

Georgia's 2018

# CLEAN WATER HEROES

## Interface

### CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER

Industry Leader in Sustainability Continues Work to Conserve Natural Resources

#### INTRODUCTION:

In the 1990s, after spending some 20 years building one of the world's largest producers of modular commercial floor coverings, Interface founder Ray Anderson said customers began to ask him "What are you doing for the environment?" His response: "We had no answer." But, before his death in 2011, Anderson came to be known for his leadership in the sustainability movement. Today, his Atlanta and LaGrange-based company with facilities worldwide is considered a leader in sustainable manufacturing. Through technological advances in manufacturing processes and the construction of massive rainwater harvesting systems, the company's Georgia facilities in LaGrange and West Point use 93 percent less water than they did in 1996. Interface has also set the bar for waste reduction, energy efficiency, recycling and use of recycled materials in its products.

#### THE WATER BODY:

What little water Interface purchases from local utilities in LaGrange and West Point comes from the Chattahoochee River that feeds Lake West Point along the Georgia-Alabama state line. Since the 1990s, the Chattahoochee has been at the center of a pitched battle over water rights between Georgia, Alabama and Florida. At issue is the amount and health of the water flowing from Georgia to the neighboring states. At 435 miles-long, the Chattahoochee is Georgia's longest and most heavily-used river. It supplies about 50 percent of Georgians with their drinking water and provides water for countless businesses and industries like Interface from its origins in the North Georgia mountains to its confluence with the Flint River at the Georgia-Florida state line in southwest Georgia.

#### THE CLEAN:

Ask Interface employees what they're doing for the environment these days, and they might tell you, "More than anyone else." And, they're not likely overstating the truth.

Since 1996, shortly after founder Ray Anderson demanded that his company become a leader in environmental sustainability, Interface has improved energy efficiency at its manufacturing sites by 43 percent,





reduced the intensity of its greenhouse gas emissions by 96 percent and reduced the amount of manufacturing waste sent to landfills by 91 percent.

Today, through the purchase of green energy credits, 88 percent of the energy used in its manufacturing processes comes from renewable sources like wind and solar.

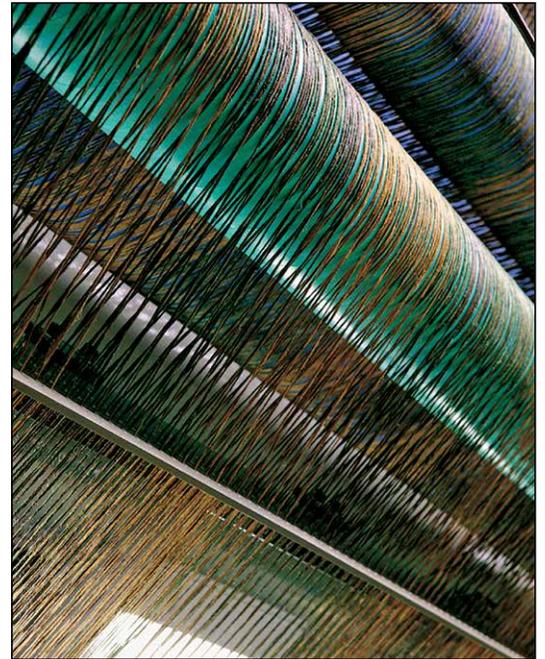
For employees who have been with the company since before Ray Anderson's conversion to environmental warrior, the change in culture has been remarkable.

"I can remember when our only goal was to make a profit," said Buddy Hay, vice president of Sustainability Strategies and a 29-year veteran of the company, "Now, our purpose is so much bigger. It is refreshing to work for a company with a moral compass."

Currently, Interface is designing and constructing two 50,000-gallon rainwater collection systems at its LaGrange facilities. Rain falling on the roofs of the company's manufacturing buildings will be directed to storage tanks that will then supply everything from portions of the manufacturing process to toilets. The company has employed a similar strategy for its new headquarters building in Atlanta, having installed a rainwater collection system designed to reduce water use by 78 percent.

A similar project at the company's West Point facility was so successful that the company needed to purchase just 1.4 million gallons from the local water utility in 2017. Twenty years ago, Interface's West Point and LaGrange facilities annual water bill was some 27 million gallons and those facilities manufactured half the product they do today. This means more water remains in the Chattahoochee River for downstream users.

Another of the company's major initiatives is increasing the recycled content of their products. In 2017, almost 60 percent of their raw materials came from recycled or plant-based materials. Many of Interface's carpet tiles are made from 100 percent recycled content yarn, including yarn produced from discarded fishing nets in the Philippines.



*Top: By recycling materials, Interface has reduced the amount of manufacturing waste sent to local landfills by 91 percent since 1996. Left: Among Interface's sustainability initiatives is an effort to reuse discarded carpet materials. In 2017, almost 60 percent of their raw materials came from recycled or plant-based materials. Right: Many of Interface's carpet tiles are manufactured from 100 percent recycled content yarn, including one line of products made from discarded nylon fishing nets collected in the Philippines.*



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