

Creating a Resilient U.S. Recycling System

Update on America Recycles Activities

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Recycling in the News

Is This the End of Recycling?

Americans are consuming more and more stuff. Now that other countries won't take our papers and plastics, they're ending up in the trash.

ALANA SEMUELS MAR 5, 2019



Plastic, paper, glass, and cardboard at a Recology facility

OLIVER MILMAN

SCIENCE 02.27.2019 00:00 AM

Since China's Ban, Recycling in the US Has Gone Up in Flames

All that neatly sorted plastic, paper, and glass used to go to China. Now a lot of it is just getting burned instead.

SIERRA

The national magazine of the Sierra Club

CLIMATE AND ENERGY

LANDS AND WATERS

ADVENTURE

GREEN LIFESTYLE

MAGAZINE

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GO



The US Recycling System Is Garbage

China doesn't want our crap anymore, and who can blame them?

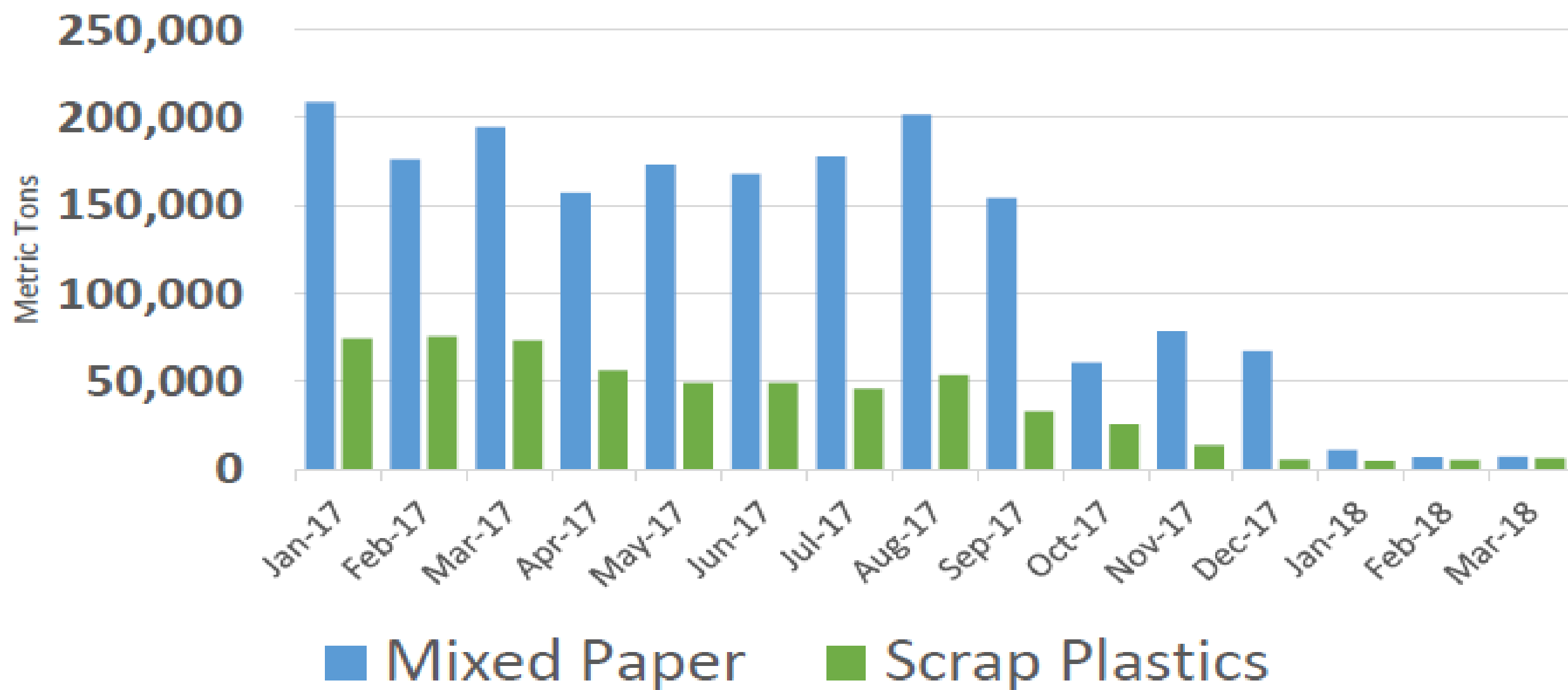
CHINA HAS SHUT DOWN ITS INEFFICIENT, POLLUTING "RECYCLING VILLAGES" IN FAVOR OF MODERN FACILITIES. | PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY D-KEINE/GETTY IMAGES



The “National Sword”

- “Reform and Implementation Plan to Enhance Solid Waste Import Management System by Prohibiting the Entry of Foreign Waste”
- Policy to restrict imports of recovered materials – March 2018
 - Placed strict contamination specifications on materials
 - Temporary bans
 - Reduction in import licensing
 - Increased inspections and rejections of imports
- Reasons
 - Rising environmental concerns in China – social media being a big driver
 - Low quality of materials being imported - Lots of unusable materials – litter, debris and disposal
 - Efforts to grow recycling infrastructure in China (collection; processing; manufacturing)
 - Self-sufficient in sourcing raw materials

U.S. Exports to China of Scrap Plastics & Mixed Paper



**How much material is recovered in the U.S.
annually?**



130 million tons

How much recovered material does the U.S. export annually?



41 million tons (32%)

How much goes to China?



13 million tons (10%)

China closes the door, prices crash

The average price paid to recyclers for a ton of mixed paper in the Pacific Northwest and across North America has plummeted in the last year.

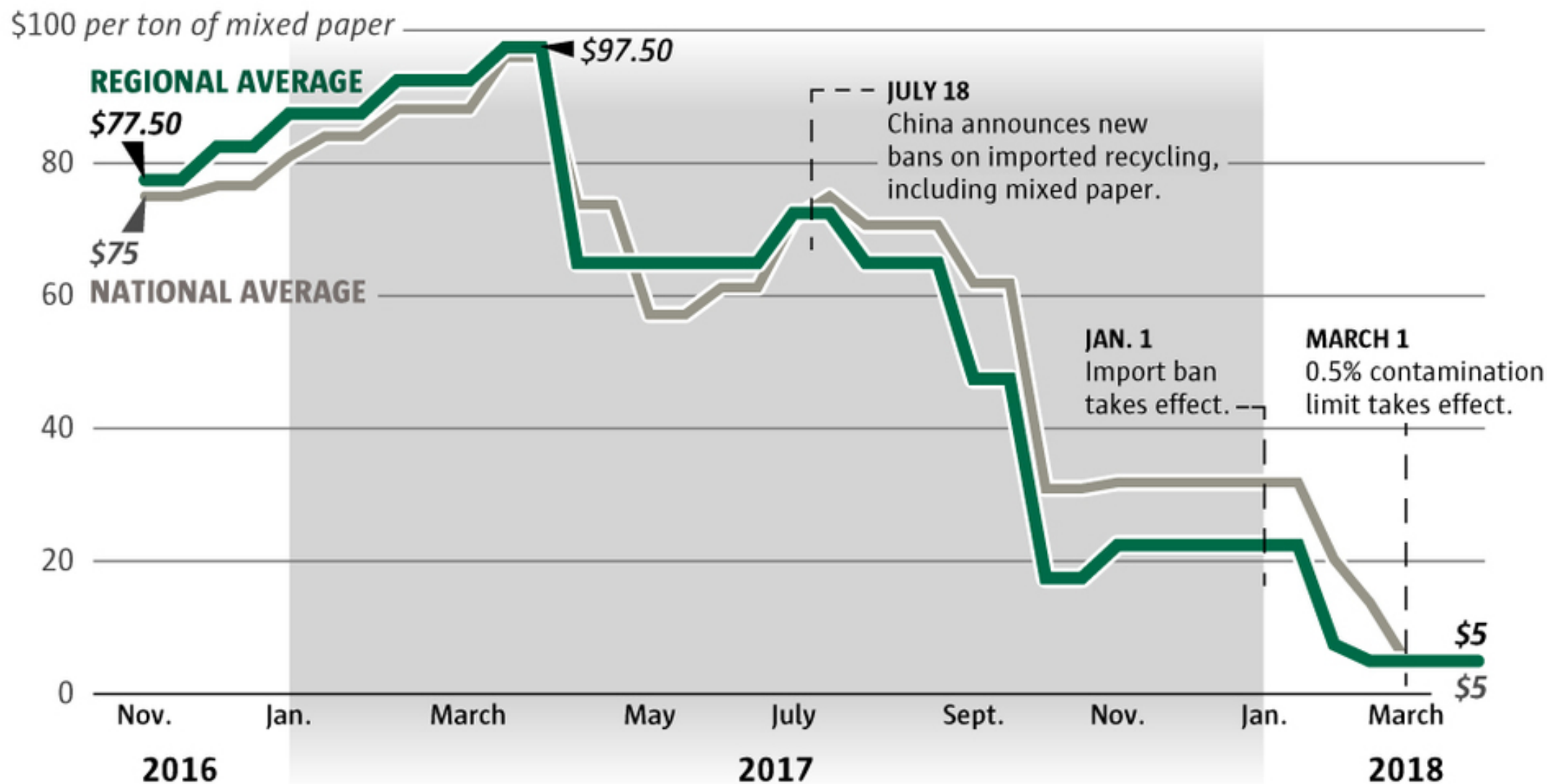
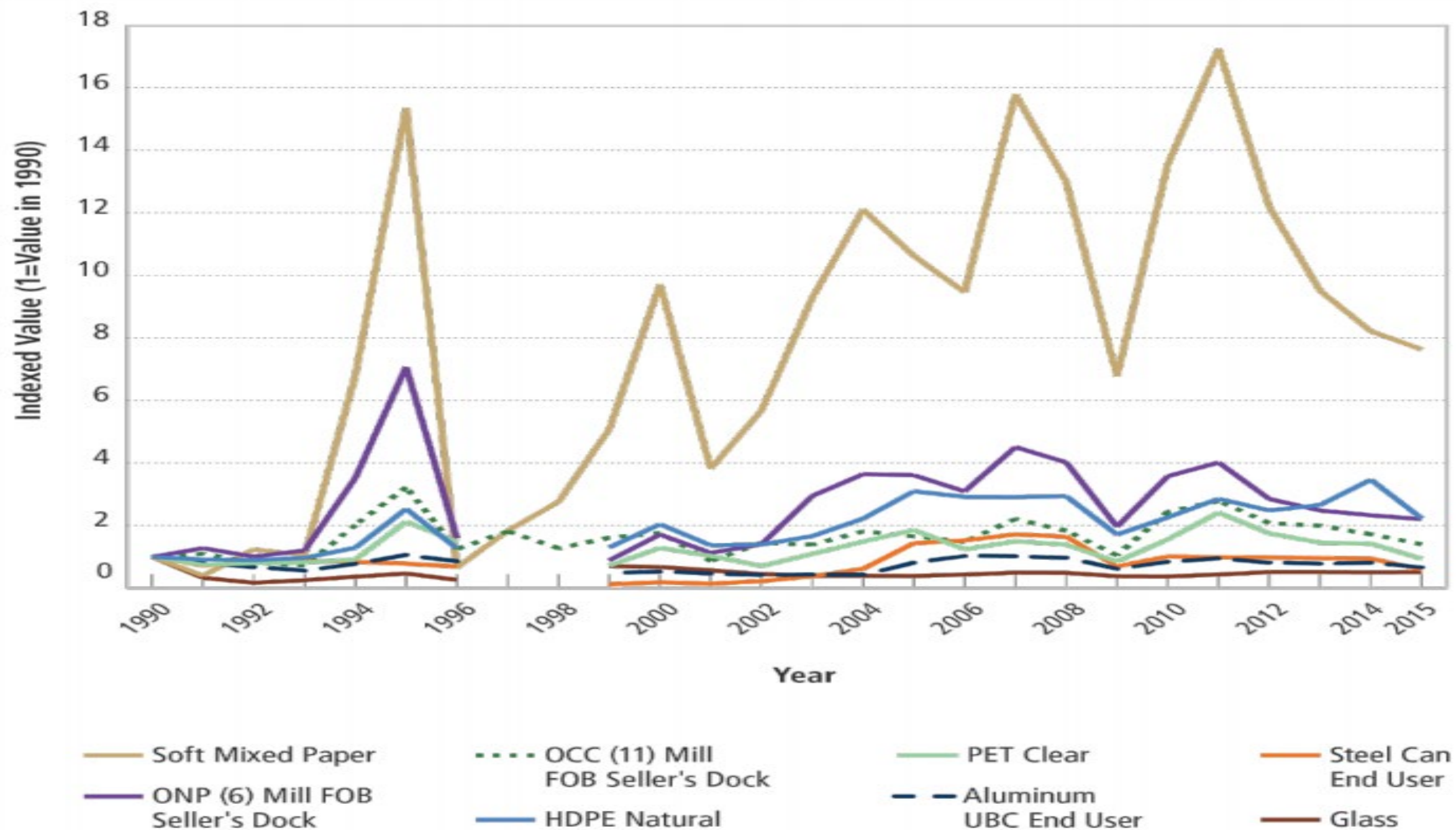


Figure 11. Indexed Recycled Commodity Values by Year



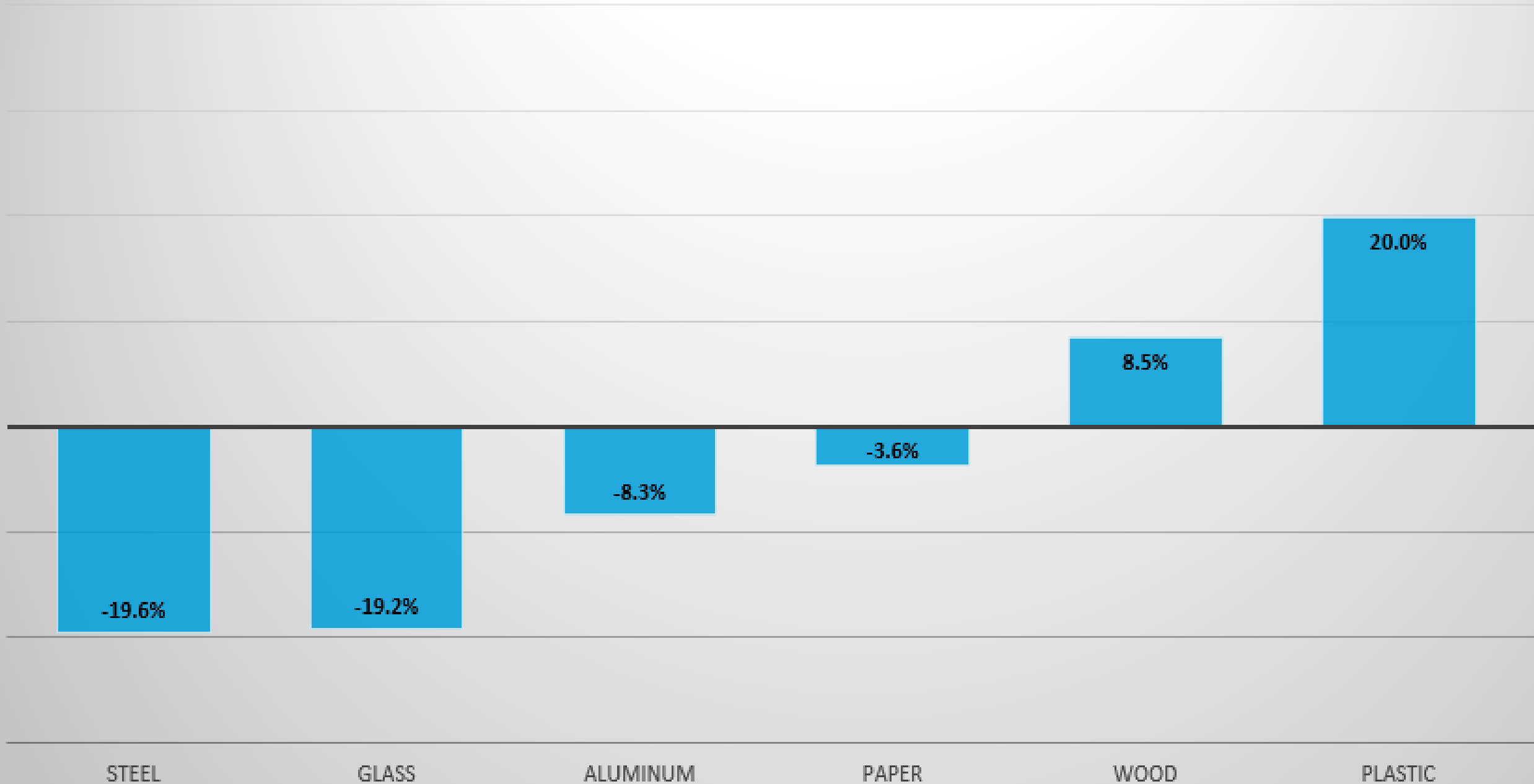






Evolving Material Stream

Percent Change in Material Generated 2000-2013



Wish-Cycling

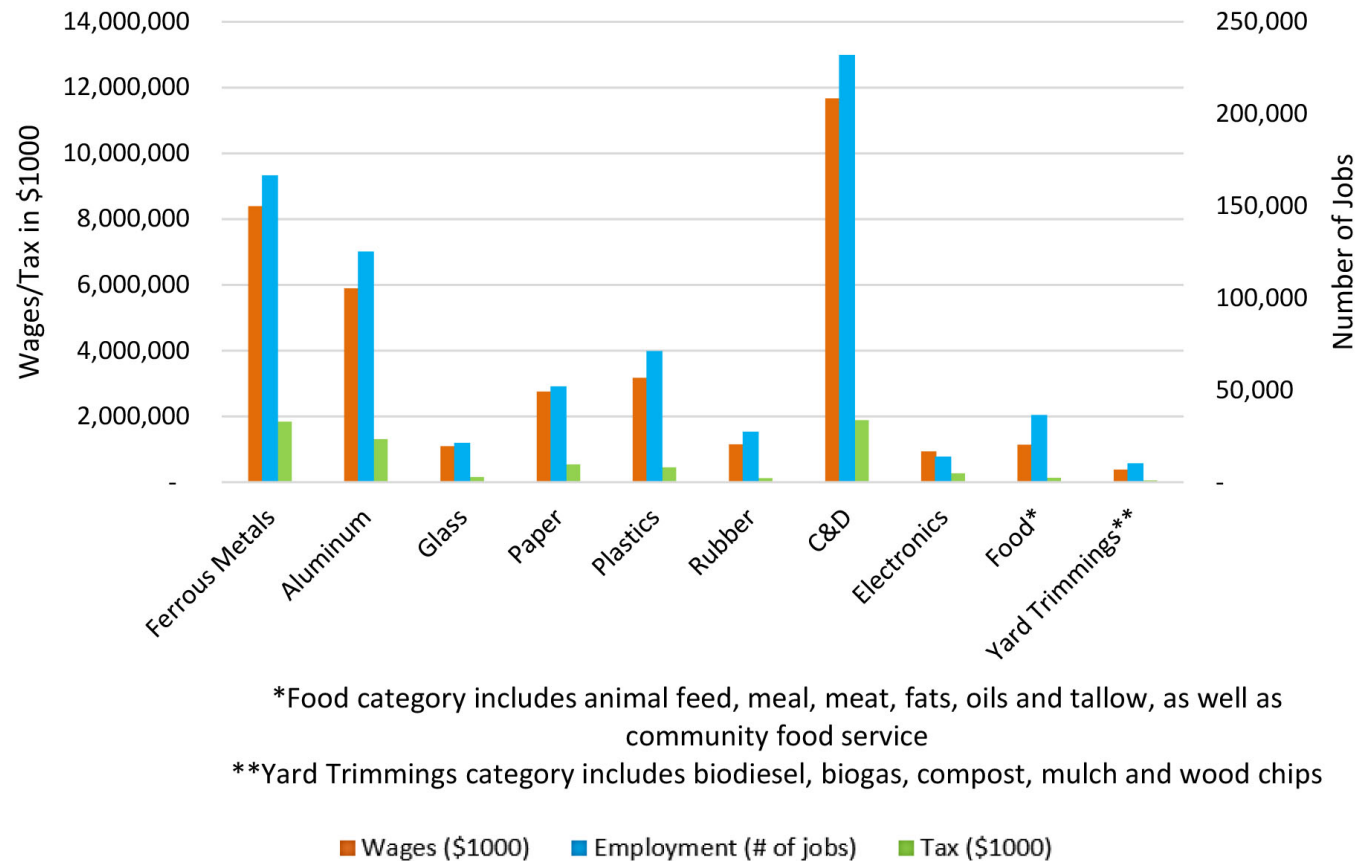


Consumer Confusion



Importance of Recycling

Wages, Tax and Jobs Attributable to Recycling



- 757,000 jobs
- \$6.7 billion annually in tax revenues

- \$9 billion are thrown away each year!

<https://www.epa.gov/smm/recycling-economic-information-rei-report>

Disaster Debris



Electronics: Li-Ion Batteries



Marine Litter



EPA's 2018 America Recycles Day Summit





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.

U.S. Recycling System Action Areas



Promoting
Education and
Outreach



Enhancing
Materials
Management
Infrastructure



Strengthening
Secondary
Materials
Markets



Enhancing
Measurement

Promoting Education and Outreach



A photograph of a waste management facility. Two workers wearing yellow hard hats and high-visibility vests are sorting through a large pile of trash on a conveyor belt. The trash includes plastic bottles, paper, and other debris. In the background, there are yellow metal structures and a blue container. The text "Enhancing Materials Management Infrastructure" is overlaid in white. At the bottom, there are labels "TRASH" and "OVERSIZE CONTAINER" on blue bins.

Enhancing Materials Management Infrastructure

TRASH

OVERSIZE
CONTAINER

A large pile of compressed plastic waste, primarily white and grey, with some colorful fragments (orange, blue, green, yellow) visible. The waste is stacked in a large, rectangular block. In the background, a building with a corrugated metal roof and a yellow structure are visible. The text "Strengthening Secondary Materials Markets" is overlaid in white, sans-serif font.

Strengthening Secondary Materials Markets

Enhancing Measurement

A photograph of an industrial manufacturing environment. In the foreground, a large stack of white, rectangular bags or containers is visible. To the right, a worker wearing a white hard hat and a bright green t-shirt is operating a large, blue industrial machine. The machine has various components, including a yellow hopper or container on top and a control panel with a digital display. The background shows a complex network of blue metal structures and pipes, typical of a factory or processing plant. The overall scene suggests a focus on industrial measurement and production.

A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a watch is standing outdoors, placing plastic bottles and aluminum cans into a blue recycling bin. The bin has a label that reads "PLASTIC BOTTLES ALUMINUM CANS" and "Please Recycle". The background shows a grassy area and a fence.

Cross-Cutting Clearinghouse

EPA Actions & Announcements



Provide leadership and facilitate workgroups



Conduct a pilot educational campaign focused on plastic film



Hold regional and state market development workshops



Update EPA's ReCon Tool to calculate emissions reductions from recycled content products



Develop a federal register notice for public comment on the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines



Update EPA's *Measuring Recycling: A Guide for State and Local Governments*

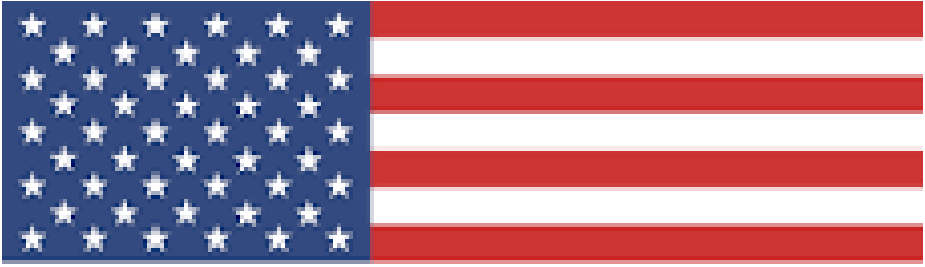


Release the *National Framework to Advance the US Recycling System*



America Recycles Week November 11-15, 2019

- Monday (11/ 11): *Veterans, Jobs and Recycling*
- Tuesday (11/ 12): *Measurement*
- Wednesday (11/13): *Markets and Market Development*
- Thursday (11/14): *Education and Outreach*
- Friday (11/15): *America Recycles Day: Collaboration is Key to Success*



America Recycles Week Highlights of Planned Events

www.epa.gov/AmericaRecycles

Keep America Beautiful Veterans Day
event at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas

November 11th

America Recycles Innovation Fair

November 14th

America Recycles Day Summit

November 15th



Working Together to Address Challenges



Thank you!

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