adversely affected by, among other things, hurricanes and other natural disasters or an outbreak or escalation of hostilities between the United States and any foreign power and, in particular, events in the Middle East. For example, wood fiber is a commodity and prices historically have been cyclical. The primary source for wood fiber is timber. Environmental litigation and regulatory developments have caused, and may cause in the future, significant reductions in the amount of timber available for commercial harvest in Canada and the United States. In addition, future domestic or foreign legislation, litigation advanced by aboriginal groups, litigation concerning the use of timberlands, the protection of endangered species, the promotion of forest biodiversity, and the response to and prevention of wildfires and campaigns or other measures by environmental activists also could affect timber supplies. The availability of harvested timber may further be limited by factors such as fire and fire prevention, insect infestation, disease, ice and wind storms, droughts, floods and other natural and man-made causes. Additionally, due to increased fuel costs, suppliers, distributors and freight carriers have charged fuel surcharges, which have increased our costs. Any significant shortage or significant increase in our energy or raw material costs in circumstances where we cannot raise the price of our products due to market conditions could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Any disruption in the supply of energy or raw materials also could affect our ability to meet customer demand in a timely manner and could harm our reputation. Furthermore, we may be required to post letters of credit or other financial assurance obligations with certain of our energy and other suppliers, which could limit our financial flexibility.

Currency fluctuations may adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We compete with producers in North America and abroad. Changes in the relative strength or weakness of the U.S. dollar may affect international trade flows of coated paper products. A stronger U.S. dollar may attract imports from foreign producers, increase supply in the United States, and have a downward effect on prices, while a weaker U.S. dollar may encourage U.S. exports. Variations in the exchange rates between the U.S. dollar and other currencies, particularly the Canadian dollar and the euro, may significantly affect our competitive position, including by making it more attractive for foreign producers to restart previously shut-down paper mills or by increasing production capacity in North America or Europe.

We are involved in continuous manufacturing processes with a high degree of fixed costs. Any interruption in the operations of our manufacturing facilities may affect our operating performance.

We seek to run our paper machines on a nearly continuous basis for maximum efficiency. Any downtime at any of our paper mills, including as a result of or in connection with planned maintenance and capital expenditure projects, results in unabsorbed fixed costs that negatively affect our results of operations for the period in which we experience the downtime. Due to the extreme operating conditions inherent in some of our manufacturing processes, we may incur unplanned business interruptions from time to time and, as a result, we may not generate sufficient cash flow to satisfy our operational needs. In addition, many of the geographic areas where our production is located and where we conduct our business may be affected by natural disasters, including snow storms, forest fires and flooding. Such natural disasters could cause our mills to stop running, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Furthermore, during periods of weak demand for paper products, we have in the past and may in the future experience market-related downtime, which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

Our operations require substantial ongoing capital expenditures, and we may not have adequate capital resources to fund all of our required capital expenditures.

Our business is capital intensive, and we incur capital expenditures on an ongoing basis to maintain our equipment and comply with environmental laws, as well as to enhance the efficiency of our operations. Our total capital expenditures were \$81 million in 2008, including \$56 million for maintenance and environmental capital expenditures. We expect to spend approximately \$50 million on capital expenditures during 2009, with approximately \$35 million for maintenance and environmental capital expenditures. We anticipate that our available cash resources and cash generated from operations will be sufficient to fund our operating needs and capital expenditures for at least the next year. However, if we require additional funds to fund our capital expenditures, we may not be able to obtain them on favorable terms, or at all. If we cannot maintain or upgrade our facilities and equipment as we require or as necessary to ensure environmental compliance, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We depend on a small number of customers for a significant portion of our business.

Our largest customer, International Paper, accounted for approximately 8% of our net sales in 2008. In 2008, our ten largest customers (including International Paper) accounted for approximately 48% of our net sales, while our ten largest end-users accounted for approximately 29% of our net sales. The loss of, or reduction in orders from, any of these customers or other customers could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, as could significant customer disputes regarding shipments, price, quality or other matters.

We may not realize certain productivity enhancements or improvements in costs.

As part of our business strategy, we intend to identify opportunities to improve profitability by reducing costs and enhancing productivity. Any cost savings or productivity enhancements that we realize from such efforts may differ materially from our estimates. For example, we have several productivity enhancement initiatives to reduce waste and increase the amount of uptime on our paper machines. We cannot be assured that these initiatives will be completed as anticipated or that the benefits we expect will be achieved on a timely basis or at all.

Rising postal costs could weaken demand for our paper products.

A significant portion of paper is used in magazines, catalogs and other promotional mailings. Many of these materials are distributed through the mail. Future increases in the cost of postage could reduce the frequency of mailings, reduce the number of pages in magazine and advertising materials and/or cause catalog and magazine publishers to use alternate methods to distribute their materials. Any of the foregoing could decrease the demand for our products, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Our business may suffer if we do not retain our senior management.

We depend on our senior management. The loss of services of members of our senior management team could adversely affect our business until suitable replacements can be found. There may be a limited number of persons with the requisite skills to serve in these positions and we may be unable to locate or employ qualified personnel on acceptable terms. In addition, our future success requires us to continue to attract and retain competent personnel.

A large percentage of our employees are unionized. Wage increases or work stoppages by our unionized employees may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

As of December 31, 2008, approximately 35%, of our employees were represented by labor unions under four collective bargaining agreements at two of our mills. In 2007, we completed successful labor negotiations for three agreements that were up for renewal during the year, and the new agreements will expire in 2011. We may become subject to material cost increases or additional work rules imposed by agreements with labor unions. This could increase expenses in absolute terms and/or as a percentage of net sales. In addition, although we believe we have good relations with our employees, work stoppages or other labor disturbances may occur in the future. Any of these factors could negatively affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We depend on third parties for certain transportation services.

We rely primarily on third parties for transportation of our products to our customers and transportation of our raw materials to us, in particular, by truck and train. If any third-party transportation provider fails to deliver our products in a timely manner, we may be unable to sell them at full value. Similarly, if any transportation provider fails to deliver raw materials to us in a timely manner, we may be unable to manufacture our products on a timely basis. Shipments of products and raw materials may be delayed due to weather conditions, strikes or other events. Any failure of a third-party transportation provider to deliver raw materials or products in a timely manner

could harm our reputation, negatively impact our customer relationships and have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, our ability to deliver our products on a timely basis could be adversely affected by the lack of adequate availability of transportation services, especially rail capacity, whether because of work stoppages or otherwise. Furthermore, increases in the cost of our transportation services, including as a result of rising fuel costs, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We are subject to various environmental, health and safety laws and regulations that could impose substantial costs or other liabilities upon us and may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We are subject to a wide range of federal, state and local general and industry-specific environmental, health and safety laws and regulations, including those relating to air emissions, wastewater discharges, solid and hazardous waste management and disposal and site remediation. Compliance with these laws and regulations is a significant factor in our business. We have made, and will continue to make, significant expenditures to comply with these requirements. In addition, we handle and dispose of wastes arising from our mill operations and operate a number of on-site landfills to handle that waste. We maintain financial assurance for the projected cost of closure and post-closure care for these landfill operations. We could be subject to potentially significant fines, penalties, criminal sanctions, plant shutdowns or interruptions in operations for any failure to comply with applicable environmental, health and safety laws and regulations. Moreover, under certain environmental laws, a current or previous owner or operator of real property, and parties that generate or transport hazardous substances that are disposed of at real property, may be held liable for the full cost to investigate or clean up such real property and for related damages to natural resources. We may be subject to liability, including liability for investigation and cleanup costs, if contamination is discovered at one of our current or former paper mills, other properties or other locations where we have disposed of, or arranged for the disposal of, wastes. International Paper has agreed to indemnify us, subject to certain limitations, for former properties and former off-site shipments, as well as certain other environmental liabilities. There can be no assurance that International Paper will perform under any of its environmental indemnity obligations, and its failure to do so could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations. We also could be subject to claims brought pursuant to applicable laws, rules or regulations for property damage or personal injury resulting from the environmental impact of our operations, including due to human exposure to hazardous substances. Increasingly stringent or new environmental requirements, more aggressive enforcement actions or policies, the discovery of unknown conditions or the bringing of future claims may cause our expenditures for environmental matters to increase, and we may incur material costs associated with these matters.

Our substantial indebtedness could adversely affect our financial health.

We have a significant amount of indebtedness. As of December 31, 2008, we had total indebtedness of \$1,357.7 million, including \$92.1 million outstanding under our revolving credit facility. The total amount of payments we will need to make on our outstanding long-term indebtedness for each of the next three fiscal years is equal to \$116.0 million, \$115.9 million and \$115.7 million, respectively (assuming the current prevailing interest rates on our outstanding floating rate indebtedness remain the same).

Our substantial indebtedness could have important consequences for us. For example, it could:

- increase our vulnerability to general adverse economic and industry conditions;
- require us to dedicate a substantial portion of our cash flow from operations to payments on our indebtedness, thereby reducing the availability of our cash flow to fund working capital, capital expenditures, research and development efforts, and other general corporate purposes;
- increase our vulnerability to, and limit our flexibility in planning for or reacting to, changes in our business and the industry in which we operate;
- expose us to the risk of increased interest rates as borrowings under our senior secured credit facilities and our floating rate notes will be subject to variable rates of interest;
- place us at a competitive disadvantage compared to our competitors that have less debt; and
- limit our ability to borrow additional funds.

In addition, the indentures governing our outstanding notes and our senior secured credit facilities contain financial and other restrictive covenants that limit our ability to engage in activities that may be in our long-term best interests. Our failure to comply with those covenants could result in an event of default which, if not cured or waived, could result in the acceleration of all of our debts.

We and our subsidiaries may be able to incur substantial additional indebtedness in the future because the terms of the indentures governing our outstanding notes and our senior secured credit facilities do not fully prohibit us or our subsidiaries from doing so. If new indebtedness is added to our and our subsidiaries' current debt levels, the related risks that we and they now face could intensify.

Lenders under our revolving credit facility may not fund their commitments.

Lehman Commercial Paper, Inc., or "Lehman," which filed for bankruptcy in October 2008 is one of the lenders under our revolving credit facility, with a commitment of \$15.8 million of the \$200 million available under the facility. On October 10, 2008, we requested funding in the amount of \$100 million under the revolving credit facility, and Lehman failed to fund \$7.9 million, the entire portion of its commitment with respect to that borrowing request. Under the credit agreement governing our revolving credit facility, if a lender's commitment is not honored, that portion of the lender's commitment under the revolving credit facility will be unavailable to the extent that the lender's commitment is not replaced by a new commitment from an alternate lender.

Lenders under our revolving credit facility are well-diversified, totaling 15 lenders at December 31, 2008. We currently anticipate that these lenders, other than Lehman, will participate in future requests for funding. However, there can be no assurance that further deterioration in the credit markets and overall economy will not affect the ability of our lenders to meet their funding commitments. Additionally, our lenders have the ability to transfer their commitments to other institutions, and the risk that committed funds may not be available under distressed market conditions could be exacerbated to the extent that consolidation of the commitments under our facilities or among its lenders were to occur.

We have received two notices from the New York Stock Exchange, or "NYSE," that we did not meet its continued listing requirements. If we are unable to rectify this non-compliance in accordance with NYSE rules, our common stock will be delisted from trading on the NYSE, which could have a material adverse effect on the liquidity and value of our common stock.

On December 11, 2008, we received notification from the NYSE that we were not in compliance with the NYSE's continued listing standard requiring that companies maintain an average market capitalization of at least \$75 million over any 30 consecutive trading-day period. Under the NYSE's rules, we have 18 months, or until June 11, 2010, to correct this deficiency. Notwithstanding the cure period for the \$75 million average market capitalization standard, if our average market capitalization falls below \$25 million (or \$15 million through June 30, 2009, under temporary rulemaking by the NYSE) over any 30 consecutive trading-day period, the NYSE will automatically begin delisting proceedings with respect to our common stock. There is no cure period if our average market capitalization falls below this level. While we plan to address these deficiencies within the required timeframe, there can be no assurance that we will be successful in doing so or that the NYSE will not exercise its discretion and begin delisting proceedings against us as a result of an abnormally low average common stock price.

In addition, on February 2, 2009, we received notification from the NYSE that we were not in compliance with the NYSE's continued listing standard requiring that the average closing price of our common stock be above \$1.00 per share over a 30 consecutive trading-day period. Under the NYSE's rules, we normally would have six months, or until August 2, 2009, for our share price and average share price to comply with the share price standard. However, on February 26, 2009, the NYSE temporarily suspended the \$1.00 requirement until June 30, 2009, and allowed companies currently below the \$1.00 minimum level that do not regain compliance during the suspension period to recommence their compliance period upon reinstatement of the share price standard and thereupon to receive the remaining balance of their compliance period. If the share price and average share price of our common stock do not regain compliance with the \$1.00 requirement during the suspension period, under the NYSE's temporary rulemaking we will have until on or about December 1, 2009, in which to comply with the share price standard. Notwithstanding the cure period for the share price standard, if our share price falls below the \$1.00 threshold to the point where the NYSE considers the share price to be "abnormally low," the NYSE has the discretion to begin delisting proceedings immediately with respect to our common stock. While there is no formal definition of "abnormally low" in the NYSE rules, the NYSE has the right to make such a determination at any time. To the extent that our share price remains significantly below \$1.00 for an extended period of time, the NYSE has broad discretion as to whether, and if so, when it would seek to delist our common stock from trading on the NYSE.

If we are unable to regain compliance with the NYSE's continued listing standards within the required time frames, our common stock will be delisted from the NYSE. As a result, we likely would have our common stock quoted on the Over-the-Counter Bulletin Board, or the "OTC BB," in order to have our common stock continue to be traded on a public market. Securities that trade on the OTC BB generally have less liquidity and greater volatility than securities that trade on the NYSE. Delisting from the NYSE also may preclude us from using certain state securities law exemptions, which could make it more difficult and expensive for us to raise capital in the future and more difficult for us to provide compensation packages sufficient to attract and retain top talent. In addition, because issuers whose securities trade on the OTC BB are not subject to the corporate governance and other standards imposed by the NYSE, our reputation may suffer, which could result in a decrease in the trading price of our shares. The delisting of our common stock from the NYSE, therefore, could significantly disrupt the ability of investors to trade our common stock and could have a material adverse effect on the value and liquidity of our common stock.

Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comments

Not applicable.

Item 2. Properties

Our corporate headquarters are located in Memphis, Tennessee. We own four mills located in Maine, Michigan and Minnesota at which we operate 11 paper machines. We also own five hydroelectric dams, of which four provide hydroelectric power to our Androscoggin mill and the fifth services our Sartell mill. In addition, we own 15 and lease five woodyards for the purpose of storage and loading of forest products and lease a number of sales offices.

Our headquarters and material facilities as of December 31, 2008, are shown in the following table:

Location	Use	Owned/Leased
Memphis, TN	corporate headquarters	leased
Jay (Androscoggin), ME	paper mill/kraft pulp mill	owned
Bucksport, ME	paper mill	owned
Quinneseec, MI	paper mill/kraft pulp mill	owned
Sartell, MN	paper mill	owned
West Chester, OH	sales, distribution and customer service	leased

Item 3. Legal Proceedings

We are involved in legal proceedings incidental to the conduct of our business. We do not believe that any liability that may result from these proceedings will have a material adverse effect on our financial condition or results of operations.

On August 6, 2008, we filed a declaratory judgment suit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin against NewPage Corporation and NewPage Wisconsin System Inc., in response to a patent infringement claim asserted by NewPage regarding certain of our coated paper products. The action sought a declaration that our coated paper products do not infringe the NewPage patent and that the NewPage patent is invalid. On January 29, 2009, the action was voluntarily dismissed with prejudice pursuant to a settlement agreement between the parties. As part of the settlement, NewPage granted us an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free, and fully paid-up right and license for any and all purposes under the NewPage patent and any continuation, division, reissue or non-U.S. counterpart of the patent.

Item 4. Submission of Matters to a Vote of Security Holders

Not applicable.

PART II

Item 5. Market for Registrants' Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Market Information

Our common stock is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol "VRS." The following table sets forth the high and low sales prices per share of our common stock, as reported by the New York Stock Exchange, for the indicated periods:

	NYSE [US \$]	
	High	Low
2008		
Second quarter (from May 15)	\$ 12.01	\$ 7.72
Third quarter	\$ 8.42	\$ 2.16
Fourth quarter	\$ 2.59	\$ 0.82

Holders

As of February 20, 2009, there were two stockholders of record and an estimated 3,350 beneficial owners of our common stock.

Dividends

We paid no dividends on our common stock prior to our IPO. Following our IPO in May 2008, we paid cash dividends on our common stock in the amount of \$0.03 per share for the second and third quarters of 2008, which are declared and paid in the following quarter. We have decided to suspend the payment of dividends and will thus not be declaring a dividend for the fourth quarter of 2008. The past dividend payments are not indicative of our future dividend policy, and there can be no assurance that we will declare or pay any cash dividends in the future. Any future determination relating to our dividend policy will be made at the discretion of our board of directors and will depend on then existing conditions, including our financial condition, results of operations, contractual restrictions, capital requirements, business prospects and other factors that our board of directors may deem relevant. Our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by the covenants of our senior secured credit facilities and the indentures governing our outstanding notes, and may be further restricted by the terms of any of our future debt or preferred securities. As of December 31, 2008, we were in compliance with these restrictive covenants.

Equity Compensation Plan Information

The table below sets forth information regarding the number of shares of common stock to be issued upon the exercise of the outstanding stock options granted under our equity compensation plans and the shares of common stock remaining available for future issuance under our equity compensation plans as of December 31, 2008.

Plan Category	Number of securities to be issued upon exercise of outstanding options (in thousands)	Weighted-average exercise price of outstanding options \$	Number of securities remaining available for future issuance under equity compensation plans (in thousands)
Equity compensation plans approved by security holders	15	1.43	4,235
Equity compensation plans not approved by security holders	-	-	-
Total	15	1.43	4,235

Item 6. Selected Financial Data

The following table sets forth our selected financial data for the years and as of the dates indicated. The selected statement of operations data for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, and the years ended December 31, 2005 and 2004, and the selected balance sheet data as of December 31, 2005 and 2004, have been derived from the audited combined financial statements of the Coated and Supercalendered Papers Division of International Paper, or the "Predecessor." The selected statement of operations data for the years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007, and the five months ended December 31, 2006, and the selected balance sheet data as of December 31, 2008, 2007 and 2006, have been derived from the audited consolidated (2008) and combined (2007 and 2006) financial statements of Verso Paper Corp., or the "Successor." The audited consolidated financial statements of the Successor as of and for the year ended December 31, 2008, the audited combined financial statements of the Successor as of and for the year ended December 31, 2007, the audited combined financial statements of the Successor for the five months ended December 31, 2006, and the audited combined financial statements of the Predecessor for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, are included elsewhere in this annual report. Our selected financial data should be read in conjunction with "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and the financial statements and their related notes included elsewhere in this annual report.

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(dollars and tons in millions except per share data)	Successor Consolidated	Successor Combined			Predecessor Combined	
	Year Ended	Year Ended	Five Months Ended	Seven Months Ended	Year Ended	
	December 31, 2008	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2006	July 31, 2006	December 31, 2005 2004	
Statement of Operations Data:						
Net sales	\$ 1,766.8	\$ 1,628.8	\$ 706.8	\$ 904.4	\$ 1,603.8	\$ 1,463.3
Costs and expenses:						
Cost of products sold - (exclusive of depreciation, amortization, and depletion)	1,463.2	1,403.0	589.3	771.6	1,338.2	1,272.5
Depreciation, amortization, and depletion	134.5	123.2	48.3	72.7	129.4	130.5
Selling, general, and administrative expenses	79.7	53.2	14.4	34.3	65.6	65.3
Restructuring and other charges	27.4	19.4	10.1	(0.3)	10.4	0.6
Operating income (loss)	62.0	30.0	44.7	26.1	60.2	(5.6)
Interest income	(0.8)	(1.5)	(1.8)	-	-	(0.3)
Interest expense	125.6	143.0	49.1	8.4	14.8	16.0
Income (loss) before income taxes	(62.8)	(111.5)	(2.6)	17.7	45.4	(21.3)
Provision (benefit) for income taxes	-	-	-	7.0	17.9	(8.2)
Net income (loss)	\$ (62.8)	\$ (111.5)	\$ (2.6)	\$ 10.7	\$ 27.5	\$ (13.1)
Per Share Data:						
Earnings (loss) per share	\$ (1.35)	\$ (2.93)	\$ (0.07)			
Weighted average common shares outstanding						
- basic and diluted	46,691,456	38,046,647	38,046,647			
Statement of Cash Flows Data:						
Cash provided by operating activities	\$ 54.1	\$ 15.0	\$ 128.2	\$ 39.3	\$ 116.8	\$ 123.7
Cash used in investing activities	\$ (81.3)	\$ (69.1)	\$ (1,402.0)	\$ (27.6)	\$ (53.0)	\$ (111.5)
Cash (used in) provided by	\$ 88.2	\$ 0.2	\$ 1,386.3	\$ (11.6)	\$ (63.8)	\$ (12.2)

financing activities

Other Financial and
Operating Data:

EBITDA (1)	\$	196.5	\$	153.2	\$	93.0	\$	98.8	\$	189.6	\$	124.9
Capital expenditures	\$	(81.4)	\$	(70.9)	\$	(27.8)	\$	(27.7)	\$	53.1	\$	111.3
Total tons sold		1,952.7		2,096.3		866.4		1,145.0		2,024.9		2,064.6

Balance Sheet Data:

Working capital (2)	\$	151.9	\$	87.2	\$	153.8	\$	87.8	\$	58.6
Property, plant and equipment, net	\$	1,116.0	\$	1,160.2	\$	1,212.3	\$	1,287.0	\$	1,363.9
Total assets	\$	1,636.4	\$	1,603.5	\$	1,711.0	\$	1,534.1	\$	1,585.0
Total debt	\$	1,357.7	\$	1,419.6	\$	1,169.3	\$	301.2	\$	302.1
Equity	\$	(10.0)	\$	(75.1)	\$	280.0	\$	1,040.0	\$	1,075.3

(1) EBITDA consists of earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization. EBITDA is a measure commonly used in our industry and we present EBITDA to enhance your understanding of our operating performance. We use EBITDA as one criterion for evaluating our performance relative to that of our peers. We believe that EBITDA is an operating performance measure, and not a liquidity measure, that provides investors and analysts with a measure of operating results unaffected by differences in capital structures, capital investment cycles and ages of related assets among otherwise comparable companies. However, EBITDA is not a measurement of financial performance under U.S. GAAP, and our EBITDA may not be comparable to similarly titled measures of other companies. You should not consider our EBITDA as an alternative to operating or net income, determined in accordance with U.S. GAAP, as an indicator of our operating performance, or as an alternative to cash flows from operating activities, determined in accordance with U.S. GAAP, as an indicator of our cash flows or as a measure of liquidity.

(2) Working capital is defined as current assets net of current liabilities, excluding the current portion of long-term debt and the Predecessor's accounts payable to International Paper.

The following table reconciles net income (loss) to EBITDA for the periods presented:

	Successor Consolidated	Successor Combined	Five Months	Seven Months	Predecessor Combined	
	Year Ended	Year Ended	Year Ended	Year Ended	Year Ended	
	December 31, 2008	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2006	July 31, 2006	December 31, 2005	December 31, 2004
(In millions of U.S. dollars)						
Reconciliation of net income (loss) to EBITDA:						
Net income (loss)	\$ (62.8)	\$ (111.5)	\$ (2.6)	\$ 10.7	\$ 27.5	\$ (13.1)
Interest expense, net	124.8	141.5	47.3	8.4	14.8	15.7
Provision (benefit) for income taxes	-	-	-	7.0	17.9	(8.2)
Depreciation, amortization, and depletion	134.5	123.2	48.3	72.7	129.4	130.5
EBITDA	\$ 196.5	\$ 153.2	\$ 93.0	\$ 98.8	\$ 189.6	\$ 124.9

Item 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations

The following discussion and analysis of our financial condition and results of operations covers periods prior to the Acquisition. For comparison purposes, the results of operations for the year ended December 31, 2006, are presented on a combined basis, consisting of the results of the Predecessor for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, and the results of the Successor for the five months ended December 31, 2006. Accordingly, the discussion and analysis of historical periods do not fully reflect the significant impact that the Acquisition has had on our financial statements. In addition, the statements in the discussion and analysis regarding the industry outlook and our expectations regarding the performance of our business and the other non-historical statements in the discussion and analysis are forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are subject to numerous risks and uncertainties, including, but not limited to, the risks and uncertainties described in "Risk Factors." Our actual results may differ materially from those contained in or implied by any forward-looking statements. The discussion and analysis should be read together with "Risk Factors" and the financial statements and their related notes included elsewhere in this annual report.

Overview

We are a leading North American supplier of coated papers to catalog and magazine publishers. Coated paper is used primarily in media and marketing applications, including catalogs, magazines, and commercial printing applications, such as high-end advertising brochures, annual reports, and direct mail advertising. We are North America's second largest producer of coated groundwood paper, which is used primarily for catalogs and magazines. We are also a low cost producer of coated freesheet paper, which is used primarily for annual reports, brochures, and magazine covers. In addition, we have a strategic presence in supercalendered paper, which is primarily used for retail inserts. We also produce and sell market kraft pulp, which is used to manufacture printing and writing paper grades and tissue products.

Background

We began operations on August 1, 2006, when we acquired the assets and certain liabilities of the business of the Predecessor. We were formed by affiliates of Apollo for the purpose of consummating the Acquisition from International Paper. Verso Paper Corp. went public on May 14, 2008, with an IPO of 14 million shares of common stock at a price of \$12 per share which generated \$152.2 million in net proceeds.

Stand-Alone Business

The Predecessor's financial statements for the periods presented represent the Division's combined financial statements. The preparation of this information was based on certain assumptions and estimates, including allocations of costs from International Paper. This financial information may not, however, necessarily reflect the results of operations, financial positions and cash flows that would have occurred if the Division had been a separate, stand-alone entity during the periods presented or our future results of operations, financial position and cash flows. For example, the financial statements of the Predecessor in this annual report include expenses for certain corporate services provided by International Paper and allocated based on various methods, including direct consumption, percent of capital employed, and number of employees. These historical charges and allocations may not be representative of expenses that we will incur in future reporting periods as we operate as a stand-alone entity.

Selected Factors that Affect Our Operating Results

Net Sales

Our sales, which we report net of rebates, allowances and discounts, are a function of the number of tons of paper that we sell and the price at which we sell our paper. The coated paper industry is cyclical, which results in changes in both volume and price. Paper prices historically have been a function of macro-economic factors which influence supply and demand. Price has historically been substantially more variable than volume and can change significantly over relatively short time periods. Paper prices declined in late 2006 and early 2007, which we believe was due to high customer and producer inventories and cautious purchasing by customers in advance of a scheduled postal rate increase. Beginning in mid-2007, prices began to rebound following announcements by several of our North American competitors of permanent closures of approximately 1 million tons of annual production capacity (approximately 9% of North American coated paper capacity). These market conditions continued into early 2008 with a series of announced price increases by suppliers of coated paper. Meanwhile, customers were rebuilding their paper inventories after a significant depletion in the second half of 2007. In the second half of 2008, we saw a significant weakening in demand as general economic conditions began to worsen. This weakened demand, coupled with the inventory build, put downward pressure on prices in late 2008 and into 2009, and has caused us, and most coated paper producers, to curtail production to match supply with demand.

We are primarily focused on serving two end-user segments: catalogs and magazines. In 2008, we believe we had a leading market share for the catalog and magazine segments of coated papers. Coated paper demand is primarily driven by advertising and print media usage. Advertising spending and magazine and catalog circulation tend to correlate with changes in the GDP of the United States – they rise with a strong economy and contract with a weak economy.

The majority of our products are sold under contracts with our customers. Contracted sales are more prevalent for coated groundwood paper, as opposed to coated freesheet paper, which is more often sold without a contract. Our contracts generally specify the volumes to be sold to the customer over the contract term, as well as the pricing parameters for those sales. Most of our contracts are negotiated on an annual basis, with only a few having terms extending beyond one year. Typically, our contracts provide for quarterly price adjustments based on market price movements. The large portion of contracted sales allows us to plan our production runs well in advance, optimizing production over our integrated mill system and thereby reducing costs and increasing overall efficiency.

We reach our end-users through several channels, including printers, brokers, paper merchants and direct sales to end-users. We sell and market our products to approximately 100 customers which comprise approximately 650 end-user accounts. In 2008, no single customer accounted for more than 10% of our total net sales.

Our historical results include specialty papers that we manufacture for Thilmany, LLC, or "Thilmany," on paper machine no. 5 at the Androscoggin mill. Under a long-term supply agreement entered into in 2005 in connection with International Paper's sale of its Industrial Papers business to Thilmany, these products are sold to Thilmany at a variable charge for the paper purchased and a fixed charge for the availability of the machine. The amounts included in our net sales for the specialty papers sold to Thilmany totaled \$42.4 million and \$37.6 million in 2008 and 2007, respectively.

Cost of Products Sold

The principal components of our cost of sales are chemicals, wood, energy, labor, maintenance, and depreciation, amortization, and depletion. Costs for commodities, including chemicals, wood and energy, are the most variable component of our cost of sales because their prices can fluctuate substantially, sometimes within a relatively short period of time. In addition, our aggregate commodity purchases fluctuate based on the volume of paper that we produce.

After giving effect to the Acquisition, our cost of products sold increased as a result of the purchase accounting treatment of the Acquisition. Under the rules of purchase accounting, we adjusted the value of our assets (including the inventory we acquired) and liabilities at closing to their respective estimated fair values. As a result of these adjustments to our asset basis, following the closing of the Acquisition, our costs of goods sold increased by such non-cash increase in our asset basis. However, this increase did not have a cash impact and did not affect our cost of sales for any inventory produced after the closing of the Acquisition.

Chemicals. Chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of coated papers include latex, starch, calcium carbonate, and titanium dioxide. We purchase these chemicals from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on any single supplier to satisfy our chemical needs. In the near term, we expect the rate of inflation for our total chemical costs to be lower than that experienced over the last two years. However, we expect that imbalances in supply and demand will drive higher prices for certain chemicals such as starch and sodium chlorate.

Wood. Our costs to purchase wood are affected directly by market costs of wood in our regional markets and indirectly by the effect of higher fuel costs on logging and transportation of timber to our facilities. While we have in place fiber supply agreements that ensure a substantial portion of our wood requirements, purchases under these agreements are typically at market rates. As we have begun to utilize wood harvested from our 23,000-acre hybrid poplar fiber farm located near Alexandria, Minnesota, our ongoing wood costs should be positively impacted.

Energy. We produce a large portion of our energy requirements, historically producing approximately 50% of our energy needs for our coated paper mills from sources such as waste wood and paper, hydroelectric facilities, chemicals from our pulping process, our own steam recovery boilers and internal energy cogeneration facilities. Our external energy purchases vary across each of our mills and include fuel oil, natural gas, coal and electricity. While our internal energy production capacity mitigates the volatility of our overall energy expenditures, we expect prices for energy to remain volatile for the foreseeable future and our energy costs to increase in a high energy cost environment. As prices fluctuate, we have some ability to switch between certain energy sources in order to minimize costs. We utilize derivative contracts as part of our risk management strategy to manage our exposure to market fluctuations in energy prices.

Labor . Labor costs include wages, salary and benefit expenses attributable to our mill personnel. Mill employees at a non-managerial level are compensated on an hourly basis. Management employees at our mills are compensated on a salaried basis. Wages, salary and benefit expenses included in cost of sales do not vary significantly over the short term. In addition, we have not experienced significant labor shortages.

Maintenance. Maintenance expense includes day-to-day maintenance, equipment repairs and larger maintenance projects, such as paper machine shutdowns for periodic maintenance. Day-to-day maintenance expenses have not varied significantly from year-to-year. Larger maintenance projects and equipment expenses can produce year-to-year fluctuations in our maintenance expenses. In conjunction with our periodic maintenance shutdowns, we have incidental incremental costs that are primarily comprised of unabsorbed fixed costs from lower production volumes and other incremental costs for purchased materials and energy that would otherwise be produced as part of the normal operation of our mills.

Depreciation, Amortization, and Depletion. Depreciation, amortization, and depletion expense represents the periodic charge to earnings through which the cost of tangible assets, intangible assets, and natural resources are recognized over the asset's life. Capital investments can increase our asset bases and produce year-to-year fluctuations in expense. Depreciation was initially lower after the Acquisition as a result of the lower asset bases assigned to property, plant, and equipment, but has subsequently risen due to capital investments.

Selling, General, and Administrative Expenses

The principal components of our selling, general, and administrative expenses are wages, salaries and benefits for our office personnel at our headquarters and our sales force, travel and entertainment expenses, advertising expenses, expenses relating to certain information technology systems, and research and development expenses. Also included are allocations of costs for corporate functions historically provided to us by International Paper. For further information about allocated costs, see "Corporate Allocations" below. In addition, we previously paid an annual management fee to Apollo under a management agreement pursuant to which Apollo provided us with certain financial and strategic advisory services and consulting services. Upon the consummation of the IPO, Apollo terminated the annual fee arrangement under the management agreement.

Taxes

Prior to the Acquisition, the Division was included in the consolidated income tax returns of International Paper. In the Predecessor's combined financial statements included in this annual report, income taxes have been presented based on an estimate of the income taxes that would have been generated if the Division had operated as a separate taxpayer. As a result, U.S. federal and state income tax expense is reflected on the Division's income based on an allocated rate of 39.4% for the seven months ended July 31, 2006. Income taxes have been provided for all items included in the historical statement of operations included herein, regardless of when such items were reported for tax purposes or when the taxes were actually paid or refunded. As a result of the Acquisition, there was a step-up in the tax basis of our assets, significantly reducing our cash income tax payments. Accordingly, our historical income tax expense may not necessarily reflect and may differ materially from what our cash tax payments would have been or will be as a stand-alone entity.

Corporate Allocations

The Predecessor's combined statement of operations includes allocations of costs for certain corporate functions that historically were provided to us by International Paper, including:

- General corporate expenses. This represents costs related to corporate functions such as accounting, tax, treasury, payroll and benefits administration, certain incentive compensation, risk management, legal, centralized transaction processing and information management and technology. These costs historically were allocated primarily based on general factors and estimated use of services. These costs are included in selling, general and administrative expenses in the Predecessor's combined statement of operations.
- Employee benefits and incentives. This represents fringe benefit costs and other incentives, including group health and welfare benefits, U.S. pension plans, U.S. post-retirement benefit plans and employee incentive compensation plans. These costs historically were allocated on an active headcount basis for health and welfare benefits (including U.S. post-retirement plans), on the basis of salary for U.S. pension plans, and on a specific identification basis for employee incentive compensation plans. These costs are included in costs of products sold, selling, general and administrative expenses, and restructuring charges in the Predecessor's combined statement of operations.
- Interest expense and debt service costs. International Paper historically provided financing to the Division through cash flows from its other operations and debt incurred. The interest expense associated with incurred debt that was allocated to the Division based on specifically-identified borrowings is included in interest expense, net, in the Predecessor's combined statement of operations. Costs associated with the debt are included in other expense in the Predecessor's combined statement of operations.

Expense allocations from International Paper reflected in the Predecessor's combined statement of operations were as follows:

	Seven Months Ended July 31, 2006
(In thousands of U.S. dollars)	
General corporate expenses	\$ 19.5
Employee benefits and incentives	11.3
Interest expense and debt service costs	8.4

Following the consummation of the Acquisition, we no longer have allocations for costs of certain corporate functions historically provided to the Division by International Paper. We now receive such services from our internal operations or third-party service providers. Accordingly, it is unlikely that the expenses we will incur as a stand-alone company for these services will reflect the allocated costs included in the Predecessor's combined financial statements.

Critical Accounting Policies

Our accounting policies are fundamental to understanding management's discussion and analysis of results of operations and financial condition. Our consolidated and combined financial statements are prepared in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America and follow general practices within the industry in which we operate. The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make certain judgments and assumptions in determining accounting estimates. Accounting estimates are considered critical if the estimate requires management to make assumptions about matters that were highly uncertain at the time the accounting estimate was made, and different estimates reasonably could have been used in the current period, or changes in the accounting estimate are reasonably likely to occur from period to period, that would have a material impact on the presentation of our financial condition, changes in financial condition or results of operations.

Management believes the following critical accounting policies are both important to the portrayal of our financial condition and results of operations and require subjective or complex judgments. These judgments about critical accounting estimates are based on information available to us as of the date of the financial statements.

Accounting policies whose application may have a significant effect on the reported results of operations and financial position, and that can require judgments by management that affect their application, include the following: Statement of Financial Accounting Standards, or "SFAS," No. 5, Accounting for Contingencies; SFAS No. 144, Accounting for the Impairment or Disposal of Long-Lived Assets; SFAS No. 142, Goodwill and Other Intangible Assets; SFAS No. 87, Employers' Accounting for Pensions; and SFAS No. 158, Employers' Accounting for Defined Benefit Pension and Other Postretirement Plans.

Impairment of long-lived assets and goodwill. Long-lived assets are reviewed for impairment upon the occurrence of events or changes in circumstances that indicate that the carrying value of the assets may not be recoverable, as measured by comparing their net book value to the estimated undiscounted future cash flows generated by their use.

Goodwill and other intangible assets are accounted for in accordance with SFAS No. 142, Goodwill and Other Intangible Assets. Intangible assets primarily consist of trademarks, customer-related intangible assets and patents obtained through business acquisitions. Impairment is the condition that exists when the carrying amount of these assets exceed their implied fair value. An impairment evaluation of the carrying amount of goodwill and other intangible assets with indefinite lives is conducted annually or more frequently if events or changes in circumstances indicate that an asset might be impaired. The Company has identified the following trademarks as intangible assets with an indefinite life: Influence®, Liberty® and Advocate®. Goodwill is evaluated at the reporting unit level and has been allocated to the "Coated" segment. The valuation as of October 1, 2008, indicated no impairment of goodwill or trademarks assigned indefinite lives.

The evaluation for impairment is performed by comparing the carrying amount of these assets to their estimated fair value. If impairment is indicated, then an impairment charge is recorded to reduce the asset to its estimated fair value. The estimated fair value is generally determined on the basis of discounted future cash flows. Management believes the accounting estimates associated with determining fair value as part of the impairment test is a critical accounting estimate because estimates and assumptions are made about the Company's future performance and cash flows. While management uses the best information available to estimate future performance and cash flows, future adjustments to management's projections may be necessary if economic conditions differ substantially from the assumptions used in making the estimates.

Pension and Postretirement Benefit Obligations. We offer various pension plans to employees. The calculation of the obligations and related expenses under these plans requires the use of actuarial valuation methods and assumptions, including the expected long-term rate of return on plan assets, discount rates, projected future compensation increases, health care cost trend rates and mortality rates. Actuarial valuations and assumptions used in the determination of future values of plan assets and liabilities are subject to management judgment and may differ significantly if different assumptions are used.

Contingent liabilities. A liability is contingent if the outcome or amount is not presently known, but may become known in the future as a result of the occurrence of some uncertain future event. We estimate our contingent liabilities based on management's estimates about the probability of outcomes and their ability to estimate the range of exposure. Accounting standards require that a liability be recorded if management determines that it is probable that a loss has occurred and the loss can be reasonably estimated. In addition, it must be probable that the loss will be confirmed by some future event. As part of the estimation process, management is required to make assumptions about matters that are by their nature highly uncertain.

The assessment of contingent liabilities, including legal contingencies, asset retirement obligations and environmental costs and obligations, involves the use of critical estimates, assumptions and judgments. Management's estimates are based on their belief that future events will validate the current assumptions regarding the ultimate outcome of these exposures. However, there can be no assurance that future events will not differ from management's assessments.

Recent Accounting Developments

Postretirement Benefit Plan Assets. In December 2008, the Financial Accounting Standards Board, or FASB, issued FASB Staff Position on Statement 132(R)-1, or FSP FAS 132(R)-1, Employers' Disclosure about Postretirement Benefit Plan Assets, which amends SFAS No. 132(R) to require more detailed disclosures about employers' pension plan assets. New disclosures will include more information on investment strategies, major categories of plan assets, concentrations of risk within plan assets and valuation techniques used to measure the fair value of plan assets. FSP FAS 132(R)-1 is effective for fiscal years ending after December 15, 2009. Since FSP FAS 132(R)-1 only addresses disclosure requirements, the adoption of FSP FAS 132(R)-1 will have no impact on our financial condition or results of operations.

Intangible Assets. In April 2008, the FASB issued FSP FAS 142-3, Determination of the Useful Life of Intangible Assets, which provides guidance on the renewal or extension assumptions used in the determination of the useful life of a recognized intangible asset. The intent of FSP FAS 142-3 is to better match the useful life of the recognized intangible asset to the period of the expected cash flows used to measure its fair value. FSP FAS 142-3 is effective for fiscal years and interim periods beginning after December 15, 2008. The adoption of FSP FAS 142-3 is not expected to have a material impact on our financial condition or results of operations.

Derivatives and Hedging Activities. In March 2008, the FASB issued SFAS No. 161, Disclosures about Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities. SFAS No. 161 changes the disclosure requirements for derivative instruments and hedging activities. Entities are required to provide enhanced disclosures about (a) how and why an entity uses derivative instruments, (b) how derivative instruments and related hedged items are accounted for under SFAS No. 133, Accounting for Derivative Instruments and Hedging Activities, and its related interpretations, and (c) how derivative instruments and related hedged items affect an entity's financial position, financial performance, and cash flows. SFAS No. 161 is effective for fiscal years and interim periods beginning after November 15, 2008. Since SFAS No. 161 only addresses disclosure requirements, the adoption of SFAS No. 161 will have no impact on our financial condition or results of operations.

Business Combinations. In December 2007, the FASB issued SFAS No. 141 (revised 2007), Business Combinations. SFAS No. 141-R establishes principles and requirements for how an acquirer recognizes and measures identifiable assets acquired, liabilities assumed and noncontrolling interests; recognizes and measures goodwill acquired in a business combination or gain from a bargain purchase; and establishes disclosure requirements. SFAS No. 141-R is effective for business combinations for which the acquisition date is on or after the beginning of the first annual reporting period beginning on or after December 15, 2008. Early adoption is prohibited. We will apply the provisions of SFAS No. 141-R to any future acquisitions.

In December 2007, the FASB issued SFAS No. 160, Noncontrolling Interests in Consolidated Financial Statements – an amendment of ARB No. 51. SFAS No. 160 establishes accounting and reporting standards for the noncontrolling interest in a subsidiary and for the deconsolidation of a subsidiary. SFAS No. 160 is effective, on a prospective basis, for fiscal years and interim periods beginning on or after December 15, 2008. The presentation and disclosure requirements for existing minority interests should be applied retrospectively for all periods presented. Early adoption is prohibited. The adoption of SFAS No. 160 is not expected to have a material impact on our financial condition or results of operations.

Fair Value Measurements. In September 2006, the FASB issued SFAS No. 157, Fair Value Measurements. SFAS No. 157 addresses how to measure fair value (not what to measure at fair value) and applies, with limited exceptions, to existing standards that require assets and liabilities to be measured at fair value. SFAS No. 157 establishes a fair value hierarchy, giving the highest priority to quoted prices in active markets and the lowest priority to unobservable data, and requires new disclosures for assets and liabilities measured at fair value based on their level in the hierarchy. SFAS No. 157 is effective for financial statements issued for fiscal years beginning after November 15, 2007. However, FSP 157-2, Effective Date of FASB Statement No. 157, delayed the implementation of SFAS No. 157 for nonfinancial assets and nonfinancial liabilities, except for items that are recognized or disclosed at fair value in the financial statements on a recurring basis, to fiscal years beginning after November 15, 2008. The adoption of the initial provisions of SFAS No. 157 did not have, and the adoption of the remaining provisions of SFAS No. 157 is not expected to have, a material impact on our financial condition or results of operations.

Other new accounting pronouncements issued but not effective until after December 31, 2008, are not expected to have a significant effect on our financial condition or results of operations.

Financial Overview

The United States and global economies are experiencing a period of substantial economic distress and uncertainty. These conditions have resulted in, among other things, a significant weakening in the demand for coated papers. This weakened demand coupled with increased inventories accumulated earlier in 2008 put downward pressure on coated paper prices in the fourth quarter of 2008. We, like most coated paper producers, have moved to curtail production to match supply with demand. Accordingly, we took almost 75,000 tons of downtime in the fourth quarter of 2008, and, as previously announced, intend to take an additional 100,000 tons of downtime during the first half of 2009. As 2009 progresses, we will continue to monitor the market conditions and will take appropriate actions to balance our supply of coated papers with the demand by our customers.

In the fourth quarter of 2008, our net sales decreased 15.7% as our sales volume fell 26.7% compared to the fourth quarter of 2007. The decline in sales volume was partially offset by a 15.1% increase in the average sales price per ton compared to the same period last year. On a sequential quarter basis, our average sale price dropped less than 1%, reflecting our efforts to sustain our pricing in a difficult economic environment.

In the fourth quarter of 2008, our gross margin dropped to 13.6% from 17.7% in the fourth quarter of 2007. The compression in gross margin reflects increased input prices for our key direct expenses compared to 2007 and \$15.8 million of unabsorbed costs resulting from the downtime taken in the fourth quarter of 2008.

Results of Operations

The following table sets forth certain consolidated and combined financial information for the years ended December 31, 2008, 2007 and 2006. For comparison purposes, we have presented the results of operations for 2006 on a combined basis, consisting of the results of the Predecessor for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, and the results of the Successor for the five months ended December 31, 2006. We believe that this approach is beneficial to the reader by providing an easier-to-read discussion of the results of operations and provides the reader with information

from which to analyze our financial results that is consistent with the manner that management reviews and analyzes results of operations.

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U.S. GAAP does not contemplate the combination of the financial results of the Predecessor and the Successor as the combined information does not include any pro forma assumptions or adjustments and, as a result, does not fully reflect the significant impact of the Acquisition on our financial statements. In particular, fair value adjustments to personal property and other property and equipment due to the allocation of the purchase price to assets acquired and liabilities assumed resulted in a lower depreciation expense for the Successor. The pro forma impact of these adjustments on the Predecessor's results of operations for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, would have been a reduction of \$5.4 million in depreciation expense. In addition, intangible assets recognized through the allocation of the purchase price to assets acquired and liabilities assumed resulted in incremental amortization expense for the Successor. The pro forma impact on the Predecessor's results of operations for the seven months ended July 31, 2006, would have been \$0.4 million of amortization expense, resulting in a net pro forma reduction in depreciation and amortization expense of \$5.0 million for the twelve months ended December 31, 2006.

Cost of sales in the following table and discussion includes the cost of products sold and depreciation and amortization. The following table and discussion should be read in conjunction with the information contained in our consolidated and combined financial statements and the related notes included elsewhere in this annual report. However, our historical results of operations set forth below and elsewhere in this annual report may not necessarily reflect what would have occurred if we had been a separate, stand-alone entity during the periods presented or what will occur in the future.

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	Successor Consolidated	Successor Combined	Combined Successor and Predecessor	Successor Combined Five Months Ended December	Predecessor Combined Seven Months Ended July 31,
	Year Ended December 31, 2008	Year Ended December 31, 2007	Year Ended December 31, 2006	31, 2006	2006
(In thousands of U.S. dollars)					
Net sales	\$ 1,766,813	\$ 1,628,753	1,611,250	\$ 706,833	\$ 904,417
Costs and expenses:					
Cost of products sold - exclusive of depreciation, amortization, and depletion	1,463,169	1,403,013	1,360,859	589,283	771,576
Depreciation, amortization, and depletion	134,458	123,217	121,004	48,330	72,674
Selling, general, and administrative expenses	79,744	53,159	48,741	14,393	34,348
Restructuring and other charges	27,416	19,395	9,804	10,126	(322)
Operating income	62,026	29,969	70,842	44,701	26,141
Interest income	(770)	(1,544)	(1,821)	(1,798)	(23)
Interest expense	125,622	142,976	57,550	49,136	8,414
Income (loss) before income taxes	(62,826)	(111,463)	15,113	(2,637)	17,750