

RECYCLING is WORKING

The U.S. Recycling Economic Information Project

Documenting the economic impact of recycling
and reuse in the United States.

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RECYCLING IS WORKING IN AMERICA

From the local cities and towns that collect household recyclables to the large scale businesses that manufacture state-of-the-art recycled-content products, recycling is working across America. According to the recently published *U.S. Recycling Economic Information (REI) Study*, recycling offers widespread benefits to the U.S. economy. More specifically, the U.S. recycling and reuse industry supports more than 56,000 recycling establishments that gross over \$236 billion in annual revenues and employ over 1.1 million people with an annual payroll of \$37 billion.

This landmark study—commissioned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a number of states through a cooperative agreement with the National Recycling Coalition (NRC)—satisfies a longstanding need for economic data that measures the important economic contribution of recycling and reuse. This new data also reinforces the well-established environmental benefits of recycling and reuse, such as cutting pollution, conserving natural resources, saving energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

“This study confirms what many have known for a long time—the recycling industry is a viable business sector with a promising future,” said Thea

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McManus, Director of EPA's Municipal Solid Waste Division. "It's a win-win venture that creates jobs, turns a nice profit, and helps save the environment all at the same time."

The REI study also measured the broader impacts of recycling and reuse on the economy. Businesses that support the recycling industry, such as accounting firms and office supply companies, indirectly contribute 1.4 million jobs with a payroll of \$52 billion and \$173 billion in receipts to the U.S. economy. Spending by employees of the recycling and reuse industry adds a further economic boost, along the lines of 1.5 million jobs with a payroll of \$41 billion and receipts of \$146 billion.

"The recycling industry is a diverse network of public and private organizations—with significant economic contributions coming from both traditional firms and new innovative market sectors," said Kate Krebs, Acting Executive Director of the NRC. "We also have a positive outlook for the future with the development of exciting new businesses, such as computer demanufacturers, composters, and plastic lumber manufacturers."

The goal of the REI study was to provide a current snapshot of the size of the nation's reuse and recycling industry. This was accomplished through a comprehensive analysis of both existing economic data and reasonable estimates based on targeted surveys of recycling businesses and sophisticated economic modeling. The study measured numerous industry characteristics, including the number of establishments, total jobs, annual payroll, annual receipts, and annual throughput (amount of materials collected and processed).