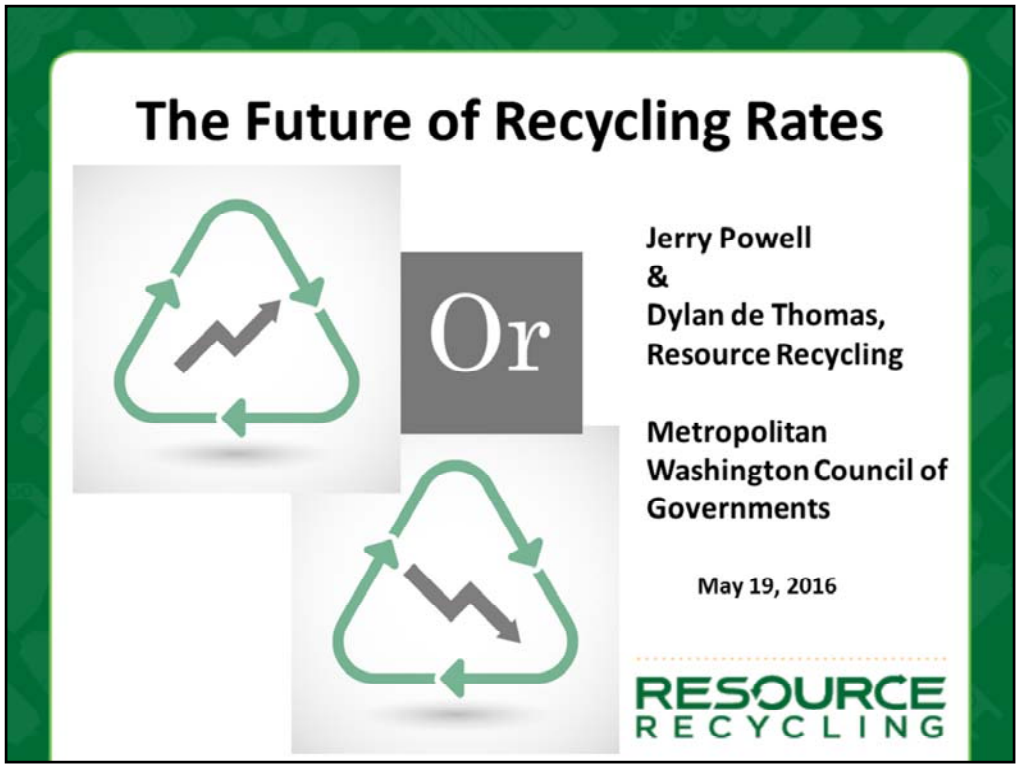


Thank you very much for having me – and now that we got the detailed experts out of the way, I'll give a broad view of some of where recycling rate reporting has come from and where it's going to in the next decade.

About Resource Recycling, Inc.

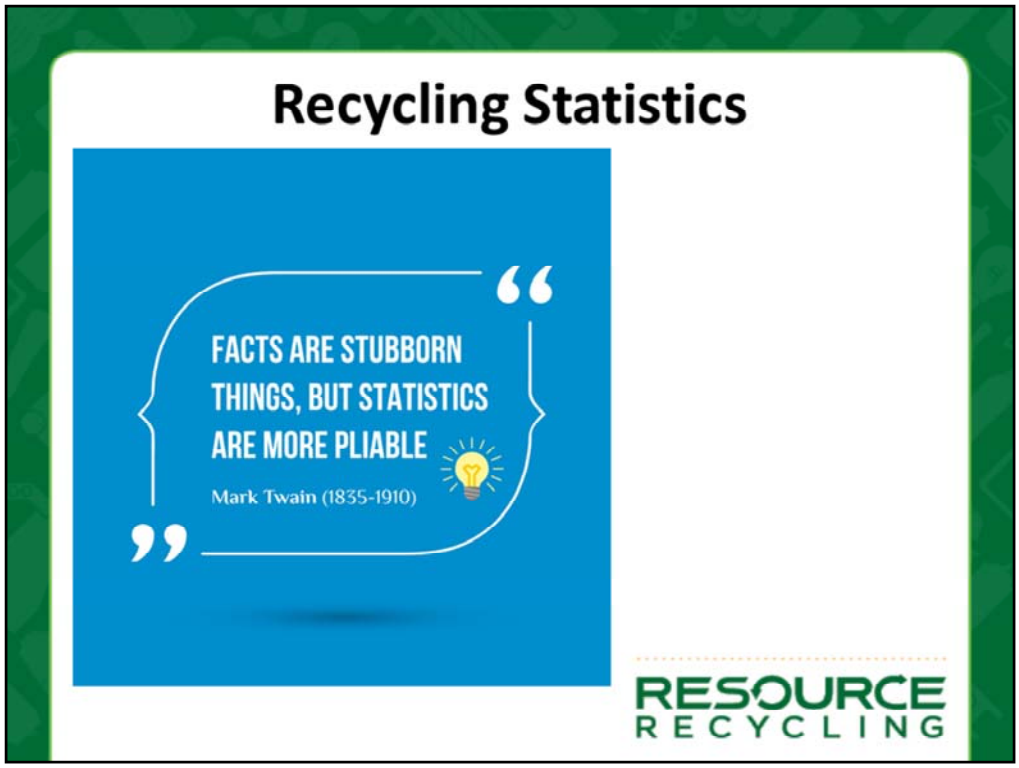
RESOURCE RECYCLING

E-SCRAP NEWS

PLASTICS RECYCLING UPDATE

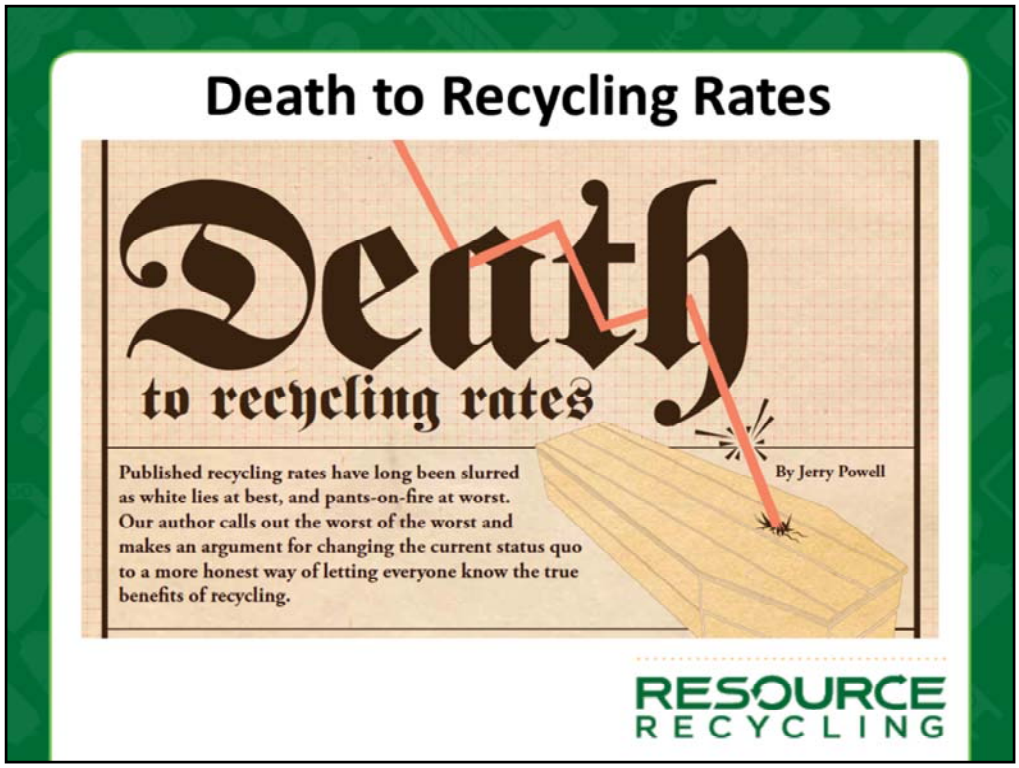
RESOURCE RECYCLING

About Resource Recycling, Inc.



To start, we have our obligatory Mark Twain quote when talking about statistics – the proverbial three kinds of prevarications: lies, damn lies and statistics.

And that certainly (at times) been the case with recycling-related statistical analysis from both the governmental sector and commodity marketplace.



So, how do we feel about recycling rates at Resource Recycling? Well, this should give you some idea.

Jerry can't be on the call today, but I'd be happy to share this article from a few years back with any who want it.

Roughly, we're not talking about the excellent work that Kent and Samantha are doing – and leading the industry by their fine examples – but rather some of the players that have given recycling numbers a bad name.

So, what will we be talking about today?

Well, we'll go over some of those worst-case scenarios at first, before showing the some of the best examples out there (again like Kent and Samantha already have), with honest reporting and numbers that can both be relied on and used for planning and producing effective recycling programs. But first!

Monroe County, Florida, following the passage of House Bill 7243, allowed for MSW that was sent to incinerator to be counted to the recycling rate which thus went (somewhat infamously) from 11 percent to the ludicrous rate of 167 percent.

House Bill 7243 did a number (pun intended) to a great deal of recycling rates in the Sunshine State. A local recycling coordinator named Andy Fairbanks did a two-part article in the magazine that's a good example of how not to pass recycling legislation. The tl;dr of that story is that the state set a gaudy recycling rate, those in charge were afraid they weren't going to meet it without massive infrastructure investment so looked for a way out – and they did.

San Francisco – now this is not to say that the City by the Bay doesn't have an excellent, well-run recycling program. They do and what they do can be emulated by other cities – all save for their recycling rate claims.

To be fair to that fair city, San Francisco has not, in the past few years, trumpeted their previously much-touted recycling rate of 80 percent. Not that they've issued a correction by any means, but they aren't issuing their annual press releases saying they're 20 percent from "zero" waste.

These two articles pictured, one by Junkyard Planet author Adam Minter and the other from his primary source (and co-presenter today) Samantha McBride, illustrate the primary issue with SF's claim. Which is that they count infill and biosolids – not typically found in calculations of MSW – as diversion. Doing some creative number-crunching, Samantha found that the diversion rate for SF is around 60%, in-line with other cities, like Portland, OR and Seattle that have curbside pick-up of organic materials beyond yard debris (meaning food waste).

The rest of "The Bad" can be spread out amongst many players through the years, doing such sins as:

Counting alternative daily cover as recycling

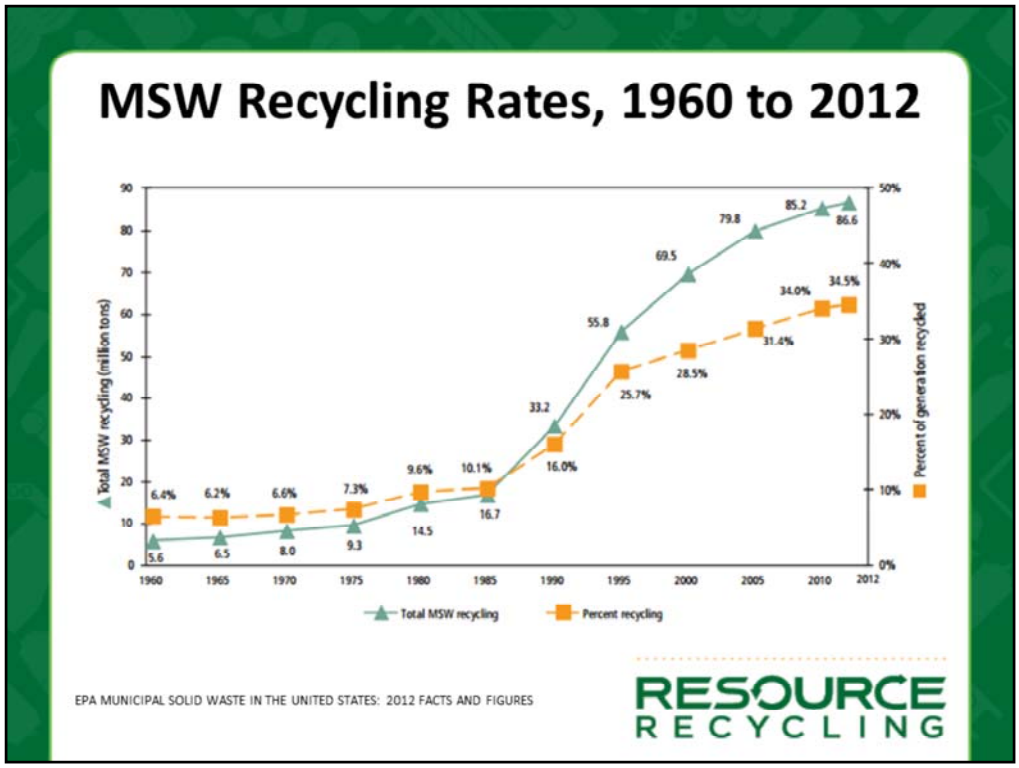
Counting exported material as recycled (fair) but also counting imported material without adjusting the numerator

Giving credit for waste diversion -- which can be an excellent driver, with great intentions behind it – but any reduction is already counted in the denominator, which would lead to double counting

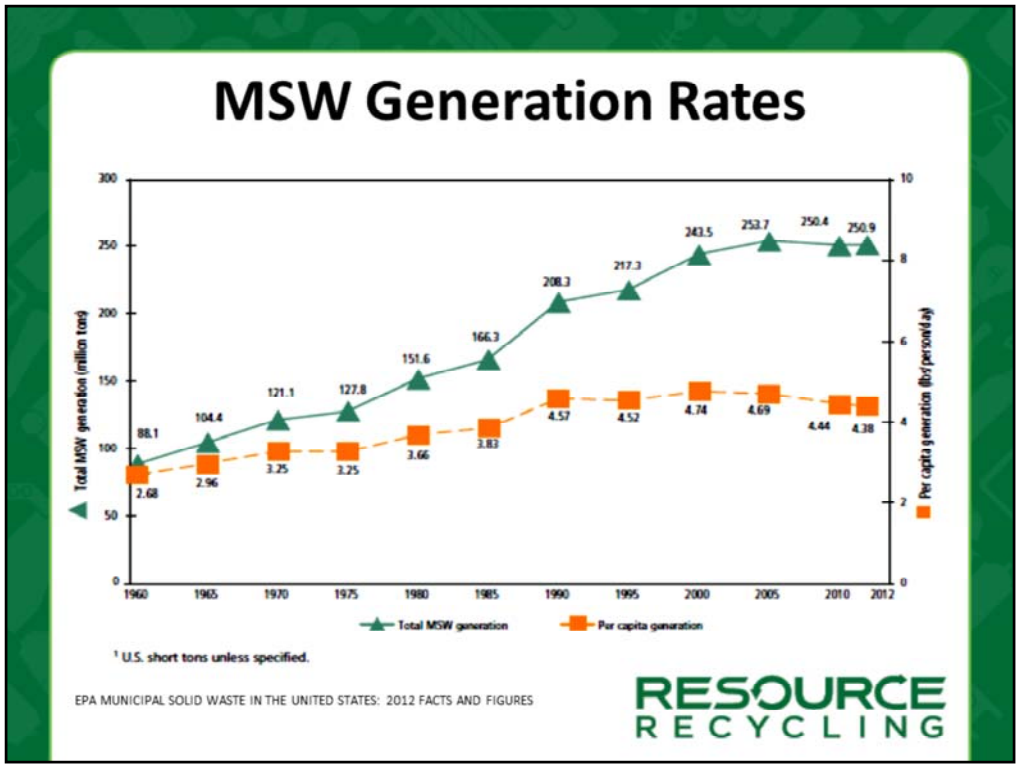
Not allowing access to the data behind how a rate was achieved. For example, posting charts that show gaudy recycling rates but not discussing in print exactly how it was arrived at so it can be questioned is an old way to reach artificial recycling rates.

Why do we do this? Well, we want credit for positive outcomes – which is all well and good and understood even as a kid. And it's good press. Do a Google search of "SF recycling" and you will find a whole wellspring of positive articles, using their recycling rate as a shining city on the hill.

No one wants their rate to go down or stay flat. It's not good press.



But flat is where we stand. I know that Kent used these charts earlier, but they're good data, Kent! I needed to use them, too!



But some of what data has shown is as recycling rates have flattened out, so has generation. Why? Because of consumer habits and changing packaging materials entering the curbside mix.

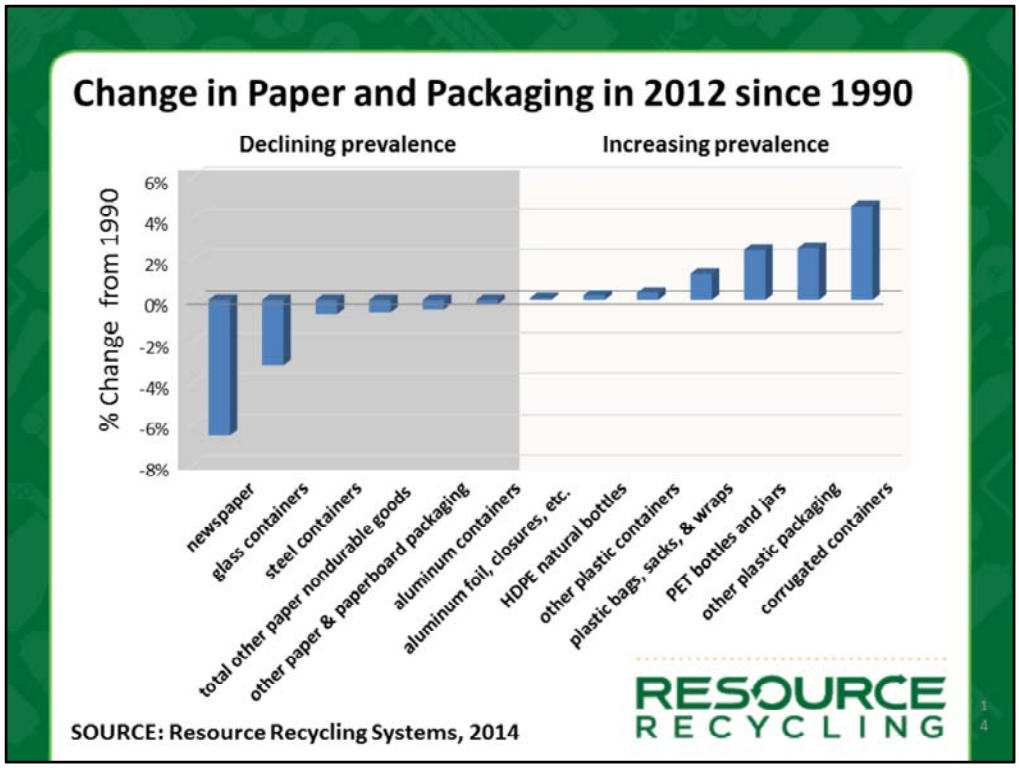
I know that Samantha touched on this somewhat, but it bears repeating – the stuff that we buy at the store has traditionally been able to be placed in recycling carts around the country. That's changing.

A brief anecdote on how quickly the material stream is changing – I took this photo two years ago at a grocery store down the street from where my family lives in Portland, Oregon.

I have a 10 and 12 year old, and this type of packaging for baby food barely existed when I was buying baby food – this photo would have been almost entirely glass a decade ago.

Now, it's almost entirely flex film packaging.

And while folks are working hard on finding a solution for this material, it is essentially non-recyclable at this time.

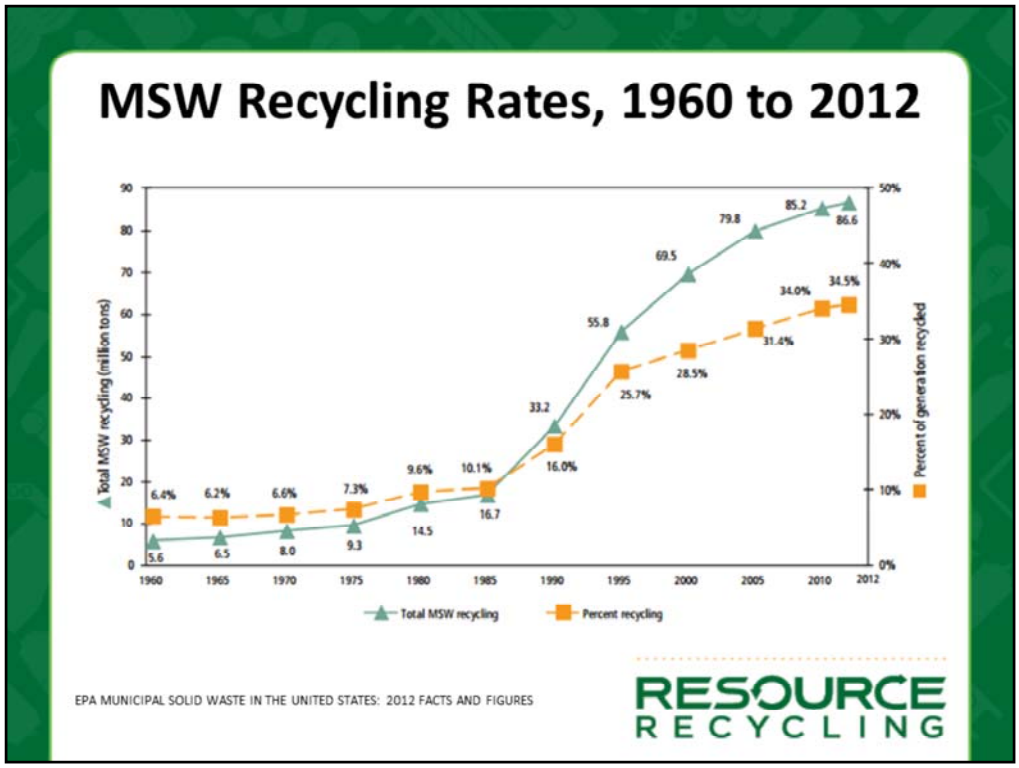


So, this offers a bit more information looking at the sweeping changes in packaging over the last two decades.

Note that while fiber, glass and steel are down, other materials differ by type, with the huge uptick in different types of plastics and OCC, what I'll call the "Amazon Prime" bar on this chart.

So why does this matter?

Because this, in part, leads to this



We read far, far fewer newspapers and we buy a lot more plastic *and* that plastic has gotten lighter. So, while we have seen greater success in recycling, it is not reflected in the rate.

And this leads to, as I said earlier, some bad press.

Bot a lot of places are keeping intellectually honest – a lot of important players are working hard to make sure the data that's out there is solid and can be used for the things that data should be used for – planning and investments, which are primary to the success of the recycling business/industry.

The U.S. EPA, as Kent noted, is doing the politically difficult work (really shouldn't be understated) of building the framework (using **Re-TRAC Connect**, which is there on the bottom and deserves a shout-out for helping enable a great deal of the "good" recycling data collection out there) to make sure that we're comparing apples to apples when looking at recycling. Are we there yet? No, but the framework is built and the work is being done.

New York, with Samantha, is doing honest work and, especially with it's recent organics work, trying to steer a rather large ship to increased recovery.

Both **Seattle and Portland, Ore.** have multi-year programs with impressive data-gathering infrastructures in place to make sure the recovery that is occurring is real and the data can be used for planning future programming, such as the aforementioned food waste, or, in Portland's case, moving to every-other-week trash pick-up (and looking at how that affects the recycling quality).

The **North Carolina Division of Environmental Assistance & Customer Service** with Scott Mouw and Rob Taylor who have been working on a pounds-per-household way of measuring recycling that is likely a better way of measuring recycling success than using traditional recycling rate reporting.

The **plastics industry** with joint reports from the ACC's Plastics Division, the APR and NAPCOR, and prepared by Moore Recycling Associates, are the envy of recycling-rate reporting – they say when it goes up, but when it goes down, as well. And those same reports have been used by the plastics recycling industry to invest (beating my dead horse) and build infrastructure.

So, what does that mean for recovery rates?

It means that we have to start looking at recycling rates differently. That we have to look at successful recovery in a holistic fashion. Which we're beginning to do.

In Oregon, with it's Countdown to 2050, holistically gathering information so decisions can be made to move the state to GHG reduction goals. These goals might be high, but the state is moving towards reaching those goals in a systematic way. And part of that is gathering data. The state's DEQ happily recently was able to boost its funding, so will have the budget and the people to gather said data so (horse) investments and infrastructure can be built.

But communication matters – Oregon is not NY or DC, where sometimes on-the-ground political realities make it difficult to pass meaningful reform (as I know you all know). SMM is complicated and not the easiest thing in the world to communicate to the general public. This is a challenge that needs to be met. And it needs to be met in such a way that the SMM methods aren't co-opted by wasters.

Another communication challenge is that, likely, recycling rates are going to go "down." As Samantha pointed out, this needs to be communicated to the press about the changes that we all know have happened and that

it’s not necessarily a bad thing. But it is something that needs to be communicated well.

And communicating this to you, to those who are going to make the necessary decisions to continue to gather data and do it well.

Data, as we all should know, costs money. But that money is worth it, if the data gathered is honest and real. And recycling – and the benefits garnered from the practice – is worth it.

Thank You!

Jerry Powell
jpowell@resource-recycling.com
&
Dylan de Thomas
dylan@resource-recycling.com
www.resource-recycling.com

Save the Date for the Resource Recycling Conference Aug 30-Sept.1 in New Orleans

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