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The Alabama Environmental Council is a statewide, non-profit leader engaging citizens toward sustainable living and stewardship of the environment. In addition to expanding and providing recycling opportunities, we educate businesses, community leaders, and citizens on waste reduction and recycling. This is accomplished by establishing the link between our consumer choices, natural resource extraction, energy production, water use, and climate change. Similarly, the Alabama Recycling Coalition works to unite, educate, and promote recycling in Alabama. This is accomplished by hosting or sponsoring professional and community forums, meetings, and publications that promote the three R's.

National SMM Plan Recommendations

A common problem heard from recycled material manufacturers and recycling processors is that they have difficulty achieving the volumes necessary to make their operations profitable. A solution is a systems-based approach that incentivizes extended producer responsibility (EPR) while including a product labeling standard for recycled content, recyclability, and carbon footprint; creates a hub and spoke materials recovery network in every state; a national public service announcement (PSA) campaign similar to Keep America Beautiful's (KAB) 1970's campaign; and assistance to municipalities in recovering recyclable materials.

EPR

While we're hearing more debate and more buy-in from manufacturers, there is still a strong need for EPR. Likewise, we're seeing more standardized product labeling, such as the How2Recycle Label, and even retailers like Walmart beginning to require their suppliers produce sustainability reports on their products.

Hub and Spoke

While some states have established efficient hub and spoke networks for both garbage and recyclables, most states rely on processors to locate appropriately. However, this has proven ineffective in providing coverage statewide in most instances. Similarly, a nationwide hub and spoke network would help prevent unnecessary overlap and ensure proper coverage.

PSA

Humans are forgetful creatures. A strategic nationwide PSA would increase recycling participation and elevate environmental awareness. However, it cannot be a one-and-done campaign. It needs to seep into our culture like the color pink in October.

Municipal Assistance

Municipalities are often burdened with the expense of recovering recyclables at the curb, yet typically don't reap the benefits of selling these materials on the commodities market. Whether through federal assistance or as an aspect of EPR, municipalities need assistance in landfill diversion and material recovery.