

From the Atlanta Business Chronicle:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/print-edition/2010/12/17/entryways.html>

# On the path to creating green entryways, mats

## Environment

Premium content from Atlanta Business Chronicle - by Doug DeLoach , Contributing Writer

Date: Friday, December 17, 2010, 6:00am EST

When it comes to business and the environment, little things mean a lot. Every contribution to enhancing quality or improving efficiencies — whether it's to the air, water, food or the manufacturing and handling of materials from source to disposal — makes a difference in the cumulative result.

Keep that thought in mind the next time you walk into an office building and scrape the soles of your shoes on the welcome mat in the lobby or the pathway leading to the elevators. You just might be treading on an environmental breakthrough.

"We set out to re-engineer a product that has been around for many years and make it green-label worthy," said **Jack Lindsay**, vice president of sales for Engineered Conversion Systems (ECS), the parent company of EcoPath, the world's first 100 percent perpetually recyclable entryway matting solution.

Exclusively manufactured in a modern 70,000-square-foot facility in Dalton, EcoPath mats incorporate a bio-preferred polymer made with soy oil, backed with EnviroCel, a polyurethane material (60 percent to 70 percent green by weight), and BioGrip, a 100 percent PET (polyethylene terephthalate, a plastic resin used to make plastic bottles) recycled fleece layer with a 70 percent non-skid natural rubber compound.

According to Lindsay, by using these American-sourced materials and selling directly to end users, such as facilities managers and office developers, EcoPath delivers a product that offers superior performance and durability while being competitively priced.

Currently installed in hotels, schools, offices, malls and retail stores across the U.S., notable EcoPath customers in the metro Atlanta area include the Georgia World Congress Center and Cousins Properties Inc.'s Terminus building in Buckhead.

"Many of the facilities that utilize our matting solutions come from sister companies in already-established locations, giving us quick penetration into those areas," Lindsay said.

As the manufacturing base in the U.S. and around the world increasingly focuses on sustainability practices, materials scientists and product designers are discovering new ways to take advantage of recycled content. EcoPath mats are designed to trap moisture and dirt particles and prevent slips and falls. The sustainable materials, which don't require harsh chemicals for cleaning, qualify EcoPath matting for LEED certification.

"EcoPath really stands out from the competition in the area of sustainability by going beyond 'green content,'" said **Richard Arena**, president of Impact Media LLC in Roswell and a veteran of the matting industry.

In addition to developing manufacturing processes that enhance product performance and durability, EcoPath extends its role to include a product's "afterlife." When a matting installation finally reaches the end of its practical usefulness (typically 12 to 15 years) the manufacturer will take back the product. "They can recycle every bit of it into other useful products that, in turn, can be endlessly recycled," Arena said.

EcoPath's product development strategy is in line with broader governmental initiatives proffered by agencies such as the USDA Bioenergy and Energy Alternatives Program. The goals of the program include job creation, reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil, and improving the environment by developing alternate energy sources and increasing the use of agricultural crops as feedstocks for biofuels.

"Government has been charged with switching to American-sourced bio-based products because until we decide we're going to buy products that reduce our dependency on petroleum we're going to stay hooked on foreign oil," said **Karen Edwards**, who sits on the United Soybean Board (USB), an advisory and consulting arm of the USDA.

Oil dependency is not the only issue the USB and other government agencies are attempting to tackle on the environmental front. "Before I sat in on meetings with Jack [Lindsay] and his people I had no idea how important having the right kind of entrance matting is to the air quality in a building," Edwards said.

Air quality is a long-recognized problem in commercial structures. As a general rule, every dollar spent keeping soil out of a building will save \$10 in removing the soil once it's inside, according to a recent article in Cleaning & Maintenance Management magazine. The Consumer Federation of America, an association of nonprofit consumer organizations, reports that American businesses spend more than \$100 billion a year stemming from lost worker productivity due to poor indoor air quality and "Sick Building Syndrome,"

which is a much-studied, EPA-recognized problem.

EcoPath partially addresses this concern by utilizing low-emitting materials in product construction, as well as in absorbing a maximum amount of dust and dirt. According to Edwards, the USDA is one of several government agencies that is either using, or has ordered, EcoPath matting for its facilities.

"When you combine those qualities with the renewable, sustainable benefits of using recycled bottles and soybean oil, and then look at the number of jobs created here, you can see why EcoPath is an innovator in the larger category of American-made greener products," Edwards said.

In addition to the people involved in manufacturing EcoPath matting solutions, since its initial launch in November 2009 with two sales consultants, one on each coast, the company has added three more consultants in the U.S., as well as eight in Canada.

"Our plan is to continue to grow and strive to lower the carbon footprint," Lindsay said.