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Recycling Programs Superintendent for the University of Virginia (UVa). Has been managing recycling operations / contracts and waste disposal contracts and leading an award winning program for more than 20 years. My team and I are responsible for collecting and processing recyclables such as but not limited to; fiber, plastics, glass, steel and aluminum cans, pallets, laser and inkjet cartridges, optical and magnetic media, reusable office supplies etc. These are packaged for vendors to recycle / reuse / repurpose. I am responsible for the waste collection and disposal contract, to ensure best service and disposal practices, for the University and Medical Center. It is within my role, to educate / communicate to the University's students, staff and faculty, best practices of conservation (reductions at the source), repurposing of materials, separation of recyclables (making a cleaner commodity to sell / recycle). Supporting and mentoring student projects to increase awareness and behavior change in our (humanity's) current "throw-away-society" and related increases in waste minimization and reduction.

National SMM Plan Recommendations:

Commodity markets are a volatile issue due to international supply and demand. If we contribute to the demand side of the arrangement, markets might rise again and create new sustainable jobs. These might be in Material Recovery Facilities (MRF), clean or dirty. I prefer the clean MRF concept in order to reclaim cleaner materials that can recycle / repurpose in to like type items easier, with less contamination problems.

It's been communicated to me by several processors and recyclers; about 20% of the materials received in their plants, find its way back to landfill due to contamination, dirt, small glass fragments, mildew or mold. MRFs such as these are key to keeping commodities clean enough to reuse / recycle. Cleaner commodities on the front end make faster, cleaner commodities on the backend. Blending of materials (e.g. paper and metal, plastic and metal, paper and plastic) needs to stop, in order to better recover the materials by recyclers.

Staying away from the all-in-one collection of discards, help to continue the dispelling of our "throw-away" mindset. If technology, materials, and the feel of "land-O-plenty, continue to reuse / recycle / repurpose; these mindsets and items return to a repairable, rather than disposable state. Again, returning repair shops and jobs to the norm of yesteryear.

Governmental policy and encouragement of product stewardship, along with distributors ensuring manufacturers / suppliers collect packaging, shipping pallets / containers for reuse in their own areas, may decrease the need to continue to make new items with new / raw materials. This includes packaging firms, bottling plants etc. by increasing the recycled content in their businesses.

Many are working towards "zero waste" goals and achieving some successes. Although not always mandated; these efforts are encouraged and in some cases and strongly encouraged elsewhere. These efforts will continue to grow slowly from the ground up and can meet better success with top down support.