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Can Small Communities Make Money Recycling?? YES! Marketing Co-op Launched in Otero County

Otero County – We all know there is strength in numbers... and that's the philosophy behind boosting income for small communities that recycle. "By banding together, and working under our new marketing co-op, the New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC), can help even small recyclers take advantage of higher pricing for their recyclables," explains English Bird, NMRC Executive Director.

The NMRC made its first sale of recyclable materials via the R3 (Rural Recycling Resources) Marketing Co-operative. Based on the farm co-operative model, the recycled material co-op aims to bring the best value to smaller community recycling programs.

The newly created recycling hub based at La Luz Transfer Station in Otero County generated the first truck-load of cardboard using the R3 co-op. The co-op currently has 3 community members with more expected to join now that the program is launched.

When assessing the need to create the co-op, NMRC found that the final sale price for the same recycled commodities varied widely by community. It also discovered that some communities had trouble marketing harder-to-recycle and lower volume materials such as plastics.

"R3 is able to provide a lot of value to smaller-scale recycling programs. We are able to document the competitive bid process, get the best prices, track down payments and ensure that our rural and smaller communities are getting market-rate for their recyclables," explains Bird. "With our longer distances to end-markets, using the co-op model really makes sense for New Mexico recycling programs."

The co-op was created as part of NMRC's multi-tiered Rural Recycling Development project funded by a grant from the Department of Energy.

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