



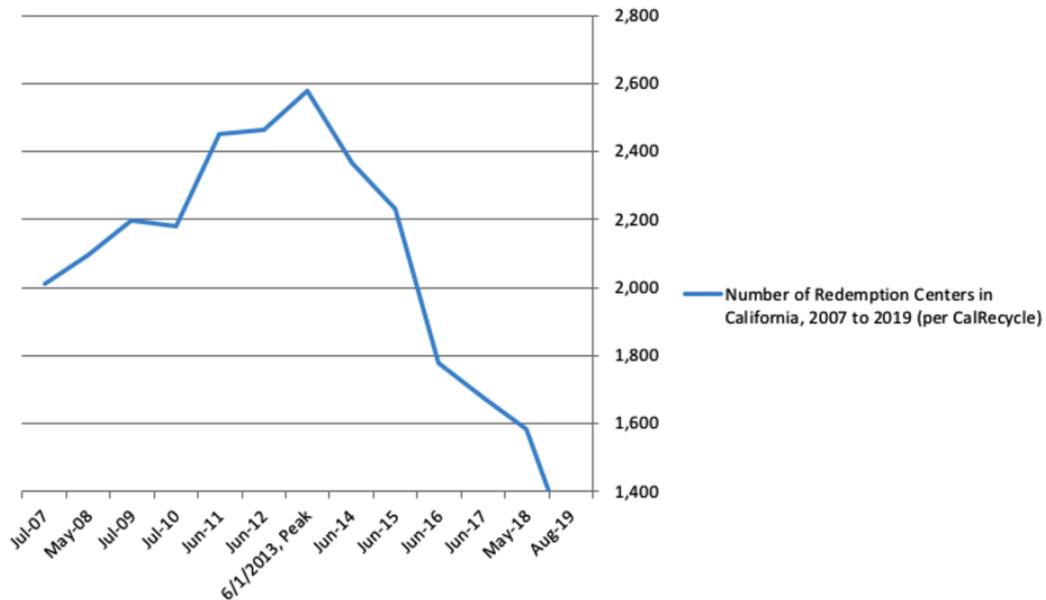
DATE: October 23, 2019
TO: Waste Management Authority Board
FROM: Justin Lehrer, Senior Management Analyst
SUBJECT: Recycling Redemption Center Closures

SUMMARY

California's Bottle Bill is one of the most successful and cost effective recycling and pollution reduction programs in North America; yet it is currently facing an unprecedented crisis, resulting in a lower recycling rate and significant harm to the sustainable economy and the environment. At the October WMA Board meeting, two guest speakers will provide an overview of the issue and share their thoughts on what is happening and what can be done to fix the system.

DISCUSSION

From 2013 through mid-2019, more than 1,300 (53%) of the state's redemption centers closed, resulting in less recovered income for consumers, fewer recycling industry jobs, and a drop in the state's recycling rate by approximately 10 percentage points. California's Bottle Bill recycling rate was 85% in 2013, and 75.6% for 2018.



The California container deposit program is beset by a host of ills: an outdated state subsidy formula that results in severe underpayments to redemption centers, historically low scrap prices, and minimum wage increases for center employees, among others. It will take a significant overhaul to revive this system.

Staff invited Susan Collins, President of the Container Recycling Institute, and Jeff Donlevy, General Manager of Ming's Recycling, to share information about this unfolding situation, impacts at the state and local levels, and ideas for addressing the causes and restoring the effectiveness of California's Bottle Bill.

Susan V. Collins, President – Container Recycling Institute

Ms. Collins leads the Container Recycling Institute's research projects and works with environmental organizations, businesses, and state and federal governments throughout the United States and around the world to educate the public on the benefits of packaging recycling. Prior to 2009, Ms. Collins was a consultant for 20 years and assisted over 80 public agencies with their solid waste and recycling programs. Ms. Collins served on four CalRecycle advisory groups, including the subject of waste accounting. Ms. Collins served on the Board of the California Resource Recovery Association for nine years, and has been on the board of the National Recycling Coalition since 2010. She holds degrees in Manufacturing Engineering from Boston University and Business Administration (MBA) from the University of California at Los Angeles.

Ms. Collins has testified before the legislatures of California, Nevada, Vermont, Minnesota, Maryland, Tennessee, and Massachusetts. She has been quoted in news stories on National Public Radio, PRI's The World, BBC radio, KNX radio, KCET's SoCal Connected (TV), Maryland Public Radio, KQED radio, the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Boston Globe, Resource Recycling, Waste 360, Plastics News, and Beverage World, among others.

Jeff Donlevy, General Manager, Ming's Resources East Bay, Hayward Facility

Mr. Donlevy has over 25 years' experience in the recycling industry, including design, construction, start-up and management of recycling facilities ranging in size from 2,000 tons per month up to 10,000 tons per month. He has been involved in the startup operations of collection programs including curbside collection programs in Chino, Upland, Corona, Diamond Bar, and the City of San Jose. He has managed recycling and logistics contracts for large customers including Anheuser Busch, California State Department of Correctional Facilities, and Bay Area News Group. He has offices in Sacramento at the Florin Rd. facility and the Hayward facility.

Ming's Recycling has provided recycling services for over 30 years. Starting as a family owned, simple buyback recycling center, Ming's has grown to be one of the largest state certified processors in California. Handling over 25,000 tons per month of recyclables, Ming's customers include over 25 material brokers, 400 recycling centers, and over 100 Material Recovery Facilities. Ming's specializes in aluminum cans, plastic bottles, tin cans, cardboard, and other recyclable material.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.

Attachment: How to Get Your Deposit Back After rePlanet Closures



Bottle Recycling in California: How to Get Your Deposits Back

What's the Best Way to Recycle My Empty Beverage Containers?

California is one of only 10 U.S. states with a deposit return system that allows you to return empty bottles and cans to a recycling location and get back the nickel or dime deposits you paid when you purchased them. California's container recycling rate is 75% compared to the national average of 32%. Deposit return systems provide many important benefits:

- Creating an incentive to recycle by providing income to consumers through returned deposits;
- Producing higher recycling rates and collecting higher-quality materials compared to curbside (blue bin) programs;
- Keeping communities cleaner by reducing litter in public places;
- Lowering the amount of waste sent to landfills;
- Reducing the amount of plastic that enters our oceans and harms marine and human life;
- Decreasing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by lessening reliance on raw materials to manufacture new containers; and
- Creating recycling industry jobs.

But My Neighborhood Recycling Center Closed. What Should I Do?

1. First check to see if there are other nearby recycling centers. Go to www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/WhereToRecycle/, and use the search function to look for other centers in your area.
2. If you can't find a recycling center in a convenient location, go to www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/BevContainer/InStoreRedemption to search for retailers that redeem in-store. More than 4,000 grocery stores and other retailers statewide have pledged to accept empty beverage containers and provide deposit refunds.

Note: If a store on this list will not take back your empty containers, email CalRecycle at complaints@calrecycle.ca.gov or dealersigns@calrecycle.ca.gov, or call 1-800-RECYCLE.

I Still Can't Find a Place to Return My Bottles and Cans. Should I Put Them in My Blue Bin?

Yes. Although container deposit programs offer significant benefits compared to curbside systems, the two types of programs can work together well to maximize bottle and can recovery rates. However, containers put into blue bins can get contaminated, making them non-recyclable and perhaps resulting in them being shipped to landfills. Please rinse out bottles and cans before adding them to your curbside bin, and make sure not to include any materials including food or other items (such as partly filled containers or pizza boxes with scraps on the cardboard).

Where Does My Money Go if I Don't Return My Containers to a Recycling Center?

If you put your containers in a curbside blue bin, the deposits are returned to the curbside program that recycles your containers. If you put your containers in the trash, the containers go to the landfill and the deposit money you paid at the store stays in the state fund that is managed by CalRecycle.

Where Can I Learn More About Recycling in California?

Please visit the website of the Container Recycling Institute at www.container-recycling.org. This nonprofit organization is a leading authority on the economic and environmental impacts of used beverage containers and other consumer product packaging. Its mission is to make North America a global model for the collection and quality recycling of packaging materials.

How to Make Your Voice Heard!

Because CalRecycle's payments to the recycling centers aren't sufficient to meet the centers' expenses, more than 1,300 centers in California have closed since 2013. (For more information from CalRecycle on this issue, visit www.calrecycle.ca.gov/markets/recyclingclosures.) If you are frustrated by the decreasing number of opportunities to return empty containers and put deposit money back in your pocket, contact CalRecycle (www.calrecycle.ca.gov/BevContainer/Contacts/) and the office of Governor Gavin Newsom (<https://govapps.gov.ca.gov/gov40mail/>).