# **Brunswick Corp:**

engagement commentary

Federated Hermes SDG Engagement Equity Q1 2023



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## P ENGAGEMENT COMMENTARY: Brunswick Corp

#### In a nutshell

Brunswick is a global leader in marine recreation, manufacturing engine, boats, parts and accessories – one out of every two boats is powered by its Mercury Marine brand outboard engine<sup>1</sup>.

Dan par



market capitalisation



#### **Headline progress**

The company further advanced its industry leadership credentials in 2022 with the launch of the Avator engine concept – electric boat engines built with components that are recyclable or reusable. In the same year, the company launched the prototype of its first fully recyclable fibreglass vessel. Such initiatives could facilitate significant progress in tackling waste generation and end-of-life pollution in the boat industry.

#### **Investment case**

- High-quality industry leader with increasingly diversified revenue mix – earnings are more diversified and notably less cyclical today than the preceding decade.
- The company has 10 million registered boats around the world and sells about 200,000 new boats annually. Brunswick is a visible leader in the industry and it is continuing to secure market share – the group expects Mercury Marine's share of the US outboard market to exceed 50% by 2025.

#### Theory of change

At the present time, Brunswick's business is inherently polluting. However, as the industry leader it has the potential to lead efforts to reduce the negative impacts caused by recreational boating and, in doing so, significantly drive-up standards across the industry. Moreover, as an employer of more than 18,500 people, it has the ability to meaningfully improve the livelihoods of its workers through the provision of decent employment.

## ~18,500

employees of whicl 27% are female

#### **Product-related emissions**

Boat engines inherently produce pollution, which contributes to ocean acidification, harming species of sea life and promoting the overabundance of other organisms.

Internal combustion engine-powered boats pollute the marine environment through the emission of gases and carbon dioxide. Poor engine maintenance can cause oil and gas pollution in recreational vessels. Additionally, gasolinepower motors can discharge non-burned fuel, which ends up in the oceans (Older two-stroke engines, for example, can emit 20-30% of the non-burned fuel into the water).

#### While electric motors are now commonplace in cars, the replication of this technology in a boat engine is tricky.

While electric motors are now commonplace in cars, the replication of this technology in a boat engine is tricky. Water is 600x as dense as air and therefore requires a significantly larger amount of power.

As a leader in the recreational marine industry, the company is well positioned to develop further engine and boat offerings that are more eco-friendly and develop a more explicit green product suite, particularly with regard to electric propulsion innovations.

Such developments would result in an enhanced reputation for the company, helping further its position as a brand of choice while also reducing the industry's impact on the marine environment.

#### End-of-life

Human-made marine debris is a growing environmental problem, which is exacerbated by issues around the end-oflife disposal and dismantling of fiberglass vessels because of the low intrinsic value of the material.

Vessels are typically dumped, which can become navigational hazards, and causing pollutants, such as disintegrating plastic and paint fragments, to enter the ecosystem.

With more than 10 million registered boats and 200,000 new vessels sold annually; incorporating end-of-life considerations into Brunswick's product-development process and working with value-chain partners to develop recycling procedures, should help embed circular-economy principles that can help mitigate these problems.

#### Direct operations: resource efficiency and decent work

As at the end of 2021, Brunswick employed 18,500 people across its operations. While the company provides a median pay of US\$51,391 (FY 2021 proxy) and has indicated to us that it pays at or above a living wage to all direct employees, there is nonetheless scope for the levelling of standards across the company. In doing so it ensures that workers are afforded a safe working environment with pay and benefits that provide for a decent standard of living.

The company's manufacturing processes, while vertically integrated, are nonetheless energy intensive. As a result, there is clear potential to reduce operational emissions through increased sourcing of renewable energy.

#### **Practice of change**

Since the inception of the SDG Engagement Equity Strategy, we have had more than 20 engagement interactions with the company. These interactions have spanned calls, correspondence, in-person meetings at our offices and, most instructively, visits to the company's own premises.

Mercury Marine, via its principal production facility in Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin, has been at the forefront of resource-efficient manufacturing for a decade. Indeed, Mercury launched its sustainability initiatives in 2010 and subsequently has received numerous awards. We visited the Fond Du Lac facility ourselves in 2018 and were impressed by many things, not least the culture on the production floor.

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#### **Product-related emissions**

The company estimates that approximately 96% of its total carbon footprint is comprised of Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions, the bulk of which (approx. 3/4) relates to downstream product usage.

The company's 2018 product range launch featured V6 and V8 engines that set high sustainability standards with regards to reduced raw material input. The engines are also lighter in terms of weight (100lbs lighter than predecessors and peers) leading to greater fuel efficiency (V6s are 12-16% more efficient than peers; V8s are 8-10% more so).



The company established a Sustainability Scorecard as an integral component of the process for new product development.

The company established a Sustainability Scorecard as an integral component of the process for new product development. Positive scores are awarded for how well a product promotes an engine's fuel economy and emissions controls and how well they contribute to the longevity of an engine. In essence, Brunswick is committed to developing engines with lower emissions and greater efficiency. Indeed, the company is committed to all new product launches being more fuel efficient than legacy products and to realising an 80% reduction in outboard engine emissions by 2025 (vs. 2007).

A further example of progress was illustrated by the 2020 launch of a new 600-horsepower engine which is 20% more fuel efficient than combining two legacy 300-horsepower engines.

The company has committed to installing





battery-powered generators by 2024, **L** replacing existing diesel-powered systems.

The company has also committed to installing 15,000 batterypowered generators by 2024, replacing existing dieselpowered systems. It estimates this initiative should result in approximately 12,500 tonnes of avoided emissions.

Having discussed the potential of electrification with the company on numerous occasions, Brunswick confirmed in 2021 that it would develop five new electric propulsion products to be launched by the end of 2023. In 2022, the company showcased the first such product – its Avator electric outboard engine – to be released in 2023. This engine, and its new boat brand Veer, are significant steps forward.

More pertinently, the group is working on a methodology for monitoring and measuring its Scope 3 emissions, including those associated with boat usage. One element is the testing and modelling of the impact of electrification of different aspects, including replacing the still common diesel generators.

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#### **End-of-life**

During 2018-19, the BC Foundation has been supporting (with funding and people) the Rhode Island Fiberglass Vessel Recycling Pilot Project initiated by the Rhode Island Marine Trades Association. The project involved exploring solutions for the sustainable disposal of fibreglass boats. This involves the dismantling of and re-processing of fibreglass hulls into alternative materials or as a potential high energy fuel source. This provides an alternative to landfill and a reduction in the use of fossil fuels.

In February 2022 the company announced an expansion of its partnership with French specialty chemical maker Arkema, to develop a fully recyclable fibreglass boat. This integrates Arkema's liquid thermoplastic resin into all the vessel's composite parts, core, and adhesives. This is expected to allow for hull and structural components to be fully recycled at the end-of-life stage and reintroduced into production processes, reducing the amount of disposable material and sourcing of virgin raw materials.

The first prototype of this fully recyclable fibreglass vessel was showcased in 2022 and will be developed in conjunction with its boat brand Boston Whaler.

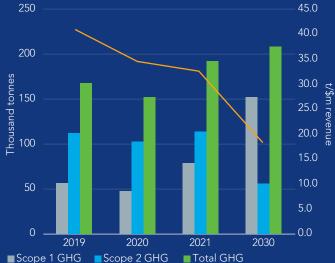
This is a promising initiative that is suggestive of a potential scenario whereby new boats sold may no longer contribute to the end-of-life challenges described above. However, this is separate from and supplementary to resolving the issues associated with the existing boat stock.

### Direct operations: resource efficiency and decent work

In 2020 Brunswick made a commitment to source 50% of its electricity from renewables by 2030. In 2021 it advanced its ambitions, targeting net-zero Scope 2 emissions by 2035. As a result, we estimate that by 2030 the company's emissions intensity will have improved 44% vs. 2021.

The company's Scope 1 emissions relate to: a) natural gas usage at its smelting foundry; b) fuel usage across the business, including across its members-only boat club (Freedom Boat Club). The adoption of more electric boats at its boat clubs will reduce emissions and the company is continuing to pilot and test alternative fuels.

Figure 1: Brunswick Corp emissions



Emissions intensity (tonnes of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per \$m of revenue)

## In 2020 Brunswick made a commitment to source



Operating in the US Midwest and away from the primary urban conurbations there is competition for talent and evidently Brunswick is doing well in this respect. The company achieved a top 15% ranking in the Forbes World's Best Employers 2022 list and top 20% ranking in the Forbes America's Best Large Employers 2022 list.

The company confirmed to us in April 2020 that it had analysed its pay practices pertaining to both its direct employees and towards its Tier-1 suppliers and was able to confirm that it pays at least a living wage. This high level of employee treatment is further borne out by above-average Glassdoor ratings.

More pertinently, the company is driving down its accident rates with a 38% reduction across the period 2018-21.

There remains, however, a marked divergence between Mercury and the wider group with regards to diversity and turnover levels – although the benefit packages are identical across the businesses. Mercury's global workforce is approximately one-third female, and that number has been trending up over the last few years. The increase in female representation among the hourly workforce is representative of the investment the company has made in the use of lifting devices and robotics within its production line – particularly in areas where previously heavy lifting was necessary. These are practices that may now be replicated across the group. Across Brunswick more widely, women represent 27% of the workforce. In addition, 19% are 'racially diverse' which is an area for future improvement as recognised by the company.



#### Next steps

We intend to continue to engage with Brunswick on the issues identified.

While there has been much progress on emissions reductions, we continue to press for establishment of both an absolute Scope 1 emissions reduction target and a Scope 3 emissions intensity target. Similarly, whilst we are welcoming of the partnership with Arkema to develop a fully-recyclable fibreglass boat, we continue to be interested in how the industry, and in particular Brunswick, as the industry leader, can play a larger role in supporting solutions for the end-of-life management of the existing fibreglass boat stock.

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