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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 9, 2014

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New Mexico Recycling Coalition Awarded USDA Rural Development Funds to Grow Recycling Businesses

Santa Fe, NM – The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development program awarded \$30,000 to the New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC) as part of the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) program. The “Growing Recycling Businesses in New Mexico” project will launch in September 2014 and will develop and support the growth of recycling-related businesses that manage or utilize locally generated recyclable materials.

New Mexico Rural Development Director Terry Brunner explained, “The RBEG program is designed to support the development of small and emerging business enterprises in rural communities and cities with up to 50,000 in population. We are pleased to support the NM Recycling Coalition in its endeavors to foster the growth of these businesses in the recycling and diversion sector.”

The project premise is supported by job and business creation evidence as outlined in a 2013 report commissioned by NMRC entitled, “Adding 5,000 Jobs To New Mexico’s Economy: A Plan to Increase Jobs Using Pay-As-You-Throw and Economic Development.” The report outlined job sectors and growth potential in New Mexico. The US Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics has documented that the recycling sector has grown by 8% since 2005.

“Recycling is an economic driver,” explains English Bird, NMRC Executive Director. “In fact, nationally the recycling industry represents more jobs than the car manufacturing industry. Generally speaking, for every one job managing the same amount of material at a landfill, there are 10 in recycling. As the state’s recycling rate continues to grow, supporting more local, private businesses to manage and utilize these materials to create new products will enhance the local and state economy.”

Targeted communities were selected based on the maturity of the local recycling program, interest of a launching business enterprise and the potential for the area to grow and expand recycling businesses. Rural communities selected as targets for assistance include Alamogordo, Angel Fire, Catron County, Deming, Gallup, Grants, Las Vegas, Raton, Roswell, Ruidoso, Silver City, Taos, Truth or Consequences and Tucumcari.

The project will initially develop small-scale recycling business model templates, ranging from collection of recyclables to utilization of items destined for the landfill, as well as provide assistance to business owners that are in the process of launching their recycling businesses. Examples of small-scale business models include taking mattresses and turning them into dog beds, providing recycling collection services to businesses and households, or taking glass and creating recycled-content countertops, tile, or art pieces.

Once the models are developed, NMRC will host Recycled Material Business Trainings in the targeted communities, working in partnership with local community and economic development partners. The objective will be to stimulate businesses to launch as well as identify opportunities for existing businesses to expand in this sector.

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