



National Recycling Strategy: Part One of a Series on Building a Circular Economy for All

January 27, 2022

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Outline of Presentation

1. Planned Strategy Series
2. Congressional Support for Recycling
3. Plans for Recycling Data Collection
4. Overview of National Recycling Strategy
5. Examples of Objectives and Actions in Strategy
6. How You Can Help Implement Strategy Actions
7. Questions & Discussion

Recent Recycling Directives from Congress and GAO

- FY20 Appropriations directed EPA to produce a national recycling strategy
- Government Accountability Office (GAO) report requests EPA to evaluate and recommend future policies to strengthen recycling
- FY21 Appropriations asks EPA to collect data on recycling and single-use plastics





- Gives EPA new authority to fund improvements to solid waste management programs and infrastructure
- Directs EPA to Develop (for example):
 - Strategy on Post-Consumer Materials Management and Water Management (“Plastics Strategy”)
 - Report on Eliminating Barriers to Recycling
 - Report on Ways to Spur Markets for Recycled Plastic
 - Report on Opportunities for Innovative Uses of Plastic Waste
 - Study on How to Create Less Plastic Waste

Unprecedented Congressional Support on Recycling

- 17 legislative proposals related to recycling
- 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
 - Grant funding for FY22-26:
 - \$55M/yr for Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant program
 - \$15M/yr for education and outreach on prevention, recycling
 - Battery collection best practices and voluntary labeling program \$25M (FY22)
- FY22 Draft Appropriations



Recycling Data Collection

- Emergency Information Collection Request (ICR)
- Congress asked EPA to Collect Data on:
 - Curbside recycling programs
 - Single use plastics and their recyclability
 - Aluminum and rates in which they are recycled
 - Estimate of infrastructure investments required
 - Estimates on the amount needed to provide recycling to all citizens
- Survey to reach out to all 50 States plus DC (estimated survey time = 30 mins)
- 6 months to complete and report back to Congress



National Recycling Strategy Released on America Recycles Day

November 15, 2021

National Recycling Strategy

Part One of a Series on Building a Circular Economy for All



November 15, 2021

Why a Strategy Series on Building a Circular Economy for All?

- Public comments on the October 2020 draft:
 - Strategy should be broader than recycling and include a circular economy.
- Comments from Congress reiterated the importance of a circular economy and reframing the Strategy.
- Provide a vision forward for the next 10 years for both our domestic work and our international work.
 - Reflects our RCRA authorities and our new Save Our Seas 2.0 Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
 - Highlights the connection between material use and climate change, as well as environmental justice

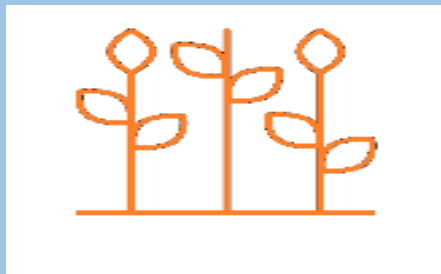
Natural resource extraction and processing contributes:



50% of global climate change impacts



90% of global biodiversity loss and water stress



11% of global species loss

The Strategy Series Vision on Building a Circular Economy for All

- **Part 1: National Recycling Strategy**
- Part 2: Plastics
- Part 3: Food Waste/Organics
- Part 4: Critical Minerals and Electronics
- Part 5: Built Environment
- Part 6: Textiles

We are establishing a 10-year vision and strategic direction that embraces zero waste/circularity, sustainable materials management, addresses climate change, and environmental justice.

Goals of the Circular Economy Strategies

- Reduce domestic and international climate impacts and social inequities associated with natural resource extraction and processing
- Increase equitable access to recycling
- Reduce ecosystem loss and destruction
- Stimulate economic development (jobs, businesses) related to circular economy



Scope of National Recycling Strategy

- Focuses on enhancing the national municipal solid waste (MSW) or “household” recycling system
- Identifies stakeholder-led actions to create a stronger, more resilient, more equitable and more cost-effective MSW recycling system
- Acknowledges recycling is only one part of what is needed to achieve a circular economy
- Commits EPA to developing additional strategies (plastics, food waste/organics, electronics)



Challenges to the U.S. Recycling System



- Inadequate recycling infrastructure and market demand for recyclables
- Confusion on what is recyclable, leading to contamination
- Environmental justice concerns

External Stakeholders Engaged

Non-profit Organizations:

- Environmental Research and Education Foundation (EREF)
- GreenBlue Institute
- Keep America Beautiful (KAB)
- National Recycling Coalition
- Recycling Partnership (TRP)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation (USCCF)

Recycling Industry Associations and Private Companies:

- Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI)
- National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA)
- Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA)
- Waste Management (WM)

State/Tribal/Local Governments:

- Association of State and Territorial Solid Waste Management Officials (ASTSWMO)
- Environmental Council of the States (ECOS)
- South Carolina Department of Commerce
- U.S. Conference of Mayors
- National Tribal Caucus
- Tribal Waste and Response Steering Committee

Federal Partners Engaged

Federal Agencies:

- Council on Environmental Quality
- Federal Trade Commission
- National Science Foundation
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Commerce
 - International Trade Administration
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 - National Institute of Standards and Technology
- U.S. Department of Defense
- U.S. Department of Energy

- U.S. Department of State
- U.S. General Services Administration
- U.S. Trade Representative

Federal Advisory Committee:

- National Environmental Justice Advisory Council



National Recycling Strategy Objectives

- A. Improve Markets for Recycled Commodities
- B. Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure
- C. Reduce Contamination in the Recycled Materials Stream
- D. Enhance Policies and Programs to Support Circularity
- E. Standardize Measurement and Increase Data Collection



Objective A: Improve Markets for Recycled Materials

Example Actions:

- **Increase demand for recycled materials through policies, programs, initiatives, and incentives.**
- **Identify strategies for addressing materials with less mature markets.**
 - Focus on materials with limited markets that could have the greatest environmental impacts
- **Address barriers of using recycled content in products.**
 - Examine barriers such as:
 - supply chain, contamination, economics, legislation/policies
 - product safety requirements (i.e., U.S. Food and Drug Administration approvals)
 - product performance specifications
 - technological limits to recycled content
 - Cross-sector collaboration to find strategies to tackle those barriers

Objective B: Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure

Example Action:

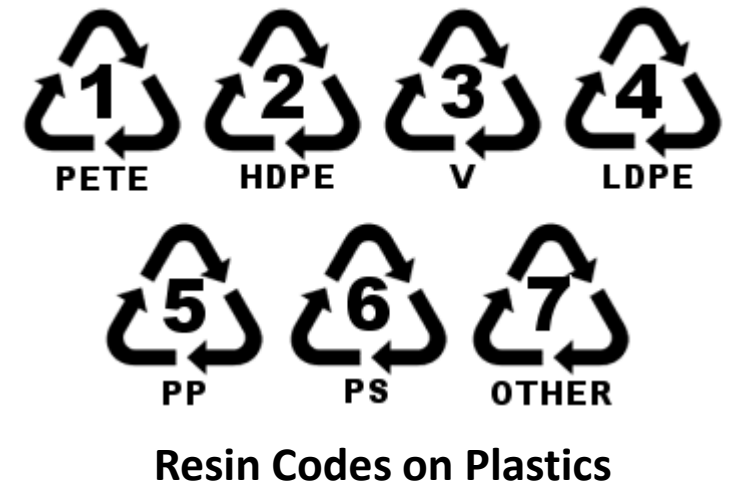
- **Increase consideration of recoverability and sustainability in the design of products.**
 - Due to their design, some products cannot be recycled
 - Encourage manufacturers to design products and packages that can be recycled



Objective C: Reduce Contamination in the Recycled Materials Stream

Example Actions:

- **Improve consistency of labels for recyclable products and recycling bins**
 - Help address consumer confusion about what can be recycled and which bins to use
 - Promote labels that are not misleading
 - Reduce contamination in recycling
- **Develop common recycling messages**
 - Help public understand how to recycling properly and to avoid wishcycling
 - Support states, local and tribal governments



Objective D: Enhance Policies and Programs to Support Circularity

Example Action:

- **Conduct an analysis of different policies that could address recycling challenges.**
 - Recycled content requirements for products
 - Taxes on virgin materials
 - Bottle bills
 - Take-back programs
 - Extended producer responsibility (EPR) requirements
 - Landfill fees
 - Packaging fees
 - Recycling mandates
 - Minimum quality/contamination standards for MRF outputs
 - Dual stream versus single stream collection
 - Policies/incentives to divert materials from landfills
 - Bans on contaminants in products
 - Bans on producing/using specific materials
 - Bans on certain materials in landfills
 - National recyclability standards

Objective E: Standardize Measurement and Increase Data Collection

Example Actions:

- **Develop and implement national recycling system definitions, measures, targets and performance indicators**
- **Create recycled content measures**

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Supports Several Strategy Objectives and Actions

Supports Objective B to Improve Recycling Infrastructure:

- Increase public and private funding opportunities for recycling infrastructure
- Continue to fund research, development, demonstration and deployment of new technologies and processes
- Optimize processing efficiencies at materials recovery facilities

Supports Objective C to Decrease Contamination:

- Identify effective ways to educate the public about recycling
- Develop messaging and educational materials about the importance and value of recycling
- Develop recycling messaging to increase recycling and ensure a more consistent stream of recyclable material

**Join the Effort:
Help Implement
the Strategy**

Implementing the National Recycling Strategy

- **Seeking Stakeholders to “Lead” or “Support” Strategy Actions**
 - **Leads** work with EPA to identify and update milestones periodically
 - **Supporters** work with action leads to implement the action

Roles for “Leads” and “Supporters”

- **Action Leads:**

- Help Develop and Lead Plan to Implement Action
 - Provide Text for EPA Website
- Provide Periodic Updates to EPA on Progress
 - Report Updates on Milestones (Quarterly?)

- **Action Supporters:**

- Work with Action Leads to Implement Action
 - Support may be large or small

Who can “Lead” and “Support” Actions?

- Anyone can potentially lead or support a Strategy action!
- Leaders and Supports Could Include Representatives from:
 - Federal governments
 - Local/state/tribal governments
 - NGOs
 - Trade associations
 - Private industry
 - Other

Online Platform for Sharing Progress Updates

| Objective | Action Title | Action Number | Status |
|---|--|---------------|-------------|
| Improve Markets | Host dialogues stakeholders to learn how to promote greater use of recycled content in products | A4.4 | Not started |
| Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure | Conduct a needs assessment of recycling infrastructure in the United States | B1.2 | Not started |
| Increase Collection and Improve Materials Management Infrastructure | Conduct an environmental justice assessment of non-hazardous solid waste management infrastructure in the U.S. | B1.3 | Not started |

See Strategy Actions at:

epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/circular-economy-implementation-plan-online-platform

A Few Reasons to Lead or Support an Action

- Help Create a More Efficient and Effective Recycling System
- Help the Nation Meet the National Recycling Goal
- Amplify Existing Work
- Get Cross-Sector Support on an Effort
- Be Recognized

Where Do I Sign Up?

Express your interest to lead or support an action at:

epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/take-action

Actions

Select "Lead" or "Support" associated with actions of interest to you or your organization.

A: Improve Markets for Recycled Commodities

A1.1 Conduct market development workshops and dialogues

None Lead Support

A1.2 Support regional market development entities

None Lead Support

A1.3 Produce an analysis of market development opportunities suited to rural areas

None Lead Support

What's Next?

- **Organizations Interested in Improving Recycling:**
 - Express interest in leading or supporting a Strategy Action
 - Complete form at epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/take-action
 - Sign up to “stay connected” to learn about recycling grants, reports, and other Circular Economy strategies
 - Complete form at: epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/stay-connected
- **EPA:**
 - Contact action leads (starting in late January and ongoing)
 - Connect action leads to supporters (starting in February and ongoing)
 - Work with leads to develop and post initial action plans (Feb-April)
 - Work with leads to convey progress and update milestones on website (~quarterly)
 - Recognize leads and supporters (ongoing)

Additional Next Steps for EPA

- **Coordinate Strategy Implementation Plan**
 - Partner with Council for Environmental Quality and federal agencies to implement federal actions
 - Engage recycling community to help implement the Strategy's actions
- **Implement Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grants to support solid waste infrastructure and public education and outreach**
 - Host stakeholder engagement webinars to inform grants
- **Develop goal to measure climate impacts from material use and consumption**
- **Issue additional Circular Economy Strategies (plastics, food waste/organics)**



Read Strategy:
epa.gov/recyclingstrategy

Lead or Support an Action:
epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/take-action

Stay Connected:
epa.gov/recyclingstrategy/forms/stay-connected

Ask Questions:
EPArecycles@epa.gov



SWIFR, Recycling Education & Outreach, and Batteries: Overview of funding

SWIFR Grants

- **\$275,000,000** for grants under section 302(a) of the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act (55M/yr).
- Implement the strategy developed under section 301(a) of the SOS 2.0 Act, support improvements to local post-consumer materials management, including municipal recycling programs; and assist local waste management authorities in making improvements to local waste management systems.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Education and Outreach Grants & Other Activities

- **\$75,000,000** (\$15M/yr from FY22-26).
- Award education and outreach grants focused on improving material recycling, recovery, management, and reduction. Directs EPA to develop a model recycling program toolkit for States, tribes, local governments for use in carrying out the grant program.
- Calls for increased coordination at the federal level regarding the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines (CPG) program and increases the frequency by which EPA must review the CPGs to every 5 years.
- Directs EPA to assist educational community by promoting the introduction of recycling principles and best practices into public school curriculum.

Battery Collection Best Practices

- **\$10,000,000** for fiscal year 2022, available to be expended until September 30, 2026.
- Develop best practices that may be implemented by State, Tribal, and local governments with respect to the collection of batteries, are technically and economically feasible for State, Tribal, and local governments; are environmentally sound and safe for waste management workers; and optimize the value and use of material derived from recycling of batteries.
- Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a best practices report.

Voluntary Battery Labeling Guidelines

- **\$15,000,000** for fiscal year 2022, available to be expended until September 30, 2026.
- Establish a program to promote battery recycling through the development of voluntary labeling guidelines for batteries and other forms of communication materials for battery producers and consumers about the reuse and recycling of critical materials from batteries.
- Strive to ensure that voluntary labeling guidelines and other forms of communication materials developed under the program are consistent with international battery labeling standards; and the Mercury-Containing and Rechargeable Battery Management Act (42 U.S.C. 14301 et seq.).