



Background Paper: Recycling Acceptance Lists

RMA Rulemaking 3: Prepared for Technical Workgroup on Recycling Acceptance Lists – Dec. 11, 2025

This paper provides background information on recycling acceptance lists under Oregon’s Recycling Modernization Act (SB 582, 2021).

Introduction to Recycling Acceptance Lists

ORS 459A.914(1) requires the Environmental Quality Commission, in consultation with producer responsibility organizations and the Oregon Recycling System Advisory Council, to identify materials that are suitable for recycling collection in Oregon and the methods for collecting those materials.

In its [initial rulemaking](#) under ORS 459A.914, which was completed in 2023, the Commission identified three such lists of materials (see OAR 340-090-0630):

- The **Local Government Recycling Acceptance List**, which includes items that local governments must collect as part of their obligations under Oregon’s Opportunity to Recycle Act.
- A subset of that list, called the **Uniform Statewide Collection List (USCL)**. The USCL identifies those items – and only those items – which may be collected commingled (mixed together).
- The **Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) Recycling Acceptance List**, which includes items that the PRO must collect for recycling to satisfy its obligation under ORS 459A.896(1).

Materials on the PRO Recycling Acceptance List are normally collected at recycling depots or other drop-off locations. Under ORS 459A.914(7), the Commission also established convenience standards (OAR 340-090-0640), performance standards (OAR 340-090-0650) and collection targets (OAR 340-090-0660) for the PRO list materials.

Recycling Acceptance Lists are not Covered Product Lists

The term “covered products” refers to packaging, food serveware, and printing and writing paper items where producers have obligations under the RMA. A common misunderstanding is that materials not on recycling acceptance lists are exempted from the definition of “covered product”. But these two lists are not the same.

There are many covered products that are not included in any of the state’s Recycling Acceptance Lists. These include a myriad of packaging and food serveware items that are not currently accepted for recycling, yet remain covered products. Producers of these items are obligated under the RMA for several reasons, including the fact that non-accepted items impose significant financial and environmental burdens in the form of contamination.

Conversely, there can also be items on the Local Government Recycling Acceptance List that are not covered products. Examples include scrap metal, beverage containers, motor oil, and yard debris.

The focus of this Technical Workgroup is on recycling acceptance lists. A separate process exists by which DEQ is considering exemptions from the definition of covered product.

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Consideration of placement on Recycling Acceptance Lists

Under ORS 459A.914(3), the Commission is required to consider a number of factors when determining whether a material should be included on a recycling acceptance list.

These 13 evaluation criteria are interpreted as follows:

1. Relating to responsible end markets:
 - “Stability” and “maturity” may consider both historic and anticipated near-term future considerations, and address both presence of the responsible end market (availability to use materials) and stability of prices. Further, a market with a single or limited number of buyers would be considered “less stable”.
 - “Accessibility” is largely a measure of location and distance (and by extension, cost)
 - “Viability” is a summation of prior sub-criteria and any other relevant considerations.
2. “Anticipated yield loss” may consider all stages of the recycling process (collection, processing/sorting, and end markets). It is evaluated from the perspective of materials that are properly separated and placed into the recycling system; “yield loss” does not account for materials that are lost to recycling because they are not separated and placed into the recycling system by the material user (waste generator). Yield loss is limited to loss of the targeted material (properly prepared) along with any original packaging that is adhered or attached to it, such as labels. It does not include “loss” of non-target material that accompanies the material, whether due to failure to properly prepare materials (e.g., ketchup in a ketchup bottle), or the addition of contaminants either by the user (e.g., limes in a beer bottle) or during the recycling process (e.g., rainwater in bales of paper stored outside).
3. “Compatibility with existing recycling infrastructure” – statutory criteria are split here into two sub-criteria: compatibility with *commingled* collection and processing, and compatibility with *separate* (non-commingled) material collection and processing. Note that drop-off collection can be either commingled or separated.
4. “Amount of material available” considers the quantity of material *generated*. It considers both the quantity of materials available as individual materials, as well as in potential combination with each other.
5. “Practicalities of sorting material” relates primarily to the ease of separating the material from other materials if collected in a commingled collection system.
6. “Practicalities of storing material” may consider the practicality of storing the material unbaled (e.g., volume requirements relative to weight/value), the ability of the material to be baled or otherwise densified, and the practicality of storing baled material (including how quickly the bales might move and whether they are subject to potential degradation during a prolonged period of storage, such as due to moisture).
7. “Contamination” includes two considerations. The first is the potential of a material to bring contamination with it (e.g., OCC often brings tape and/or staples; food containers may bring food into the system; the acceptance of some plastics may lead generators to include other plastics; etc.). The second consideration is the nature of the contamination, the potential for “look-alike” contamination, its ability to be removed in a commingled recycling processing facility, and potential impacts downstream. For example, food that is included with aluminum foil is not practical for a CRPF to remove.
8. “Ability for waste generators to easily identify and properly prepare the material” relates to both identification and proper preparation of materials.

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9. “Economic factors” include both transactional costs (e.g., fuel, labor, and capital) as well as externalized costs (e.g., economic damages resulting from pollution). Not all materials are evaluated for economic factors (for example, if they score poorly against multiple other criteria are not considered viable for recycling).
10. “Environmental health and safety” is primarily a qualitative measure that considers safety and health impacts for workers, and whether the end market(s) is (are) likely to properly manage contaminants.
11. “Environmental factors from a life cycle perspective” includes life cycle impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions, depletion of nonrenewable resources, air and water toxics, etc. Not all materials will be evaluated quantitatively for environmental factors (for example, if they score poorly against multiple other criteria are not considered viable for recycling).
12. “Policy in ORS 459.015(2)(a) and (b)”: These criteria are not directly germane to recycling, and (a) will be considered as part of the quantitative evaluation of “environmental factors from a life cycle perspective” (described above).
13. “Policy in ORS 459.015(2)(c)”: For purposes of this evaluation, this relates to the ability of the material to be recycled via responsible end markets that result in the greatest reduction of net negative impacts on human well-being and environmental health, responsible end markets that displace the production of more impactful materials, and processes that best preserve the value and molecular structure of the material being recycled.

Onramp

Under ORS 459A.914(4)(b), items can be added to the Uniform Statewide Collection List through a process separate from rulemaking. This process is often referred to colloquially as “the onramp”. The process involves the PRO proposing to add to the USCL via a program plan or plan amendment. Under ORS 459A.878, DEQ is required to consult with the Oregon Recycling System Advisory Council and provide opportunity for public comment prior to accepting or rejecting such a plan or plan amendment.

Offramp

Materials can also be removed from recycling acceptance lists, either by rule or by approval of a program plan or plan amendment. One specific offramp requirement is called out in OAR 340-090-0670(5), which relates to the PRO’s obligation to ensure that certain materials flow to responsible end-markets, if doing so is “practicable”. OAR 340-090-0670(5) defines “practicable” and establishes a process by which a PRO can claim that it is not “practicable” to ensure that materials flow to responsible end-markets. If DEQ agrees with such a claim, DEQ is then required to review the material in question and reconsider its inclusion in a recycling acceptance list. Removal from the recycling acceptance list is not required, but consideration of removal is.

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