



Recycling Steering Committee

Modernizing Oregon's recycling system, with support from Oregon Consensus

MODERNIZING OREGON'S RECYCLING SYSTEM THROUGH SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Once a model for the nation, Oregon's recycling system was heavily impacted by disruptions in international recycling markets in 2017. After two years of collaboration, Oregon's Recycling Steering Committee has recommended an innovative, shared responsibility framework that addresses many challenges in our decades-old recycling system and creates a more effective, stable and resilient system for the future.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK RECYCLING

The international recycling markets disruption helped highlight many issues with Oregon's recycling system, which was built on a policy framework created in the 1980s and early 1990s. DEQ convened the Recycling Steering Committee (RSC) in 2018 that included local and state governments, recycling businesses, and nonprofit organizations, to work together and recommend a path forward to modernize our recycling system.

The RSC's goals were to: optimize environmental benefits, create a strong and resilient system, and restore and maintain public trust. The committee worked together to identify what Oregon's future recycling system should look like, conduct research to inform decisions, gather feedback from other stakeholders, and recommend changes to achieve that future system. The RSC reached consensus on a recommended framework in September 2020. Read the full proposal: <https://go.usa.gov/xGSbz>.

FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW

The RSC's proposal is an innovative, shared responsibility framework that updates the roles of existing players and gives producers new obligations that help modernize the system. Producers of packaging and printed paper will be required to fund many system improvements, support expansion of recycling service across the state, and ensure responsible recycling. Local governments will maintain local control of collection and customer education; processors will be required to meet new performance standards; and DEQ will provide strong system oversight to create positive environmental and social outcomes for the public good.

FRAMEWORK HIGHLIGHTS

- Decrease public confusion by preventing producers from using misleading labels on products sold into Oregon.
- Create a statewide recycling collection list informed by economic, technical and environmental considerations.
- Reduce trash that ends up in recycling by implementing tested programs that address contamination.
- Create a more accessible and stable system by requiring producers to finance advancements including: expansion of collection services especially for multi-family and rural communities, upgrades to processing facilities, and improving conditions for workers.
- Ensure that materials are recycled responsibly by requiring processing facilities to meet new performance standards, and obligating producers to work with processors to ensure that materials are actually recycled. Producers will finance processing improvements where needed to achieve this, while protecting ratepayers from rate increases.
- Increase transparency and accountability by requiring local governments to send materials to certified processing facilities and processors to report where those materials are sent after sorting.
- Incentivize producers to design products and packaging that are better for the environment.
- Restore and sustain public trust through effective state oversight and enforcement.

SUMMARY OF ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



PRODUCERS

Finance system improvements and ensure responsible recycling

- Meet new “truth in labeling” requirements
- Form and join a nonprofit producer responsibility organization to meet obligations
- Develop and implement stewardship plans
- Meet plastic packaging recovery goals
- Work with DEQ and advisory council to develop a statewide materials list
- Work with processors to ensure responsible markets for collected material and finance improvements as needed
- Finance many system upgrades, including:
 - Expand access to collection
 - Education resources for statewide materials list
 - Transportation reimbursement for distant communities
 - Contamination reduction
 - Multifamily collection improvements
 - Waste prevention and reuse grants
 - Plastic litter collection
- Finance or operate depots and collection events for recyclable materials not collected on-route



STATE GOVERNMENT

Provide strong oversight and enforcement

- Review and approve stewardship plans and annual reports
- Conduct system audits
- Certify and permit processors that are required to meet new performance standards
- Administer waste prevention and reuse grant program
- Approve statewide material collection list
- Ensure all responsible parties meet requirements



ADVISORY COUNCIL

Review and advise on important system elements

- Diverse stakeholder group appointed by Governor
- Review and advise DEQ and producers on key elements of system, including:
 - Stewardship plans and annual reports
 - Fee structure
 - Statewide materials list
 - Education resources



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Maintain local control of collection and education

- Ensure collection of material on statewide recycling list
- Direct local material to permitted/certified MRFs
- Primarily responsible for local education about recycling, reuse and waste prevention
- Ensure convenient, equitable access to multifamily properties
- Work with collectors on contamination reduction efforts



PROCESSORS

Properly sort material and send material to responsible markets

- Meet new performance, equity and reporting standards established under new permit/certification program
- Direct collected materials to responsible end markets



COLLECTORS

Work with system partners to increase access to collection

- Deliver collected material to certified/permitted MRFs
- Work with municipalities on contamination reduction efforts

LEARN MORE

To read the full Recycling Steering Committee proposal, visit <https://go.usa.gov/xGSbz>.

ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.