



## **The Northeast Recycling Council & its Sustainable Materials Management Strategies**

February 15, 2015

The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) is a regional non-profit organization comprised of the ten Northeastern states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. NERC's mission is *"to promote sustainable materials management by supporting traditional and innovative solid waste best practices, focusing on waste prevention, toxics reduction, reuse, recycling and organics recovery."*

Through its mission and activities, NERC promotes and endorses a sustainable materials management (SMM) strategy as a critical component of achieving an environmentally sustainable economy.

In February 2015, NERC's current SMM projects and programs include:

- In Vermont, NERC is working with four schools to establish organics diversion and composting programs, as well as increasing recycling.
  - Assisting in establishing lunch food scrap collection programs.
  - Training students, staff, and volunteers to monitor and support the program.
  - Establishing on-site composting in some schools.
- In New York, providing technical assistance in the development and implementation of reuse programming in rural communities.
  - Working with three counties and the Mohawk Nation to establish reuse events and ongoing programming.
- In Vermont, working with the hospitality industry to establish and expand food waste reduction and organics diversion programs.
  - Providing technical assistance to restaurants and sporting venues to decrease food waste, increase food donation, and divert waste to local composting programs.
  - Encouraging their participation in EPA's Food Recovery Challenge.
- Providing education about and promoting the use of environmentally preferable purchasing.
  - Working with procurement officials in Delaware, Maine, Rhode Island, and Vermont to increase EPP procurement of office supplies, office paper, and toner cartridges.
  - Through the State Electronics Challenge, promoting the use of the EPEAT standard for computers and imaging equipment.
- Spring conference focused on sustainable materials management.
  - Taking place in Delaware in early April, topics include product stewardship, single-stream collection and processing, dirty MRFs, and EPA's perspective on SMM.
- Webinars on organics, food recovery and waste prevention, green procurement of toner cartridges, sustainable supply chains, and lifecycle assessments.
  - NERC will be offering a series of webinars in conjunction with the Golisano Institute on these topics in the first six months of 2015.
- National programs supporting state laws on electronics take-back laws and toxic use reduction (Electronics Recycling Coordination Clearinghouse (ERCC), and the Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse (TPCH))
  - These include education, multi-state collaboration on implementation efficiencies, stakeholder engagement, and research projects.

### **What NERC Would Like to See in the NRC National Plan**

- A strategy for obtaining the federal government's recognition that sustainable materials management is important in order to decrease the environmental impacts that influence climate change.
- Working with the federal government to define, create and implement a sustainable materials management policy that will provide leadership to federal agencies and to state and local government.
- Programs to address difficult to recycle materials, including engaging stakeholders and the supply chain to identify source reduction and recycling economic development strategies to improve material recovery and avoid waste.
- Assistance for establishing metrics to better estimate the amount of food waste generated from different types of sources and establishments.