



DATE: October 14, 2021

TO: Programs and Administration Committee

FROM: Alma Freeman, Program Manager

SUBJECT: CA Recycling Commission Report Key Findings

SUMMARY

In June 2021, CalRecycle’s Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets and Curbside Recycling, tasked last year with evaluating California’s state of recycling and recommending policies to help meet the state’s ambitious recycling and organics recovery goals, released its final set of policy recommendations. As part of this work, the Commission determined a list of 15 materials that are readily recyclable and compostable and that are consistently collected in California curbside recycling programs, using specific criteria to determine which materials make the list. The Commission recommends that the state only allow materials included on this list to be marketed and labeled as “recyclable” in the state. The report also provides a pathway for additional items to be added to local recycling acceptance lists by individual cities as long as they meet specific criteria. At the October 14 Programs and Administration Committee meeting, staff will present key findings from the report, with a focus on the new acceptability list and possible implications and opportunities for our local programs in Alameda County.

DISCUSSION

Questions around what is “truly recyclable” have increased since China’s National Sword policy and other changes in global markets for recyclable materials disrupted recycling programs across the country. Given the complexity and rapid change of the materials in our waste stream, messaging and outreach to consumers about what goes where has been and still is confusing and inconsistent, including in Alameda County. The Commission list, which are non-binding recommendations to CalRecycle and the Legislature, excludes many commonly accepted items, such as yogurt tubs and scrap metal. By eliminating materials that are not deemed readily recyclable, the narrowed list aims to not only help reduce contamination and “wish cycling,” but to also send a signal upstream to manufacturers to design or choose packaging that is recyclable. Long term, the Commission’s goal is to inform development of a sustainable recycling system where consumers are able to make informed purchasing choices based on true recyclability.

Ongoing efforts

StopWaste and our partners are advancing several efforts that are relevant to the State Commission's recommendations and that are designed to increase waste prevention and diversion in Alameda County, including:

- Continued discussions and consultations with member agencies and the Alameda County Recycling Markets Network on recycling market changes and implications for modifying acceptability lists based on these recommendations. The State Commission was modeled after the network we developed for Alameda County.
- Developing potential strategies for cities interested in local additions to the Commission's recyclable list.
- Facilitating a countywide bin decal project to meet SB 1383 requirements and strengthen consistency across the county about what goes where.
- Supporting legislative priorities that advance truth in labeling, upstream waste prevention, and domestic market stimulation.
- Supporting the development of a local Recycling Market Development Zone to spur in-county materials processing and stimulate economic investment and local jobs.

The final report of the Statewide Commission on Recycling Markets and Curbside Recycling is available to view here: <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/markets/commission>.

Staff will review key findings from the report and discuss local implications and next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.

Attachment: CA Statewide Recyclable List

Table 2: California (CA) Statewide Recyclable List

15 Consumer Item types met the criteria requirements across the state and are recyclable statewide:

Paper Products (8):

1. Mail
2. Paper Mailing Pouches
3. Kraft Bags
4. Magazines
5. Newspaper
6. OCC (old corrugated cardboard)
7. Home Office Paper
8. Paperboard Boxes (e.g. cereal, tissue, not coated)

Glass (2):

9. Bottles
10. Jars

Metal (2):

11. Aluminum cans
12. Steel cans

Plastic (3):

13. #1 PET Bottles (Screw-type narrow neck tops – no non-recyclable shrink sleeves or other non-recyclable components)
14. #2 HDPE Bottles – Natural (Narrow necks – includes jugs – no non-recyclable shrink sleeves or other non-recyclable components)
15. #2 HDPE Bottles – Color (Narrow necks – includes jugs – no non-recyclable shrink sleeves or other non-recyclable components)