

Verso Corp
Form 10-K
March 08, 2018

UNITED STATES
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20549

FORM 10-K

ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934
For the fiscal year ended December 31, 2017

OR
 TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF
1934
For the transition period from _____ to _____

Verso Corporation
(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

Delaware 001-34056 75-3217389
(State of Incorporation (Commission File Number) (IRS Employer
or Organization) Identification Number)

8540 Gander Creek Drive
Miamisburg, Ohio 45342
(Address, including zip code, of principal executive offices)

(877) 855-7243
(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

Securities registered pursuant to section 12(b) of the Act:
Title of each class Name of each exchange on which registered

Class A common stock, \$0.01 par value New York Stock Exchange
Class B common stock, \$0.01 par value None

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act: None

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days. Yes No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate website, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§ 232.405 of this chapter)

during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files). Yes
 No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§ 229.405) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

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Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, a smaller reporting company or an emerging growth company. See the definitions of “large accelerated filer,” “accelerated filer,” “smaller reporting company,” and “emerging growth company” in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer Accelerated filer Non-accelerated filer Smaller reporting company
Emerging growth company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act). Yes No

As of June 30, 2017, the aggregate market value of the voting and non-voting common equity of Verso Corporation held by non-affiliates, computed by reference to the price at which the common equity was last sold on the last business day of the most recently completed second fiscal quarter, was approximately \$137,409,355. For purposes of this calculation, only those shares held by directors, executive officers and holders of 10% or more of the voting securities of Verso Corporation have been excluded as held by affiliates. Such exclusion should not be deemed a determination or an admission by Verso Corporation or any such person that such individuals or entities are or were, in fact, affiliates of Verso Corporation.

As of February 23, 2018, Verso Corporation had 34,234,921 shares of Class A common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and 220,552 shares of Class B common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, outstanding.

DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE:

The information required by Part III is incorporated by reference from portions of the definitive proxy statement of Verso Corporation to be filed within 120 days after December 31, 2017, pursuant to Regulation 14A under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 in connection with the 2018 annual meeting of stockholders of Verso Corporation.

Verso Corporation
 Form 10-K
 December 31, 2017

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Forward-Looking Statements

In this annual report, all statements that are not purely historical facts are forward-looking statements within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, or “Securities Act,” and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or “Exchange Act.” Forward-looking statements may be identified by the words “believe,” “expect,” “anticipate,” “project,” “plan,” “estimate,” “intend” and other similar expressions. They include, for example, statements relating to our business and operating outlook; assessment of market conditions; and the growth potential of the industry in which we operate. Forward-looking statements are based on currently available business, economic, financial and other information and reflect management’s current beliefs, expectations and views with respect to future developments and their potential effects on us. Actual results could vary materially depending on risks and uncertainties that may affect us and our business. The following factors, among others, could cause actual results to differ from those set forth in the forward-looking statements: the long-term structural decline and general softening of demand facing the paper industry; our exploration of strategic alternatives, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company; developments in alternative media, which are expected to adversely affect the demand for some of our key products, and the effectiveness of our responses to these developments; intense competition in the paper manufacturing industry; rising postal costs; our dependence on a small number of customers for a significant portion of our business; any additional closure and other restructuring costs; our limited ability to control the pricing of our products or pass through increases in our costs to our customers; changes in the costs of raw materials and purchased energy; negative publicity, even if unjustified; any failure to comply with environmental or other laws or regulations, even if inadvertent; legal proceedings or disputes; any labor disputes; and the potential risks and uncertainties described in Part I, Item 1A, “Risk Factors,” as such disclosures may be amended, supplemented or superseded from time to time by other reports we file with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including subsequent annual reports on Form 10-K and quarterly reports on Form 10-Q. We assume no obligation to update any forward-looking statement made in this annual report to reflect subsequent events or circumstances or actual outcomes.

Market and Industry Information

Market data and other statistical information used throughout this annual report are based on independent industry publications, government publications, reports by market research firms, or other published independent sources. Some data is also based on our good-faith estimates which are derived from our review of internal surveys, as well as the independent sources listed above. Although we believe these sources are reliable, we have not independently verified the information. Industry prices for coated paper provided in this annual report are, unless otherwise expressly noted, derived from RISI, Inc. data. “North American” data included in this annual report that has been derived from RISI, Inc. only includes data from the United States and Canada. Any reference to (a) grade No. 3, grade No. 4 and grade No. 5 coated paper relates to 60 lb. basis weight, 50 lb. basis weight and 34 lb. basis weight, respectively, (b) lightweight coated groundwood paper refers to groundwood paper grades that are a 36 lb. basis weight or less, and (c) ultra-lightweight coated groundwood paper refers to groundwood paper grades that are a 30 lb. basis weight or less. The RISI, Inc. data included in this annual report has been derived from the following RISI, Inc. publications: RISI World Graphic Paper Forecast, January 2018 and RISI Paper Trader: A Monthly Monitor of the North American Graphic Paper Market, December 2017.

PART I

Item 1. Business

In this report, the term “Verso” refers to Verso Corporation, which is the ultimate parent entity and the issuer of Class A common stock listed on the New York Stock Exchange. In December 2016, Verso Corporation completed a consolidation and reorganization of its subsidiaries, or the “Internal Reorganization.” For more information on the Internal Reorganization, see below under “History”. After the Internal Reorganization, Verso is the sole member of Verso Holding LLC, which is the sole member of Verso Paper Holding LLC. As used in this report, the term “Verso Holding” refers to Verso Holding LLC, and the term “Verso Paper” refers to Verso Paper Holding LLC. Prior to the Internal Reorganization, Verso was the sole member of Verso Paper Finance Holdings One LLC, which was the sole member of Verso Paper Finance Holdings LLC, which was the sole member of Verso Paper Holdings LLC. As used in this report, the term “Verso Finance” refers to Verso Paper Finance Holdings LLC; and the term “VPH” refers to Verso Paper Holdings LLC. The term “NewPage” refers to NewPage Holdings Inc., which was an indirect, wholly owned subsidiary of Verso prior to the Internal Reorganization; the term “NewPage Corp” refers to NewPage Corporation, which was an indirect, wholly owned subsidiary of NewPage prior to the Internal Reorganization. Each of Verso Finance, VPH, NewPage and NewPage Corp were either merged into other subsidiaries of Verso, converted into limited liability corporations, and/or renamed in the Internal Reorganization and do not exist on and after the Internal Reorganization. The term for any such entity includes its direct and indirect subsidiaries when referring to the entity’s consolidated financial condition or results. Unless otherwise noted, references to “the Company,” “we,” “us,” and “our” refer to Verso.

Overview

We are the leading North American producer of coated papers, which are used primarily in commercial print, magazines, catalogs, high-end advertising brochures and annual reports, among other media and marketing publications. We produce a wide range of products, ranging from coated freesheet and coated groundwood, to specialty papers, to inkjet and digital paper, supercalendered papers and uncoated freesheet. We also produce and sell market kraft pulp, which is used to manufacture printing and writing paper grades and tissue products.

We operate thirteen paper machines at seven mills located in Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, as of December 31, 2017. The mills have an aggregate annual production capacity of approximately 2,870,000 tons of paper, including coated papers and specialty papers which excludes pulp. In February 2018, we announced plans to upgrade the shuttered No. 3 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, enabling this equipment to restart for the manufacture of packaging products. This paper machine was previously idled beginning in January 2017 and shut down in July 2017. We anticipate completion of this upgrade in the third quarter of 2018 and expect the No. 3 paper machine to increase annual paper production capacity by approximately 200,000 tons.

We sell and market our products to approximately 300 customers which comprise approximately 1,700 end-user accounts. We have long-standing relationships with many leading magazine and catalog publishers, commercial printers, specialty retail merchandisers and paper merchants. Our relationships with our ten largest coated paper customers average more than 20 years. We reach our end-users through several distribution channels, including direct sales, commercial printers, paper merchants and brokers.

History

We began operations on August 1, 2006, when we acquired the assets and certain liabilities comprising the business of the Coated and Supercalendered Papers Division of International Paper. We were formed for the purpose of consummating the acquisition from International Paper. We completed our initial public offering of common stock on the New York Stock Exchange in May 2008. On January 7, 2015, we acquired NewPage Holdings, Inc., also a paper

manufacturer, in a merger transaction. The NewPage acquisition provided us with assets in a complementary geographic area, a broader portfolio of products and strategic flexibility to reduce operating costs.

On January 26, 2016, or the “Petition Date,” Verso and substantially all of its direct and indirect subsidiaries, or the “Debtors,” filed voluntary petitions for relief, or the “Chapter 11 Filings,” under Chapter 11 of Title 11 of the United States Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, or the “Bankruptcy Code,” in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, or the “Bankruptcy Court.” The chapter 11 cases, or the “Chapter 11 Cases,” were consolidated for procedural purposes only and administered jointly under the caption “In re: Verso Corporation, et al., Case No. 16-10163.” On June 23, 2016, the Bankruptcy Court entered an order confirming the Debtors’ First Modified Third Amended Joint Plan of Reorganization Under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code dated as of June 20, 2016, or the “Plan.” On July 15, 2016, or the

“Effective Date,” the Plan became effective pursuant to its terms and the Debtors emerged from their Chapter 11 Cases. As a result of the Plan, among other things, all of our common stock issued and outstanding immediately prior to the Effective Date was cancelled and our creditors existing immediately prior to the Effective Date received all of our newly issued common stock in exchange for the cancellation of all of our pre-petition indebtedness.

In accordance with the provisions of Financial Accounting Standards Board, or “FASB,” Accounting Standards Codification, or “ASC” 852, Reorganizations, the Debtors adopted fresh-start accounting upon emergence from the Chapter 11 Cases and became a new entity for financial reporting purposes as of July 15, 2016. Accordingly, the Consolidated Financial Statements for the reporting entity subsequent to emergence from the Chapter 11 Cases, or the “Successor,” are not comparable to the Consolidated Financial Statements for the reporting entity prior to emergence from the Chapter 11 Cases, or the “Predecessor.” For more information on the Chapter 11 Cases, including a detail of liabilities subject to compromise and reorganization items, net see Note 2 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report.

In December 2016, Verso Corporation completed a consolidation and reorganization of its subsidiaries, or the “Internal Reorganization.” The Internal Reorganization involved several separate, but related, actions consisting of mergers between subsidiaries to reduce their numbers, the conversion of corporate subsidiaries to limited liability companies, the re-domestication of subsidiaries under Delaware law to provide for a uniform and enlightened regulatory framework, the formation of new holding companies to create separate “branches” for Verso’s paper-making and energy operations, and name changes of subsidiaries to more appropriately reflect the nature of their assets and operations. Management believes that the Internal Reorganization will afford greater efficiency and reduced costs in the administration of its subsidiaries.

In September 2017, we announced the formation of a Strategic Alternatives Committee, comprised solely of independent directors. The Strategic Alternatives Committee is leading our efforts to identify and evaluate a range of potential strategic transaction alternatives, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company or the possible sale of some of our mills. This strategic alternatives process is ongoing and we have retained Houlihan Lokey Capital, Inc. to assist in the process. See “Item 1A. Risk Factors - Risks Relating to Our Business - We cannot assure you that our exploration of strategic alternatives will result in a transaction or that any such transaction would be successful, and the process of exploring strategic alternatives or its conclusion could adversely impact our business and our stock price.”

Verso Corporation was incorporated in 2006 in the state of Delaware. Our principal executive offices are located at 8540 Gander Creek Drive, Miamisburg, Ohio 45342. Our telephone number is (877) 855-7243. Our website address is www.versoco.com. Information on or accessible through our website is not considered part of this annual report.

Industry

Based on 2017 sales, the size of the global coated paper industry is estimated to be approximately \$32 billion, or 38 million tons of coated paper shipments, including approximately \$5 billion, or 6 million tons of coated paper shipments, in North America. Coated paper is used primarily in media and marketing applications, including catalogs, magazines and commercial printing applications, which include high-end advertising brochures, annual reports and direct mail advertising. Demand is generally driven by North American advertising and print media trends, which in turn have historically been correlated with growth in Gross Domestic Product, or “GDP.” The coated paper industry has been facing a decline in demand. See “Item 1A. Risk Factors - Risks Relating to Our Business - The paper industry has been facing a long-term structural decline and our profitability has been adversely impacted by such decline.”

In North America, coated papers are classified by brightness and fall into five grades, labeled No. 1 to No. 5, with No. 1 having the highest brightness level and No. 5 having the lowest brightness level. Papers graded No. 1, No. 2 and No.

3 are typically coated freesheet grades. No. 4 and No. 5 papers are predominantly groundwood containing grades. Coated groundwood grades are the preferred grades for catalogs and magazines, while coated freesheet is more commonly used in commercial print applications.

Within the paper industry, specialty papers are products which are given unique characteristics in their manufacture, converting or processing and that have properties suitable for special purposes, or custom engineered applications. Specialty papers have unique functional properties and are usually produced in relatively small quantities for a specific product, function or end-use requirement. Commercial and development activities rely largely on defining the unique characteristics of an application, in contrast with other substrates. We have focused on the following markets within the specialty papers arena: label and converting, flexible packaging and technical papers. Based on our market research, we estimate the annual demand for specialty papers in all markets to be between 11 and 14 million tons globally.

Products

We manufacture printing papers, which includes coated freesheet paper and uncoated freesheet paper, coated groundwood paper, supercalendered paper and a wide range of specialty papers. These paper grades are differentiated primarily by their respective brightness, weight, print quality, functionality, bulk, opacity and strength. We also produce and sell Northern Bleached Hardwood Kraft, or “NBHK,” pulp.

As a result of our scale and technological capabilities, we are able to offer our customers a broad product offering, from ultra-lightweight coated groundwood to heavyweight coated freesheet. Our customers have the opportunity to sole-source all of their coated paper needs from us while optimizing their choice of paper products. As our customers' preferences change, they can switch paper grades to meet their desired balance between cost and performance attributes while maintaining their relationship with us.

Printing papers. Printing papers include coated freesheet paper and uncoated freesheet papers. Coated freesheet paper is made from bleached kraft pulp, which is produced using a chemical process to break apart wood fibers and dissolve impurities such as lignin. The use of kraft pulp results in a bright, heavier-weight paper with excellent print qualities, which is well-suited for high-end commercial applications and premium magazines. Coated freesheet contains primarily kraft pulp, with less than 10% mechanical pulp in its composition. Revenue from our printing paper sales represented approximately 56%, 57% and 56% of our total revenues for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Specialty paper. We offer customized product solutions for strategic accounts by producing paper grades with customer-specified weight, brightness and pulp mix characteristics, providing customers with cost benefits and/or brand differentiation. Our specialty papers portfolio focuses on functionality, printability and innovative solutions to provide over 200 specialty paper grades for use in an array of end use applications including label and converting, flexible packing and technical papers. End uses range from beverage container labels, to oil and grease resistant food containers, to pressure sensitive labels and thermal printing papers. Revenue from our specialty paper sales represented approximately 19%, 21% and 23% of our total revenues for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Coated groundwood paper. Coated groundwood paper includes a fiber component produced through a mechanical pulping process. The use of such fiber results in a bulkier and more opaque paper that is better suited for applications where lighter weights and/or higher stiffness are required, such as catalogs and magazines. In addition to mechanical pulp, coated groundwood paper typically includes a kraft pulp component to improve brightness and print quality. Revenue from our coated groundwood paper sales represented approximately 14%, 12% and 9% of our total revenues for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Supercalendered paper. Supercalendered paper consists of groundwood fibers and a very high filler content but it does not receive a separate surface coating. Instead, the paper is passed through a supercalendering process in which alternating steel and filled rolls “iron” the paper, giving it a gloss and smoothness that makes it resemble coated paper. Supercalendered papers are primarily used for retail inserts, due to their relatively low price point. Revenue from our supercalendered paper sales represented approximately 5%, 6% and 6% of our total revenues for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Pulp. We produce and sell NBHK pulp. NBHK pulp is produced through the chemical kraft process using hardwoods. Hardwoods typically have shorter length fibers than softwoods and are used in a variety of end use applications. Kraft describes pulp produced using a chemical process, whereby wood chips are combined with chemicals and steam to separate the wood fibers. The fibers are then washed and pressure screened to remove the chemicals and lignin which originally held the fibers together. Finally, the pulp is bleached to the necessary whiteness and brightness. Kraft pulp

is used in applications where brighter and whiter paper is required. We also offer de-inked pulp to help meet specific customer requirements. Revenue from our pulp sales represented approximately 6%, 4% and 6% of our total revenues for fiscal years 2015, 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Manufacturing

As of December 31, 2017, we operate thirteen paper machines at seven mills located in Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin. We believe our graphic, packaging and specialty paper mills are among the most efficient and lowest cost paper mills in North America based on the cash cost of delivery to Chicago, Illinois. We attribute our manufacturing efficiency, in part, to investments made in our mills, our R-GAP manufacturing benchmarking and our cost improvement program. As of December 31, 2017, our mills have a combined annual production capacity of 2,870,000 tons of paper, including coated papers and specialty papers. Our facilities are strategically located within close proximity to major publication printing customers, which affords us the ability to more quickly and cost-effectively deliver our products.

The following table provides key information about our mills and operating paper machines' capacity as of December 31, 2017:

| Mill/Location | Product/Paper Grades | Paper Machines | Annual Production Capacity (in tons) |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Duluth, Minnesota | Supercalendered paper | 1 | 270,000 |
| Escanaba, Michigan | Coated, specialty and uncoated paper | 3 | 730,000 |
| Jay (Androscoggin), Maine | Coated, specialty and uncoated paper | 2 ⁽¹⁾ | 250,000 ⁽¹⁾ |
| Luke, Maryland | Coated paper | 2 | 450,000 |
| Quinnesec, Michigan | Coated freesheet | 1 | 430,000 |
| Stevens Point, Wisconsin | Specialty paper | 2 | 200,000 |
| Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin | Coated paper | 2 | 540,000 |

(1) On February 15, 2018, we announced a plan to upgrade and restart the No. 3 paper machine in the third quarter of 2018, increasing annual paper production capacity by approximately 200,000 tons.

The basic raw material of the papermaking process is wood pulp. The first stage of papermaking involves converting wood logs to pulp through either a mechanical or chemical process. Before logs can be processed into pulp, they are passed through a debarking drum to remove the bark. Once separated, the bark is burned as fuel in bark boilers. The wood logs are composed of small cellulose fibers which are bound together by a glue-like substance called lignin. The cellulose fibers are then separated from each other through either a mechanical or a kraft pulping process.

After the pulping phase, the fiber furnish is run onto the forming fabric of the paper machine. On the forming fabric, the fibers become interlaced, forming a mat of paper, and much of the water is extracted. The paper web then goes through a pressing and drying process to extract the remaining water. After drying, the web goes through a series of on machine and off machine finishing and converting processes that impact product specific attributes to ensure excellent downstream performance. Finally, the paper is wrapped, labeled and shipped.

We utilize a manufacturing excellence program, called R-GAP, to take advantage of the financial opportunities that exist between the current or historical performance of our mills and the best performance possible given usual and normal constraints (i.e., configuration, geographical and capital constraints). Our continuous improvement process is designed to lower our cost position and enhance operating efficiency through reduced consumption of energy and material inputs, reduced spending on indirect costs, and improved productivity. The program utilizes benchmarking data to identify improvement initiatives and establish performance targets. Detailed action plans are used to monitor the execution of these initiatives and calculate the amount saved. We also use multi-variable testing, lean manufacturing, center of excellence teams, source-of-loss initiatives and best practice sharing to constantly improve our manufacturing processes and products. Since 2001, the Quinnesec Mill has been recognized in the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration's Voluntary Protection Program as a Star facility. The Michigan Voluntary Protection Program Star award is the state's highest recognition for workplace safety programs and performance. Each year we develop and implement new efforts to continue our safety improvement and also share our successes through the mentoring aspects of this important program.

Raw Materials and Suppliers

Our key cost inputs in the papermaking process are wood fiber, chemicals and energy.

Wood Fiber. We source our wood fiber from a broad group of timberland and sawmill owners located in the regions around our mills. Our costs to purchase wood are affected directly by market costs of wood in our regional markets

and indirectly by the effect of higher fuel costs on logging and transportation of timber to our facilities. While we have fiber supply agreements in place that ensure a substantial portion of our wood requirements, purchases under these agreements are typically at market rates.

Chemicals. Chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of coated papers include latex, clay, starch, calcium carbonate, caustic soda, sodium chlorate and titanium dioxide. We purchase these chemicals from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on any single supplier to satisfy our chemical needs. Occasionally imbalances in supply and demand create volatility in prices for certain chemicals.

Energy. In 2017, we produced a significant portion of our energy needs for our paper mills from sources such as waste wood, hydroelectric facilities, liquid biomass from our pulping process and internal energy cogeneration facilities. Our external energy purchases vary across each of our mills and include fuel oil, natural gas, coal and electricity. Our overall energy expenditures are mitigated by our internal energy production capacity and ability to switch between certain energy sources. We also consider the use of derivative contracts as part of our risk management strategy to manage our exposure to market fluctuations in energy prices.

Sales, Marketing and Distribution

We reach our end-users through several sales channels. These include selling directly to end-users, through brokers, merchants and printers. We sell and market products to approximately 300 customers, which comprise approximately 1,700 end-user accounts.

Sales to End-Users. In 2017, we sold approximately 32% of our paper products directly to end-users, most of which are specialty converters and catalog and magazine publishers. These customers are typically large, sophisticated buyers who have the scale, resources and expertise to procure paper directly from manufacturers. Customers for our pulp products are mostly other paper manufacturers.

Sales to Brokers and Merchants. Our largest indirect paper sales by volume are through brokers and merchants who resell the paper to end-users. In 2017, our total sales to brokers and merchants represented approximately 47% of our total sales. Brokers typically act as an intermediary between paper manufacturers and smaller end-users who do not have the scale or resources to cost effectively procure paper directly from manufacturers. The majority of the paper sold to brokers is resold to catalog publishers. We work closely with brokers to achieve share targets in the catalog, magazine and insert end-user segments through collaborative selling.

Merchants are similar to brokers in that they act as an intermediary between the manufacturer and the end-user. However, merchants generally take physical delivery of the product and keep inventory on hand. Merchants tend to deal with smaller end-users that lack the scale to warrant direct delivery from the manufacturer. Coated freesheet comprises the majority of our sales to merchants. In most cases, because they are relatively small, the ultimate end-users of paper sold through merchants are generally regional or local commercial printers.

Sales to Printers. In 2017, our total sales to printers represented approximately 21% of our total sales. The majority of our sales were to the two largest publication printers in the United States. Printers also effectively act as an intermediary between manufacturers and end-users in that they directly source paper for printing/converting and then resell it to their customers as a finished product.

The majority of our products are delivered directly from our manufacturing facilities to the printer or converter, regardless of the sales channel. In order to serve the grade No. 3 coated freesheet market, we maintain a network of distribution centers located in the West, Midwest, South and Northeast close to our customer base to provide quick delivery. The majority of our pulp products are delivered to our customers' paper mills.

Our sales force is organized around our sales channels. We maintain an active dialogue with all of our major customers and track product performance and demand across grades. We have a team of sales representatives and marketing professionals organized into three major sales groups that correspond with our sales channels: direct sales support; support to brokers and merchants; and printer support.

Many of our customers provide us with forecasts of their paper needs, which allows us to plan our production runs in advance, optimizing production over our integrated mill system and thereby reducing costs and increasing overall efficiency. Generally, our sales agreements do not extend beyond the calendar year. Typically, our sales agreements

provide for quarterly or semiannual price adjustments based on market price movements.

See “Item 7. Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations” included elsewhere in this report for information regarding seasonality and the effect of inflation on our operating results.

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Customers

We participate in the printing papers, specialty papers and pulp markets and have developed long-standing relationships with many premier customers in these areas. Our relationships with our ten largest customers average more than 20 years. Our largest customer, Veritiv Corporation, accounted for approximately 19% of our net sales in 2017. Our key customers in the printing papers arena include Central National-Gottesman, Quad/Graphics, Inc., RR Donnelley & Sons Company, Veritiv and Midland Paper. Verso's key customers in the specialty papers market include Avery Dennison, UPM Raflatac and Green Bay Packaging.

Research and Development

The primary function of our research and development efforts is to work with customers in developing and modifying products to accommodate their evolving needs and to identify cost-saving opportunities within our operations. Over the past several years, examples of our research and development efforts include innovative and performance-driven products for the flexible packaging, label and specialty printing markets.

Intellectual Property

We have several patents and patent applications in the United States and various foreign countries. These patents and patent applications generally relate to various paper manufacturing methods and equipment which may become commercially viable in the future. We also have trademarks for our name, Verso®, as well as for our products such as Sterling®, Futura®, Anthem Plus®, Productolith®, Influence®, Liberty® and Voyager®. In addition to the intellectual property that we own, we license a significant portion of the intellectual property used in our business on a perpetual, royalty-free, non-exclusive basis from International Paper.

Competition

Our business is highly competitive. A significant number of North American competitors produce coated papers and several overseas manufacturers, principally from Europe, export to North America. We compete based on a number of factors, including:

- price;
- product availability;
- product quality;
- customer service;
- breadth of product offerings; and
- timeliness of product delivery.

Foreign competition in North America is affected by the exchange rate of the U.S. dollar relative to other currencies, especially the euro, market prices in North America and other markets, worldwide supply and demand, and the cost of ocean-going freight.

While our product offering is broad in terms of grades produced (from coated and uncoated graphical grades, including web and sheeted products, to highly technical specialty grades), our largest offering is in the coated freesheet category, with about two thirds in web form and one third in sheets. This strategy is driven primarily by our alignment with the commercial print market, with a secondary focus on catalogs and magazines for our coated freesheet grades. Our specialty grades have each year become a larger portion of our overall shipments, and that growth is expected to continue. As of December 31, 2017, our principal competitors include Resolute Forest Products, UPM-Kymmene Corporation, Catalyst Paper Corp. and Sappi Limited, all of which have North American

operations. UPM and Sappi are headquartered overseas and also have overseas manufacturing facilities. Catalyst is headquartered in Canada.

Employees

As of December 31, 2017, we had approximately 4,200 employees. Approximately 70% of our hourly workforce is represented by 16 local branches of the following unions: the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Services Workers International Union; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; the Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers; the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; the Office & Professional Employees' International Union; and the United Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry. All represented employees were covered by a Master Labor Agreement from 2012–2016, that covered

wages and benefits. Certain represented mills also had local agreements covering general work rules. The Master Agreement expired in December 2016. The parties are engaged in collective bargaining at the Luke Mill and Escanaba Mill and continue to work under the terms and conditions of their expired agreements. We have not experienced any work stoppages during the past several years, and believe that we have a good relationship with our employees.

Environmental and Other Governmental Regulations

We are subject to a wide range of federal, state, regional and local general and industry-specific environmental, health and safety laws and regulations, including the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, or “Clean Water Act,” the federal Clean Air Act, the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, or “CERCLA,” the federal Occupational Safety and Health Act and analogous state and local laws. Our operations also are subject to a regional regime designed to address climate change, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in the northeastern United States, and in the future we may be subject to additional federal, state, regional, local or supranational legislation related to climate change and greenhouse gas controls. Among our activities subject to environmental regulation are the emissions of air pollutants, discharges of wastewater and stormwater, operation of dams, storage, treatment and disposal of materials and waste, and remediation of soil, surface water and ground water contamination. Many environmental laws and regulations provide for substantial fines or penalties and criminal sanctions for any failure to comply. In addition, failure to comply with these laws and regulations could result in the interruption of our operations and, in some cases, facility shutdowns.

Certain of these environmental laws, such as CERCLA and analogous state laws, provide for strict liability, and under certain circumstances joint and several liability, for investigation and remediation of the release of hazardous substances into the environment, including soil and groundwater. These laws may apply to properties presently or formerly owned or operated by or presently or formerly under the charge, management or control of an entity or its predecessors, as well as to conditions at properties at which waste attributable to an entity or its predecessors was disposed. Under these environmental laws, a current or previous owner or operator of real property or a party formerly or previously in charge, management or control of real property and parties that generate or transport hazardous substances that are disposed of at real property, may be held liable for the cost to investigate or clean up that real property and for related damages to natural resources. We handle and dispose of wastes arising from our mill operations, including disposal at on-site landfills. We are required to maintain financial assurance (in the form of letters of credit and other similar instruments) for the expected cost of landfill closure and post-closure care. We may be subject to liability, including liability for investigation and cleanup costs, if contamination is discovered at one of our current or former paper mills or another location where we have disposed of, or arranged for the disposal of, wastes. We could be subject to potentially significant fines, penalties, criminal sanctions, plant shutdowns, or interruptions in operations for any failure to comply with applicable environmental, health and safety laws, regulations and permits.

Compliance with environmental laws and regulations is a significant factor in our business. We have made, and will continue to make, significant expenditures to comply with these requirements and our permits. We incurred environmental capital expenditures of \$1 million in 2017, \$4 million in 2016 and \$3 million in 2015, and we anticipate that environmental compliance will require increased capital expenditures and operating expenses over time as environmental laws, regulations, or interpretations thereof, change or the nature of our operations requires us to make significant additional capital expenditures.

Permits are required for the operation of our mills and related facilities. The permits are subject to renewal, modification and revocation. We and others have the right to challenge our permit conditions through administrative and legal appeals and review processes. Governmental authorities have the power to enforce compliance with the permits, and violators are subject to civil and criminal penalties, including fines, injunctions or both. Other parties also may have the right to pursue legal actions to enforce compliance with the permits.

Available Information

Our website is located at www.versoco.com. We make available free of charge through this website our annual reports on Form 10-K, quarterly reports on Form 10-Q, current reports on Form 8-K and amendments to those reports filed with or furnished to the Securities and Exchange Commission, or "SEC," pursuant to Section 13(a) or 15(d) of the Exchange Act, as soon as reasonably practicable after they are electronically filed with or furnished to the SEC.

Item 1A. Risk Factors

Our business is subject to various risks. Set forth below are certain of the more important risks that we face and that could cause our actual results to differ materially from our historical results. Our business also could be affected by other risks that are presently unknown to us or that we currently believe are immaterial to our business.

Risks Relating to our Business

The paper industry has been facing a long-term structural decline and our profitability has been adversely impacted by such decline.

The coated paper industry faces a long-term, structural decline. From 2014 to 2017, demand for printing and writing paper in the United States fell by roughly 16%. U.S. demand for coated freesheet has declined 11% from 2014 to 2017. Similarly, U.S. demand for coated groundwood has declined 23% from 2014 to 2017. The demand for coated paper is expected to continue to steadily decline in the future, with market volumes in 2018 projected to be 3% below 2017 levels.

Fluctuations in supply and demand for our products could have a material adverse affect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. The paper industry is a commodity market to a significant extent and is subject to cyclical market pressures. For example, from 2010 to 2014, prior to the acquisition of NewPage, we experienced a year-over-year average revenue decline of approximately 4.9% partly due to the prolonged decline in demand for coated paper.

A decline in general economic conditions may increase unemployment or lower gross domestic product growth rates to adversely affect demand for our products by our customers. During an economic downturn, end customers may reduce magazine subscriptions, contributing to lower demand for our products and advertising in printed magazines and catalogs may also decline, each of which may result in a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Foreign overcapacity also could result in an increase in the supply of paper products available in the North American market. An increased supply of paper available in North America could put downward pressure on prices and/or cause us to lose sales to competitors, either of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We cannot assure you that our exploration of strategic alternatives will result in a transaction or that any such transaction would be successful, and the process of exploring strategic alternatives or its conclusion could adversely impact our business and our stock price.

In September 2017, we announced the formation of a Strategic Alternatives Committee, comprised solely of independent directors. The Strategic Alternatives Committee is leading our efforts to identify and evaluate a range of potential strategic transaction alternatives, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company or the possible sale of some of our mills. This strategic alternatives process is ongoing and we have retained Houlihan Lokey Capital, Inc. to assist in the process.

There can be no assurances that the strategic alternatives process will result in the announcement or consummation of any strategic transaction, or that any resulting plans or transactions will yield additional value for shareholders. Any potential transaction would be dependent on a number of factors that may be beyond our control, including, among other things, market conditions, industry trends, the interest of third parties in a potential transaction with Verso and the availability of financing to potential buyers on reasonable terms.

The process of exploring strategic alternatives could adversely impact our business, financial condition and results of operations. We could incur substantial expenses associated with identifying and evaluating potential strategic alternatives, including those related to equity compensation, severance pay and legal, accounting and financial advisory fees. In addition, the process may be time consuming and disruptive to our business operations, could divert the attention of management and the Board of Directors from our business, could negatively impact Verso's ability to attract, retain and motivate key employees, and could expose us to potential litigation in connection with this process or any resulting transaction. The public announcement of a strategic alternative may also yield a negative impact on operating results if prospective or existing customers are reluctant to commit to new or renewal orders or if existing

customers decide to shift their business to a competitor. Further, speculation regarding any developments related to the review of strategic alternatives and perceived uncertainties related to the future of Verso could cause our stock price to fluctuate significantly.

Developments in alternative media adversely affect the demand for our products.

Trends in advertising, electronic data transmission and storage, and the internet have had and likely will continue to have adverse effects on traditional print media, including the use of and demand for our products and those of our customers. Our

magazine and catalog publishing customers may increasingly use (both for content and advertising), and compete with businesses that use, other forms of media and advertising and electronic data transmission and storage, particularly the internet, instead of paper made by us. As the use of these alternative media grows, the demand for our paper products likely will decline.

The industry in which we operate is highly competitive.

The industry in which we operate is highly competitive. Competition is based largely on price. We compete with foreign producers, some of which are lower cost producers than we are or are subsidized by certain foreign governments. We also face competition from numerous North American coated paper manufacturers. Some of our competitors have advantages over us, including lower raw material and labor costs and are subject to fewer environmental and governmental regulations.

Furthermore, due to the trend towards consolidation in our industry, some of our competitors have greater financial and other resources than we do or may be better positioned than we are to compete for certain opportunities. There is no assurance that we will be able to continue to compete effectively in the markets we serve.

Competition could cause us to lower our prices or lose sales to competitors, either of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, the following factors will affect our ability to compete:

- product availability;
- the quality of our products;
- our breadth of product offerings;
- our ability to maintain mill efficiencies and to achieve high operating rates;
- manufacturing costs per ton;
- customer service and our ability to distribute our products on time; and
- the availability and/or cost of wood fiber, market pulp, chemicals, energy and other raw materials and labor.

Rising postal costs could weaken demand for our paper products.

A significant portion of paper is used in periodicals, magazines, catalogs, fliers and other promotional mailings. Many of these materials are distributed through the mail. Future increases in the cost of postage could reduce the frequency of mailings, reduce the number of pages in magazine and advertising materials, and/or cause advertisers, catalog and magazine publishers to use alternate methods to distribute their materials. Any of the foregoing could decrease the demand for our products, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We depend on a small number of customers for a significant portion of our business. Furthermore, we may have credit exposure to these customers through extension of trade credits.

Our largest customer, Veritiv Corporation accounted for approximately 19% of our net sales in 2017. In 2017, our ten largest customers (including Veritiv Corporation) accounted for approximately 56% of our net sales. The loss of, or reduction in orders from, any of these customers or other customers could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, as could significant customer disputes regarding shipments, price, quality, or other matters.

Furthermore, we extend trade credit to certain of these customers to facilitate the purchase of our products and we rely on these customers' creditworthiness and ability to obtain credit from lenders. Accordingly, a bankruptcy or a significant deterioration in the financial condition of any of these significant customers could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations, due to a reduction in purchases, a longer collection cycle or an inability to collect accounts receivable.

We have limited ability to control the pricing of our products or pass through increases in our costs to our customers. Decreases in demand and prices, or increases in costs, for printing and writing paper could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Our earnings are sensitive to price changes in coated paper. Fluctuations in paper prices (and coated paper prices in particular) historically have had a direct effect on our net income (loss) and EBITDA for several reasons:

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Market prices for paper products are a function of supply and demand, factors over which we have limited control. We therefore have limited ability to control the pricing of our products. Market prices of grade No. 3, 60 lb. basis weight paper, which is an industry benchmark for coated freesheet paper pricing, have fluctuated since 2000 from a high of \$1,105 per ton to a low of \$740 per ton. In addition, market prices of grade No. 5, 34 lb. basis weight paper, which is an industry benchmark for coated groundwood paper pricing, have fluctuated between a high of \$1,130 per ton to a low of \$795 per ton over the same period. Prices are expected to continue to recover in 2018. As market conditions determine the price for our paper products, the price for our products could fall below our cash production costs.

Market prices for paper products typically are not directly affected by raw material costs or other costs of sales, and consequently we have limited ability to pass through increases in these raw materials and/or other sales costs to our customers absent increases in the market price. Thus, even though our costs may increase, we may not have the ability to increase the prices for our products, or the prices for our products may decline.

The manufacturing of coated paper is highly capital-intensive and a large portion of our operating costs are fixed. Additionally, paper machines are large, complex machines that operate more efficiently when operated continuously. Consequently, both we and our competitors typically continue to run our machines whenever marginal sales exceed the marginal costs, adversely impacting prices at times of lower demand.

Therefore, our ability to achieve acceptable margins is principally dependent on (a) our cost structure, (b) changes in the prices of raw materials, electricity, energy and fuel, which will represent a large component of our operating costs and will fluctuate based upon factors beyond our control and (c) general conditions in the paper market including the demand for paper products, the amount of foreign imports, the amount spent on advertising, the circulation of magazines and catalogs, the use of electronic readers and other devices and postal rates. Any one or more of these economic conditions could affect our sales and operating costs and could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We are involved in continuous manufacturing processes with a high degree of fixed costs. Any interruption in the operations of our manufacturing facilities may affect our operating performance.

We run our paper machines on a nearly continuous basis for maximum efficiency. Any downtime at any of our paper mills, including as a result of or in connection with planned maintenance and capital expenditure projects, results in unabsorbed fixed costs that could negatively affect our results of operations for the period in which we experience the downtime. Due to the extreme operating conditions inherent in some of our manufacturing processes, we may incur unplanned business interruptions from time to time and, as a result, we may not generate sufficient cash flow to satisfy our operational needs. In addition, the geographic areas where our production is located and where we conduct our business may be affected by natural disasters, including snow storms, forest fires and flooding. Such natural disasters could cause our mills to stop running, which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Furthermore, during periods of weak demand for paper products, such as the current market, or periods of rising costs, we have experienced and may in the future experience market-related downtime, which could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

We may be required to record significant closure costs and long-lived asset impairment or accelerated depreciation charges.

We have responded to changing market dynamics by optimizing assets and streamlining our production, including idling or shutting down certain paper machines and facilities. For example, in November 2016, we announced the closure of our Memphis office headquarters and relocation of our Corporate headquarters to Miamisburg, Ohio; in August 2015, we announced plans to shut down the No. 1 pulp dryer and No. 2 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, and to indefinitely idle our mill in Wickliffe, Kentucky; in April 2016, we announced our decision to permanently close the mill in Wickliffe, Kentucky. If demand for our products continues to decline, or if the pace of decline accelerates, it may be necessary to curtail production even further, or permanently shut down certain machines and facilities. In addition to the potential loss of production, curtailments and shutdowns could result in asset

impairments or accelerated depreciation and cash closure costs for the affected facilities, including restructuring charges and exit or disposal costs, which could negatively impact our cash flows and materially affect our results of operations and financial condition.

Losses related to the impairment of long-lived assets to be held and used are recognized when circumstances, such as continuing losses or demand declines in certain businesses, indicate the carrying value of an asset group may not be recoverable. When indicators that the carrying value of an asset group may not be recoverable are triggered, we evaluate the carrying value of the asset group in relation to its estimated undiscounted future cash flows. If the carrying value of an asset group is greater than the estimated undiscounted future cash flows to be generated by the asset group, an impairment charge is

recognized based on the excess of the asset group's carrying value over its fair value. If it is determined that the carrying value of an asset group is recoverable, we review and adjust, as necessary, the estimated useful lives of the assets in the group. If there were to be a triggering event, it is possible that we could record non-cash long-lived asset impairment or accelerated depreciation charges in future periods, which would be recorded as operating expenses and would directly and negatively impact our reported results of operations.

If we are unable to obtain energy or raw materials, including petroleum-based chemicals at favorable prices, or at all, it could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We purchase substantial amounts of energy, wood fiber, market pulp, chemicals and other raw materials from third parties. We may experience shortages of energy supplies or raw materials or be forced to seek alternative sources of supply. If we are forced to seek alternative sources of supply, we may not be able to do so on terms as favorable as our current terms or at all. The prices for energy and many of our raw materials, especially petroleum-based chemicals, have recently been volatile and are expected to remain volatile for the foreseeable future. Chemical suppliers that use petroleum-based products in the manufacture of their chemicals may, due to a supply shortage and cost increase, ration the amount of chemicals available to us and/or we may not be able to obtain the chemicals we need to operate our business at favorable prices, if at all. In addition, certain specialty chemicals that we currently purchase are available only from a small number of suppliers. If any of these suppliers were to cease operations or cease doing business with us in the future, we may be unable to obtain such chemicals at favorable prices, if at all.

The supply of energy or raw materials may be adversely affected by, among other things, natural disasters or an outbreak or escalation of hostilities between the United States and any foreign power, and, in particular, events in the Middle East or weather events such as hurricanes could result in a real or perceived shortage of oil or natural gas, which could result in an increase in energy or chemical prices. In addition, wood fiber is a commodity and prices historically have been cyclical. The primary source for wood fiber is timber. Environmental litigation and regulatory developments have caused, and may cause in the future, significant reductions in the amount of timber available for commercial harvest in Canada and the United States. In addition, future domestic or foreign legislation, litigation advanced by aboriginal groups, litigation concerning the use of timberlands, the protection of endangered species, the promotion of forest biodiversity, and the response to and prevention of wildfires and campaigns or other measures by environmental activists also could affect timber supplies. The availability of harvested timber may further be limited by factors such as fire and fire prevention, insect infestation, disease, ice and wind storms, droughts, floods and other natural and man-made causes. Additionally, due to increased fuel costs, suppliers, distributors and freight carriers have charged fuel surcharges, which have increased our costs. Any significant shortage or significant increase in our energy or raw material costs in circumstances where we cannot raise the price of our products due to market conditions could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Any disruption in the supply of energy or raw materials also could affect our ability to meet customer demand in a timely manner and could harm our reputation. We are expected to have limited ability to pass through increases in our costs to our customers absent increases in market prices for our products, material increases in the cost of our raw materials could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Furthermore, we may be required to post letters of credit or other financial assurance obligations with certain of our energy and other suppliers, which could limit our financial flexibility.

We may not realize certain projected cost savings or productivity improvements, which could result in lower profitability for our business.

As part of our business strategy, we identify opportunities to improve profitability by reducing costs and enhancing productivity. For example, through our continuous process improvement program, we have implemented focused programs to optimize material and energy sourcing and usage, reduce repair costs and control overhead. We will continue to utilize the process improvement program to drive cost reductions and operating improvements in our mill system, and have targeted additional profitability enhancements in the next twelve months. Our strategy assumes that

increases in productivity through our continuous process improvement program, including through a more efficient manufacturing process or engineering design enhancements, will result in economies of scale, and global competitive sourcing of our materials will reduce our raw material and other costs. Any cost savings or productivity enhancements that we expect to realize from such efforts may differ materially from our estimates. Cost savings or productivity enhancements that we realize may be offset, in whole or in part, by reductions in pricing or volume, or through increases in other expenses, including raw material, energy or personnel. We cannot assure you that these initiatives will be completed as anticipated or that the benefits we expect will be achieved on a timely basis or at all.

Currency fluctuations may adversely affect our competitive position and selling prices.

We compete with producers from around the world, particularly in North America. In addition to the impact of product supply and demand, changes in the relative strength or weakness of international currencies, particularly the U.S. dollar, can also affect international trade flows in certain products. A stronger U.S. dollar, as has been recently experienced, may attract imports, thereby increasing product supply and possibly creating downward pressure on prices. Conversely, a weaker U.S. dollar might encourage U.S. exports, thereby decreasing product supply and possibly creating upward pressure on prices.

Our business may suffer if we do not retain our senior management and other key personnel.

We are highly dependent on the continuing efforts of our senior management team and other key personnel. The loss of services of members of our senior management team and other key personnel could adversely affect our business until suitable replacements can be found. There may be a limited number of persons with the requisite skills to serve in these positions and we may be unable to locate or employ qualified personnel on acceptable terms. In addition, our future success requires us to continue to attract and retain competent personnel. Any failure to attract and retain key personnel could have a material adverse effect on our business and require the incurrence of substantial additional costs to recruit replacement personnel.

Work stoppages and slowdowns and legal action by our unionized employees may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

As of December 31, 2017, approximately 70% of our hourly workforce was represented by 16 local branches of the following unions: the United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Services Workers International Union; the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; the Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers; the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers; the Office & Professional Employees' International Union; and the United Association of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry. All represented employees were covered by a Master Labor Agreement from 2012-2016, that covered wages benefits. Certain represented mills also had local agreements covering general work rules. The Master Labor Agreement expired in December 2016. The parties are engaged in collective bargaining at the Luke Mill and Escanaba Mill and continue to work under the terms and conditions of their expired agreements. We may become subject to material cost increases as a result of action taken by the labor unions. This could increase expenses in absolute terms and/or as a percentage of net sales. In addition, although we believe we have a good relationship with our employees, work stoppages or other labor disturbances may occur in the future. Any of these factors could lead to operational delays or increased costs, which could negatively affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Security breaches and other disruptions to our information technology infrastructure could interfere with our operations and could compromise our information and the information of our customers and suppliers, exposing us to liability which would cause our business and reputation to suffer.

In the ordinary course of business, we rely upon information technology networks and systems, some of which are managed by third parties, to process, transmit and store electronic information and to manage or support a variety of business processes and activities, including supply chain, manufacturing, distribution, invoicing and collection of payments from customers. We use information technology systems to record, process and summarize financial information and results of operations for internal reporting purposes and to comply with regulatory financial reporting, legal and tax requirements. Additionally, we collect and store sensitive data, including intellectual property, proprietary business information, the propriety business information of our customers and suppliers, as well as personally identifiable information of our employees, in data centers and on information technology networks. The secure operation of these information technology networks and the processing and maintenance of this information is critical to our business operations and strategy. Despite security measures and disaster recovery plans, our information technology networks and infrastructure may be vulnerable to damage, disruptions or shutdowns due to security breaches, including those caused by physical or electronic break-ins, computer viruses, malware, attacks by hackers,

employee error and disruptions caused from unauthorized access and tampering, or other disruptions during the process of upgrading or replacing computer software or hardware, power outages, telecommunication or utility failures or natural disasters or other catastrophic events. The occurrence of any of these events could compromise our networks and the information stored there could be accessed, publicly disclosed, lost or stolen. Any such access, disclosure or other loss of information could result in legal claims or proceedings, liability or regulatory penalties under laws protecting the privacy of personal information, disrupt operations and damage our reputation, which could adversely affect our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We depend on third parties for certain transportation services.

We rely primarily on third parties for transportation of our products to our customers and transportation of our raw materials to us, in particular, by truck and train. The transportation industry is subject to legislative and regulatory changes that can affect the economics of those third-party transportation providers by requiring changes in their operating practices or influencing the demand for, and the cost of providing, transportation services. If any third-party transportation provider fails to deliver our products in a timely manner, we may be unable to sell them at full value. Similarly, if any transportation provider fails to deliver raw materials to us in a timely manner, we may be unable to manufacture our products on a timely basis. Shipments of products and raw materials may be delayed due to weather conditions, strikes or other events. Any failure of a third-party transportation provider to deliver raw materials or products in a timely manner could harm our reputation, negatively impact our customer relationships and have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. In addition, our ability to deliver our products on a timely basis could be adversely affected by the lack of adequate availability of transportation services, especially rail capacity, whether because of work stoppages or otherwise. If any of these third-party transportation providers were to cease operations or cease doing business with us, we may be unable to replace them at a reasonable cost. Furthermore, we may experience increases in the cost of our transportation services as a result of rising fuel costs and surcharges (primarily in diesel fuel). Since we have a limited ability to pass these increased costs through to our customers, they could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We are subject to various environmental, health and safety laws and regulations that could impose substantial costs or other liabilities upon us and may have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

We are subject to a wide range of federal, state, regional and local general and industry-specific environmental, health and safety laws and regulations, including those relating to air emissions (including greenhouse gases and hazardous air pollutants), wastewater discharges, solid and hazardous waste management and disposal, site remediation and natural resources. Compliance with these laws and regulations, and permits issued thereunder, is a significant factor in our business and may be subject to the same or even increased scrutiny and enforcement actions by regulators. We have made, and will continue to make, significant expenditures to comply with these requirements and permits, which may impose increasingly more stringent standards over time as they are renewed or modified by the applicable governmental authorities. In addition, we handle and dispose of waste arising from our mill operations and operate a number of on-site landfills to handle that waste. We are required to maintain financial assurance (in the form of letters of credit and other similar instruments) for the projected cost of closure and post-closure care for these landfill operations. We could be subject to potentially significant fines, penalties, criminal sanctions, plant shutdowns, or interruptions in operations for any failure to comply with applicable environmental, health and safety laws, regulations and permits. Moreover, under certain environmental laws, a current or previous owner or operator of real property, and parties that generate or transport hazardous substances that are disposed of at real property, may be held liable for the full cost to investigate or clean up such real property and for related damages to natural resources. We may be subject to liability, including liability for investigation and cleanup costs, if contamination is discovered at one of our current or former paper mills, other properties or other locations where we have disposed of, or arranged for the disposal of, waste.

While we have announced our exploration of strategic alternatives, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company or the possible sale of some of our mills, we may also from time to time pursue opportunistic acquisitions the success of which could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

In the past, we have pursued acquisitions to complement or expand our business. While we are currently exploring strategic alternatives, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company or the possible sale of some of our mills, we may from time to time pursue opportunistic acquisitions. If we identify an acquisition candidate, we may not be able to successfully negotiate or finance the acquisition or integrate the acquired businesses with our existing business and services. Future acquisitions could result in potentially dilutive issuances of equity securities and the

incurrence of debt and contingent liabilities, amortization expenses and substantial goodwill. The negotiation of any transaction, its completion, and subsequent integration of any business acquired may be complex and time consuming, involve significant costs and may result in a distraction of management's attention from on going business operations. We may be affected materially and adversely if we are unable to successfully integrate businesses that we acquire. Similarly, we may divest portions of our business, which may also have material and adverse effects. Adverse developments in general business and economic conditions could have an adverse effect on the demand for our products, our financial condition and results of operations.

General economic conditions may adversely affect industrial non-durable goods production, consumer spending, commercial printing and advertising activity, and consumer confidence, all of which impact demand for our products. In addition, volatility

in the capital and credit markets, which impacts interest and the availability of credit, could have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations. Furthermore, the recent presidential and congressional elections in the United States could result in significant changes in, and uncertainty with respect to, legislation, regulations and monetary, tax and trade policy, among other things. While it is not possible to predict whether and when any such changes will occur, changes at the local, state or federal level could significantly impact our business and the industry in which we compete.

We have debt outstanding and may incur additional debt in the future, which may adversely affect our financial condition and future financial results.

Our total indebtedness, at par, was \$211 million as of December 31, 2017, and we had \$209 million of additional borrowing availability under our Credit Facilities. Our ability to make scheduled payments of the principal and interest or to refinance our indebtedness depends on our future performance, which is subject to economic, financial, competitive and other factors beyond our control. Our business may not generate cash flow from operations in the future sufficient to service our debt and make necessary capital expenditures. If we are unable to generate such cash flow, we may be required to adopt one or more alternatives, such as selling assets, restructuring debt or obtaining additional equity capital on terms that may be onerous or dilutive.

It is also possible that we may incur additional indebtedness in the future in the ordinary course of business. If new debt is added to current debt levels, the risks described above could intensify. In addition, our high level of debt could have additional significant consequences, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- limiting our ability to obtain additional financing in the future for working capital, capital expenditures, or other general corporate purposes;
- requiring a substantial portion of our cash flows to be dedicated to debt service payments instead of other purposes;
- limiting our ability to refinance our indebtedness with acceptable terms;
- placing us at a competitive disadvantage to competitors carrying less debt; and
- making us more vulnerable to economic downturns and limiting our ability to withstand competitive pressure.

We may be unable to maintain compliance with the financial maintenance or other covenants in our Credit Facilities, which could result in an event of default under the credit agreement governing the Credit Facilities that, if not cured or waived, would have a material adverse effect on our business, financial condition and results of operations.

Under the ABL Facility, Verso Paper is required to maintain a minimum fixed charge coverage ratio when the excess availability under such facility is less than the greater of (a) 10% of the lesser of (i) the borrowing base at such time and (ii) the aggregate amount of revolving facility commitments at such time or (b) \$30 million. In addition, under the Term Loan Facility, Verso Paper is required to maintain a maximum total net leverage ratio as further described in the Term Loan Facility. The Credit Facilities also contain certain covenants which, among other things, and subject to certain exceptions, restrict Verso Paper and certain of its subsidiaries' ability to incur additional debt or liens, pay dividends, repurchase equity interests, prepay other indebtedness, sell, transfer, lease or dispose of assets and make investments in or merge with another company.

If Verso Paper were to violate any of the covenants under the ABL Facility or the Term Loan Facility and were unable to obtain a waiver, it would be considered a default after the expiration of any applicable grace period. If Verso Paper were in default under the Credit Facilities, then the lenders thereunder may exercise remedies under such Credit Facility in accordance with the terms thereof, including declaring all outstanding borrowings immediately due and payable. In addition, if Verso Paper were in default under the ABL Facility, no additional borrowings under the ABL Facility would be available until the default was waived or cured. This could adversely affect our operations and our

ability to satisfy our obligations as they come due.

Restrictive covenants in the agreements governing our Credit Facilities may restrict our ability to pursue our business strategies.

The Credit Facilities limit our ability, among other things, to:

- incur additional indebtedness;
- incur liens;
- enter into sale and lease back transactions;
- make investments;
- make capital expenditures;
- consolidate, merge, sell, or otherwise dispose of all or substantially all of our assets;
- pay dividends or make other distributions or repurchase or redeem our stock;

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- enter into transactions with our affiliates;
- engage or enter into any new lines of business;
- repay, redeem, or repurchase certain of our indebtedness; and
- amend or modify certain provisions of our, and our subsidiaries', organizational documents.

The Credit Facilities also require us to comply with certain financial maintenance covenants as discussed above.

A breach of any of these restrictive covenants could result in a default under the instruments governing our Credit Facilities. If a default occurs, the holders of these instruments may elect to declare all borrowings thereunder outstanding, together with accrued interest and other fees, to be immediately due and payable. The lenders under the Credit Facilities would also have the right in these circumstances to terminate any commitments they have to provide further borrowings. If we are unable to repay our indebtedness when due or declared due, the lenders thereunder will also have the right to proceed against the collateral pledged to them to secure the indebtedness. If such indebtedness were to be accelerated, our assets may not be sufficient to repay in full our secured indebtedness.

We have certain material pension obligations. Future funding obligations related to these obligations could restrict cash available for our operations, capital expenditures or other requirements or require us to borrow additional funds.

We have certain defined benefit pension plans covering approximately 81% of our employees. As of December 31, 2015, all of our defined benefit pension plans were frozen to new entrants. As of December 31, 2017, the projected benefit obligation for our pension plans was approximately \$1,753 million and the fair value of pension plan assets was \$1,296 million. The total underfunded status of the pension obligations calculated on a projected benefit obligation basis as of December 31, 2017 was approximately \$457 million. We currently anticipate making future pension benefit payments of \$88 million in 2018 (see Note 12 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report). A deterioration in the value of plan assets could cause the unfunded status of these pension plans to increase, thereby increasing our obligation to make additional contributions to these plans. In addition, we will require future operating cash flows to fund our pension obligations, which could restrict available cash for our operations, capital expenditures and other requirements. We may also not generate sufficient cash to satisfy these obligations, which could require us to seek funding from other sources, including through additional borrowings, which could materially increase our outstanding debt or debt service requirements.

Litigation could be costly and harmful to our business.

We are involved from time to time, and may currently be involved in, claims and legal proceedings relating to contractual, employment, environmental, intellectual property and other matters incidental to the conduct of our business. Although we do not believe that any currently pending claims or legal proceedings are likely to result in an unfavorable outcome that would have a material adverse effect on our financial condition or results of operations, we may become involved in such claims and legal proceedings that could result in unfavorable outcomes and could have a material adverse effect on our financial condition and results of operations.

Our financial condition and results of operations for periods after our emergence from bankruptcy on July 15, 2016 are not comparable to the financial condition and results of operations for periods prior to July 15, 2016.

On July 15, 2016, the Effective Date of our Plan, we adopted fresh-start reporting as a result of the reorganization as prescribed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America and the provisions of FASB, ASC 852, Reorganizations. As required by fresh-start reporting, our assets and liabilities were recorded at fair value by allocating the reorganization value determined in connection with the plan of reorganization. Accordingly, our financial condition and results of operations from and after the Effective Date of our plan of reorganization are not comparable, in various material respects, to the financial condition and results of operations

prior to the Effective Date of our Plan.

We may not achieve the expected benefit of the upgrade of our No. 3 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine.

In February 2018, we announced plans to upgrade the shuttered No. 3 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, enabling this equipment to restart for the manufacture of packaging products, such as linerboard. This undertaking is subject to various risks and uncertainties, and there are many factors that may impact our ability to successfully upgrade and operate the No. 3 paper machine, many of which are beyond our control and which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- our ability to complete the upgrade within our \$17 million estimate and within our projected time frame;
- our ability to attract, hire and train skilled labor for the operation of the No. 3 paper machine;

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our competitors having more experience with the manufacture and sale of packaging products and having more fully integrated converting operations; and
our ability to offer these new products on favorable terms, achieve an adequate market acceptance, manage our inventory, and fulfill orders.

As a result of the above factors, we cannot assure you that the upgrade of the No. 3 paper machine will be completed as anticipated or that the benefits we expect will be achieved on a timely basis or at all.

Risks Relating to Verso's Common Stock

Our stock price may be volatile and stockholders may be unable to sell shares at or above the price at which they purchased them.

Since our emergence from bankruptcy on July 15, 2016 and up to the date of filing this annual report on Form 10-K, our stock price for our Class A Common Stock ranged from \$3.17 per share to \$18.47 per share. The market price of our Class A Common Stock may continue to be highly volatile and could be subject to wide fluctuations. In addition, the trading volume of our Class A Common Stock may fluctuate and cause significant price variations to occur. Volatility in the market price of our Class A Common Stock may prevent you from being able to sell your shares at or above the price you paid for your shares of Class A Common Stock. The market price for our Class A Common Stock could fluctuate significantly for various reasons, including:

- our operating and financial performance and prospects;
- our quarterly or annual earnings or those of other companies in our industry;
- conditions that impact demand for our paper products;
- the public's reaction to our press releases, other public announcements and filings with the SEC;
- changes in earnings estimates or recommendations by securities analysts who track our common stock;
- market and industry perception of our success, or lack thereof, in exploring strategic alternatives, including perceived uncertainties related to the future of Verso;
- strategic actions by us or our competitors, such as acquisitions or restructurings;
- changes in government regulations;
- arrival and departure of key personnel;
- changes in our capital structure;
- sales of common stock by us or members of our management team; and
- changes in general market, economic and political conditions in the United States and global economies or financial markets, including those resulting from natural disasters, terrorist attacks, acts of war and responses to such events.

The exercise of all or any number of outstanding Plan Warrants or the issuance of stock-based awards may dilute your holding of shares of our Class A Common Stock.

As of the date of filing this annual report on Form 10-K, we have outstanding (i) warrants to purchase 1,810,035 shares of our Class A Common Stock, or the "Plan Warrants," and (ii) 1,411,042 restricted stock units. In addition, as of the date of filing this annual report on Form 10-K, we have 3,555,237 shares of Class A Common Stock reserved for future issuance under our Verso Corporation Performance Incentive Plan. The exercise of equity awards, including any stock options that we may grant in the future, and Plan Warrants, and the sale of shares of our Class A Common Stock underlying any such options or the Plan Warrants, could have an adverse effect on the market for our Class A Common Stock, including the price that an investor could obtain for their shares. Investors may experience dilution in the net tangible book value of their investment upon the exercise of the Plan Warrants and any stock options that may be granted or issued pursuant to the Verso Corporation Performance Incentive Plan in the future.

Our Amended and Restated Bylaws, our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation and Delaware law contain provisions that could discourage another company from acquiring us and may prevent attempts by our stockholders to replace or remove our current management.

Provisions of our Amended and Restated Bylaws and Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation, which became effective on the Effective Date, and Delaware law may discourage, delay or prevent a merger or acquisition that stockholders may consider favorable, including transactions in which our stockholders might otherwise receive a premium for their shares. In addition, these provisions may frustrate or prevent any attempts by our stockholders to replace or remove our current management by making it more difficult for stockholders to replace or remove our board of directors. These provisions include:

- not providing for cumulative voting in the election of directors;
- requiring at least a supermajority vote of our stockholders to amend our Amended and Restated Bylaws or certain provisions of our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation;
- establishing advance notice requirements for nominations for election to the board of directors or for proposing matters that can be acted on by stockholders at stockholder meetings;
- prohibiting stockholder action by written consent; and
- authorizing the issuance of “blank check” preferred stock without any need for action by stockholders.

Together, these charter and statutory provisions could make the removal of management more difficult and may discourage transactions that otherwise could involve payment of a premium over prevailing market prices for our Class A Common Stock. The existence of the foregoing provisions and anti-takeover measures could limit the price that investors might be willing to pay in the future for shares of our Class A Common Stock. They could also deter potential acquirers of our company, thereby potentially reducing the likelihood that our stockholders could receive a premium for their Class A Common Stock in an acquisition.

Our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation designates the Court of Chancery of the State of Delaware as the exclusive forum for certain litigation that may be initiated by our stockholders, which could limit our stockholders' ability to obtain a favorable judicial forum for disputes with us.

Our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation provides that, unless we consent in writing to alternative forums, the Court of Chancery of the State of Delaware will be the exclusive forum for (i) any derivative action or proceeding brought on our behalf, (ii) any action asserting a claim of breach of a fiduciary duty owed to us by our directors, officers, or stockholders, (iii) any action asserting a claim against us arising under the Delaware General Corporation Law or to which the Delaware General Corporation Law confers jurisdiction on the Court of Chancery of the State of Delaware, or (iv) any action asserting a claim governed by the internal affairs doctrine. We may consent in writing to alternative forums. By becoming a stockholder in Verso, you will be deemed to have notice of and have consented to these provisions of our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation. This choice of forum provision in our Amended and Restated Certificate of Incorporation may limit our stockholders' ability to obtain a favorable judicial forum for disputes with us.

We currently do not plan to pay dividends on our Class A Common Stock and, consequentially, your only opportunity to achieve a return on your investment is if the price of our Class A Common Stock appreciates.

We do not anticipate paying any cash dividends on our Class A Common Stock for the foreseeable future. Any decision to pay dividends on our Class A Common Stock in the future will be at the discretion of our board of directors in light of conditions then existing, including factors such as our results of operations, financial condition and requirements, business condition, covenants under any applicable contractual arrangements, including our indebtedness.

Item 1B. Unresolved Staff Comments

Not applicable.

Item 2. Properties

As of December 31, 2017, we operate thirteen paper machines at seven mills located in Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin with a total annual paper production capacity of approximately 2,870,000 tons.

Our material facilities as of December 31, 2017 are shown in the following table:

| Location | Use | Owned/Leased |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Miamisburg, Ohio | corporate office | leased |
| Duluth, Minnesota | paper mill | owned |
| Escanaba, Michigan | paper mill | owned |
| Jay (Androscoggin), Maine | paper mill/kraft pulp mill | owned |
| Luke, Maryland | paper mill, warehouse and converting | owned |
| Quinnesec, Michigan | paper mill/kraft pulp mill | owned |
| Stevens Point, Wisconsin | paper mill | owned |
| Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin | paper mill, warehouse and converting | owned |
| Wickliffe, Kentucky | paper mill | owned |
| Memphis, Tennessee | corporate office | leased ⁽¹⁾ |

(1) Office space of former corporate headquarters. Lease expires in July 2022. As of December 31, 2017, Verso does not occupy this office space.

Item 3. Legal Proceedings

We are involved from time to time in legal proceedings incidental to the conduct of our business. We do not believe that any liability that may result from these proceedings will have a material adverse effect on our Consolidated Financial Statements (see Note 18 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report.)

Item 4. Mine Safety Disclosures

Not applicable.

PART II

Item 5. Market for Registrant’s Common Equity, Related Stockholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities

Market Information

In connection with the Company’s reorganization and emergence from bankruptcy, all shares of common stock outstanding prior to emergence were cancelled on July 15, 2016. On July 15, 2016, the Company’s new Class A common stock was listed on the New York Stock Exchange, or the “NYSE,” under the symbol “VRS,” and began trading on July 18, 2016.

The following table sets forth the high and low sales prices per share of our new Class A common stock, as reported by the NYSE, since July 18, 2016 (Successor):

| Price per share: | High | Low |
|--|--------|--------|
| 2017 | | |
| First quarter | \$8.43 | \$5.54 |
| Second quarter | 6.23 | 3.17 |
| Third quarter | 5.53 | 3.82 |
| Fourth quarter | 17.77 | 5.04 |
| 2016 | | |
| Third quarter (starting July 18, 2016) | 13.60 | 5.55 |
| Fourth quarter | 7.51 | 4.37 |

Holders

As of February 23, 2018, there were 104 stockholders of record of our Class A common stock and 6 stockholders of record of our Class B common stock. Because many of our shares of common stock are held by brokers and other institutions on behalf of stockholders, including 33,395,205 shares of our Class A common stock where the registered shareholder is Cede & Co., we are unable to estimate the total number of stockholders represented by these record holders.

Dividends

We have not declared or paid any cash dividends on shares of our Successor common stock during the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016. Any future determination relating to our dividend policy will be made at the discretion of our board of directors and will depend on then existing conditions, including our financial condition, results of operations, contractual restrictions, capital requirements, business prospects and other factors that our board of directors may deem relevant. Our ability to pay dividends on our common stock is limited by the covenants in our Credit Facilities, and may be further restricted by the terms of any of our future debt or preferred securities. See “Item 7. Management’s Discussion & Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations - Liquidity and Capital Resources - Credit Facilities” for a summary of our Credit Facilities.

Issuer Repurchases of Equity Securities

There were no repurchases of equity securities by Verso in the fourth quarter of 2017.

Item 6. Selected Financial Data

The following table presents our selected historical financial data as of and for the years ended December 31, 2013 through 2015 (Predecessor), for the period from January 1, 2016 to July 14, 2016 (Predecessor), for the period from July 15, 2016 to December 31, 2016 (Successor) and for the year ended December 31, 2017 (Successor). The following information is only a summary which has been derived from the Consolidated Financial Statements and should be read in conjunction with “Management’s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations” and the financial statements and their related notes, and the other financial information, included elsewhere in this annual report. Historical results are not indicative of future results.

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| | Predecessor | | | January 1, 2016 Through Year Ended December 31, | Successor July 15, 2016 Through Ended December December | |
|---|-------------|-----------|-----------|--|--|-----------|
| | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2016 | 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions except per share amounts) | | | | | | |
| Statement of Operations Data: | | | | | | |
| Net sales | \$1,389 | \$1,297 | \$3,122 | \$1,417 | \$1,224 | \$2,461 |
| Costs and expenses: | | | | | | |
| Cost of products sold - (exclusive of depreciation, amortization and depletion) | 1,179 | 1,176 | 2,727 | 1,249 | 1,098 | 2,237 |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 105 | 91 | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 |
| Selling, general and administrative expenses | 74 | 70 | 187 | 95 | 49 | 106 |
| Restructuring charges | 1 | 135 | 54 | 151 | 11 | 9 |
| Other operating (income) expense ⁽¹⁾ | (4) | — | 1 | (57) | 8 | 1 |
| Operating income (loss) | 34 | (175) | (155) | (121) | (35) | (7) |
| Interest expense | 138 | 142 | 270 | 39 | 17 | 38 |
| Other (income) expense ⁽²⁾ | 8 | 39 | — | — | — | (7) |
| Income (loss) before reorganization items, net | (112) | (356) | (425) | (160) | (52) | (38) |
| Reorganization items, net ⁽³⁾ | — | — | — | (1,338) | — | — |
| Income (loss) before income taxes | (112) | (356) | (425) | 1,178 | (52) | (38) |
| Income tax benefit | (1) | (3) | (3) | — | (20) | (8) |
| Net income (loss) | \$(111) | \$(353) | \$(422) | \$1,178 | \$(32) | \$(30) |
| Per Share Data: | | | | | | |
| Income (loss) per common share: | | | | | | |
| Basic | \$(2.09) | \$(6.62) | \$(5.19) | \$14.39 | \$(0.93) | \$(0.87) |
| Diluted | (2.09) | (6.62) | (5.19) | 14.39 | (0.93) | (0.87) |
| Weighted average common shares outstanding (in thousands): | | | | | | |
| Basic | 53,124 | 53,293 | 81,295 | 81,847 | 34,391 | 34,432 |
| Diluted | 53,124 | 53,293 | 81,295 | 81,847 | 34,391 | 34,432 |
| Statement of Cash Flows Data: | | | | | | |
| Cash provided by (used in) operating activities | \$(27) | \$(58) | \$(266) | \$25 | \$17 | \$153 |
| Cash provided by (used in) investing activities | (14) | (25) | 111 | 29 | (38) | (39) |
| Cash provided by (used in) financing activities | (9) | 78 | 153 | (11) | (20) | (113) |
| Other Financial and Operating Data: | | | | | | |
| EBITDA ⁽⁴⁾ | \$131 | \$(123) | \$153 | \$1,317 | \$58 | \$115 |
| Capital expenditures | (41) | (42) | (64) | (31) | (42) | (40) |
| Total tons sold (in thousands) ⁽⁵⁾ | 1,690 | 1,624 | 3,647 | 1,676 | 1,473 | 2,959 |
| Balance Sheet Data: | | | | | | |
| Working capital ⁽⁶⁾ | \$63 | \$5 | \$371 | \$463 | \$412 | \$309 |
| Property, plant and equipment, net | 743 | 531 | 1,857 | 1,180 | 1,132 | 1,062 |
| Total assets | 1,070 | 855 | 2,710 | 2,006 | 1,855 | 1,732 |
| Total debt | 1,220 | 1,304 | 2,879 | 310 | 293 | 190 |
| Total equity (deficit) | (417) | (784) | (1,183) | 675 | 770 | 746 |

(1) Other operating (income) expense for the period from January 1, 2016 to July 14, 2016 (Predecessor) primarily reflected the gain on sale of hydroelectric facilities in January 2016. Other operating (income) expense for the

period from July 15, 2016 to December 31, 2016 (Successor) primarily reflected on-going costs incurred for professional fees paid for bankruptcy related services such as legal and consulting.

- (2) Other (income) expense in 2013 (Predecessor) reflected costs related to debt refinancing. Other (income) expense in 2014 (Predecessor) reflected costs incurred in connection with the NewPage acquisition.

Reorganization items, net, in 2016 (Predecessor) represented expenses and income directly associated with the Predecessor's bankruptcy filing on the Petition Date. This amount represents primarily a gain on settlement of

- (3) liabilities subject to compromise of \$1,992 million, partially offset by a loss of \$651 due to the revaluation of our assets and liabilities as part of the application of fresh-start accounting as of the Effective Date (see Note 2 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report).

EBITDA consists of earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation/depletion and amortization. Our use of EBITDA

- (4) is further discussed in the "Reconciliation of Net Income (Loss) to EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA" section of Item 7 herein. The following table reconciles net income (loss) to EBITDA for the periods presented:

| | Predecessor | | | Successor | | |
|--|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| | Year Ended December 31, | | | January 1, 2016 Through July 14, 2016 | July 15, 2016 Through December 31, 2016 | Year Ended December 31, 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions) | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2016 | 2017 |
| Reconciliation of net income (loss) to EBITDA: | | | | | | |
| Net income (loss) | \$(111) | \$(353) | \$(422) | \$ 1,178 | \$(32) | \$(30) |
| Income tax benefit | (1) | (3) | (3) | — | (20) | (8) |
| Interest expense | 138 | 142 | 270 | 39 | 17 | 38 |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 105 | 91 | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 |
| EBITDA | \$131 | \$(123) | \$153 | \$ 1,317 | \$58 | \$ 115 |

- (5) See discussion of metric in "Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" included in Item 7 herein.

- (6) Working capital is defined as current assets net of current liabilities, excluding the current portion of long-term debt.

Item 7. Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations

Overview

We are the leading North American producer of coated papers, which are used primarily in commercial print, magazines, catalogs, high-end advertising brochures and annual reports, among other media and marketing publications. We produce a wide range of products, ranging from coated freesheet and coated groundwood, to specialty papers, to inkjet and digital paper, supercalendered papers and uncoated freesheet. We also produce and sell market kraft pulp, which is used to manufacture printing and writing paper grades and tissue products.

We operate seven mills located in Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin with a total annual paper production capacity of approximately 2,870,000 tons of paper as of December 31, 2017.

Background

Emergence from Chapter 11

On January 26, 2016, or the "Petition Date," we and substantially all of our direct and indirect subsidiaries, collectively, the "Debtors," filed voluntary petitions for relief, or the "Chapter 11 Filings," under Chapter 11 of Title 11 of the United States Code, or the "Bankruptcy Code," in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware or the "Bankruptcy Court." The Chapter 11 cases, or the "Chapter 11 Cases," were consolidated for procedural purposes only and administered jointly under the caption "In re: Verso Corporation, et al., Case No. 16-10163." During the pendency of the Chapter 11 Cases, we continued to manage our properties and operate our businesses as a "debtor-in-possession" under the jurisdiction of the Bankruptcy Court and in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Bankruptcy Code and orders of the Bankruptcy Court.

On March 26, 2016, the Debtors filed a proposed joint plan of reorganization, (as amended, the "Plan,") with the Bankruptcy Court together with a disclosure statement in respect of the Plan. The Plan set forth, among other things, the treatment of claims against and equity interests in the Debtors. On June 23, 2016, the Bankruptcy Court entered an order confirming the Plan. On July 15, 2016, or the "Effective Date," the Plan became effective pursuant to its terms and the Debtors emerged from their Chapter 11 Cases.

On the Effective Date, by operation of the Plan, among other things:

Verso issued 33,366,784 shares of its new Class A common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, 1,023,859 shares of its new Class B common stock, par value \$0.01 per share, and the Plan Warrants to purchase up to an aggregate of 1,810,035 shares of Class A Common Stock at an initial exercise price of \$27.86, in exchange for the elimination of \$2.6 billion of the Debtor's outstanding indebtedness (principal and accrued interest);

All general unsecured claims were satisfied in full for an aggregate settlement totaling \$3 million in cash (except with respect to general unsecured claims against Debtors that have only de minimis assets, which will receive no distributions under the Plan);

All shares of Verso's common stock issued and outstanding immediately prior to the Effective Date were cancelled and discharged;

The shared services agreement between Verso, NewPage and NewPage Corp was terminated;

The prior employee incentive plans and other employment agreements were terminated and any awards issued under them were no longer honored, and a new performance incentive plan was adopted by Verso;

The Management and Transaction Fee Agreement dated as of August 1, 2006 among Verso Paper LLC, Verso Paper Investments LP, Apollo Management V, L.P. and Apollo Management VI, L.P., and all rights and remedies thereunder were terminated, extinguished, waived and released; and

Employee retirement contracts and collective bargaining agreements were honored by Verso upon emergence.

Pursuant to the Plan, on the Effective Date, the Company entered into a \$375 million asset-based revolving credit facility or the "ABL Facility", and a senior secured term loan agreement or the "Term Loan Facility" that provides for

term loan

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commitments of \$220 million or collectively the “Credit Facilities.” Further, VPH borrowed \$340 million under the Credit Facilities on the Effective Date, with available loan proceeds of \$318 million, consisting of (i) the borrowing of \$120 million under the ABL Facility and (ii) the borrowing of \$198 million (\$220 million net of original issue discount) under the Term Loan Facility. The proceeds of the borrowings on the Effective Date under the Credit Facilities were used (i) to repay outstanding indebtedness under the credit facilities we entered into while a debtor-in-possession, or the “DIP Facilities,” (ii) to pay outstanding allowed administrative expenses and allowed claims in accordance with the Plan and (iii) to pay fees, costs and expenses related to and contemplated by the Credit Facilities and emergence by Verso and its subsidiaries from bankruptcy.

Capacity Reductions

On August 20, 2015, we announced plans to make production capacity reductions at two of our mills by shutting down the No. 1 pulp dryer and No. 2 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, and by indefinitely idling our Wickliffe Mill in Wickliffe, Kentucky. Together, these actions reduced our annual production capacity by approximately 430,000 tons of coated paper and approximately 130,000 tons of dried market pulp. On April 5, 2016, we announced our decision to permanently close the Wickliffe Mill and the associated Property, plant and equipment were written down to salvage value. On November 1, 2016, we announced the temporary idling of the No. 3 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill, reducing annual coated paper production capacity by approximately 200,000 tons. On July 19, 2017, we announced plans to permanently shut down the No. 3 paper machine and associated equipment. Upgrade/Restart Paper Machine at Androscoggin Mill

On February 15, 2018, Verso announced plans to upgrade the shuttered No. 3 paper machine and pulp line at its Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, enabling this equipment to restart for the manufacture of packaging products, which we expect to occur during the third quarter of 2018. This project is expected to create approximately 120 full-time jobs at the Androscoggin Mill and increase annual paper production capacity by approximately 200,000 tons. The estimated total capital cost of the project is \$17 million, \$4 million of which will come from a Maine Technology Asset Fund 2.0 challenge grant administered by the Maine Technology Institute. Funds from the grant will be become available as certain milestones in the project are reached.

NewPage Acquisition

On January 7, 2015, we completed the acquisition of NewPage and its subsidiaries through a merger of one of our wholly owned subsidiaries with and into NewPage, or the “NewPage acquisition.” At the time of the NewPage acquisition, NewPage and its subsidiaries were the largest coated paper producer in the United States and operated eight paper mills located in Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, while we operated three mills located in Maine and Michigan.

Financial Reporting After Emergence from Bankruptcy and Presentation of Predecessor and Successor

We were required to adopt fresh-start accounting under ASC 852, Reorganizations, upon emergence from bankruptcy on the Effective Date. Adoption of fresh-start accounting resulted in Verso becoming a new entity for financial reporting purposes and the recording of our assets and liabilities at their fair value as of the Effective Date in conformity with ASC 805, Business Combinations. The fair values of our assets and liabilities as of that date differed materially from the recorded values of our assets and liabilities as reflected in our historical consolidated financial statements. In addition, our adoption of fresh-start accounting materially affected our results of operations following the fresh-start accounting date, as we had a new basis in our assets and liabilities. We also adopted various new accounting policies in connection with our adoption of fresh-start accounting. Consequently, our financial statements on or after the Effective Date are not comparable with the financial statements prior to that date and the historical financial statements before the Effective Date are not reliable indicators of our financial condition and results of operations for any period after our adopted fresh-start accounting. References in this report to “Successor” refer to the Company on or after the Effective Date. References to “Predecessor” refer to the Company prior to the Effective Date. Operating results for the Successor and Predecessor periods are not necessarily indicative of the results to be expected

for a full year. References such as the “Company,” “we,” “our” and “us” refer to Verso, whether Predecessor and/or Successor, as appropriate.

Management’s discussion and analysis of the results of operations and of liquidity compares the year ended December 31, 2017 to the year ended December 31, 2016 and the year ended December 31, 2016 to the year ended December 31, 2015. Presentation of the combined financial information of the Predecessor and Successor for the year ended December 31, 2016 is not in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles in the United States of America, or “GAAP.” However, we believe that for purposes of discussion and analysis in this annual report, the combined financial results are useful for management and investors to assess the Company’s ongoing financial and operational performance and trends.

Selected Factors Affecting Operating Results

Net Sales

Our sales, which we report net of rebates, allowances and discounts, are a function of the number of tons of paper that we sell and the price at which we sell our paper. Paper prices historically have been a function of macro-economic factors which influence supply and demand. Price has historically been substantially more variable than volume and can change significantly over relatively short time periods.

We are primarily focused on serving the following end-user segments: specialty converters, general commercial print, catalogs and magazines. Coated paper demand is primarily driven by advertising and print media usage. Advertising spending and magazine and catalog circulation generally tend to correlate with gross domestic product in the United States, as they rise with a strong economy and contract with a weak economy, which impacts media spend which further impacts magazine and catalog subscriptions.

Many of our customers provide us with forecasts of their paper needs, which allows us to plan our production runs in advance, optimizing production over our integrated mill system and thereby reducing costs and increasing overall efficiency. Generally, our sales agreements do not extend beyond the calendar year, and they typically provide for quarterly price adjustments based on market price movements.

We reach our end-users through several distribution channels, including commercial printers, paper merchants, brokers, converters and direct sales to end-users. We sell and market our products to approximately 300 customers which comprise approximately 1,700 end-user accounts. In 2017, our largest customer, Veritiv Corporation, accounted for approximately 19% of our net sales.

Cost of Products Sold

We are subject to changes in our cost of sales caused by movements in underlying commodity prices. The principal components of our cost of sales are chemicals, wood, energy, labor and maintenance. Costs for commodities, including chemicals, wood and energy, are the most variable component of our cost of sales because their prices can fluctuate substantially, sometimes within a relatively short period of time. In addition, our aggregate commodity purchases fluctuate based on the volume of paper that we produce.

Chemicals. Chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of coated papers include latex, clay, starch, calcium carbonate, caustic soda, sodium chlorate and titanium dioxide. We purchase these chemicals from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on any single supplier to satisfy our chemical needs. We expect imbalances in supply and demand to periodically create volatility in prices for certain chemicals.

Wood. Our costs to purchase wood are affected directly by market costs of wood in our regional markets and indirectly by the effect of higher fuel costs on logging and transportation of timber to our facilities. While we have in place fiber supply agreements that ensure a substantial portion of our wood requirements, purchases under these agreements are typically at market rates.

Energy. We produce a significant portion of our energy needs for our paper mills from sources such as waste wood, waste water, hydroelectric facilities, liquid biomass from our pulping process, and internal energy cogeneration facilities. Our external energy purchases vary across each of our mills and include fuel oil, natural gas, coal and electricity. Our overall energy expenditures are mitigated by our internal energy production capacity and ability to switch between certain energy sources. We also from time to time utilize derivative contracts as part of our risk

management strategy to manage our exposure to market fluctuations in energy prices.

Labor. Labor costs include wages, salary and benefit expenses attributable to our mill personnel. Mill employees at a non-managerial level are compensated on an hourly basis. Management employees at our mills are compensated on a salaried basis. Wages, salary and benefit expenses included in cost of sales do not vary significantly over the short term. In addition, we have not experienced significant labor shortages.

Maintenance. Maintenance expense includes day-to-day maintenance, equipment repairs and larger maintenance projects, such as paper machine shutdowns for periodic maintenance. Maintenance expenses can produce year-to-year fluctuations in our maintenance expenses. In conjunction with our periodic maintenance shutdowns, we have incidental incremental costs that are

primarily comprised of unabsorbed fixed costs from lower production volumes and other incremental costs for purchased materials and energy that would otherwise be produced as part of the normal operation of our mills.

Depreciation, Amortization and Depletion.

Depreciation, amortization and depletion expense represents the periodic charge to earnings through which the cost of tangible assets, intangible assets and natural resources are recognized over the asset's life. Capital investments can increase our asset basis and produce year-to-year fluctuations in expense.

Selling, General and Administrative Expenses

The principal components of our selling, general and administrative expenses are wages, salaries and benefits for our office personnel at our headquarters and our sales force, travel and entertainment expenses, advertising expenses, expenses relating to certain information technology systems, and research and development expenses.

Effect of Inflation

While inflationary increases on certain raw materials such as energy, wood fiber and chemicals have an impact on our operating results, sales prices and volumes are more strongly influenced by supply and demand factors in specific markets and by exchange rate fluctuations than by inflationary factors. We cannot assure you, however, that we will not be affected by general inflation in the future.

Seasonality

We are exposed to fluctuations in quarterly net sales volumes and expenses due to seasonal factors. These seasonal factors are common in the coated paper industry. Our third and fourth quarters are generally our strongest quarters for volume and revenue, reflecting an increase in printing related to end-of-year magazines, increased end-of-year direct mailings, and holiday season catalogs. Our working capital and accounts receivable generally peak in the third quarter, while inventory generally peaks in the second quarter in anticipation of the third quarter season. We expect our seasonality trends to continue for the foreseeable future.

Critical Accounting Policies

Our accounting policies are fundamental to understanding management's discussion and analysis of financial condition and results of operations. Our Consolidated Financial Statements are prepared in conformity with GAAP and follow general practices within the industry in which we operate. The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make certain judgments and assumptions in determining accounting estimates. Accounting estimates are considered critical if the estimate requires management to make assumptions about matters that were highly uncertain at the time the accounting estimate was made, and different estimates reasonably could have been used in the current period, or changes in the accounting estimate are reasonably likely to occur from period to period, that would have a material impact on the presentation of our financial condition, changes in financial condition or results of operations.

Management believes the following critical accounting policies are both important to the portrayal of our financial condition and results of operations and require subjective or complex judgments. These judgments about critical accounting estimates are based on information available to us as of the date of the financial statements.

Accounting standards whose application may have a significant effect on the reported results of operations and financial position, and that can require judgments by management that affect their application, include the following:

Financial Accounting Standards Board, or “FASB,” Accounting Standards Codification, or “ASC,” Topic 450, Contingencies, ASC Topic 360, Property, Plant and Equipment, ASC Topic 350, Intangibles – Goodwill and Other, ASC Topic 606, Accounting for Revenue from Contracts with Customers and ASC Topic 715, Compensation – Retirement Benefits.

Impairment of long-lived assets. Long-lived assets are reviewed for impairment upon the occurrence of events or changes in circumstances that indicate that the carrying value of the assets may not be recoverable, as measured by comparing their net book value to the estimated undiscounted future cash flows generated by their use.

Management believes that the accounting estimates associated with determining fair value as part of an impairment analysis are critical accounting estimates because estimates and assumptions are made about our future performance and cash flows. The estimated fair value is generally determined on the basis of discounted future cash flows. We also consider a market-based

approach and a combination of both. While management uses the best information available to estimate future performance and cash flows, future adjustments to management's projections may be necessary if economic conditions differ substantially from the assumptions used in making the estimates.

In the third quarter of 2015 (Predecessor), we announced plans to make production capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill and Wickliffe Mill. As a result, we recognized \$58 million of accelerated depreciation which is included in Depreciation, amortization and depletion in our accompanying Consolidated Statement of Operations for the year ended December 31, 2015 (Predecessor). Given the capacity reductions, we conducted a Step 1 impairment test as of the announcement date and concluded that the undiscounted estimated future cash flows associated with the remaining long-lived assets exceeded their carrying value and no impairment was recorded.

On April 5, 2016 (Predecessor), Verso announced that it would permanently close its paper mill located in Wickliffe, Kentucky, which had been idle since November 2015. The decision to close the mill resulted in restructuring charges of \$160 million for the year ended December 31, 2016. The associated Property, plant and equipment were written down to salvage value resulting in a non-cash restructuring charge of \$127 million during the first quarter of 2016 (Predecessor).

In the third quarter of 2016 (Successor), management concluded that actual operating results were lower than those projected in the Plan. Such circumstance constituted a triggering event requiring management to conduct a Step 1 impairment test. Based on the results of the Step 1 impairment test, we concluded that the undiscounted estimated future cash flows associated with the remaining long-lived assets exceeded their carrying value and no impairment was recorded.

In the fourth quarter of 2016 (Successor), based on our plans to temporarily idle the No. 3 paper machine at our Androscoggin Mill, we determined a reduction in the useful life of the machine was necessary and accordingly recognized \$43 million of accelerated depreciation during the fourth quarter of 2016 (Successor) and an additional \$6 million of accelerated depreciation during the first quarter of 2017 (Successor), which is included in Depreciation, amortization and depletion in our Consolidated Statement of Operations. As a result of the acceleration of depreciation, no impairment charge was required to be recorded with the temporary idling of the No. 3 paper machine and associated equipment at the Androscoggin Mill (see Note 15 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report).

Intangible assets primarily consist of trademarks, customer-related intangible assets and patents obtained through business acquisitions. The Predecessor identified the following trademarks as intangible assets with an indefinite life: Influence[®], Liberty[®] and Advocate[®] and assessed indefinite-lived intangible assets in accordance with ASC 350, Intangibles - Goodwill and Other, at least annually for impairment or more frequently when events occurred or circumstances changed between annual tests that would have more likely than not reduced the fair value of the reporting unit below its carrying amount.

Trademarks of the Predecessor were evaluated by comparing their fair value to their carrying values. During 2015 (Predecessor), we completed our annual impairment test of indefinite lived intangibles and determined that there was no impairment as the fair value of intangibles exceeded their carrying value at December 31, 2015.

The intangible assets of the Successor are comprised of customer relationships with a useful life of 10 years and trademarks with a five year useful life. For the period from July 15, 2016 through December 31, 2016 and during 2017 (Successor), there were no indicators requiring evaluation of impairment for these definite lived intangible assets.

Pension and other postretirement benefit obligations. We have offered various pension and other postemployment and retirement benefits to certain employees. The calculation of the obligations and related expenses under these plans

requires the use of actuarial valuation methods and assumptions, including the expected long-term rate of return on plan assets, discount rates, increases in future medical cost, and mortality rates. The table below shows assumptions used by us for the periods shown:

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| | Predecessor Year Ended December 31, 2015 | January 1, 2016 Through July 14, 2016 | Successor Year Ended December 31, 2016 | July 15, 2016 Through December 31, 2017 |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Weighted average assumptions used to determine benefit obligations as of end of period: | | | | |
| Discount rate | 4.17% | 3.43 % | 3.99% | 3.51 % |
| Rate of compensation increase | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Weighted average assumptions used to determine net periodic pension cost for the period: | | | | |
| Discount rate | 3.98% | 4.17 % | 3.43% | 3.98 % |
| Rate of compensation increase | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Expected long-term return on plan assets | 7.05% | 6.75 % | 6.75% | 6.50 % |

We determine these actuarial assumptions, after consultation with our actuaries, on December 31 of each year to calculate liability information as of that date and pension and postretirement expense for the following year. The expected long-term rate of return on plan assets is based on projected rates of return for current and planned asset classes in the plan's investment portfolio. The discount rate is generally based on the yield of high-quality corporate fixed-income investments.

Actuarial valuations and assumptions used in the determination of future values of plan assets and liabilities are subject to management judgment and may differ significantly if different assumptions are used. The following table highlights the sensitivity of our pension obligations and 2018 net periodic pension (income) expense to changes in these assumptions, assuming all other assumptions remain constant.

| Change in Assumption | Impact on 2018 Net Periodic Pension (Income) Expense | Impact on Pension Benefit Obligation |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| 0.25 percentage point decrease in discount rate | Decrease \$3 million | Increase \$55 million |
| 0.25 percentage point increase in discount rate | Decrease \$3 million | Decrease \$54 million |
| 0.25 percentage point decrease in expected rate of return on assets | Increase \$3 million | |
| 0.25 percentage point increase in expected rate of return on assets | Decrease \$3 million | |

Contingent liabilities. A liability is contingent if the outcome or amount is not presently known, but may become known in the future as a result of the occurrence of some uncertain future event. We estimate our contingent liabilities based on management's estimates about the probability of outcomes and their ability to estimate the range of exposure. Accounting standards require that a liability be recorded if management determines that it is probable that a loss has occurred and the loss can be reasonably estimated. In addition, it must be probable that the loss will be confirmed by some future event. As part of the estimation process, management is required to make assumptions about matters that are by their nature highly uncertain.

The assessment of contingent liabilities, including legal contingencies, asset retirement obligations and environmental costs and obligations, involves the use of critical estimates, assumptions and judgments. Management's estimates are based on their belief that future events will validate the current assumptions regarding the ultimate outcome of these exposures. However, there can be no assurance that future events will not differ from management's assessments.

Fresh Start Accounting. Upon the our emergence from the Chapter 11 Cases, we adopted fresh start accounting in accordance with the provisions of ASC 852, Reorganizations, which resulted in us becoming a new entity for financial reporting purposes. Upon adoption of fresh start accounting, our assets and liabilities were recorded at their fair values as of the Effective Date. The Effective Date fair values of our assets and liabilities differed materially from the recorded values of our assets and liabilities as reflected in our historical consolidated balance sheet. The effects of the Plan and the application of fresh start accounting were reflected in our consolidated financial statements as of July 14, 2016 and the related adjustments thereto were recorded in our Consolidated Statement of Operations as reorganization items for the period January 1, to July 14, 2016 (Predecessor).

As a result, our consolidated balance sheets and consolidated statement of operations subsequent to the Effective Date are not comparable to our consolidated balance sheets and statements of operations prior to the Effective Date. Our consolidated financial statements and related footnotes are presented with a black line division which delineates the lack of comparability

between amounts presented after July 14, 2016 and dates on or prior to July 14, 2016. Our financial results for future periods following the application of fresh start accounting will be different from historical trends and the differences may be material.

Recent Accounting Pronouncements

For a description of recently issued and adopted accounting pronouncements, including the respective dates of adoption and expected effects on our results of operations and financial condition, see Part II, Item 8, Note 3 of Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements, which is incorporated by reference in response to this item.

Financial Overview

In 2017, net sales decreased \$180 million, or 7% compared to 2016, which was primarily driven by a 6% decrease in total sales volume and a 1% reduction in average price per ton. The decreases in volume and pricing were driven by general softening of demand for coated papers and our capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill. In 2016, net sales decreased \$481 million, or 15% as total sales volume decreased 14% and price per ton decreased 2% compared to 2015. The decreases in volume and pricing were driven by general softening of demand for coated papers, our capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill and the closure of the Wickliffe Mill. Our gross margin, excluding depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses, was 9% in 2017 compared to 11% in 2016, attributable primarily to a 6% decrease in sales volume in 2017.

In 2017, we reported a net loss of \$30 million or \$0.87 per diluted share and an operating loss of \$7 million. During the period from January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 (Predecessor), we reported net income of \$1,178 million or \$14.39 per diluted share and an operating loss of \$121 million. During the period from July 15, 2016 to December 31, 2016 (Successor), we reported a net loss of \$32 million or \$0.93 per diluted share and an operating loss of \$35 million. Impacting the results for 2016 were the Chapter 11 Cases along with several restructuring events. In 2015, we reported a net loss of \$422 million or \$5.19 per diluted share and an operating loss of \$155 million. Impacting the results for 2015 were the significant restructuring costs associated with the closure of our Bucksport Mill and costs incurred in connection with the NewPage acquisition.

Results of Operations

The following tables set forth the historical results of operations of Verso for the periods indicated below. The following discussion of our financial condition and results of operations should be read in conjunction with our Consolidated Financial Statements and the related notes thereto included elsewhere in this annual report.

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| | Predecessor | | Successor | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Year Ended December 31, 2015 | January 1, 2016 Through July 14, 2016 | Year Ended July 15, 2016 Through December 31, 2016 | Year Ended December 31, 2017 | Month Ended December 12, 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions) | | | | | \$ Change |
| Net sales | \$3,122 | \$ 1,417 | \$ 1,224 | \$ 2,461 | \$(180) |
| Costs and expenses: | | | | | |
| Cost of products sold (exclusive of depreciation, amortization and depletion) | 2,727 | 1,249 | 1,098 | 2,237 | (110) |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 | (78) |
| Selling, general and administrative expenses | 187 | 95 | 49 | 106 | (38) |
| Restructuring charges | 54 | 151 | 11 | 9 | (153) |
| Other operating (income) expense | 1 | (57) | 8 | 1 | 50 |
| Operating income (loss) | (155) | (121) | (35) | (7) | 149 |
| Interest expense | 270 | 39 | 17 | 38 | (18) |
| Other (income) expense | — | — | — | (7) | (7) |
| Income (loss) before reorganization items, net | (425) | (160) | (52) | (38) | 174 |
| Reorganization items, net | — | (1,338) | — | — | 1,338 |
| Income (loss) before income taxes | (425) | 1,178 | (52) | (38) | (1,164) |
| Income tax benefit | (3) | — | (20) | (8) | 12 |
| Net income (loss) | \$(422) | \$ 1,178 | \$(32) | \$(30) | (1,176) |

2017 Compared to 2016

Net Sales. Net sales for the year ended December 31, 2017 decreased by \$180 million or 7% compared to the prior year. This decrease was attributable to a 6% decrease in total sales volume, from 3,149 thousand tons in 2016 to 2,959 thousand tons in 2017, and a 1% reduction in average price/mix from \$839 per ton in 2016 to \$832 per ton in 2017. The decrease in sales volume resulted in a \$159 million decrease in revenue, while the reduced pricing, partially offset by improvement in product mix, resulted in an additional \$21 million decrease in revenue. The decrease in volume and pricing were driven by general softening of demand for coated papers and our capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill.

Cost of sales. Cost of products sold, excluding depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses, decreased \$110 million or 5% in the year ended December 31, 2017 compared to the prior year. Our gross margin, excluding depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses, was 9.1% for the year ended December 31, 2017 compared to 11.1% for the year ended December 31, 2016 reflecting an incremental decrease of \$70 million in gross margin. Gross margin was negatively impacted by lower sales volume, lower sales prices, inflation in chemicals and energy costs and inventory reduction initiatives, partially offset by lower wood costs, reductions in manufacturing overhead costs and inventory fair value adjustments associated with fresh-start accounting in 2016.

Depreciation, amortization and depletion. Depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses decreased \$78 million or 40% from the prior year. The reduction in Depreciation, amortization and depletion is attributable to the capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill, the closure of the Wickliffe Mill and the reduction in the carrying value of our Property, plant and equipment, net as a result of the adoption of fresh-start accounting.

Selling, general and administrative expenses. Selling, general and administrative expenses for the year ended December 31, 2017 decreased \$38 million or 26% compared to the prior year primarily attributable to cost reduction

initiatives implemented across the Company and a change in accounting policy adopted in connection with fresh-start accounting related to certain centralized manufacturing overhead costs of \$15 million previously presented in Selling, general and administrative expenses of the Predecessor that are now presented in Cost of products sold of the Successor. In addition, Selling, general and administrative expenses for the year ended December 31, 2016 included \$6 million in costs incurred in connection with pre-reorganization advisory and legal services related to planning for the Chapter 11 Cases. As a percentage of sales, Selling, general and administrative expense was 4% for the year ended December 31, 2017 and 5% for the year ended December 31, 2016.

Restructuring charges. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2017 decreased \$153 million from the prior year. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2017 are primarily associated with the announced closure and relocation of the Memphis office headquarters and closure of the Wickliffe Mill. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2016 consisted primarily of non-cash fixed asset write-down charges of \$127 million and \$15 million of severance and benefit costs related primarily to the production capacity reductions and permanent closure of our Wickliffe Mill.

Other operating (income) expense. Other operating income for the year ended December 31, 2017 decreased \$50 million, primarily attributable to the sale of hydroelectric facilities in January 2016, partially offset by costs incurred for professional fees paid for legal, consulting and other bankruptcy related costs and services.

Interest expense. Interest expense for the year ended December 31, 2017 decreased \$18 million or 32% compared to the prior year. For the year ended December 31, 2016, we ceased recording interest expense as of the Petition Date on outstanding pre-petition debt classified as Liabilities subject to compromise, or "LSTC." Such interest on pre-petition debt was stayed by the Bankruptcy Court effective on the Petition Date. During the pendency of the bankruptcy, the Predecessor incurred interest expense on the DIP Facilities. For periods subsequent to the Effective Date, the Successor incurred interest expense on the outstanding balance of the Credit Facilities.

Other (income) expense. Other income of \$7 million for the year ended December 31, 2017 was related to the extinguishment of our obligation in December 2017 in connection with the unwind of a New Market Tax Credit transaction (see Note 17 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report).

Reorganization items, net. Reorganization items, net, which represent expenses and income associated with the Chapter 11 Cases, resulted in a net gain of \$1,338 million for the period from January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 (Predecessor). This amount was driven primarily by a gain on settlement of LSTC and the DIP Facilities of \$1,992 million offset by a loss of \$651 million due to the revaluation of our assets and liabilities as part of the application of fresh-start accounting as of the Effective Date. Additionally we recognized a gain of \$81 million associated with the write-off of unamortized deferred financing costs related to pre-petition debt. We also incurred \$52 million of professional fees paid for legal, consulting and other bankruptcy-related costs and services.

Income Tax Benefit. Income tax benefit decreased \$12 million compared to the prior year. In 2017, Verso allocated \$2 million of tax expense to other comprehensive income and recognized a \$2 million tax benefit in continuing operations. Also, on December 22, 2017, the federal government enacted new tax reform legislation. The provisions of the U.S. Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, or the "Tax Act," included a reduction in the corporate income tax rate from 35% to 21%, as well as a repeal of the alternative minimum tax and provisions allowing for the refund of any minimum tax credit carryovers. Verso recognized a tax benefit of \$6 million in 2017 related to the recognition of a minimum tax credit carryover receivable. We expect to receive this refund over time starting in 2019 through 2022. In 2016, Verso allocated \$20 million of tax expense to other comprehensive income and recognized a \$20 million tax benefit in continuing operations.

Based on our initial assessment of the Tax Act, we believe that the most significant impact on our financial statements is the refund of a minimum tax credit carryover. Quantifying all of the impacts of the Tax Act however requires significant judgment by our management, including the inherent complexities involved in determining the timing of reversals of our deferred tax assets and liabilities. Accordingly, we will continue to analyze the impacts of the Tax Act and, if necessary, record any further impacts in future periods.

2016 Compared to 2015

Net Sales. Net sales for the year ended December 31, 2016 decreased by \$481 million or 15% compared to the prior year. This decrease was attributable to a 14% decrease in total sales volume, from 3.6 million tons in 2015 to 3.1 million tons in 2016, and a 2% reduction in average price per ton from \$856 per ton in 2015 to \$839 per ton in 2016. The decrease in sales volume resulted in a \$395 million decrease in revenue, while the reduced pricing resulted in an additional \$86 million decrease in revenue. The decrease in volume and pricing were driven by general softening of demand for coated papers, our capacity reductions at our Androscoggin Mill and the closure of the Wickliffe Mill.

Cost of sales. Cost of products sold, excluding depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses, decreased \$380 million or 14% in the year ended December 31, 2016 compared to the prior year. Our gross margin, excluding depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses, was 11.1% for the year ended December 31, 2016 compared to 12.7% for the year ended December 31, 2015, reflecting an incremental decrease of \$101 million in gross margin. Gross margin was negatively impacted by the

decrease in sales volume and inventory fair value adjustments associated with fresh-start accounting of \$41 million, as well as by the effects of two accounting policy changes adopted in conjunction with fresh-start reporting.

Depreciation, amortization and depletion. Depreciation, amortization and depletion expenses decreased \$115 million or 37% from the prior year primarily attributable to the reduction in the fair value of our Property, plant and equipment, net as a result of the adoption of fresh-start accounting.

Selling, general and administrative expenses. Selling, general and administrative expenses for the year ended December 31, 2016 decreased \$43 million or 23% compared to the prior period attributable to a change in accounting policy adopted in connection with fresh-start accounting. As described in Cost of products sold above, \$11 million of certain centralized costs related to manufacturing overhead previously recorded to Selling, general and administrative expenses of the Predecessor are now recorded to Cost of products sold of the Successor. This decrease in Selling, general and administrative expenses for the year ended December 31, 2016 is partially offset by a \$3 million increase related to the recognition of previously unrecognized stock compensation costs as all outstanding stock compensation of the Predecessor were cancelled upon emergence from the Chapter 11 Cases. As a percentage of sales, Selling, general and administrative expense was 5% for the year ended December 31, 2016 and 6% for the year ended December 31, 2015, respectively.

Restructuring charges. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2016 increased \$108 million from the prior year. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2016 were primarily attributable to non-cash fixed asset write-down charges of \$127 million and \$15 million of severance and benefit costs related primarily to the production capacity reductions and permanent closure of our Wickliffe Mill. Restructuring charges for the year ended December 31, 2015, consisted primarily of \$16 million of severance and benefit costs related primarily to the production capacity reductions at our Androscoggin and Wickliffe mills, \$16 million of severance and benefit costs related to efforts to integrate the legacy Verso and NewPage operations and \$12 million of expenses related to the sale of the Bucksport Mill.

Other operating (income) expense. Other operating income for the year ended December 31, 2016 increased \$50 million primarily attributable to the sale of hydroelectric facilities in January 2016, partially offset by the on-going costs incurred for professional fees paid for legal, consulting and other bankruptcy related costs and service. There were no similar income, costs or charges during the year ended December 31, 2015.

Interest expense. Interest expense for the year ended December 31, 2016 decreased \$214 million or 79% compared to the prior year primarily due to the fact that we ceased recording interest expense as of January 26, 2016 on outstanding pre-petition debt classified as LSTC.

Reorganization items, net. Reorganization items, net, which represent expenses and income associated with the Chapter 11 Cases, resulted in a net gain of \$1,338 million for the period from January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 (Predecessor). This amount was driven primarily by a gain on settlement of LSTC and the DIP Facilities of \$1,992 million offset by a loss of \$651 million due to the revaluation of our assets and liabilities as part of the application of fresh-start accounting as of the Effective Date. Additionally we recognized a gain of \$81 million associated with the write-off of unamortized deferred financing costs related to pre-petition debt. We also incurred \$52 million of professional fees paid for legal, consulting and other bankruptcy-related costs and services.

Income Tax Benefit. Income tax benefit increased \$17 million compared to the prior year. In 2016, Verso allocated \$20 million of tax expense to other comprehensive income and recognized a \$20 million tax benefit in continuing operations.

Reconciliation of Net Income (Loss) to EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA

EBITDA consists of earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. Adjusted EBITDA reflects adjustments to EBITDA to eliminate the impact of certain items that we do not consider to be indicative of our performance. We use EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA as a way of evaluating our performance relative to that of our peers and to assess compliance with our credit facilities. We believe that Adjusted EBITDA is a non-GAAP operating performance measure commonly used in our industry that provides investors and analysts with a measure of ongoing operating results unaffected by differences in capital structures, capital investment cycles and ages of related assets among otherwise comparable companies.

We believe that the supplemental adjustments applied in calculating Adjusted EBITDA are reasonable and appropriate to provide additional information to investors.

Because EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA are not measurements determined in accordance with GAAP and are susceptible to varying calculations, EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA, as presented, may not be comparable to similarly titled measures of

other companies. You should consider our EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA in addition to, and not as a substitute for, or superior to, our operating net income (loss) or cash flows from operating activities, which are determined in accordance with GAAP.

The following table reconciles net income (loss) to EBITDA and Adjusted EBITDA for the periods presented:

| | Predecessor | | Successor | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| | Year Ended December 31, 2015 | Year Ended July 14, 2016 | Year Ended July 15, 2016 | Year Ended December 31, 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions) | | | | |
| Net income (loss) | \$(422) | \$ 1,178 | \$(32) | \$(30) |
| Income tax benefit | (3) | — | (20) | (8) |
| Interest expense | 270 | 39 | 17 | 38 |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 |
| EBITDA | \$ 153 | \$ 1,317 | \$ 58 | \$ 115 |
| Adjustments to EBITDA: | | | | |
| Reorganization items, net ⁽¹⁾ | — | (1,338) | — | — |
| Restructuring charges ⁽²⁾ | 59 | 151 | 11 | 9 |
| Fresh-start accounting adjustments ⁽³⁾ | — | 3 | 46 | — |
| (Gain) loss on disposal of assets ⁽⁴⁾ | 6 | (57) | 2 | 3 |
| Pre- and post-reorganization costs ⁽⁵⁾ | 10 | 6 | 8 | 1 |
| NewPage acquisition and integration-related costs/charges ⁽⁶⁾ | 36 | — | — | — |
| Other severance costs ⁽⁷⁾ | 2 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| Strategic initiatives costs ⁽⁸⁾ | — | — | — | 3 |
| Extinguishment of NMTC obligation ⁽⁹⁾ | — | — | — | (7) |
| Other items, net ⁽¹⁰⁾ | 3 | 11 | 5 | 4 |
| Adjusted EBITDA | \$ 269 | \$ 95 | \$ 133 | \$ 134 |

(1) Net gains associated with the Chapter 11 Cases.

(2) For 2015, charges represent severance and employee related costs and other restructuring charges associated with the NewPage acquisition, and the closure of the Bucksport Mill. For 2016, charges are primarily associated with

(3) the closure of the Wickliffe Mill, of which \$137 million is non-cash. For 2017, charges are primarily associated with the announced closure and relocation of the Memphis office headquarters and closure of the Wickliffe Mill.

(4) Non-cash charges related to the one-time impacts of adopting fresh-start accounting.

(5) Realized (gains) and losses on the disposal of assets, which are primarily attributable to the sale of hydroelectric facilities in January 2016.

(6) Costs incurred in connection with advisory and legal services related to planning for and emerging from the Chapter 11 Cases.

(7) Professional fees and other charges and integration costs incurred in connection with the NewPage acquisition, including one-time impacts of purchase accounting.

(8) Severance and related benefit costs not associated with restructuring activities.

(9) Professional fees and other charges associated with strategic alternatives initiatives.

(10) Extinguishment of obligation in December 2017 in connection with the unwind of a New Market Tax Credit

(11) (NMTC) transaction entered in 2010. See Note 17 to our Consolidated Financial Statements included elsewhere in this report.

(12) For 2015, non-cash equity award expense, unrealized losses (gains) on energy-related derivative contracts, and miscellaneous other non-recurring adjustments. For 2016, costs associated with the indefinite idling of the

Wickliffe Mill, non-cash equity award expense, unrealized losses (gains) on energy-related derivative contracts, and miscellaneous other non-recurring adjustments. For 2017, costs incurred in connection with the re-engineering of information systems, non-cash equity award expense, costs associated with the temporary idling of the No. 3 paper machine at the Androscoggin Mill, and miscellaneous other non-recurring adjustments.

Liquidity and Capital Resources

As noted above, we emerged from bankruptcy on July 15, 2016. Upon our emergence, we entered into a \$375 million ABL Facility and a \$220 million Term Loan Facility. We borrowed \$340 million under the Credit Facilities on July 15, 2016, with available loan proceeds of approximately \$318 million, consisting of \$120 million of borrowings under the ABL Facility and \$198 million (\$220 million net of original issue discount) of borrowings under the Term Loan Facility. On July 15, 2016, we paid in full amounts outstanding under our DIP Facilities with proceeds from the Credit Facilities. As of December 31, 2017 (Successor), the outstanding balance of the ABL Facility was \$65 million, with \$40 million issued in letters of credit and \$209 million available for future borrowings. Since our emergence from bankruptcy, our primary sources of liquidity have been cash from operations and our ABL Facility.

During the year ended December 31, 2017 (Successor), we elected to make voluntary principal prepayments totaling \$40 million on the Term Loan Facility, from available liquidity including amounts under our ABL Facility, and applied these payments against the final maturity amount due in October 2021.

Our cash flows from operating, investing and financing activities, as reflected in the accompanying Consolidated Statements of Cash Flows, are summarized in the following table.

| | Predecessor | | Successor | |
|---|-------------|---|------------|---------------------------------------|
| | Year Ended | January 1, 2016 December 31, 2015 | Year Ended | July 15, 2016 December 31, 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions) | | Through July 14, 2016 | | Through December 31, 2016 |
| Net cash provided by (used in): | | | | |
| Operating activities | \$(266) | \$ 25 | \$ 17 | \$ 153 |
| Investing activities | 111 | 29 | (38) | (39) |
| Financing activities | 153 | (11) | (20) | (113) |
| Net change in cash and cash equivalents | \$(2) | \$ 43 | \$(41) | \$ 1 |

Operating activities. In 2017 (Successor), our net cash provided by operating activities of \$153 million reflects a net loss of \$30 million, pension plan contributions of \$32 million, deferred taxes of \$8 million offset by noncash depreciation, amortization and depletion of \$124 million and cash provided by changes in working capital of \$99 million.

For the period from July 15, 2016 through December 31, 2016 (Successor), our net cash provided by operating activities of \$17 million reflects a net loss of \$32 million, adjusted noncash postretirement gain of \$25 million and deferred taxes of \$20 million, offset by noncash depreciation, amortization and depletion of \$96 million and cash provided by changes in working capital of \$19 million. For the period from January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 (Predecessor), Verso's net cash provided by operating activities of \$25 million was driven by net income of \$1,178 million, net cash provided by working capital of \$34 million, non-cash depreciation, amortization and depletion, gain on sale of assets and non-cash restructuring charges of \$180 million, and the adjustment for debtor-in-possession financing costs of \$22 million, offset by noncash reorganization items of \$1,390 million.

In 2015 (Predecessor), Verso's net cash used in operating activities of \$266 million reflected a net loss of \$422 million partially offset for noncash depreciation, amortization and depletion and asset impairment charges totaling \$330 million, noncash restructuring charges of \$7 million and a decrease in cash used by changes in working capital of \$108 million.

Investing activities. In 2017 (Successor), Verso's net cash used in investing activities of \$39 million consisted primarily of \$40 million for capital expenditures.

For the period from July 2016 through December 31, 2016 (Successor), Verso's net cash used in investing activities of \$38 million consisted primarily of \$42 million for capital expenditures. For the period from January 1, 2016 through

July 14, 2016 (Predecessor), Verso's net cash provided by investing activities of \$29 million consisted primarily of \$63 million of proceeds from the sale of certain hydroelectric generation facilities and related assets, partially offset by \$31 million of capital expenditures.

In 2015 (Predecessor), Verso's net cash provided by investing activities of \$111 million reflected cash acquired in the NewPage acquisition of \$128 million as well as proceeds from sale of assets of \$51 million including the sale of the Bucksport Mill, partially offset by capital expenditures of \$64 million.

Financing activities. In 2017 (Successor), Verso's net cash used in financing activities of \$113 million consisted primarily of \$65 million in payments on the Term Loan Facility, which includes \$7 million in excess cash flow payments, and net payments of \$47 million on our ABL Facility.

In the period from July 15 to December 31, 2016 (Successor), net cash used in financing activities of \$20 million consisted primarily of net payments of \$8 million on the ABL Facility and \$9 million on the Term Loan Facility. In the period from January 1 to July 14, 2016 (Predecessor), net cash used in financing activities of \$11 million consisted primarily of net payments on pre-petition revolving credit facilities of \$299 million, \$30 million of debt issuance costs, partially offset by proceeds from the ABL Facility of \$120 million and proceeds net of original issue discount of the Term Loan Facility of \$198 million.

During the year ended December 31, 2015, net cash provided by financing activities were \$153 million and resulted primarily from net borrowings on our pre-petition revolving credit facilities.

Credit Facilities. On the Effective Date, pursuant to the terms of Plan, VPH entered into a \$375 million ABL Facility and an Term Loan Facility that provides for term loan commitments of \$220 million with loan proceeds of \$198 million after the deduction of the original issue discount of \$22 million. After the Internal Reorganization, Verso Paper became the borrower under the Credit Facilities.

VPH borrowed \$340 million under the Credit Facilities on the Effective Date, with available loan proceeds of \$318 million, consisting of (i) the borrowing of \$120 million under the ABL Facility and (ii) the net borrowing of \$198 million (\$220 million par value less \$22 million of original issue discount) under the Term Loan Facility. The proceeds of the borrowings on the Effective Date under the Credit Facilities were used (i) to repay outstanding indebtedness under the debtor-in-possession financing credit agreements, (ii) to pay outstanding allowed administrative expenses and allowed claims in accordance with the Plan and (iii) to pay fees, costs and expenses related to and contemplated by the Credit Facilities and emergence by Verso and its subsidiaries from bankruptcy.

The ABL Facility will mature on July 14, 2021. The outstanding borrowings under the ABL Facility bear interest at a per annum rate equal to, at the option of Verso Paper, either (i) a customary London interbank offered rate, or “LIBOR,” plus an applicable margin ranging from 1.25% to 2.00% or (ii) a customary base rate plus an applicable margin ranging from 0.25% to 1.00%, determined based upon the average excess availability under the ABL Facility. Verso Paper is also required to pay a commitment fee for the unused portion of the ABL Facility, which ranges from 0.25% to 0.375% per annum, based upon the average revolver usage under the ABL Facility. Verso Paper has the right to prepay loans under the ABL Facility at any time without a prepayment penalty, other than customary “breakage” costs with respect to eurocurrency loans. As of December 31, 2017 (Successor), the outstanding balance of the ABL Facility was \$65 million, with \$40 million issued in letters of credit, and \$209 million available for future borrowings.

The Term Loan Facility will mature on October 14, 2021. The outstanding borrowings under the Term Loan Facility bear interest at a rate equal to, at the option of Verso Paper, either (i) LIBOR (subject to a floor of 1%) plus 11% or (ii) a customary base rate plus 10%. With respect to LIBOR denominated loans under the Credit Facilities, Verso Paper may elect an interest period of one, two, three or six months or such other period subject to the terms of the Credit Facilities. The term loans provided under the Term Loan Facility are subject to quarterly principal amortization payments in an amount equal to the greater of (a) 2.00% of the initial principal amount of the term loans or (b) the excess cash flow in respect of such quarter as further described under the Term Loan Facility; however, if the liquidity, as defined in the Term Loan Facility, of Verso Paper is less than \$75 million at any time during the 90-day period following the due date of such quarterly amortization payment or excess cash flow payment date, then the portion of such amortization amount that results in such liquidity being less than \$75 million will not be payable by Verso Paper, as further described in the Term Loan Facility.

Per the described quarterly principal amortization, installments due are \$4 million (subject to increase depending on excess cash flow) for each quarter ending in 2016 through 2021 with the remaining balance due on October 14, 2021. As a result of the excess cash flow requirement, we are obligated to fund an additional principal payment of \$43 million in the first quarter of 2018, which is reflected in Current maturities of long-term debt on our Consolidated

Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2017 (Successor). As of December 31, 2016, as a result of an excess cash flow requirement, we were obligated to fund an additional principal payment of \$10 million in the first quarter of 2017, which is reflected in Current maturities of long-term debt on our Consolidated Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2016 (Successor). As of March 31, 2017, \$7 million of the excess cash flow requirement calculated as of December 31, 2016 was required to be paid, which is reflected in our Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended December 31, 2017 (Successor). Any voluntary prepayment by Verso Paper of the term loans under the Term Loan Facility will be subject to customary “breakage” costs with respect to eurocurrency loans and a 2% prepayment premium until July 14, 2018, and a 1% prepayment premium after July 15, 2018, but before July 14, 2020, and thereafter no prepayment premium will apply to any voluntary prepayment of term loans. Such prepayment premium may also apply to certain repricing amendments of the Term Loan Facility as further described therein.

All obligations under the Credit Facilities are unconditionally guaranteed by Verso Holdings, and certain of the subsidiaries of Verso Paper and are secured by liens on certain assets of Verso Holdings and liens on substantially all of the assets of Verso Paper and the other guarantor subsidiaries. The security interest with respect to the ABL Facility consists of a first-priority lien on the current assets of Verso Paper and the guarantor subsidiaries, including accounts receivables, inventory, deposit accounts, securities accounts and commodities accounts, and a second-priority lien on all other collateral. The security interest with respect to the Term Loan Facility, consists of a first-priority lien on all other collateral and second-priority lien on collateral securing the ABL Facility.

The Credit Facilities contain financial covenants requiring us, among other things, to maintain a minimum fixed charge coverage ratio in certain circumstances and a maximum total net leverage ratio. The Credit Facilities also contain restrictions, among other things and subject to certain exceptions, on our ability to incur debt or liens, pay dividends, repurchase equity interest, prepay indebtedness, sell or dispose of assets and make investments in or merge with another company.

If Verso Paper were to violate any of the covenants under the ABL Facility or the Term Loan Facility and were unable to obtain a waiver, it would be considered a default after the expiration of any applicable grace period. If Verso Paper were in default under any either Credit Facility, then the lenders thereunder may exercise remedies under such Credit Facility in accordance with the terms thereof. In addition, if Verso Paper were in default under the ABL Facility, no additional borrowings under the ABL Facility would be available until the default was waived or cured. The Credit Facilities provide for customary events of default, including a cross-event of default provision in respect of any other existing debt instrument having an aggregate principal amount that exceeds \$25 million.

As of December 31, 2017 (Successor), we were in compliance with the covenants in our Credit Facilities.

We believe our current cash, cash equivalents and cash generated from operations as well as our Credit Facilities will be sufficient to meet our working capital, debt and capital expenditure needs for at least the next twelve months. Our ability to sustain our working capital position is subject to a number of risks that we discuss in “Part I, Item 1A, Risk Factors,” included elsewhere in this report.

Upgrade/Restart Paper Machine at Androscoggin Mill. The estimated total capital cost for the announced upgrade of the shuttered No. 3 paper machine and pulp line at our Androscoggin Mill, which we expect to occur during the third quarter of 2018, is \$17 million, of which \$4 million will come from a Maine Technology Asset Fund 2.0 challenge grant administered by the Maine Technology Institute. We expect to fund these capital costs from cash generated from operations as well as our Credit Facilities. Funds from the grant will be become available as certain milestones in the project are reached.

Outlook

During 2017, we continued our focus on cash flow, reducing our debt, managing our inventory and working with suppliers on improving terms in response to our challenging environment. Our efforts led to \$40 million in voluntary prepayments on our Term Loan Facility during the second half of 2017. In addition, we were able to reduce our outstanding letters of credit by an additional \$17 million during the second half of 2017. As a result of the excess cash flow requirement, we are obligated to fund an additional principal payment of \$43 million in the first quarter of 2018.

We believe our focus on cash flow management and debt reduction will continue to position us for improved financial results. Furthermore, as previously announced, our board of directors formed a Strategic Alternatives Committee in September 2017 in an effort to identify and evaluate potential strategic transaction alternatives. With the assistance of Houlihan Lokey Capital, Inc., our financial advisor, the Strategic Alternatives Committee continues to evaluate a range of potential strategic opportunities, including the possible sale or merger of our entire company or the possible sale of some of our mills. While our industry continues to be challenged from a demand standpoint, several competitor closures have been announced and we have begun to realize previously announced price increases. On February 15,

2018, we announced plans to upgrade the shuttered No. 3 paper machine and pulp line at our Androscoggin Mill in Jay, Maine, enabling this equipment to restart in the third quarter of 2018 for the manufacture of packaging products. This project will increase annual paper production capacity by approximately 200,000 tons.

Off-Balance Sheet Arrangements

None.

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Item 7A. Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures about Market Risk

We are exposed to market risk from fluctuations in our paper prices, interest rates, energy prices and commodity prices for our inputs.

Paper Prices

Our sales, which we report net of rebates, allowances and discounts, are a function of the number of tons of paper that we sell and the price at which we sell our paper. Paper prices historically have been a function of macroeconomic factors that influence supply and demand. Price has historically been substantially more variable than volume and can change significantly over relatively short time periods. Prices are also subject to volatility due to fluctuations in foreign exchange rates of the U.S. dollar relative to other currencies, especially the Euro, which can lead to lower average sales price realization.

We are primarily focused on serving the following end-user segments: specialty converters, general commercial print, catalogs and magazines. Coated paper demand is primarily driven by advertising and print media usage. Advertising spending and magazine and catalog circulation tend to correlate with gross domestic product, or “GDP,” in the United States, as they rise with a strong economy and contract with a weak economy, which impacts media spend which further impacts magazine and catalog subscriptions.

Many of our customers provide us with forecasts of their paper needs, which allows us to plan our production runs in advance, optimizing production over our integrated mill system and thereby reducing costs and increasing overall efficiency. Generally, our sales agreements do not extend beyond the calendar year, and they typically provide for semiannual price adjustments based on market price movements.

We reach our end-users through several channels, including printers, brokers, paper merchants and direct sales to end-users. We sell and market our products to approximately 300 customers. During 2017, our largest customer, Veritiv Corporation, accounted for approximately 19% of our total net sales.

Interest Rates

Since December 31, 2015, we and substantially all of our direct and indirect subsidiaries filed voluntary petitions for relief under the Bankruptcy Code in the Bankruptcy Court. In connection with our Chapter 11 Cases, we entered into the DIP Facilities, which accrued interest at variable rates. Upon the Effective Date, we entered into the Credit Facilities. Borrowings under the Credit Facilities accrue interest at variable rates.

Our ABL Facility and Term Loan Facility each bear interest at variable rates based on LIBOR or a customary base rate, in each case plus an applicable margin. Our Term Loan Facility had a LIBOR floor of 1%. Assuming the principal amount outstanding under the ABL Facility remains unchanged as of December 31, 2017, and the Term Loan Facility interest remains at or above the LIBOR floor, a 100 basis point increase in quoted interest rates on our outstanding floating-rate debt as of December 31, 2017, would cause an estimated increase in interest expense of approximately \$2 million per year. While we may enter into agreements limiting our exposure to higher interest rates, any such agreements may not offer complete protection from this risk.

Commodity Prices

We are subject to changes in our cost of sales caused by movements underlying commodity prices. The principal components of our cost of sales are chemicals, wood, energy, labor, maintenance and depreciation, amortization and depletion. Costs for commodities, including chemicals, wood and energy, are the most variable component of our cost

of sales because their prices can fluctuate substantially, sometimes within a relatively short period of time. In addition, our aggregate commodity purchases fluctuate based on the volume of paper that we produce.

Wood Fiber. We source our wood fiber from a broad group of timberland and sawmill owners located in the regions around our mills. Our costs to purchase wood are affected directly by market costs of wood in our regional markets and indirectly by the effect of higher fuel costs on logging and transportation of timber to our facilities. While we have fiber supply agreements in place that ensure a substantial portion of our wood requirements, purchases under these agreements are typically at market rates.

Chemicals. Chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of coated papers include latex, clay, starch, calcium carbonate, caustic soda, sodium chlorate and titanium dioxide. We purchase these chemicals from a variety of suppliers and are not dependent on

any single supplier to satisfy our chemical needs. Occasionally imbalances in supply and demand create volatility in prices for certain chemicals.

Energy. In 2017, we produced a significant portion of our energy needs for our paper mills from sources such as waste wood, hydroelectric facilities, liquid biomass from our pulping process and internal energy cogeneration facilities. Our external energy purchases vary across each of our mills and include fuel oil, natural gas, coal and electricity. Our overall energy expenditures are mitigated by our internal energy production capacity and ability to switch between certain energy sources. We also consider the use of derivative contracts as part of our risk management strategy to manage our exposure to market fluctuations in energy prices.

Item 8. Financial Statements and Supplementary Data

Verso Corporation
Consolidated Financial Statements

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MANAGEMENT'S REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING

Our management is responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate internal control over financial reporting, as such term is defined in Rules 13a-15(f) and 15d-15(f) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. Under the supervision and with the participation of our management, including our Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer, we conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of Verso Corporation's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2017, based upon the guidelines established in Internal Control — Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO). Verso Corporation's internal control over financial reporting includes policies and procedures that provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external reporting purposes in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Based on the results of our evaluation, our management concluded that Verso Corporation's internal control over financial reporting was effective as of December 31, 2017. We reviewed the results of management's assessment with our Audit Committee.

The effectiveness of Verso Corporation's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2017, has been audited by Deloitte & Touche LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, as stated in their attestation report which appears below.

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the stockholders and the Board of Directors of Verso Corporation

Opinion on the Financial Statements

We have audited the accompanying consolidated balance sheets of Verso Corporation and subsidiaries (the "Company") as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, the related consolidated statements of operations, comprehensive income (loss), stockholders' equity, and cash flows, for the year ended December 31, 2017, the period July 15, 2016 through December 31, 2016 (Successor Period Operations), the period January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 and the year ended December 31, 2015 (Predecessor Period Operations) and related notes (collectively referred to as the "financial statements"). In our opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of December 31, 2017 and 2016, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year ended December 31, 2017, the period July 15, 2016 through December 31, 2016 (Successor Period Operations), the period January 1, 2016 through July 14, 2016 and the year ended December 31, 2015 (Predecessor Period Operations), in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

We have also audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (PCAOB), the Company's internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2017, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission and our report dated March 8, 2018, expressed an unqualified opinion on the Company's internal control over financial reporting.

Basis for Opinion

These financial statements are the responsibility of the Company's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company's financial statements based on our audits. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB. We conducted our audits in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement, whether due to error or fraud. Our audits included performing procedures to assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to error or fraud, and performing procedures that respond to those risks. Such procedures included examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. Our audits also included evaluating the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial statements. We believe that our audits provide a reasonable basis for our opinion.

/s/ DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP

Dayton, Ohio

March 8, 2018

We have served as the Company's auditor since 2006.

REPORT OF INDEPENDENT REGISTERED PUBLIC ACCOUNTING FIRM

To the stockholders and the Board of Directors of Verso Corporation

Opinion on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

We have audited the internal control over financial reporting of Verso Corporation and subsidiaries (the “Company”) as of December 31, 2017, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO). In our opinion, the Company maintained, in all material respects, effective internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2017, based on criteria established in Internal Control - Integrated Framework (2013) issued by COSO.

We have also audited, in accordance with the standards of the Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (United States) (PCAOB), the consolidated financial statements as of and for the year ended December 31, 2017, of the Company and our report dated March 8, 2018, expressed an unqualified opinion on those financial statements.

Basis for Opinion

The Company’s management is responsible for maintaining effective internal control over financial reporting and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting, included in the accompanying Management’s Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the Company’s internal control over financial reporting based on our audit. We are a public accounting firm registered with the PCAOB and are required to be independent with respect to the Company in accordance with the U.S. federal securities laws and the applicable rules and regulations of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the PCAOB. We conducted our audit in accordance with the standards of the PCAOB. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether effective internal control over financial reporting was maintained in all material respects. Our audit included obtaining an understanding of internal control over financial reporting, assessing the risk that a material weakness exists, testing and evaluating the design and operating effectiveness of internal control based on the assessed risk, and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

Definition and Limitations of Internal Control over Financial Reporting

A company’s internal control over financial reporting is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the reliability of financial reporting and the preparation of financial statements for external purposes in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A company’s internal control over financial reporting includes those policies and procedures that (1) pertain to the maintenance of records that, in reasonable detail, accurately and fairly reflect the transactions and dispositions of the assets of the company; (2) provide reasonable assurance that transactions are recorded as necessary to permit preparation of financial statements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and that receipts and expenditures of the company are being made only in accordance with authorizations of management and directors of the company; and (3) provide reasonable assurance regarding prevention or timely detection of unauthorized acquisition, use, or disposition of the company’s assets that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal control over financial reporting may not prevent or detect misstatements. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the policies or procedures may deteriorate.

/s/ DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP

Dayton, Ohio
March 8, 2018

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEETS

| | December 31, 2016 | December 31, 2017 |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| (Dollars in millions) | | |
| ASSETS | | |
| Current assets: | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | \$ 6 | \$ 7 |
| Accounts receivable, net | 194 | 208 |
| Inventories | 445 | 385 |
| Prepaid expenses and other assets | 20 | 14 |
| Total current assets | 665 | 614 |
| Property, plant and equipment, net | 1,132 | 1,062 |
| Intangibles and other assets, net | 58 | 56 |
| Total assets | \$ 1,855 | \$ 1,732 |
| LIABILITIES AND EQUITY | | |
| Current liabilities: | | |
| Accounts payable | \$ 105 | \$ 176 |
| Accrued liabilities | 148 | 129 |
| Current maturities of long-term debt | 28 | 60 |
| Total current liabilities | 281 | 365 |
| Long-term debt | 265 | 130 |
| Pension benefit obligation | 491 | 457 |
| Other liabilities | 48 | 34 |
| Total liabilities | 1,085 | 986 |
| Commitments and contingencies (Note 18) | | |
| Equity: | | |
| Preferred stock -- par value \$0.01 (50,000,000 shares authorized, no shares issued) | — | — |
| Common stock -- par value \$0.01 (210,000,000 Class A shares authorized with 33,366,784 shares issued and outstanding on December 31, 2016 and 34,173,571 shares issued and 34,164,434 outstanding on December 31, 2017; 40,000,000 Class B shares authorized with 1,023,859 shares issued and outstanding on December 31, 2016 and 291,039 shares issued and outstanding on December 31, 2017) | — | — |
| Treasury stock -- at cost (no shares on December 31, 2016 and 9,137 shares on December 31, 2017) | — | — |
| Paid-in-capital (including Warrants of \$10 million) | 675 | 676 |
| Retained deficit | (32) | (62) |
| Accumulated other comprehensive income | 127 | 132 |
| Total equity | 770 | 746 |
| Total liabilities and equity | \$ 1,855 | \$ 1,732 |

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF OPERATIONS

| | Predecessor | | Successor | |
|---|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Year Ended | January 1, 2016 | Year Ended | Year Ended |
| | December 31, | Through | July 15, 2016 | December 31, |
| | 2015 | July 14, 2016 | December 31, 2016 | December 31, 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions, except per share amounts) | | | | |
| Net sales | \$3,122 | \$ 1,417 | \$1,224 | \$ 2,461 |
| Costs and expenses: | | | | |
| Cost of products sold (exclusive of depreciation, amortization and depletion) | 2,727 | 1,249 | 1,098 | 2,237 |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 |
| Selling, general and administrative expenses | 187 | 95 | 49 | 106 |
| Restructuring charges | 54 | 151 | 11 | 9 |
| Other operating (income) expense | 1 | (57) | 8 | 1 |
| Operating income (loss) | (155) | (121) | (35) | (7) |
| Interest expense | 270 | 39 | 17 | 38 |
| Other (income) expense | — | — | — | (7) |
| Income (loss) before reorganization items, net | (425) | (160) | (52) | (38) |
| Reorganization items, net | — | (1,338) | — | — |
| Income (loss) before income taxes | (425) | 1,178 | (52) | (38) |
| Income tax benefit | (3) | — | (20) | (8) |
| Net income (loss) | \$(422) | \$ 1,178 | \$(32) | \$(30) |
| Income (loss) per common share: | | | | |
| Basic | \$(5.19) | \$ 14.39 | \$(0.93) | \$(0.87) |
| Diluted | (5.19) | 14.39 | (0.93) | (0.87) |
| Weighted average common shares outstanding (in thousands): | | | | |
| Basic | 81,295 | 81,847 | 34,391 | 34,432 |
| Diluted | 81,295 | 81,847 | 34,391 | 34,432 |

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME (LOSS)

| | Predecessor Year Ended December 31, 2015 | January 1, 2016 Through July 14, 2016 | Successor Year Ended July 15, 2016 Through December 31, 2016 | Year Ended December 31, 2017 |
|---|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| (Dollars in millions) | | | | |
| Net income (loss) | \$(422) | \$ 1,178 | \$(32) | \$ (30) |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net of tax: | | | | |
| Defined benefit pension/other postretirement plans: | | | | |
| Pension/other postretirement liability adjustment, net | (78) | — | 127 | 5 |
| Amortization of net actuarial loss and prior service cost | 3 | 1 | — | — |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net of tax | (75) | 1 | 127 | 5 |
| Comprehensive income (loss) | \$(497) | \$ 1,179 | \$95 | \$ (25) |

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CHANGES IN STOCKHOLDERS' EQUITY (DEFICIT)

| | Common Stock (Predecessor) | Class A (Successor) | Class B (Successor) | | | | | | Accumulated Other Comprehensive Income (Loss) | Total Stockholders' Equity (Deficit) | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---|---|----------|-----------|
| (Dollars in millions, shares in thousands) | Common Shares | Common Stock | Common Shares | Common Stock | Common Shares | Common Stock | Treasury Shares | Treasury Stock | Paid-in Capital | Retained Deficit | | |
| Balance - December 31, 2014 - Predecessor | 53,435 | \$ 1 | | | | | (98) | \$ — | \$ 222 | \$ (980) | \$ (27) | \$ (784) |
| Net income (loss) | — | — | | | | | — | — | — | (422) | — | (422) |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net | — | — | | | | | — | — | — | — | (75) | (75) |
| Treasury shares acquired | — | — | | | | | (143) | (1) | — | — | — | (1) |
| Stock option expense | 14 | — | | | | | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Common stock issued for restricted stock, net | 357 | — | | | | | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Stock issued for NewPage acquisition | 13,607 | — | | | | | — | — | 46 | — | — | 46 |
| Stock issued for convertible warrants | 14,702 | — | | | | | — | — | 50 | — | — | 50 |
| Equity award expense | — | — | | | | | — | — | 3 | — | — | 3 |
| Balance - December 31, 2015 - Predecessor | 82,115 | 1 | | | | | (241) | (1) | 321 | (1,402) | (102) | (1,183) |
| Net income (loss) for the period January 1, 2016 to July 14, 2016 | — | — | | | | | — | — | — | 1,178 | — | 1,178 |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net | — | — | | | | | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| Treasury shares acquired | — | — | | | | | (52) | — | — | — | — | — |
| Equity award expense | — | — | | | | | — | — | 4 | — | — | 4 |
| Cancellation of Predecessor common stock | (82,115) | (1) | | | | | 293 | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Elimination of Predecessor additional paid-in-capital, accumulated deficit and accumulated other comprehensive loss | — | — | | | | | — | — | (325) | 224 | 101 | — |
| Issuance of Successor common stock and stock purchase warrants | | | 33,367 | \$ — | \$ — | \$ — | — | — | 675 | — | — | 675 |
| Balance - July 14, 2016 - Predecessor | — | \$ — | 33,367 | \$ — | \$ — | \$ — | — | \$ — | \$ 675 | \$ — | \$ — | \$ 675 |

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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|----|--------|----|----|----|--------|--------|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Balance - July 15, 2016 - Successor | 33,367 | \$ | -1,024 | \$ | — | \$ | —\$675 | \$— | \$ | — | \$ | 675 | | |
| Net income (loss) for the period July 15, 2016 to December 31, 2016 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | (32 |) | — | (32 |) | | |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 127 | — | 127 | — | | |
| Balance - December 31, 2016 - Successor | 33,367 | — | 1,024 | \$ | — | \$ | —\$675 | \$(32 |) | \$ | 127 | \$ | 770 | |
| Net income (loss) | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | (30 |) | — | (30 |) | | |
| Other comprehensive income (loss), net | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 5 | — | 5 | — | | |
| Treasury shares acquired | — | — | — | — | (9 |) | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Common stock issued for restricted stock | 73 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Class B stock converted to Class A stock | 733 | — | (733 |) | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | | |
| Equity award expense | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | | |
| Balance - December 31, 2017 - Successor | 34,173 | \$ | -291 | \$ | (9 |) | \$ | —\$676 | \$(62 |) | \$ | 132 | \$ | 746 |

See Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements.

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS

| | Predecessor Year Ended December 31, 2015 | January 1, 2016 Through July 14, 2016 | Successor Year Ended July 15, 2016 Through December 31, 2016 | Year Ended December 31, 2017 |
|--|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
| (Dollars in millions) | | | | |
| Cash Flows From Operating Activities: | | | | |
| Net income (loss) | \$ (422) | \$ 1,178 | \$ (32) | \$ (30) |
| Adjustments to reconcile net income (loss) to net cash provided by (used in) operating activities: | | | | |
| Depreciation, amortization and depletion | 308 | 100 | 93 | 115 |
| Noncash restructuring charges | 7 | 137 | — | — |
| Reorganization items and fresh-start reporting adjustments, net | — | (1,390) | — | — |
| Noncash postretirement gain | (3) | — | (25) | (4) |
| Net periodic pension cost (income) | (1) | 6 | — | 6 |
| Pension plan contributions | (28) | (16) | (10) | (32) |
| Amortization of debt issuance cost and discount | 9 | 1 | 3 | 9 |
| Extinguishment of New Market Tax Credit obligation | — | — | — | (7) |
| Equity award expense | 3 | 4 | — | 1 |
| (Gain) loss on disposal of assets | 7 | (57) | 2 | 3 |
| Deferred taxes | 4 | — | (20) | (8) |
| Debtor-in-possession financing costs | — | 22 | — | — |
| Prepayment premium on Term Loan Facility | — | — | — | 1 |
| Other, net | (9) | 6 | — | — |
| Changes in assets and liabilities: | | | | |
| Accounts receivable, net | 24 | 26 | 4 | (13) |
| Inventories | 15 | (28) | 44 | 60 |
| Prepaid expenses and other assets | (15) | 10 | 7 | 6 |
| Accounts payable | (91) | 68 | (40) | 67 |
| Accrued liabilities | (74) | (42) | (9) | (21) |
| Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities | (266) | 25 | 17 | 153 |
| Cash Flows From Investing Activities: | | | | |
| Proceeds from sale of assets | 51 | 63 | 1 | — |
| Transfers (to) from restricted cash, net | 1 | (3) | 3 | 1 |
| Capital expenditures | (64) | (31) | (42) | (40) |
| Cash acquired in acquisition | 128 | — | — | — |
| Other investing activities | (5) | — | — | — |
| Net cash provided by (used in) investing activities | 111 | 29 | (38) | (39) |

VERSO CORPORATION
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS (Continued)

| | Predecessor | | Successor | |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| | Year Ended | Year Ended | Year Ended | Year Ended |
| | December 31, | January 1, 2016 | July 15, 2016 | December 31, |
| | 2015 | Through July 14, 2016 | Through December 31, 2016 | 2017 |
| (Dollars in millions) | | | | |
| Cash Flows From Financing Activities: | | | | |
| Borrowings on revolving credit facilities | 723 | 147 | — | — |
| Payments on revolving credit facilities | (567) | (446) | — | — |
| Borrowings on debtor-in-possession revolving credit facilities | — | 275 | — | — |
| Payments on debtor-in-possession revolving credit facilities | — | (275) | — | — |
| Proceeds from debtor-in-possession term loan | — | 175 | — | — |
| Repayment of debtor-in-possession term loan | — | (175) | — | — |
| Borrowings on ABL Facility | — | 120 | 43 | 186 |
| Payments on ABL Facility | — | — | (51) | (233) |
| Proceeds from Term Loan Facility | — | 220 | — | — |
| Payments on Term Loan Facility | — | — | (9) | (65) |
| Prepayment premium on Term Loan Facility | — | — | — | (1) |
| Repayment of long-term debt | (3) | — | — | — |
| Original issue discount on Term Loan Facility | — | (22) | — | — |
| Debtor-in-possession financing costs | — | (22) | — | — |
| Debt issuance costs | — | (8) | (3) | — |
| Net cash provided by (used in) financing activities | 153 | (11) | (20) | (113) |
| Change in cash and cash equivalents | (2) | 43 | (41) | 1 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period | 6 | 4 | 47 | 6 |
| Cash and cash equivalents at end of period | \$4 | \$ 47 | \$ 6 | \$ 7 |
| Supplementary cash flow disclosures: | | | | |
| Total interest paid | \$246 | \$ 12 | \$ 12 | \$ 30 |
| Total income taxes paid (received) | — | — | — | — |
| Noncash investing and financing activities: | | | | |
| Issuance of Notes for Acquisition | 663 | — | — | — |
| Issuance of Common Stock for Acquisition | 46 | — | — | — |
| Issuance of Common Stock in exchange for debt modification | 50 | — | — | — |
| Conversion of interest payable to long-term debt | 19 | — | — | — |