

Judge clears Verso settlement despite objections

BY DARREN FISHELL
BDN STAFF

PORTLAND — A federal judge has ruled Verso Paper's agreement to sell mills in Rumford and Biron, Wisconsin, was sufficient to settle antitrust complaints stemming from its \$1.4 billion purchase of larger competitor NewPage.

The approval late Friday came nearly a year after the companies completed the sale and means

struggling Verso, which owns a mill in Jay, won't need to meet other conditions to resolve the antitrust complaint from the U.S. Department of Justice.

The 58-member union representing former Verso employees at the shuttered Bucksport mill objected to the settlement.

The union argued the settlement should have included the Bucksport mill and gone further to remedy concerns about Verso's influence in the coated paper market.

In a separate memo about the decision, U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan wrote that the court has limited authority to overrule the Department of Justice's assessment of what would remedy the alleged antitrust harms under the federal Tunney Act.

"When plants such as the one in Bucksport close, entire communities, where families may have been employed for generations, are often devastated, and the

court is aware of the objectors' frustrations with a remedy they deem insufficient," Chutkan wrote, citing another paper industry antitrust settlement case.

"However, the court's role here is a limited one, and 'the relevant inquiry is whether the United States' conclusion about the adequacy of the ... divestiture was reasonable, not whether it was correct.'"

Chutkan referred to the antitrust settlement between the fed-

eral government and pulp and paper producer Abitibi-Consolidated, which merged in 2007 with Bowater to form AbitibiBowater and reorganized as Resolute Forest Products through a bankruptcy in 2010.

The unions argued the U.S. Department of Justice should have involved Bucksport in the settlement, requiring Verso either to sell the mill to a competing paper maker or prevent the sale to entitle

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Dan Higgins, general manager of Hamlin's Marine in Hampden, stands next to the Scout 151 Dorado, which will soon be manufactured in the shop.

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A new boat to launch

Partnership means more growth for Hampden builder

BY DAWN GAGNON
BDN STAFF

Two years after it began manufacturing Puffin dinghies at its facility overlooking the Penobscot River, Hamlin's Marine's Puffin Boats LLC last week inked a contract to build fiberglass boats for a South Carolina company.

Although particulars of the agreement weren't disclosed, the move is expected to double the boat maker's manufacturing crew, Hamlin's Marine General Manager Dan Higgins said Thursday. There are 23 employees in Hampden, and the company plans to add another five or so positions in the near future.

The Hampden boat maker already is turning out about 60 of its own signature dinghies a year. It also is producing fiberglass boat components for the Hinckley Co., a Maine-based yacht maker, and is doing contract work for Adirondack Rowing, a company based in New York.

Under an agreement with Scout Boats Inc., Puffin Boats will build two versions of its current line — the 151 Dorado and the Sportfish models. They retail at \$15,000 to \$17,000, Higgins said.

The Hampden-based boat builder also will manufacture the yet-to-be-launched Edendriller, which is part of the Scout family of boats.

Puffin Boats is a company formed by Hamlin's Marine, which has locations in

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Puffin skippers are seen in the manufacturing part of Hamlin's Marine in Hampden. The company is planning an expansion to start production on the Scout 151 Dorado.

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Hampden and Waterville, where it employs 23 people and 20 people, respectively.

Higgins said Thursday that the Dorado, one of the models that Scout has been manufacturing for more than a decade, was in danger of being discontinued.

"They're focused on building bigger boats so they don't have room in their production line for it, and they're also farther south," Higgins said, adding that bringing their production north to Maine will put them closer to key markets in the Northeast and Canada, thereby greatly decreasing freight costs.

There's no particular dollar amount tied to the Scout deal, he said.

"It's an open-ended contract. We're going to build in batches," he said.

The Dorados are going into immediate production, he said.

"Once we get ramped up, we'll be building four to five a month," he said, adding that the initial order calls for 18 units, some of which have been pre-ordered by customers.

"Scout is working with us to promote the boats, but we're going to be manufacturing them under the Scout name," he said.

Higgins said that Hamlin's already had a business relationship with Scout before landing the deal to build some of their smaller boats.

"We sell their bigger boats, and as a dealer we wanted to be able to sell this boat, and they were going to discontinue it," he said. "We told them that we have a manufacturing component to our business, and we already had the relationship."

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Fake IRS scammers get more aggressive

BY RUSS VAN ARSDALE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NORTHEAST CONTACT

Most consumers can spot a scam attempt almost as soon as they pick up the phone. However, one recent spate of calls has citizens and government officials concerned.

The callers pretend to represent the Internal Revenue Service, or IRS. They claim they're calling because taxes are past due; unless payment is made immediately, the caller threatens to file a lawsuit, seize property, even do them physical harm.

In the past two weeks, the Maine attorney general and Bureau of Consumer Credit Protection, or BCCP, have issued warnings about these scams. Similar warnings from officials around the country show scammers are ramping up their efforts. And they're doing so a lot earlier than usual.

The fake IRS scam usually hits high gear during the run-up to income tax season, that is, in February, March and early April. This year, however, crooks have been

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CONSUMER FORUM

Search today, news feed tomorrow

Last night I was Christmas shopping for slippers on several websites. Today, ads for slippers from those same sites are showing up all over my news feeds.

How does my news feed know?

It's called "re-targeting," and it's a marketing technique used by companies to increase the likelihood I will purchase those slippers.

How do they know that I was shopping for slippers on their sites? I got "cookied." Somewhere on their site they installed a hidden pixel that attached itself to what I am doing online.

That code will follow me all over the Web, as if to say, "Hey, remember me?" as companies "re-

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