

Photos



Empire State Development Chairman Daniel Gundersen (left) gets an explanation from Finishing Room employees Matthew Maneri and Susan Taylor on how the new packaging machine at International Paper's Ticonderoga mill works. Gundersen was at IP to award a \$1 million grant toward the sheeter's \$11 million cost.

Staff Photo/Lohr McKinstry /



Reams of high-quality photographic paper come out of the Ticonderoga mill's new No. 22 Sheeter. The \$11 million digital machine is supposed to ensure the mill's operation for decades.

Staff Photo/Lohr McKinstry /

Published December 06, 2007 11:15 pm - An \$11 million paper-packaging machine is being touted as the key to the longevity of International Paper's Ticonderoga mill.

IP gets \$1 million from state for upgrades

State helps buy equipment, solidifying local presence

By **LOHR MCKINSTRY**
Staff Writer

TICONDEROGA -- The head of the Empire State Development Corp. says a new \$11.4 million machine at International Paper's Ticonderoga mill spells longevity for the papermaker in the North Country.

Empire State Development Chairman Daniel Gundersen was at the Ticonderoga mill Thursday to award a \$1 million manufacturing-assistance grant to International Paper as the state's share of the project.

Gundersen toured the mill and got to see the digital machine, which IP is calling its "No. 22 Sheeter," in action.

"To the people who work here, this mill is home," he said. "It is very much a part of this community."

Â NEXT GENERATION'

Mill spokeswoman Donna Wadsworth said the new sheeter enables them to cut and package high-quality reproduction paper that previously had to be shipped out in rolls for packaging elsewhere.

"We expect to grow that market share and hold that market share. You have to look at that next generation of paper. The acquisition of this machine for our Finishing Department is very, very important to us."

Wadsworth said Mill Manager Chris Mallon wanted to be at the event with Gundersen, but was called out of town on business.

Mallon left a statement that "the Upgrade Project is

integral to our strategic plan for the future of the mill."

The German-made converting machine was just recently installed, and German engineers are still onsite assisting mill personnel in its setup and operation.

BIG LOCAL IMPACT

Wadsworth said IP wouldn't be investing in the machine if it didn't intend to operate its Ticonderoga mill far into the future.

Those jobs are what concern him the most, Gundersen said.

"Our interest lies in the 618 employees of this mill and the 700 loggers and truckers who make their living from wood fiber."

As Essex County's largest employer, the mill has a \$40 million annual payroll. Last year, it purchased \$28.6 million in wood and wood chips from suppliers and \$23 million in goods and services from New York state vendors.

Ticonderoga Supervisor Robert C. Dedrick said he was delighted to learn of the state commitment to the paper mill's future.

"Who said Christmas doesn't come early? International Paper has been the lifeblood of the Ticonderoga area. We are so, so thankful for them. This will allow the mill to produce paper for years to come."

Moriah Supervisor Thomas Scozzafava said many residents of his town work at IP.

"If these jobs were lost, you'd never replace them. Not with current regulations. You couldn't build this facility today."

The Ticonderoga mill was constructed on the shores of Lake Champlain in 1971, replacing an old mill downtown that was demolished.

"International Paper provides much of the economic base for the North Country, and Empire State Development would like to keep it that way,"

Gundersen said.

LARGER SHEETS

IP Converting Plant Upgrade Project Manager Eugene Fox said the new machine enables them to produce larger-cut sheets than ever before.

"Those are sizes we would have to ship rolls to other sites to convert for us. Now, we will convert that at the Ticonderoga mill here in New York."

Ed Leonard works at the No. 7 paper machine, one of two at the mill.

"I've heard a lot of positive things about the new sheeter," he said. "It's definitely going to help the employees and help this mill. It makes a big difference."

Gundersen said the new sheeter can cut and package 280 reams of paper a minute.

"It's astounding to see what technology can do. The highest-grade paper is being made in New York state. It's a market niche."

He said he spoke with many employees at their jobs as he walked around the mill.

"These people are proud of the work they do. This will keep them in business."