

Draft National Recycling Strategy Executive Summary

The draft National Recycling Strategy identifies strategic objectives and actions needed to create a stronger, more resilient, and cost-effective U.S. municipal solid waste recycling system. Recycling has been a critical component of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) decades-long efforts to implement the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and its more recent efforts to pursue a Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) approach, which aims to reduce the environmental impacts of materials across their lifecycle. Building on the 2019 *National Framework for Advancing the U.S. Recycling System* and EPA's long history of providing data, tools, information and other resources to support recycling in the United States, the draft Strategy identifies strategic objectives and actions needed to create a stronger, more resilient, and cost-effective U.S. municipal solid waste recycling system. The U.S. recycling system currently faces a number of challenges, including confusion about what materials can be recycled, recycling infrastructure that has not kept pace with today's diverse and changing waste stream, reduced markets for recycled materials, and varying methodologies to measure recycling system performance. The draft Strategy identifies actions to address these challenges that build on the collaborative efforts by stakeholders from across the recycling system that began under the *National Framework for Advancing the U.S. Recycling System*. The Strategy, when finalized, will be aligned with and support implementation of the national recycling goals, which EPA intends to announce in November 2020.

EPA proposes three strategic objectives: reduce contamination in the recycling stream, increase processing efficiency, and improve markets, that will contribute towards strengthening the U.S. recycling system, and which serve as the organizing framework under which proposed actions in this draft Strategy are organized:

Objective 1: Reduce Contamination in the Recycling Stream

Reducing contamination in the recycling stream will enable more material to be recycled and can result in less material being discarded and higher quality recycled materials produced for manufacturing feedstock.

1.1. Enhance education and outreach to consumers on the value of recycling and how to recycle properly.

1.2. Increase coordination, availability and accessibility of information on recycling programs and policies at the federal, state, tribal and local levels.

Objective 2: Increase Processing Efficiency

Investment and innovation are needed to increase the efficiency of materials processing infrastructure and create a more resilient recycling system.

2.1. Improve understanding of available recycling infrastructure and needs.

National Recycling Strategy

October 5, 2020 Draft

2.2. Increase awareness of available public and private funding and incentives and effective strategies to access the funding.

2.3. Continue to fund research and development of new technologies and processes that result in environmental gains from improvements in manufacturing and processing efficiencies.

2.4. Increase consideration of the sorting process in the design of new products.

2.5. Develop and implement national recycling system definitions, measures, targets, and performance indicators.

Objective 3: Improve Markets

There is a need to improve domestic markets for recyclable materials and recyclable products, as well as to better integrate recycled materials into product and packaging designs.

3.1. Conduct market development workshops and dialogues to spur market development for recycled materials, educate stakeholders on the value of secondary materials, and identify solutions to recycling system challenges.

3.2. Produce an analysis of different types of end markets that considers resilience, environmental benefits, and other relevant factors for decision makers.

3.3. Increase data availability and transparency about recyclable materials generated and the materials manufacturers need.

3.4. Increase manufacturing use of feedstocks in the regions where they are generated.

3.5 Increase demand for recycled materials through policies, programs, initiatives, and incentives, focusing on materials with less mature markets.

Public Comment: EPA is providing a 60-day comment period from October 5th, 2020 until December 4th, 2020. EPA is looking for specific feedback during the comment period on the questions in the textbox below.

Key questions to consider in the comment period include:

- Of the proposed actions, which are the most important and would have the greatest positive impact at the local, regional, and national level?
- What are the key implementation steps and milestones necessary to successfully implement these actions?
- Is your organization willing to lead an action? Or collaborate with others to implement the actions? What factors would your organization take into account when considering whether to lead an action?
- What are the most important roles and/or actions for federal agencies to lead?
- Are there other actions that should be included in the Strategy?
- Do you have additional information or recommendations to inform these or other proposed actions?