Greenpeace stops Kimberly-Clark's destruction of the Boreal forest in Canada (Kleercut), 2004-2009

November 2004 to August 2009

Country: Canada
Country: United States
Country: Germany
Country: United Kingdom
Country: Italy

Goals:
In general, Greenpeace's objective was to protect the Canadian Boreal forest. Specifically, Greenpeace wanted Kimberly-Clark corporation to change their sourcing policy to only allow sustainable FSC-certified fiber or recycled sources.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 178. Guerrilla theatre

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 172. Nonviolent obstruction
- 173. Nonviolent occupation
- 178. Guerrilla theatre

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 006. Group or mass petitions
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 009. Leaflets, pamphlets, and books
- 037. Singing
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 172. Nonviolent obstruction
• 173. Nonviolent occupation
• 178. Guerrilla theatre

Methods in 4th segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 172. Nonviolent obstruction
• 173. Nonviolent occupation

Methods in 5th segment:

• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 172. Nonviolent obstruction
• 173. Nonviolent occupation
• 178. Guerrilla theatre

Methods in 6th segment:

• 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions

Notes on Methods:
Though it is likely that handing out flyers and displays of public symbols continued throughout the campaign, Greenpeace's own media emphasize a gradual shift to more guerrilla theater tactics and "blockades" during the later segments of the campaign. Note that though blockades are coded as both nonviolent obstruction and nonviolent occupation, some were more physically disruptive (including locking activists to factory doors, etc.) than others. See narrative for more detail.

Classifications

Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Environment
Group characterization:

• Environmentalists
• students
• volunteers

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Greenpeace

Partners:
Natural Resource Defense Council

External allies:
Students on University campuses

**Involvement of social elites:**
Not known

**Joining/exiting order of social groups**

**Groups in 1st Segment:**

**Groups in 2nd Segment:**

- Natural Resource Defense Council

**Groups in 3rd Segment:**

- College students
- Natural Resource Defense Council (exit)

**Groups in 4th Segment:**

**Groups in 5th Segment:**

**Groups in 6th Segment:**

**Segment Length:** Approximately 10 months

**Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence**

**Opponents:**
Kimberley-Clark corporation

**Nonviolent responses of opponent:**
Not known

**Campaigner violence:**
None known

**Repressive Violence:**
arrests

**Success Outcome**

**Success in achieving specific demands/goals:**
6 points out of 6 points

**Survival:**
1 point out of 1 points

**Growth:**
3 points out of 3 points

Kimberley-Clark Corporation is the largest tissue-product manufacturer in the world, producer of well-known brands including Kleenex, Scott, and Cottonelle. It is no surprise that Kimberly-Clark is also arguably the leading consumer of wood-fiber. However, before 2009, Kimberly-Clark continued to take 90% this wood-fiber from unsustainably managed forests, most notably the ancient Boreal Forest in Canada. Furthermore, the fiber was predominantly logged in clearcuts, a highly destructive form of logging. In reaction, Greenpeace began a campaign focused on forcing Kimberly-Clark to get their fiber from
sustainable sources, specifically readily available sources of recycled fiber.

On November 11, 2004, Greenpeace launched their Kleercut campaign. They used label transformation for the brand Kleenex (one of Kimberly-Clark’s largest grossing products) to be visually associated with their campaign, Kleercut, a play on clearcut logging. For their beginning action, the environmentalists crafted bold mock Kleenex boxes out of 3 large trucks in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

On April 12, 2005, Greenpeace partnered with the ZIP ad agency, sending public service announcements across Canada. The public service announcements depicted people walking around with large logs on their shoulders as a symbol of the consumption of ancient forests by Kimberly-Clark Corporation.

A few weeks later on April 28, Greenpeace drove up to Kimberly-Clarks annual shareholder meeting in Kleenex box Kleercut trucks. They distributed satirical pamphlets of Greenpeace’s socially responsible investment report with the title: “Kimberley-Clark: Investing in Social Destruction”.

On August 5, Greenpeace staged a mock crime-scene directly outside of Kimberley-Clark’s headquarters in Mississauga, Ontario. The scene depicted the forests as the victims outlined in chalk, surrounded by caution tape and wanted posters.

Throughout the next few months, Greenpeace expanded. Then, on November 3, 2005, Greenpeace organized the “Boreal Day of Action”. On that single day, Greenpeace activists organized over 350 events in over 200 cities throughout the US and Canada. These actions became international, extending to Kimberly-Clark facilities in London, England and Hamburg, Germany.


On March 15, Greenpeace volunteers and Miami activists continued to make themselves visible by attending the annual Tissue World convention with a banner that read: “Kimberly-Clark: Wiping Away Ancient Forests” floating in mid-air. The convention was an important place for the activists to make noise because that was where the big names like Procter & Gamble and Georgia Pacific came to discuss tissue making. In conjunction with the banner, the activists spent four and a half hours asking delegates to take their “Kleercut Challenge”. The challenge consisted of two questions: 1) Can you tell which tissue is made of destroyed forests and which is made from recycled paper? 2) Did you know that Kleenex is made from old-growth trees from the Boreal forest? Unsurprisingly, the delegates could tell the difference. However, most were unaware of Kimberley-Clarks doings. The final aspect of the challenge was to ask the delegates to use recycled paper in their products, to which many answered that they already do. In conjunction with this event, the environmentalists distributed copies of “USA Today” rewritten as a spoof on the original to the attendees’ hotel rooms.

On March 29, Greenpeace began an international business initiative called “Forest Friendly 500” via the Internet. Their goal was to accumulate 500 businesses from around the world to discontinue buying Kimberly-Clark products. By taking away Kimberly-Clark’s business, Greenpeace could begin to apply the greater economic pressure to the corporation. Greenpeace had 125 pledges from businesses within a week. On May 1, only two months later, they had surpassed the 500-pledge goal.

Throughout the campaign, college students participated by successfully petitioning their respective schools to boycott any Kimberly-Clark products. These colleges included American University, Skidmore College, Rice University, University of California-Berkeley, and Harvard University.

Meanwhile, Kimberly-Clark continued to refuse the demands of the shareholders and the environmentalists, only retaliating with defensive arguments and no action moving towards sustainable options for production. The shareholders continued the fight, by forcing Kimberly-Clark to include the information in their annual proxy statement from an investigation by the United States Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) regarding the feasibility of making a switch to FSC-certified fiber within 10
years. This information could potentially sway the investment in the company.

In July, Greenpeace requested that the SEC investigate Kimberley-Clark’s public statements on wood-pulp policy. These investigations revealed that Kimberley-Clark had continually been using wood pulp from the coastal temperate rainforests of British Columbia but had publicly stated the contrary. Kimberley-Clark had been lying to the public and shareholders since as early as 1998.

By August, 650 businesses had signed onto the ongoing “Forest Friendly 500” campaign.

In the early morning of November 9, Greenpeace activists staged a massive installation in front of Kimberley-Clark regional headquarters in Turin, Italy. Kimberley-Clark also produced some of Europe’s best selling brands of tissue and toilet paper, including Kleenex, Andrex, Scottex, Page and Hackle. The activists, dressed in bright orange jumpsuits, chained themselves to toilets directly in front of the building facing the street. There were trees placed inside the toilets to symbolize the forests that were being “flushed down” throughout Europe.

On November 13, Greenpeace activists blocked the entrance of the largest Kimberley-Clark mill facility in North America for 9 hours using a bus dressed up as a large Kleenex box. Two activists locked themselves into the bus and held a banner between them reading: “Kleenex=Ancient Forest Destruction”. By this time, 680 businesses had joined the “Forest Friendly 500” campaign.

On December 21, Greenpeace spread the same initial ad from the New York Times in November to Europe by placing it in the International Herald Tribune.

On March 24, 2007, Greenpeace infiltrated a Kleenex commercial shooting in New York City’s Times Square called “Let It Out”. During the filming, Greenpeace activists jumped into the frame with a Kleercut banner. Simultaneously, the previously thought common person “letting it out” to Kleenex turned out to be a Kleercut activist and began proclaiming her disapproval of Kimberley-Clarks logging practices.

The next day, Kimberley-Clark released a new procurement policy. Greenpeace publicly denounced this policy due to major flaws. They stated that it promised no substantial change and offered no protection of the forests. Throughout the next six months Greenpeace and Kimberley-Clark participated in unsuccessful negotiations.

Bad press continues for Kimberly-Clark when the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise successfully blocks a freighter filled with Boreal forest pulp from leaving Quebec’s Saguenay River in mid-September 2007. Then, at the Bank of America Annual Investor Convergence in San Francisco, activists gather with banners and spoofed conference newsletters to single-out Kimberly-Clark as a bad investment.

On October 3, 2007, Greenpeace activists infiltrated Kleenex’s “Let It Out” commercial shooting for the second time. This time the commercials were being shot at Wrigley Field in Chicago, IL. The second time around the activists added drama and song. They dressed up as bears and had masked people with chainsaws chase them. They also infiltrated the commercial with their own song “Take me out to the clearcut”.

A few days later on October 15, Greenpeace infiltrated Thomas Falk’s, Kimberley-Clark’s CEO, keynote address at his alma mater, the University of Wisconsin. The activists switched his Powerpoint presentation with their own, explaining Kimberley-Clark’s role in the destruction of the Boreal forest. This surprise sent the attendees to an early lunch where they were greeted with menus swapped in the same style that read of different dishes like “songbird stir-fry” and “caribou clearcut cake”. These menus also included more detailed information about the destruction and imbalance Kimberley-Clark was fostering.

On December 2, four Greenpeace activists entered the Kimberley-Clark headquarters in Canada dressed in business suits for a stand-in. They spread wood chips on the floor and played chainsaw sounds to symbolize the destruction of the forest and locked themselves together with chains directly in front of the corporate offices. They demanded a meeting with Ken Strassner,
Kimberley-Clark’s Vice President of Environment. The activists were later arrested and released on the charge of mischief. On December 26, 2007, Kimberley-Clark released a $100 million ad campaign for its Cottonelle brand. Greenpeace activists countered with banners in front of the ads on buses.

On March 27, 2008 police make an incredibly public arrest of four Greenpeace activists attempting to unfurl a massive banner against the destruction of the Boreal forest within Toronto’s Eaton Center.

On April 11, 2008, Kae Stuart, a retired judge and Dallas local, introduced a resolution to establish a Kimberley-Clark committee devoted to sustainability. The resolution garnered enough support from shareholders to be revived the next year.

On June 9, Greenpeace activists set up another blockade at Kimberley-Clark’s New Milford, Connecticut facility since the plant produced 40% of Kleenex and Scott products. Simultaneously, other activists were placing tree seedlings and informational pamphlets on the cars of employees stating: “We know Kimberley-Clark can do better. Here is a start”. On that same day, Greenpeace placed a billboard strategically on a prominent highway between Irving and Dallas that many Kimberley-Clark employees used to get to work.

On June 30, activists dressed as movers greeted Kimberley-Clark employees as they entered their new offices in Franklin, Massachusetts. Meanwhile, other activists locked down an office of a prominent Kimberley-Clark board member in Chicago, IL.

On July 23, activists continued to blockade yet another manufacturing mill in Fullerton, California. Simultaneously, other activists on the same site unraveled a banner reading: “Stop Flushing Forests”.

On August 12, Greenpeace launched a boat into the lake at Kimberley-Clark’s corporate campus in Roswell, Georgia. The boat read the previously released “Cut and Run” report through a bullhorn. On August 21, Greenpeace commissioned artist Mark Fiore to make a film in response to Kimberley-Clark’s production of Pixar’s Wall-E branded Kleenex boxes. The short animated film was called “WALL-E+Kleenex = IRON-E” in order to focus on the idea of conservation that played into the original Pixar film’s central themes.

On April 4, Greenpeace released another informative video linking harmful logging practices and paper products called “What’s in your box of Kleenex?” On April 17, Greenpeace released a highly popular video spoof on the “Feels Good to Feel” promotional campaign titled “Kleenex Comes with More than a Feeling”. On May 11, Greenpeace released an iPhone App of their consumer guide that was downloaded by several thousand people.

Finally, on August 5th 2009 during a joint news conference in Washington DC, Greenpeace and the Kimberly-Clark Corporation announced an historic agreement marking the end of conflict and beginning of collaboration between the groups. After almost 5 years of campaigning, Kimberley-Clark adopted a new fiber procurement policy, including the goal of ensuring 100% of the fiber used in its products would be sourced from environmentally responsible places.

The new agreement ensures that Kimberly-Clark will no longer be purchasing pulp from the 7.4 million acre Kenogami and Ogoki Forests in northern Ontario unless strict ecological concerns are addressed. The agreement also demanded that by 2012 the company will no longer use any pulp from the Boreal forest unless certified to the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council. Greenpeace and Kimberly-Clark have continued to work together to realize more comprehensive sustainability goals.

Research Notes

Sources:


“Kleenex gets Punk’d”. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZCym0DB7hA. 21 September, 2011.

“Kleenex Struck Out at Wrigley Field”. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aar_6wDGr0Y. 21 September, 2011.


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