



RECYCLING REFORM FOR MAINE

More Effective • More Sustainable • More Equitable

www.recyclingreform.org

Recycling in Maine is fundamentally flawed.

You can help fix it.

Maine people have developed a strong recycling ethic because they want to do the right thing. However, many towns are being forced to scale back or eliminate their recycling programs due to higher costs from shifts in global markets and a flood of poorly designed, non-recyclable packaging.

It is unfair for towns and taxpayers to shoulder the costs for managing a constantly evolving waste stream that they have no control over. That's why NRCM is supporting a proposed state law that would reform recycling to require brand owners and corporations who manufacture packaging and materials to share responsibility for creating an effective recycling system. This solution is based on a successful model being used across the world called "extended producer responsibility (EPR) for packaging."

Recycling reform for Maine will make recycling:

- **More Effective.** Producers of packaging materials would have a direct economic incentive to produce less wasteful packaging that can easily and profitably be recycled.
- **More Sustainable.** Our current approach to recycling is not resilient to changes in the global recycling market, forcing cities or towns to consider stopping or restricting recycling when costs rise unexpectedly. **Think of this solution as an insurance policy for Maine municipalities when global recycling markets fluctuate.**
- **More Equitable.** Maine's cities, towns, and taxpayers currently pay \$16-\$17.5 million per year to manage packaging waste that they did not create. With recycling reform, taxpayers would no longer pay for the cost of recycling since the net costs of recycling would be reimbursed by a producer responsibility organization.

What are Recyclables?



Aside from printed paper, our recycling bins are filled mostly with packaging, including plastic, steel, aluminum, glass, and cardboard. These materials make up about 30% to 40% of Maine's waste stream.

Boxy McBoxface, Recycling Reform for Maine Director
Learn more about Boxy at recyclingreform.org



Recycling is one of the key ways that we can keep materials out of landfills and conserve our natural resources. Manufacturers are designing a greater diversity of products that may be technically recyclable but not practically recyclable locally.

“I have been working on ways to reduce plastic in my life, but the wasteful packaging is what is most frustrating to me because I don’t have the ability to change that infrastructure.”

—Sarah Southam, Bethel

Problems with Status Quo	Solutions with Recycling Reform
Municipalities and taxpayers unfairly pay for a waste problem they have no control over.	Shifts the cost of managing packaging waste from the municipal taxpayer to the producers of the packaging materials.
Access to convenient recycling programs vary greatly across the state.	Producers reimburse municipalities for the costs of expanding access and convenience to recycling programs. Cities and towns still pay for disposal costs so there is a strong incentive to maintain a robust and effective recycling system.
Municipal recycling programs are not resilient to changes in global recycling markets.	Municipalities would be reimbursed by the producers for the net costs of recycling, preventing them from having to adjust their programs due to market fluctuations over time.
Manufacturers are flooding the market with products that may be technically recyclable but not practically recyclable locally.	Producers pay into the system based on what they produce so companies that use materials that can be more easily recycled would pay less than those who don’t.
Contamination in recycling streams due to confusion and non-recyclable packaging materials raises costs and leads to more disposal.	There will be less opportunity for contamination and incentives for producers to create only readily recyclable materials. Payments made by producers could be reduced if they have clear instructions on how to recycle the material on their package. The producer would also fund and provide public recycling education.
Never reached goal of 50% recycling rate. Currently stagnant at 40% and presumed to be falling.	The more than 40 jurisdictions around the world that have adopted EPR for packaging boast recycling rates well over 50%.
Lack of reliable and transparent data on recycling activity.	Reimbursement to municipalities would be based on reliable data of what materials are sold, collected, and ultimately recycled.
Domestic recycling markets extremely limited.	Payments made by producers become lower when they incorporate a higher percentage of recycled content in their packaging, helping to create demand for a vibrant recycling economy.



How you can help!

We need the support of Mainers across the state! Visit www.recyclingreform.org to get involved: sign our petition, recruit municipal support for recycling reform, and contact your elected officials. For more information, contact NRCM Sustainable Maine Outreach Coordinator Chrissy Adamowicz at (207) 430-0144 or chrissy@nrcm.org.



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