



RECYCLING: AN ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

LET'S STOP THROWING AWAY JOBS AND BURYING MONEY

THE RECYCLING CHALLENGE: MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Colorado recycles only 12 percent of its waste, much less than the national average of 34 percent.¹

This abysmally low recycling rate costs Colorado jobs and money—a lot of jobs and money. **In 2014, Colorado landfilled valuable materials worth as much as \$170 million²**—that's enough money to cover the tuition costs of sending more than 15,000 students to the University of Colorado every year.

This is an **economic** problem as well as an environmental problem. Imagine the potential jobs and revenue that could have been generated had those valuable materials been sold, reused or remanufactured instead of trashed.

Coloradoans share strong conservation values, yet **our state is one of the most wasteful in the nation.**³ More than 40% of Coloradoans do not recycle regularly, and 25% never recycle. Residential curbside recycling is available in less than half of the counties in Colorado.⁴



THROWING AWAY MONEY

- Much of what goes in the trash has value and could be sold on the recycling market—this includes materials like aluminum, cardboard and plastic bottles.
- **Recycling, reuse and remanufacturing industries in Colorado generate \$8.7 billion in economic benefits annually**, even at our low recycling rate.⁵ (Imagine the benefits if we doubled or quadrupled that rate!)



THROWING AWAY JOBS

- **Nearly 86,000 jobs in Colorado are generated by the recycling, reuse and remanufacturing industries**, even at the current low recycling rate.⁵
- Recycling creates nine times more jobs per ton of waste than landfills.⁶

¹ CDPHE, 2016. Annual Solid Waste Diversion Totals, 2015 data. Accessed at https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/HM_sw-annual-diversion-totals.pdf. EPA, 2015. Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: 2013 Fact Sheet. Accessed at <https://www.epa.gov/smm/advancing-sustainable-materials-management-facts-and-figures>.

² Skumatz, Lisa A., and Dana D'Souza, May 2015, "Colorado's Wasted Value: Recyclables Discarded in the Front Range and Rest of the State and their Dollar, Job, and GHG Impacts," Skumatz Economic Research Associates, Superior Colorado.

³ Shin, Dolly, 2014. Generation and Disposition of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) in the United States. Accessed at http://www.seas.columbia.edu/earth/wtert/sofos/Dolly_Shin_Thesis.pdf.

⁴ CDPHE, 2014. Report Concerning Senate Joint Resolution 13-038. Accessed at <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/swreports>.

⁵ ENVIRON International Corporation, 2014. Economic Study of Recycling in Colorado. Accessed at <https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/recycling-grants-and-rebates>.

⁶ Tellus Institute, 2011. More Jobs, Less Pollution: Growing the Recycling Economy in the U.S. Accessed at <http://www.nrdc.org/business/guides/recyclingreport.asp>

COLORADO LAGS BEHIND OTHER STATES

States around the country are investing in recycling to create jobs and boost their local economies:

- **The State of Michigan is adding one million dollars to its existing recycling funds in order to double its residential recycling rate.** As the Republican Governor said, "We've been throwing away money for decades. Addressing this issue is simply the right thing to do."⁷
- While Colorado allocates less than \$0.50 per ton of trash to recycling programs and grants, Ohio, Wisconsin and other states allocate between \$2 and \$7 per ton to recycling.

THE SOLUTION: UNLOCK THE ECONOMIC POWER OF RECYCLING

It's time to get serious about Colorado's Recycling Economy. The state needs to provide direction, funding and support to help local communities expand recycling programs.

1. Develop a statewide recycling plan of action; set a statewide recycling goal and timeline to achieve it.
2. Increase funding and technical assistance to local communities to expand recycling services.
3. Support research and development of new recycling technologies, systems and markets for recycling, reuse and remanufacturing industries.

YOU CAN NOW RECYCLE IN YOUR CAPITOL OFFICE!

In 2016, the Department of Personnel and Administration provided new deskside recycling bins for all legislators and capitol building employees. Do your part to create local jobs by recycling your office paper, cardboard, newspaper, junk mail, aluminum cans, plastic bottles, tubs, jugs and jars.



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⁷ State of Michigan, 2014. Snyder announces statewide recycling initiative. Accessed at http://www.michigan.gov/snyder/0,4668,7-277-57577_57657-326217--,00.html