



**DATE:** September 12, 2019

**TO:** Programs & Administration Committee  
Planning Committee/Recycling Board

**FROM:** Meghan Starkey, Senior Management Analyst

**SUBJECT:** National Sword Update and Local Impacts

---

### **SUMMARY**

StopWaste convenes a quarterly National Sword Task Force for member agencies and local service providers to share information. The primary purpose of the task force is to create a unified front and consistent talking points, and a common understanding regarding current market challenges created by China's import policies and subsequent international developments.

The purpose of this item is to share an update on the National Sword topic generally, as well as share results from a recent survey of member agencies about steps they have taken or plan to take in response to the market disruption caused by National Sword.

### **DISCUSSION**

The United States has relied on China as an export destination for mixed paper and plastics for many years. As part of the China's Blue Sky policy, aimed at shutting down old polluting mills and decreasing trash and litter, China instituted strict new guidelines for commodity imports.

The market impacts were both sudden and very disruptive. Inspections of material became extremely rigorous. Simultaneously, the prices for these commodities plummeted. Other markets, primarily in Southeast Asia, have taken up the slack in volume, but are prone to disruption.

The finances of local recycling programs in Alameda County were designed both around readily available markets and revenue from commodities to offset costs of collection and processing. At the meeting, staff will present the results of a survey of member agencies summarizing their responses in the areas of messaging, processing, acceptable materials, and service provider compensation.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This item is for information only.

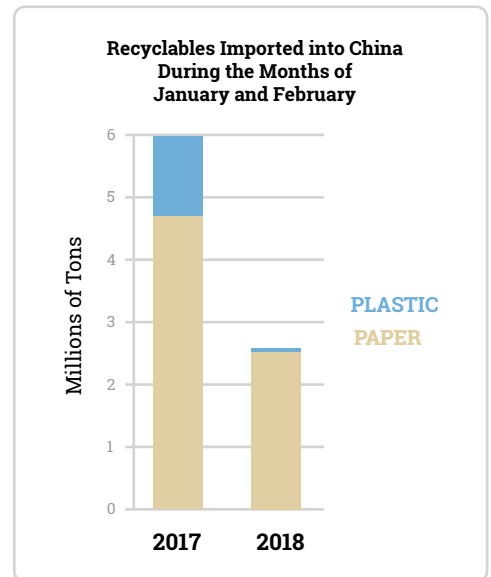
Attachment: National Sword Topic Brief

## A New Era for Recycling

After your recycling cart or bin is picked up by a hauler, the materials are sorted, processed and sold to end users, some domestically and others overseas.

The United States, Europe, Australia and other parts of the world have increasingly relied on China as an export destination for mixed paper (junk mail, newsprint, office paper, etc.) and mixed plastic. Due to concerns about contamination of the material they have been receiving, and to shut down older polluting mills, China has instituted policies (Blue Sky and National Sword) that have effectively closed the doors on most imported mixed recyclables. Global changes are affecting our local programs, and quite abruptly.

As a result, StopWaste is re-emphasizing what residents and businesses can do to keep recycling streams clean, and how to reduce waste in the first place—especially paper—so that there is less of it to manage.



Data from Resource-Recycling.com (4/17/2018)

### Here's how to take action:



#### 1. Continue Recycling

- Although recycling haulers are being challenged to find a way to market mixed paper and some plastics, residents and businesses should continue to recycle as work is done to find a long-term solution for recycling these items.
- Other materials that go in the recycling cart continue to have reliable venues for processing and remanufacturing.



#### 2. Keep It Clean

- Make sure you're only putting what's allowed in your recycling and green carts (check [www.StopWaste.org/Recycle](http://www.StopWaste.org/Recycle) to see what's accepted in your city).
- Items going in the recycling cart should be empty, clean and dry, free of food and liquids.
- No plastic, glass, or metal should ever go in the green cart—quality compost starts with yard trimmings and food scraps.



#### 3. Minimize Paper Use

- Think twice before printing and print double-sided when possible.
- Go paperless with bank and utility statements.
- Visit [www.StopWaste.org/Recycle](http://www.StopWaste.org/Recycle) for links to stop junk mail and unwanted catalogs and phone books.

Additional information on how to recycle is available at [www.StopWaste.org/Recycle](http://www.StopWaste.org/Recycle)