



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
SOLID WASTE AND
EMERGENCY RESPONSE

NOW THE
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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Honorable Haley Stevens
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Stevens:

Thank you for your letter of April 29, 2019, to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler, regarding the state of recycling and waste management infrastructure in the United States. The EPA has been working hard to address many of the recent challenges that have impacted our nation's material recovery system.

Our recycling system is a strong and important part of the U.S. economy, and new challenges make it even more important. For example, the EPA's 2016 analysis found the U.S. recycling industry provides more than 757,000 jobs and \$6.7 billion in tax revenues each year. However, recent data indicate that materials worth as much as \$9 billion are thrown away each year, providing an opportunity for an even greater contribution.

On America Recycles Day (ARD), held on November 15, 2018, Administrator Wheeler hosted a group of senior-level executives from a wide array of industry, non-profit and government organizations to discuss opportunities to advance and strengthen the domestic recycling system. At this event, more than 40 key industry stakeholders signed a pledge to work together to improve the state of recycling in the United States. The 2018 ARD Summit focused on four action areas to guide progress over the next year, which include providing education and outreach; enhancing materials management infrastructure; strengthening secondary materials markets; and enhancing measurement methodologies to track our progress.

Since the summit, the EPA has convened four stakeholder workgroups to develop a draft framework for these action areas. The framework will ultimately serve as the overarching guide to address the current challenges facing our recycling system and will include both near- and long-term actions, such as developing key and consistent recycling messages; creating a publicly available clearinghouse for resources on improving recycling infrastructure; and compiling information on a range of material management metrics and measures.

No one organization has the resources necessary to address all the challenges to our materials recovery system, so significant progress requires collective action. The progress will be highlighted during American Recycles Day this November.

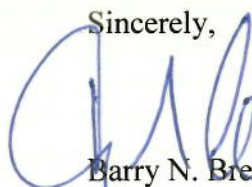
The EPA is engaged in several efforts to provide information, best practices and data the public needs to monitor their recycling efforts. Some examples include:

- We are helping stimulate demand for recycling materials by designating the minimum recycled content of products purchased by federal agencies through the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines;
- We are working with the Wrap Recycling Action Program (WRAP), along with the American Chemistry Council and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition to address hard-to-recycle plastic film packaging;
- We are encouraging the use of sustainable materials management through recognition programs, such as the Electronics Challenge, which not only reduce the amount of waste at a single facility, but also inspire others to follow their lead; and
- We are implementing the WasteWise program, in which organizations and businesses reduce waste voluntarily and incorporate sustainable materials management into their efforts. This program has helped organizations prevent and divert millions of tons of waste since 1994.

You indicated concern about the timing of the publication of EPA's data on generation of recycling, composting, combustion with energy recovery and landfilling of materials. Normally, it takes two to three years to prepare this information as the process entails collecting data from external sources, as well as analyzing and synthesizing the information for publication on our Material, Waste and Recycling website at <https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling>. We will be publishing data for both 2016 and 2017 this fall.

Through the efforts mentioned above, the EPA will continue to encourage improvement and investment in the U.S. recycling system. By convening stakeholders and working together, we hope to improve the recycling system and also support more competitive manufacturing by using materials from recycled products.

Sincerely,



Barry N. Breen
Acting Assistant Administrator