

# Product Stewardship A Success for Maine

Case  
Study

#1

## The Bottle Bill



*“Producers, consumers, and beverage-related businesses all share responsibility in our system, and it works—we have a 90% recycling rate for beverage containers here in Maine because of the bottle bill.”*

– Paul Coburn, Owner,  
Old Mill Redemption Center

The bottle bill, or container deposit law, is Maine’s oldest “product stewardship” program. With hundreds of millions of qualifying beverage containers recycled annually in Maine, the economic, job creation, and environmental benefits of Maine’s original product stewardship law are widespread. Since 1978, beverage manufacturers and distributors have been responsible for sharing a portion of container recycling costs with beverage retailers and redemption centers.

Maine’s bottle bill is the most effective recycling law in the state. Its 90% recycling rate for beverage containers far outperforms Maine’s average recycling rate of 35% for other recyclable materials. During the 35 years our bottle bill has been in effect, Maine has kept tens of billions of containers out of landfills, incinerators, and off of roadsides.

Maine’s bottle bill supports more than 1,000 jobs at hundreds of redemption centers and spurs millions of dollars in direct and indirect economic activity. At the same time, it reduces costs to towns and taxpayers for litter collection, container collection, transportation, and recycling. It also helps schools, churches, and sports groups raise money through bottle drives. Maine is one of ten states with a container deposit system and the law has become an integral part of how we handle plastic, glass, and aluminum beverage containers. It is often mystifying to Mainers visiting states that don’t have a bottle bill to see containers thrown into the trash or allowed to litter the streets. For Mainers, the bottle bill has been a big success.

### What is “Product Stewardship”?

Product stewardship is an advanced recycling strategy that requires manufacturers to share responsibility for the safe collection and recycling or disposal of their products and packaging. Product stewardship shifts recycling and disposal costs from taxpayers to producers and consumers.

### How it Works

**Producers** pick up the empties from **collection sites** and pay them 5¢ plus a 3.5¢-4¢ handling fee per container.

**Producers** charge a 5¢ deposit for each container delivered to **retailers**.

**Retailers** charge the 5¢ deposit to **consumers** upon purchase.

**Collection Sites** return the 5¢ to **consumers** when they return empties.

# Product Stewardship Creates Jobs in Maine



## CLYNK, South Portland

Product stewardship policies spur innovation and job creation, and the example of CLYNK's operations in Maine is a case in point. CLYNK is a beverage container recycling company that provides an innovative and easy way for customers at Hannaford grocery stores to drop off their returnable containers and get the redemption amount credited directly to their account or passed on to a designated charity. CLYNK's operations are straightforward: their trucks collect empty containers from participating Hannaford grocery store locations and bring them to a central facility in South Portland. There, the materials are tracked, sorted, baled, and housed to await pickup for recycling. The beverage manufacturers or their contracted agents then retrieve the materials from the facility, and pay 3.5¢ to 4¢ per container to cover the recycling and sorting costs.

Since its founding in 2004, CLYNK has processed more than 300 million beverage containers at its 46 collection locations throughout Maine. The eight-year old company, employing 30 full-time-employees, is the largest redeemer and processor in the state. As a relatively new company operating under a 30-year old product stewardship program, CLYNK turns a profit and creates jobs in Maine while providing a valuable service to beverage consumers and retailers.

"Because we've made it really easy for people to recycle, and since our operation is highly streamlined, the company has thrived in just a few years of operation," says CLYNK CEO Clayton Kyle. "By sharing the costs of collection and sorting with beverage distributors, our company has had room to create a lean and efficient system that works well for Maine."

## A Maine Employer

Mary Wood, a resident of South Portland, has worked at CLYNK for two years. After thirty years working as a waitress and a bank teller engaging with the public, Mary is pleased with the change of pace that her job provides on the floor at CLYNK's processing facility.

"I love working at CLYNK," says Mary. "There are usually sixteen of us here who track and sort containers, and make sure the equipment runs properly." Mary is responsible for the accurate tracking and sorting of containers dropped off in CLYNK bags. She is one of 50-70 employees at CLYNK (summer months bring more work to the company), and one of 30 who are employed full-time.



## At a Glance

- 30 Full-time employees
  - 12 in the office
  - 18 in trucking or processing
- 20 additional part-time employees in the winter
- 40 additional part-time employees in the summer
- Most of CLYNK's full-time employees have been with the company more than 2 years
- All full-time workers get health and retirement benefits and dental, disability, and life insurance

# Product Stewardship Protects Maine's Environment

## THE OLD MILL Redemption Center

### Old Mill Redemption Center, Kingfield



Paul Coburn and his two employees have been operating the Old Mill Redemption Center for 25 years. Residents of Kingfield, Stratton, Eustis, Salem, Carrabasset Valley, and visitors to Sugarloaf Mountain Resort visit the facility throughout the year. The 1,500 residents of Kingfield, residents in surrounding towns, and 15 to 20 local community groups provide a steady flow of customers to the facility. In 2011, the Old Mill Redemption Center collected and sorted about 2.2 million beverage containers. "People live in and visit our area to enjoy its natural beauty. Our business helps protect the beautiful land in this area," says Coburn.

### Cleaner Land

States with bottle bills have less litter than those without them. By sharing the cost of collection and recycling with manufacturers and providing an incentive for consumers to recycle, the bottle bill keeps Maine a cleaner, environmentally responsible state. More than half of the beverage containers recycled at Old Mill and other redemption centers would end up on roadsides or in landfills if the law did not provide consumers, retailers, and redemption centers with incentives to recycle. One government-funded study showed that Maine's beverage container litter was reduced by 69-77% as a result of the container-deposit system. Studies conducted in eight other states showed that bottle bills reduced total litter by 30% to 65%.

### Cleaner Air

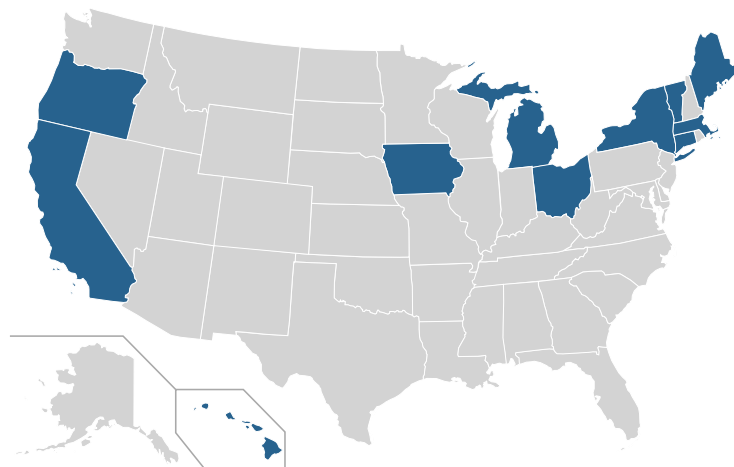
Recycling of beverage containers also saves energy and materials, and reduces environmental impacts associated with energy generation and mining. Cans made from recycled aluminum require 95% less energy input than those made from new aluminum. Recycling plastic bottles cuts energy use by 90%, and recycling glass cuts energy use by 30% compared with containers made from virgin materials. By recycling beverage container materials and reducing the amount of energy required for production, Maine's bottle bill has prevented as much climate-changing pollution as is produced by more than 19,000 cars in a year.



# Product Stewardship Boosts Maine's Economy

## Saves Taxpayer Money

Maine's bottle bill saves taxpayers money because manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and consumers share the responsibility for recycling beverage containers. The system increases the efficiency of the market for recyclable materials by requiring commercial beverage manufacturers to assume some responsibility for managing materials. Local governments save money that they otherwise would spend on collection and landfill operations, including landfill expansion costs that might be triggered in part if Maine people were simply throwing their cans and bottles out with their trash—as happens in many of the 40 states without a bottle bill.



States With Bottle Bills: California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Maine, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Vermont



## Supports Good Works

Over the past thirty years, bottle drives have become critical fundraisers for community organizations statewide. For schools, sports teams, non-profit organizations, clubs like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and many others, annual bottle drives can raise thousands of dollars to support their programs and good works in our communities.



## Stockton Springs Community Library

The Stockton Springs Community Library raises over \$6,000 per year, about half of its annual budget, from their *Bottles for Books Drive*. "We keep the bottle drive going every day of the year," says Patricia Curley, Library Director. "Local schools, clubs, businesses, and residents get involved by returning containers, and then stay involved as library patrons and volunteers. It's engaging for the community and it's an absolutely critical source of funding for us."

The program has run smoothly for ten years. Library users contribute redeemable containers to a homemade shed outside the library, and a volunteer makes a daily delivery to the nearby Bucksport Redemption Center. The funds raised are used to purchase books and audiovisual materials, help pay for library programs, and maintain the facility that serves the residents of Stockton Springs and patrons of the library from surrounding towns.



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## For Further Information:

NRCM's Product Stewardship Project: [www.nrcm.org/productstewardship.asp](http://www.nrcm.org/productstewardship.asp)

Container Recycling Institute: [www.container-recycling.org/](http://www.container-recycling.org/)

Help support sustainable materials policies by joining NRCM's Action Network:  
[www.nrcm.kintera.org/Action\\_Network\\_signup](http://www.nrcm.kintera.org/Action_Network_signup)