

Recycling – Is This the New Normal?





SWANA's Mission

SWANA is an organization of professionals committed to advancing from solid waste management to resource management through their shared emphasis on education, advocacy and research

— SWANA Strategic Plan FY 2016-2020 (March 2015)

China and Recycling





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China Restricts Imports

- **Prohibits imports of mixed paper and post-consumer plastic – January 1, 2018**
- **Contamination standard of 0.5% effective March 1, 2018**
- **Tariffs imposed mid-2018**
- **Additional tariffs announced as part of ongoing trade war**



New Asian Markets

Other countries in Asia began receiving lots more paper/plastic from U.S. and other countries in wake of China's actions

- Vietnam
- Thailand
- Malaysia
- India
- Indonesia

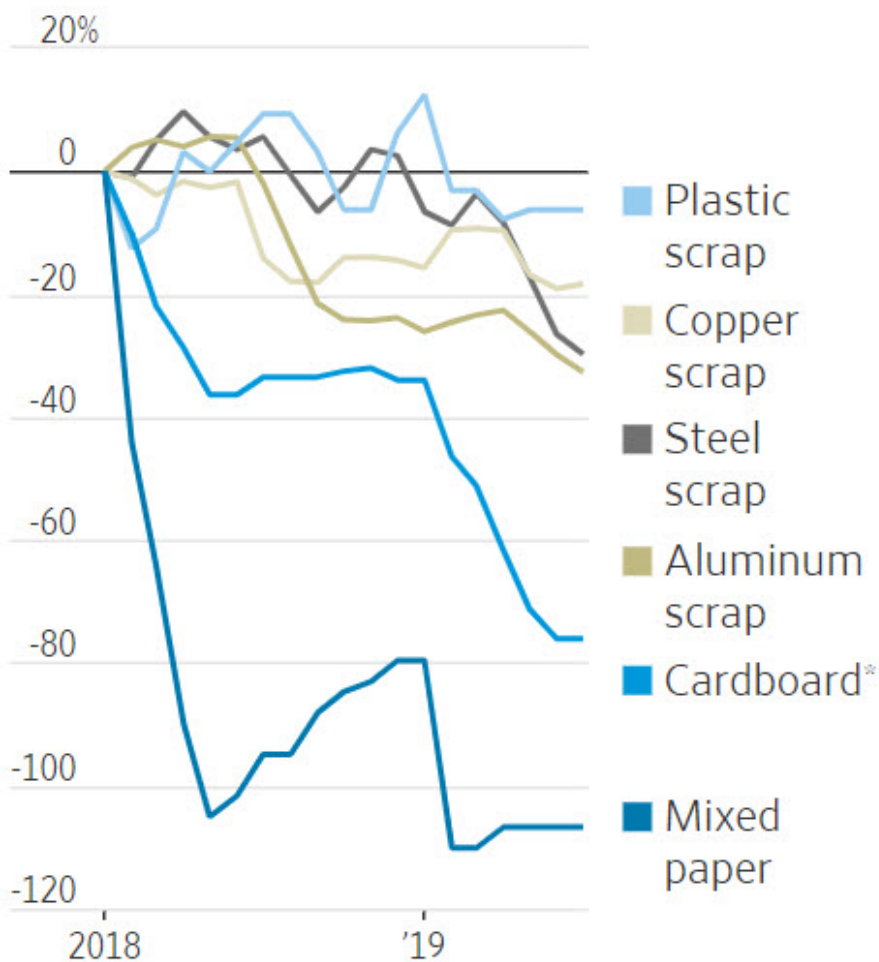


These nations started to impose restrictions as they were overrun by containers and plastic

- Several countries are returning “dirty recyclables”

Prices Continue Declining

Recycled commodity prices, percentage change from January 2018





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Local Government Responses

- **Many are renegotiating contracts**
- **Some scaled back materials accepted – plastic!**
- **A few eliminated curbside recycling**
- **A few increased fees for service (\$1-3/month)**
- **A handful have gone back to dual stream collection**
- **Most focus on reducing contamination**

Local Government Responses

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

- **Surprise, AZ** – Suspending curbside collection until markets recover
- **Tucson, AZ** - Changing to every-other-week curbside collection to reduce costs
- SWANA's Applied Research Foundation (ARF) issued a report last week that recommended changing collection frequency as a way for local governments to respond to declining prices caused by National Sword.





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Local Government Responses

The most common response has been efforts to reduce contamination, which increases operational costs and reduces the value of the material processed at the MRF

SWANA-reviewed data reveals many single-stream systems have 15-25% contamination rates

Contamination

- Hoses/Tanglers
- Food waste
- Batteries
- Bowling balls!
- Diapers
- Propane Tanks
- Textiles
- Styrofoam





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Plastic Bags at the MRF



Contamination





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Contamination



WHAT TO RECYCLE



Learn what to recycle in Rumpke's program.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)



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Contamination

RECYCLING

✓ **EMPTY** ✓ **CLEAN** ✓ **UNBAGGED**

PAPER

- Empty cartons - **NO liquids**
- Flatten boxes
- Contain shredded paper in paper bag or box

PLASTIC

- Empty bottles, jugs, jars and tubs - **NO food or liquids**
- Reattach lids and caps

METAL & GLASS

- Empty cans, bottles and jars - **NO food or liquids**
- Clean foil
- Reattach lids and caps

- NO bags
- NO shredded paper in plastic bag
- NO caps
- NO liquids

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

www.metrodca.org/go/recycling

GO

Recycling

Cans & Bottles

Empty Cups

Clean Plastic Containers & Large Lids

Lids must be minimum 5" diameter. Use tubs to measure.

Dugged plastic bags.

Paper & Empty Cartons

ITEMS MUST BE EMPTY AND CLEAN

Recology
CleanScapes
WASTE ZERO

For more information call 425.453.0220
or visit recologycleanscapes.com/bothell





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Clean It Up at the Curb



- Restrict list of what is acceptable to what can be recycled
- More education
- More enforcement
- Less wishful recycling

Contamination Declining

Contamination rates are declining in communities that are focusing educational or enforcement resources to residents

- **District of Columbia DPW - 24% to 18%**
- **San Antonio - 29% to 21%**
- **Lynn, Mass rejection rate from 31% to 10%**
- **WM reports national contamination rate at their MRFs has declined from 24% to 19%**
- **Mass DEP Recycling IQ Kit reduced cart rejections in communities by 30 – 80%**

Rumpke/Fairfield & Centerville – 22 to 12%, 19 to 11%





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Contamination

We still have work to do on contamination...

SCENE & HEARD

**Republic Services Would Appreciate it if You'd
Stop Putting Live Ammo and Dead Animals in the
Recycling**

Posted By Sam Allard on Thu, May 23, 2019 at 10:54 am

MRF Improvements

Recycling Facilities Need to be Updated

- **Upgrades to equipment**
 - Optical sorters, robots, AI, ballistic separators
- **More automation/fewer people**
- **More flexibility to adapt to changing material streams**
- **“MRF of the Future”**



Chemical Recycling

Increased interest in plastic-to-fuel and polymer level recycling. A recent Closed Loop Fund report identified 60 chemical recycling solutions

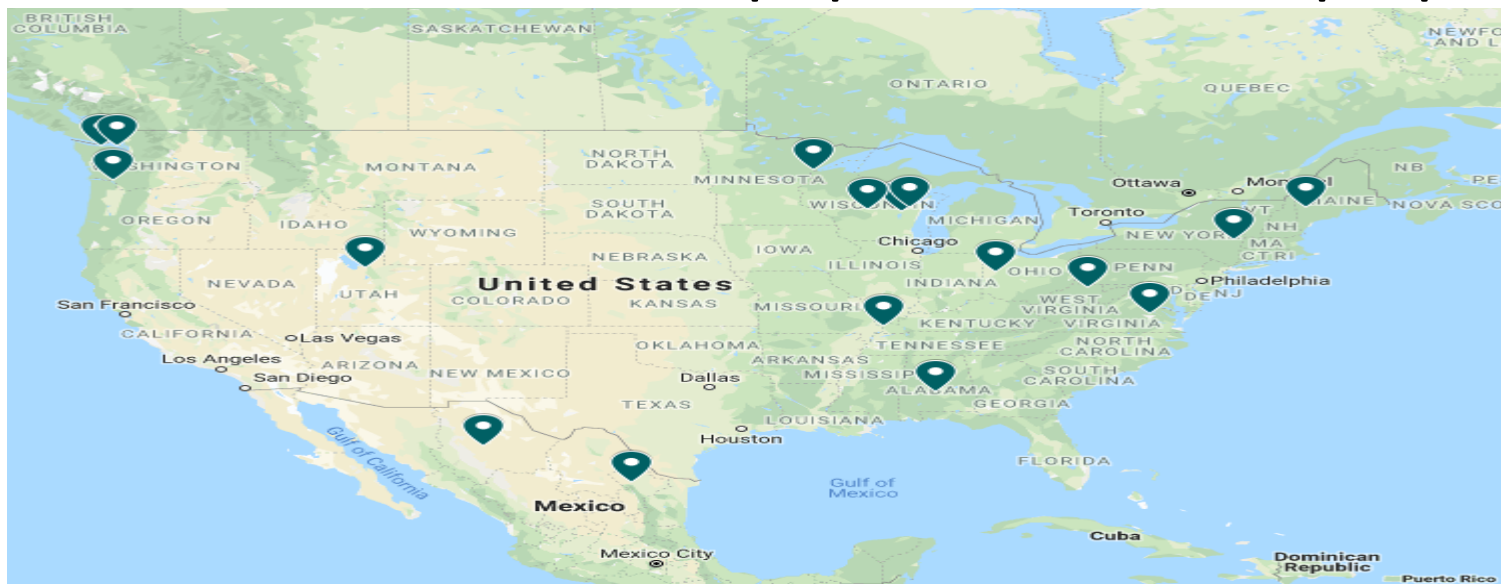
- **Dow/EnergyBag is most visible**
- **Marine Litter is major catalyst for investment by large companies**



Increasingly Optimistic

1. U.S. & Chinese companies are investing in domestic processing capacity in the U.S.

- 20+ plants coming on-line in late 2019-2021 (mostly paper)
- 3.5M tons OCC/mixed paper & 1M tons pulp



Increasingly Optimistic

2. MRFs are making investments

3. Brands setting new recycled content goals

4. Renewed focus on contamination at all levels

-- contamination rates **are declining**

5. Increased cooperation and collaboration among recycling stakeholders

6. Basel Convention amendment – U.S. may not be able to export recovered plastic to developing countries starting 2021

-- OECD meeting this week in Paris

7. US EPA developing a national recycling Framework

EPA Recycling Pledge



AMERICA RECYCLES DAY 2018 PLEDGE

In recognition of this America Recycles Day, November 15, 2018, we, the undersigned, pledge to work together to build on our existing efforts to address the challenges facing our nation's recycling system and identify solutions that create a more resilient materials economy and protect the environment. Our signatures indicate the interest and willingness of our organizations to participate in an ongoing dialogue over the next year to identify specific actions that we can take collectively and within our respective organizations to improve the nation's recycling system.



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EPA Recycling Workgroups

- **Education and Outreach**
 - Develop consistent messages for key recycling issues
- **Improve Materials Mgmt Infrastructure**
 - Create a digital library of info/best practices/funding
- **Strengthen Secondary Materials Markets**
 - Explore regional and local market development
- **Enhance Measurement**
 - Compile state/local metrics & measures; data gaps
 - Is weight the best metric?

EPA - Recycling

EPA will be releasing the “Recycling Framework” on America Recycles Day (ARD) on Nov 15, 2019, during its ARD Summit

SWANA is helping EPA plan the ARD 2019 events and develop The Framework





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EPA - Recycling

SWANA, its chapters and members are organizing recycling-related events the week of November 11-15

- **Nov 11** - KAB Recycling Heroes (TX)
- **Nov 12** - 25th anniversary of Waste Wise
- **Nov 13** - ISRI Congressional briefing
- **Nov 14** - Innovations Fair in Washington
- **Nov 15** - EPA ARD Summit

EPA - Recycling

Purpose of November 11-15 activities will be to counter the “recycling crisis” narrative

- Highlight innovations/technology**
- Highlight progress on contamination**
- Emphasize economic and environmental benefits**

SWANA Chapters planning state and local events including: tours, special waste drop-off, press releases, and education campaigns

-partner with OAR and OALPRP?



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Congress

Congress is interested in recycling and hearings may take place in the Fall

RECOVER Act – proposal to create federal funding for states to distribute for recycling education, equipment upgrades, and growing domestic markets (SWANA is key stakeholder)





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Congress

Some Democrats believe the RECOVER Act isn't aggressive enough and want to do more.

- **Udall/Lowenthal – “Plastic Crisis” Bill Principles**
 - Product Stewardship
 - National Bottle Bill
 - National Bag Fee
 - Ban on Styrofoam
 - New labeling requirements
 - Collection targets for single use plastic bottles
 - Recycled content requirements



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Congress

Save Our Seas 2.0

- **Bipartisan effort to strengthen domestic infrastructure and prevent marine debris**
- **Directs EPA to develop strategy for material management and residential recycling infrastructure**
- **Creates block grant program for states to support municipal recycling programs (states must contribute 20%)**
- **Creates infrastructure grant program (\$50M/year)**
- **Directs EPA to perform studies re plastics**



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WASTECON

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WASTECON 2019

Phoenix, Arizona

October 21 – 24, 2019



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SWANApalooza

March 23–26, 2020
The Westin Peachtree Plaza
Atlanta, Georgia

SWANApalooza.org
[#SWANApalooza](https://twitter.com/SWANApalooza)





Thank you!

Questions?

David Biderman
SWANA Executive Director
240-494-2254
dbiderman@swana.org