

NEWS RELEASE

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

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DATE: February 5, 2013

FROM: DNR Central Office

New plastics recycling study shows potential for economic growth

MADISON- Wisconsin could realize substantial economic rewards and jobs growth by recycling more of the valuable plastics that currently end up in our landfills, concludes a recent study commissioned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The study, authored jointly by Foth Infrastructure and Environment and by Moore Recycling Associates, found that used plastics have real monetary value to processors and manufacturers within Wisconsin. Yet despite a comprehensive statewide recycling program and a strong recycling ethic, hundreds of tons of valuable plastics are still sent to Wisconsin landfills every day. Foth estimates some \$64 million in recyclable plastic materials is landfilled each year.

The DNR commissioned the study to identify actions that can be taken now to capture and recycle more of these valuable used plastics, thereby creating jobs and boosting economic development in Wisconsin. "In addition to the benefits to businesses and employment, increasing plastics recycling would provide environmental benefits by prolonging the life of landfills and reducing pollutant emissions," said Brad Wolbert, DNR Solid Waste & Recycling Section Chief.

The study enumerates a number of actions Wisconsin can take to substantially increase plastics recovery rates. According to Cynthia Moore, DNR Recycling Program coordinator, "These actions could be implemented individually or as a coordinated approach. The priority actions are intended to target the most valuable and commonly used plastic containers such as consumer beverage bottles and containers for household cleaning products".

The study also emphasizes the potential to increase recycling of plastic bags and other film plastics, as well as the less commonly recovered rigid plastics such as clamshell containers, margarine tubs and drink cups. Spurred by this study, the DNR has already agreed to conduct a pilot project this spring to expand recycling of flexible film packaging. The film recycling project will be carried out under a Memorandum of Understanding with two national business groups, the American Chemistry Council's Flexible Film Recycling Group (FFRG) and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition's GreenBlue Foundation. The project will focus on expanding consumer recycling of plastic film packaging, extending recycling opportunities at small and mid-sized businesses in the state. "This public-private partnership is a win-win for both the environment and the economy," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp.

Currently, Wisconsin's plastic industry is ranked 8th nationally in plastics industry employment, providing jobs for some 40,000 people, with a direct payroll of \$1.6 billion. "Increasing plastics recycling in the state will open the door for greater economic and job development particularly through expansion of existing business but also in creation of new business," said Dan Krivit, senior project manager for Foth and co-author of the report.

"There is a strong and growing demand for recycled plastics," says Patty Moore, President of Moore Recycling Associates, a consulting firm that specializes in plastics recycling. "Even the highest volume, highest value plastic items are only recycled at about 30 percent nationally. With a coordinated approach to increasing the supply of used plastics from Wisconsin, the state could triple its plastics recycling rate and still not exceed the demand from domestic markets, many of which are located right in Wisconsin."

For more information, go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/recycling/studies.html> and click on "Other studies and reports"

Click here for information about the [Flexible Film Packaging group](#):

For more information on the Council on Recycling, visit [Council on Recycling](#) or contact Cynthia Moore (608) 267-7550.

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