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For Immediate Release

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New Mexico Recycling Coalition Works to Increase Recycling to 50%

In the 2014 legislative session, legislators passed a memorial (HM51) sponsored by Representative Jeff Steinborn to develop strategies and policy in order to reach a state goal of a 50% solid waste diversion rate. The New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC), in partnership with the New Mexico Environment Department: Solid Waste Bureau (NMED), led the charge with initial research and stakeholder input to help guide the process.

The New Mexico Solid Waste Management Act outlines a statewide goal to reach a 25% recycling rate by 1995 and a 50% recycling rate by 2000. The state is currently at a 21.9% diversion rate and 16% recycling rate (2013, NMED). The diversion rate includes other types of recyclable materials such as beneficially used organic materials/yard waste and construction/demolition (C&D) waste.

There is a direct link between increased recycling and the creation of jobs in the local economy. A report commissioned by the NMRC estimates that 9,000 direct, indirect (jobs that serve the industry) and induced jobs (those that provide goods and services to direct and indirect workers) jobs in NM would be created once the state attains a 50% recycling rate. Job sectors in this industry include collections, processing, re-manufacturing and reuse. In looking at these sectors, it is estimated our state would add more than 3,500 direct jobs managing recyclables at a 50% recycling rate.

Based on what other states with high-performing recycling and diversion rates have seen, a strong state-level funding mechanism is a critical component to achieve the 50% goal. State funding not only supports municipal grant programs to build and improve infrastructure but also allows the state to expand staffing levels to support communities with technical assistance and strategic planning. Currently, the Recycling and Illegal Dumping Grant fund supports recycling endeavors in the range of \$100,000-\$200,000 annually, depending on funding levels and shared distributions with other grant priorities that include tire recycling, tire clean-up and illegal dumping projects. This funding level currently is able to support only small-scale projects.

Last June, more than 40 stakeholders gathered to provide feedback on tactics to reach a 50% diversion rate in New Mexico. Participants were educated on what other states have done to reach 50% or higher recycling rates and also looked at states that are in the planning phases to reach this goal. Three short-term policies or strategies were identified at this meeting as top considerations for further analysis: 1) examine a mandate for commercial recycling; 2) develop construction and demolition recycling strategies; 3) and look at how state agencies can increase diversion and use recycled-content materials. These three topics, as well as increased state-level funding, will be a focus of additional research and stakeholder input this year.

Longer-term policy recommendations from the stakeholder group included looking at implementing a statewide requirement for communities to use Pay-As-You-Throw, a form of utility billing where customers pay for the amount of trash disposed. Other considerations included landfill bans on certain recyclable materials, product stewardship (where companies are required to take end-of-life responsibility for the products they sell in the state) and incentives for private business to operate in New Mexico. These topics will be explored in future years.

The stakeholder group identified two primary challenges to increasing recycling in New Mexico: changing habits due to a lack of public education and the lack of state-level funding to support these endeavors.



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An Executive Summary from the June stakeholder meeting was presented at a December 2 legislative Water and Natural Resources Interim Committee. The report can be found online at www.recyclenewmexico.com/increasingrecycling.htm.

NMRC has created a new program entitled “Increasing Recycling in NM”. NMRC staff and board have outlined a time frame for 2015 to conduct intensive research and then solicit stakeholder feedback. Several aspects of the research will have the support of NMED as a partner to reach 50%.

- Jan – May: Research policy aspects of Funding and predicted recycling infrastructure needs
- June 3: As part of the NMRC Annual Member Meeting and Training, solicit stakeholder feedback on funding strategies
- Summer: Research policy aspects of C&D Recycling, State Agency Recycling and Business Recycling
- Fall: Stakeholder meeting to receive input on C&D, State Agency and Business Recycling components

NMRC is seeking donations and sponsor support to fund this critical program. Please contact Sarah Pierpont to support this program.

New Mexico Recycling Coalition is a non-profit member-supported organization with the mission of leading New Mexico to value waste as a resource. The organization serves as a recycling advocate working with a diverse group of stakeholders, communities, businesses, schools and grassroots activists to help build sustainable and efficient recycling programs. To learn more, visit www.recyclenewmexico.com.

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