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Forisk White Paper Examines Market Pressures and Policy Opportunities for U.S. Pulp and Paper Sector

ATHENS, GEORGIA – August 27, 2026 – From 2019 through July 2026, 31 wood-using pulp mills closed in the United States. Forisk Consulting has published a new white paper that examines the factors reshaping the U.S. pulp and paper sector and identifies policy opportunities to support the long-term competitiveness of domestic manufacturing, forest sustainability, and local communities.

Authored by Brooks Mendell and Amanda Lang, *Market Pressures and Policy Opportunities for the U.S. Pulp and Paper Sector* draws on structured interviews with executives and managers representing wood-consuming operating assets across the United States. These conversations provide firsthand perspectives on the economic, operational, market, and policy factors influencing investment and operating decisions across the industry.

As a highly capital-intensive sector, pulp and paper manufacturers operate in a dual reality: competing nationally and globally on end-products while anchored to local wood fiber economics and state-level policy environments. The report highlights how shifting end-product demand, compounded by efficiency gains, increased use of recycled fiber, and global trade dynamics, magnifies margin pressures across the supply chain.

“This research gave us an opportunity to hear directly from industry leaders about what influences investment and operating decisions across the sector,” said Amanda Lang, President and COO of Forisk. “While conditions vary by mill and region, several themes emerged around the challenges facing U.S. pulp manufacturers and what could improve their competitiveness.”

At the federal level, policy actions recommended by industry leaders included:

- **Stable, levelizing trade policy.** Firms want predictable policies that “level up” subsidized imports to account for production costs.
- **Incentivize non-competing wood use**. Policies that encourage the use of wood pulp (over plastic) and grow alternative uses for wood pulp had broad support.

At the state level, firms want to partner with state agencies when advancing capital projects or operating plants. Policy priorities include:

- **Efficient permitting.** Industry leaders want permitting to take less time and have fewer bottlenecks, which would reduce costs.
- **Trucking and insurance.** Policies that reduce costs or increase wood supply also help local mills, including expanding truck weights and lowering insurance costs.

"Firms want regulatory predictability," added Brooks Mendell, CEO of Forisk. "Whether streamlining state environmental reviews or establishing fair global trade rules, policy decisions directly dictate how fast – or if – capital moves into U.S. manufacturing facilities."

Currently, the older U.S. pulp mill infrastructure is disadvantaged when competing with new, more efficient mills in Asia or South America. Industry leaders believe that U.S. policymakers have specific and viable options for supporting the U.S. industry.

To request a copy of the white paper, please complete this form.

For more information visit www.forisk.com or contact: Nick DiLuzio, ndiluzio@forisk.com, 770.725.8447.

About Forisk Consulting: Forisk delivers forecasts and analysis of forest industry markets and timberland investments. Firms participate in Forisk's research program by subscribing to the *Forisk Research Quarterly* (*FRQ*), the *Forisk Wood Fiber Review*, or the North American Forest Industry Capacity Database; supporting benchmarking studies related to forest operations and mill capacities; and attending educational workshops. www.forisk.com.