

## 'We have nowhere to give it': Fort Edward halts recycling



File photo. The Fort Edward Town Board discusses the decision to stop recycling at a meeting Monday, July 9.

FORT EDWARD — The town stopped recycling pick-up in June, but some residents learned this month that recycling had actually stopped at the beginning of the year. It's a decision that has both residents and town officials concerned, as they consider the balance between cost, practicality and caring for the environment.

Resident Katie DeGroot brought the issue up July 9 at a Town Board meeting, fueling a lengthy discussion as she pressed board members to consider alternate solutions.

In a phone interview after the meeting, Supervisor Terry Middleton explained that Waste Management had been taking the town's recycling. It closed its local collection station last year, making Albany the next closest site to deliver recyclables.

Middleton and Highway Superintendent Brian Brockway said at the meeting that Albany is too far away.

Since Jan. 1, Fort Edward residents who have put their recyclables out on their curbs have not been recycling at all.

The town has been picking up the bottles, cans and papers and delivering them to the Hudson Falls trash plant to be burned. In a June 13 notice, the town officially halted pick-up services.

"We have nowhere to give it," Middleton said. "We have a separate crew going out and picking it up, and I thought it was a waste of taxpayer money, so we did away with it. Not that we're against recycling by any means. We were picking it up and throwing it up in the garbage dump and driving around in a recycling truck."

While local transfer stations will take recycling, they require items to be sorted and clean. Residents can drive their own trash and recyclables to local transfer stations.

At the July 9 meeting, Brockway said he could not see training town workers to sort by color and number, peel off labels and other measures those stations require.

DeGroot and resident Theresa Rose said that's the way they used to handle recyclables before companies stopped sorting. DeGroot and Middleton discussed how China has stopped accepting the United States' plastic waste, too.

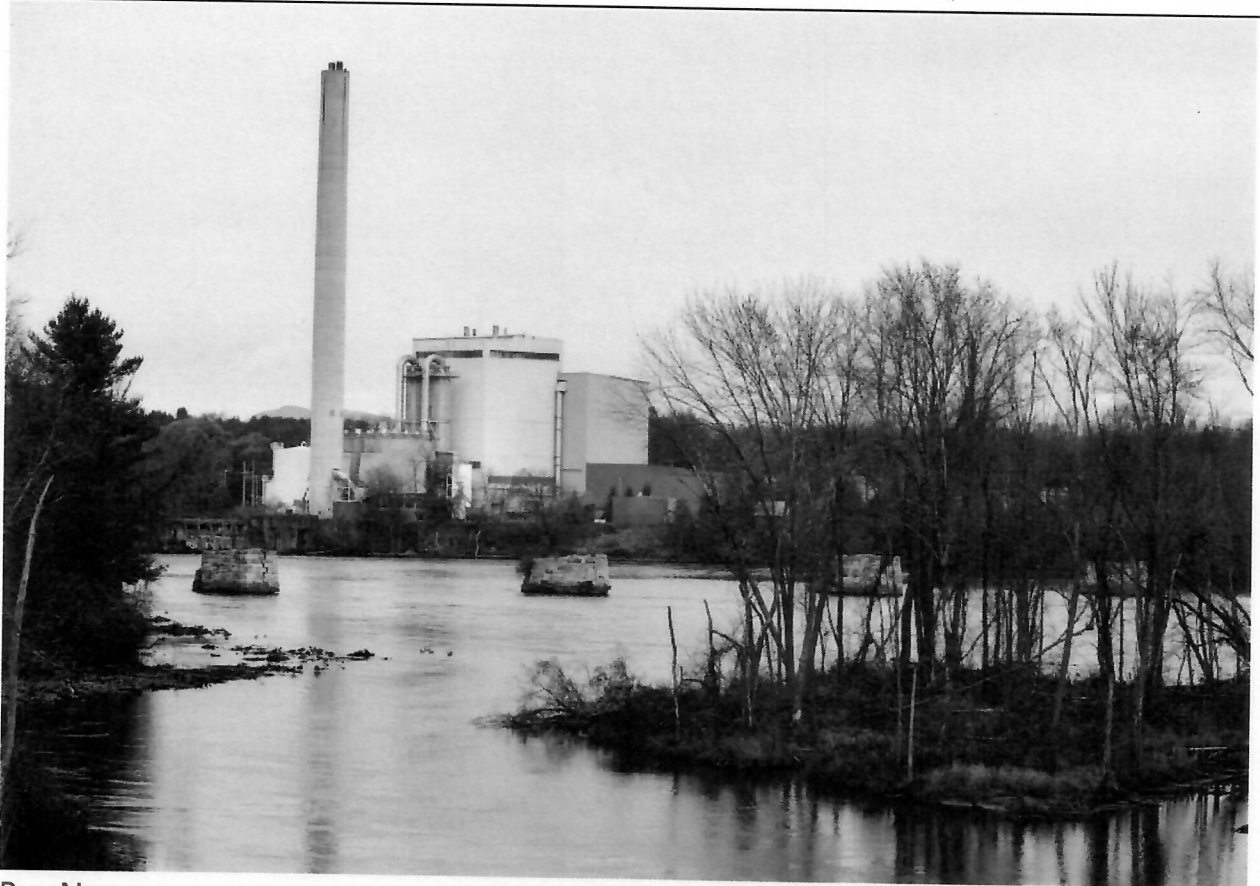
"It's bigger than just Fort Edward," DeGroot said. "There's like nothing happening in the recycling world right now, because everyone's gone to zero sort and all that stuff is junk, so no one will pay for it."

Middleton said he thought New York is behind all the other states in recycling initiatives, and he couldn't see raising taxes to bring back recycling services to the town. Rose, who said she could drive her recyclables to a transfer station now, said she was concerned about what she should do with them if she one day couldn't drive. Middleton told her to throw them away.

"Let's hope actually that's not true, and let's hope we can figure out a better way to deal with what we're creating," DeGroot said.

Reporter Gwendolyn Craig can be reached at (518) 742-3238 or [gcraig@poststar.com](mailto:gcraig@poststar.com). Follow her on Twitter [@gwendolynnn1](https://twitter.com/gwendolynnn1).

# State says it's working with Fort Edward on recycling



[Buy Now](#)

The Hudson Falls trash plant sits on the banks of the Hudson River.

[Save](#)

FORT EDWARD — Following reports that the town of Fort Edward had halted recycling, the state Department of Environmental Conservation says it is now working with the municipality on recycling options moving forward.

The town announced this summer that it was halting recycling pick-up. At a town board meeting in July, town employees said recycling had actually stopped at the beginning of the year, after the shutdown of its local transfer station.

Town employees had been picking up recyclables from curb sides and delivering them to the Hudson Falls trash plant, Supervisor Terry Middleton said. Pick-up was stopped, he added, because it was a waste of taxpayers' money. He said the town was not against recycling, but it had "nowhere to give it."

Now, the DEC is getting involved, working with Fort Edward to sort out where it can deliver its recyclables. In the meantime, the state is encouraging residents of Fort Edward to bring their recyclables to the Earth Waste facility located on Route 196 in Kingsbury.

"While DEC is looking into Fort Edward's reported actions, we encourage all communities to continue recycling and to contact DEC if they are experiencing difficulties adapting to changes in the global recycling market," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos in a statement. "Recognizing current challenges, DEC has been working with recycling industry stakeholders, municipalities, academic institutions, and others to develop short- and long-term actions to bolster recycling markets in New York, improve the quality of recyclable materials and provide increased flexibility for recycling facilities. All New Yorkers can do their part to reduce contamination in our recycling supply chain by following our tips to 'recycle right.' "

A lack of recycling has become a national problem. China, which has collected a large portion of the United States' recyclables, cracked down on the quality of the materials it accepts as of Jan. 1. It's more likely now to have a batch of recyclables sent to a landfill because of contamination.

In fact, DEC promotes the phrase "when in doubt, keep it out," so that an item that may not be recyclable will not impact the recycling potential of other materials.

As far as Fort Edward goes, the DEC said it is premature to identify any specific fines or violations, but did say New York State General Municipal Law requires communities to develop and implement source separation of recyclables which have viable markets.

Reporter Gwendolyn Craig can be reached at 518-742-3238 or [gcraig@poststar.com](mailto:gcraig@poststar.com). Follow her on Twitter [@gwendolynnn1](https://twitter.com/gwendolynnn1).





# AMERICA CHUNG NAM, INC.

221 River Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hoboken, NJ 07030  
TEL: (201) 333-6008 • FAX: (201) 333-6003

Dear Valued Supplier,

The intention of this letter is to inform you of recent changes to policies in the Chinese Market and their possible impact on the recycling industry.

As you may be aware, the Chinese Government has lately modified its GB Standard for recycled paper, reducing tolerance of prohibitive items to 0.5%. As we highly appreciate your efforts in providing ACN with quality material, we would like to encourage all our suppliers to take whatever additional necessary measures to cope with the new standards.

As the new GB Standard becomes effective on March 1, 2018, we foresee heightened inspections by competent Chinese authorities at destination ports along the Chinese coast. Sub-standard material is expected to be rejected and discovery of any zero-tolerance contaminants will result in immediate rejection. In both cases, heavy costs shall accumulate from ocean and land freights, handling, as well as the value of the material, etc.

Therefore, we are calling on our suppliers to work closely with our inspectors and buyers to follow the new GB Standard and to make sure that no non-conforming materials are loaded into any container bound for China. It would be highly appreciated if you could implement technical, quality control measures and other necessary upgrades to your operation in order to produce quality material that meets the new standard.

We will continue to keep you updated of any progress and development from the Chinese market. Should you have any question, please feel free to contact your ACN representative.

Thank you for again for your business and continued support.

Sam Liu

COO

America Chung Nam

5/14/2018

Recycling, Once Embraced by Businesses and Environmentalists, Now Under Siege - WSJ

DOW JONES, A NEWS CORP COMPANY ▼

DJIA 24908.83 0.31% ▲

S&P 500 2730.70 0.11% ▲

Nasdaq 7421.90 0.26% ▲

U.S. 10 Yr -6/32 Yield 2.992% ▼

Crude Oil 71.01 0.44% ▲

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/recycling-once-embraced-by-businesses-and-environmentalists-now-under-siege-1526209200>

## BUSINESS

# Recycling, Once Embraced by Businesses and Environmentalists, Now Under Siege

Local officials raise fees and send recyclables to landfills as economics erode

By Bob Tita

May 13, 2018 7:00 a.m. ET

The U.S. recycling industry is breaking down.

Prices for scrap paper and plastic have collapsed, leading local officials across the country to charge residents more to collect recyclables and send some to landfills. Used newspapers, cardboard boxes and plastic bottles are piling up at plants that can't make a profit processing them for export or domestic markets.

"Recycling as we know it isn't working," said James Warner, chief executive of the Solid Waste Management Authority in Lancaster County, Pa. "There's always been ups and downs in the market, but this is the biggest disruption that I can recall."

U.S. recycling programs took off in the 1990s as calls to bury less trash in landfills coincided with China's demand for materials such as corrugated cardboard to feed its economic boom. Shipping lines eagerly filled containers that had brought manufactured goods to the U.S. with paper, scrap metal and plastic bottles for the return trip to China.

As cities aggressively expanded recycling programs to keep more discarded household items out of landfills, the purity of U.S. scrap deteriorated as more trash infiltrated the recyclables. Discarded food, liquid-soaked paper and other contaminants recently accounted for as much as 20% of the material shipped to China, according to Waste Management Inc.'s estimates, double from five years ago.

The tedious and sometimes dangerous work of separating out that detritus at processing plants in China prompted officials there to slash the contaminants limit this year to 0.5%. China early this month suspended all imports of U.S. recycled materials until June 4, regardless of the quality. The recycling industry interpreted the move as part of the growing rift between the U.S. and China over trade policies and tariffs.

The changes have effectively cut off exports from the U.S., the world's largest generator of scrap paper and plastic. Collectors, processors and the municipal governments that hire them are reconsidering what they will accept to recycle and how much homeowners will pay for that service. Many trash haulers and city agencies that paid for curbside collection by selling scrap said they are now losing money on almost every ton they handle.

The upended economics are likely to permanently change the U.S. recycling business, said William Moore, president of Moore & Associates, a recycled-paper consultancy in Atlanta.

"It's going to take domestic demand to replace what China was buying," he said. "It's not going to be a quick turnaround. It's going to be a long-term issue."

The waste-management authority in Lancaster County this spring more than doubled the charge per ton that residential trash collectors must pay to deposit recyclables at its transfer station, starting June 1. The higher cost is expected to be passed on to residents though a 3% increase in the fees that haulers charge households for trash collection and disposal.

The additional transfer-station proceeds will help offset a \$40-a-ton fee that the authority will

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/recycling-once-embraced-by-businesses-and-environmentalists-now-under-siege-1526209200?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=2>



Cal-Waste Recovery Systems plans to invest more than \$6 million on new sorting equipment to produce cleaner bales of recyclables. PHOTO: MAX WHITTAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

start paying this summer to a company to process the county's recyclables. Before China raised its quality standards at the beginning of this year, that company was paying Lancaster County \$4 for every ton of recyclables.

Mr. Warner may limit the recyclable items collected from Lancaster County's 500,000 residents to those that have retained some value, such as cans and corrugated cardboard. He said mixed plastic isn't worth processing.

#### RELATED

- New York City's Sewage Shipment Runs Afoul in Rural South
- Amid Trade Feud, Recycling Is in Danger of Landing on Trash Pile

"You might as well put it in the trash from the get-go," he said.

Environmentalists are hoping landfills are only a stopgap fix for the glut of recyclables while the industry finds new

markets and reduces contaminants.

"Stuff is definitely getting thrown away in landfills. Nobody is happy about it," said Dylan de Thomas, vice president of industry collaboration for the Recycling Partnership in Virginia. "There are very few landfill owners that don't operate recycling facilities, too. They'd much rather be paid for those materials."

Pacific Rim Recycling in Benicia, Calif., slowed operations at its plant early this year to meet China's new standard. But company President Steve Moore said the more intensive sorting process takes too long to process scrap profitably. Pacific Rim idled its processing plant in February and furloughed 40 of its 45 employees.

"The cost is impossible. We can't make money at it," Steve Moore said. "We quit accepting stuff."

China stopped taking shipments of U.S. mixed paper and mixed plastic in January. Steve Moore said mixed-paper shipments to other Asian countries now fetch \$5 a ton, down from as much as \$150 last year. Other buyers such as Vietnam and India have been flooded with scrap paper and plastic that would have been sold to China in years past.

Dave Vaccarezza, president of Cal-Waste Recovery Systems near Sacramento, Calif., intends to invest more than \$6 million in new sorting equipment to produce cleaner bales of recyclables.

"It's going to cost the rate payer to recycle," he said. "They're going to demand we make our best effort to use those cans and bottles they put out."

Sacramento County, which collects trash and recyclables from 151,000 homes, used to earn \$1.2 million a year selling the scrap to Waste Management and another processor from scrap. Now, the county is paying what will amount to about \$1 million a year, or roughly \$35 a ton, to defray the processors' costs. Waste Management paid the county \$250,000 to break the revenue-sharing contract and negotiate those terms.

County waste management director Doug Sloan expects those costs to keep climbing. "We've been put on notice that we need to do our part," he said. The county hasn't yet raised residential fees.



China stopped taking shipments of U.S. mixed paper and mixed plastic in January. Cal-Waste Recovery Systems workers sift through recycled trash. PHOTO: MAX WHITTAKER FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

**'There's always been ups and downs in the market, but this is biggest disruption that I can recall.'**

—James Warner, chief executive of the Solid Waste Management Authority

Some recyclers said residents and municipalities need to give up the “single-stream” approach of lumping used paper and cardboard together with glass, cans and plastic in one collection truck. Single-stream collections took hold in the waste-hauling industry about 20 years ago and continue to be widely used. Collecting paper separately would make curbside recycling service more expensive but cut down on contamination.

“We’re our own worst enemies,” said Michael Barry, president of Mid America Recycling, a processing-plant operator in Des Moines, Iowa, of single-stream recycling. “It’s almost impossible to get the paper away from the containers.”

Even relatively pure loads of paper have become tough to sell, Mr. Barry said, noting the domestic market for paper is saturated as well. He stockpiled paper bales at Mid America’s warehouse, hoping prices would improve. They didn’t. He has trucked 1,000 tons of paper to a landfill in recent weeks.

“We had to purge,” he said. “There’s no demand for it.”

Write to Bob Tita at [robert.tita@wsj.com](mailto:robert.tita@wsj.com)

*Appeared in the May 14, 2018, print edition as 'Recycling Firms Hit by Crushing Economics.'*

Copyright &copy;2017 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.



EDITION

AdChoices

IMPACT

# The Dirty Truth Is Your Recycling May Actually Go To Landfills

America is in the midst of what one official calls an “unprecedented” recycling crisis.

By Dominique Mosbergen

07/24/2018 05:01 am ET | Updated Jul 25, 2018



PORTLAND PRESS HERALD/GETTY IMAGES

Bales of recyclables at an Ecomaine recycling facility in Portland, Maine. Ecomaine is one of many U.S. recyclers that have been affected by China's waste import restrictions.

## This New World

The current capitalist system is broken. Get updates on our progress toward building a fairer world.

address@email.com

SUBSCRIBE



Americans recycle millions of tons of trash every year. We trust that the items we toss in the blue bin won't end up in a landfill. We hope this stuff is repurposed and turned into reusable goods — but a lot of it isn't getting recycled at all.

Two-thirds of U.S. states are facing a recycling crisis of our own making. For months, mountains of plastic, paper and other materials have been piling up at recycling facilities across the nation. Recyclables are ending up in landfills en masse. Some municipalities — from Sacramento, California, to Hooksett, New Hampshire — have canceled or significantly curtailed their recycling programs, leaving residents with no choice but to throw their recyclables in the trash.

To put it in the words of a waste manager in Bakersfield, California, the situation is “not just a little bad, it is terrible.”

“I've been in garbage all my life. This is unprecedented,” Kevin Barnes, the city's solid waste director, told The Bakersfield Californian earlier this month. “I think there's been nothing in history this severe for the markets. So we're in uncharted waters here.”

The first signs of trouble came in January when China, which had long served as the world's de facto wastebasket, banned the importation of several categories of recyclable waste. For decades, China had bought massive shipments of recyclable plastics, paper, cardboard and other materials from countries around the world.

It had been a win-win situation. On the one hand, China needed a steady supply of recyclable waste to feed its flourishing manufacturing sector. And on the other, countries like the U.S., Canada, Germany, the U.K. and Japan lacked the recycling facilities and manpower that China had — and they desperately needed a destination for their growing quantity of garbage.

About a year ago, however, China abruptly announced its intention to close its borders to this trash influx. The country notified the World Trade Organization that it would be banning the import of 24 categories of solid waste, including several kinds of scrap plastic and mixed paper. It also demanded that other waste materials, like cardboard and scrap metal, have only 0.5 percent contamination from food and other sources — a standard that American recyclers have said is “impossible” to meet.

The immediate global impact of the new Chinese restrictions, enforced on Jan. 1, was staggering. “It was a huge shock — a tsunami for the industry,” said Arnaud Brunet, head of the Bureau of International Recycling, speaking from Brussels on Wednesday. “When the biggest market for recyclables progressively shuts the door to imports, you can expect the global industry will be under stress.”

Prior to its new policy, China had been processing at least half of the world's exports of waste plastic, paper and metals. Between 1992 and 2016, China accepted more than 110 million tons of plastic scrap from countries around the globe, or about 45 percent of the world's plastic waste. A recent study predicts that about 120 million tons of plastic waste will be displaced worldwide by 2030 because of China's policy change.



AARON ONTIVEROZ/GETTY IMAGES

Alpine Waste & Recycling in Denver has been investing in cleaning up its paper recycling stream in an effort to meet China's new import standards.

The United States has long been one of the biggest exporters of trash to China. Of the estimated 66 million tons of material that Americans recycle each year, about one-third used to be exported — a majority of which had been bound for Chinese shores.

Since January, however, local and state governments, together with domestic recycling companies, have had to figure out new destinations for all this garbage.

### RELATED COVERAGE

[China No Longer Wants Your Trash. Here's Why That's Potentially Disastrous.](#)

[The Oceans Are Drowning In Plastic — And No One's Paying Attention](#)

[What Happens When One Of The World's Biggest Cities Doesn't Recycle](#)

At least 38 states have experienced “noticeable” impacts since the policy took effect, according to Waste Dive, a D.C.-based publisher of waste industry news that’s been documenting the ban’s effects with this online tracker.

At least 10 states — including California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Oregon — have been “heavily” affected. A waste coordinator in Alaska, another of the hardest-hit states, described the shake-up as “Armageddon for recycling.”

“At this point, there is no state in the country that has not felt at least something because of the ban,” Waste Dive reporter Cole Rosengren told HuffPost.

**SWANA Resources: China Waste Import Restrictions Infographics**

Download printable infographics in exchange for contact information.

<b>Timeline</b> A timeline showing the progression of China's waste import restrictions from 2017 to 2021.	<b>How to Take Action</b> A guide for businesses and individuals on how to respond to the new regulations.	<b>Materials Affected</b> A list of the types of waste materials that are restricted or banned.	<b>Recycling Infrastructure</b> A map and overview of the recycling infrastructure in the United States.
---	---	--	---

## Recyclables Get Dumped

In the U.S., local governments often contract private recycling companies to collect and sort through recyclables. Once sorted, the marketable materials are sold to domestic or overseas processors. In the past, China had, in many cases, been that final destination.

Nowadays, however, there are few willing buyers — and none of them come close to filling China's shoes.

"Overall, the value of a ton of recycling has declined by about 40 percent over the past year," David Biderman, executive director of the Solid Waste Association of North America, told HuffPost in an email.

In some of the worst-hit places — like parts of the Pacific Northwest, which has traditionally sent a greater proportion of its recycling to China, and New England, where waste processing costs had been hefty even before the ban — there's now "no market" at all for certain materials like mixed paper (cereal boxes, junk mail, magazines and the like) and some types of plastic, Biderman said.

Across the country, thousands of bales of paper and plastic are being stockpiled and stored at recycling facilities in the hopes that new markets will eventually be found for them.

E.L. Harvey & Sons, a recycling company in Massachusetts, told The New York Times in May that half of its 80,000-square-foot facility was stacked high with about 6,000 tons of stockpiled material. In New Hanover County, North Carolina, "piles of recycled cardboard" have reportedly sat unused for months.

Mid America Recycling in Des Moines, Iowa, told The Wall Street Journal that it had stockpiled about 1,000 tons of mixed paper, which it had hoped to sell when prices improved.

All of it, however, was eventually dumped in a landfill.

"We had to purge," Michael Barry, the company's president, told the paper in May. "There's no demand for it."



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Recology, a curbside recycler in San Francisco, admits it's been diverting some materials to landfills. "There's no market for a lot of stuff in the blue bin. What we can't recycle we take to a landfill," [a company rep](#) told the Los Angeles Times earlier this month.

Dumping recyclables in a landfill is a recycler's nightmare. "We hate the landfill. We do everything we can to avoid it," Brunet said. "It's a waste of resources — for the industry, for the planet."

But many U.S. recyclers have had to resort to landfills in recent months.

States like Oregon and Massachusetts have laws prohibiting companies from dumping recyclables — but have recently been granting waivers so firms can dispose of the materials they can't seem to sell.

Garten Services, an Oregon recycler, told The New York Times that the company recently sought a waiver to dump about 900 tons of recyclables in a landfill.

Republic Services, one of the country's largest waste managers, said it's disposed of more than 2,000 tons of paper in landfills since January.

Some municipalities have raised recycling rates or even resorted to canceling or cutting back on recycling services. The Alaskan cities of Sitka, Ketchikan and Petersburg, for instance, have stopped accepting mixed plastics and paper to their recycling programs. In Arizona, one of the states believed to be less severely affected by the new recycling landscape, the city of Flagstaff nevertheless announced in June that it was limiting its curbside recycling collection to only #1 and #2 plastics.

Sacramento said it was similarly dropping several kinds of plastics from its curbside program, and Hooksett, a New Hampshire town of some 14,000 people, said it was canceling curbside collection entirely. The town has said the move is only temporary. The

Hooksett Department of Public Works did not respond to questions about when the program would be reinstated.



SAUL LOEB/GETTY IMAGES

The Waste Management Material Recovery Facility in Elkridge, Maryland, says it's had to pay to get rid of huge amounts of paper and plastic that it would have normally sold to China.

### 'A Real Wake-up Call'

China has been widely vilified as the cause of the current recycling fiasco. But industry watchers say the blame should not be placed on China, which has cited environmental and public health concerns, as well as a desire for self-sufficiency, as reasons for its policy change.

"China's not the bad guy," Mark Murray, executive director of the advocacy group Californians Against Waste, told the Los Angeles Times in June. "To the Chinese credit, they've decided they don't want to have Third World [trash] sorting in their country."

So, who then should be held accountable for this mess? It turns out we're all to blame.

"People were upset and had been pointing the finger at China, but really, here in the U.S., it's a shared responsibility," Rosengren said.

China's waste import restrictions have revealed just how flawed — and dirty — the American recycling industry is, and how bad American consumers are at recycling.

"One of the principal reasons China imposed these restrictions is that the scrap and recyclables that the U.S. was sending to China included too much 'contamination' — material that is not recyclables," Biderman said. "This is because many Americans are 'wishful recyclers' and put items in the recycling container hoping that the recycling company or local sanitation department will recycle them."



Dirty takeout containers, most plastic bags, batteries, Christmas lights, garden hoses and those takeout coffee cups from Starbucks are all not recyclable — yet many Americans toss their trash willy-nilly into the recycling bin without a second thought.

We're so bad at recycling that Rosengren said some waste management companies have reported receiving recyclables from customers with contamination rates of up to 30 percent.

He said the companies themselves are partly to blame for allowing contamination levels to creep up over time. Before the ban, these companies had also been shipping recyclables with too much contamination to China, he told HuffPost.

"Things had been good, they were making money, so a lot of these companies got complacent," he said.

The federal government, as well as many state and local governments, also failed to adequately support and investment in domestic recycling infrastructure, Rosengren noted. "Everyone got complacent, they figured China would just be there... It's been a real wake-up call for people."



DAVID L. RYAN/BOSTON GLOBE/GETTY IMAGES

Trash is separated on a conveyor belt at E.L. Harvey & Sons in Westborough, Massachusetts, on May 31. The company says it's been forced to stockpile thousands of tons of recyclables since January.

## New Markets, New Opportunities

Industry experts say China isn't likely to soften its stance on foreign scrap — in fact, the country recently suggested that it would seek to ban all solid waste imports by 2020. Global recyclers will thus need to evolve and adapt.

There are expectations that the downturn in the recycling industry will continue for many months, if not years. But there is also optimism that the recycling industry as a whole will eventually emerge better and brighter than ever.

"On the short term, it's painful for the industry, but long term it's probably a good thing for society at large," said Brunet, who predicts more market diversity and better, cleaner recycling processes as a result of China's policy change.

Already, new recycling markets have emerged to fill the void that China once occupied. In recent months, recyclables have flooded into other nations, mostly in Asia, including India, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan.

These countries have only a fraction of China's processing capacity, however, and signs of strain are already starting to show.

"Vietnamese ports are clogging up due to the upsurge of plastic waste imports into the country," Von Hernandez, global coordinator for the Break Free From Plastic global movement, said in an email. "In Thailand, the spike in imports is, unfortunately, fuelling demands to establish more incinerators in the country, which would be tantamount to exporting and externalizing one country's toxic air emissions to another, if those plastic materials end up being burned in those facilities."

It remains to be seen whether these other nations will be able to adequately — and sustainably — handle the new influx of waste.



DEREK DAVIS/PORTLAND PRESS HERALD/GETTY IMAGES

Ecomaine says it's been implementing new policies to eliminate contaminated recycling from its waste stream in an effort to reduce losses in the global recycled-commodity market.

Stateside, many opportunities have emerged for the American recycling industry — from investments in contamination reduction to the building of more recycling infrastructure.

"I hope that the federal government recognizes the value of strong municipal recycling programs in the United States," Biderman said. "Recycling is a job creator — recycling creates up to seven times more jobs per ton than landfilling, preserves landfill space for what truly needs to be disposed of, and is good for the environment."

Consumers, too, have a critical role to play in turning the recycling tide.

"People seem to think that once recyclables hit the curb, they just go away. They don't think about the process," Rosengren said.

Check your local guidelines to find out what can and cannot be recycled in your municipality — the rules tend to vary from city to city and county to county. "Make sure you're giving the right stuff, and make sure they're all clean and dry," Rosengren said. "Get the peanut butter out of the jar, rinse your beer bottle out and remember to never, ever put plastic bags in your recycling. That's death to a recycling facility."

"Try to reduce your consumption," he added. "Just because you're recycling doesn't mean you're absolved of your environmental footprint on the Earth."

**CORRECTION:** An earlier version of this article said some waste management companies had been shipping recyclables with contamination rates of up to 30 percent to China. That figure, however, is the amount of inbound contamination these companies were seeing from customers and not the amount they were shipping out.

 BEFORE YOU GO



01:56

China's ban on foreign trash hits recycling industry



Dominique Mosbergen  
Senior Reporter, HuffPost

[Suggest a  
correction](#)

MORE:

China

Environment

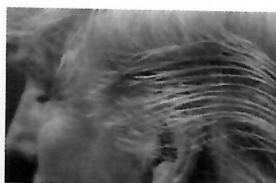
This New World

Recycling

Landfill

Around The Web

Powered By ZergNet





# **One year later: How China has reshaped US recycling**

By Cole Rosengren

Published July 18, 2018

China's July 18, 2017 WTO filing that banned dozens of scrap categories has upended recycling economics around the world, especially in the U.S. The subsequent tightening of contamination standards for what the country still will accept has added further pressure to the industry.

Over the past year, Waste Dive has covered this from many angles with dozens of stories throughout the scrap supply chain. From local governments big and small to state and federal agencies to the industry's largest recycling companies and the many parties in between, we're constantly seeking new perspectives. We also continue to update our 50 state market effects tracker on a weekly basis.

As we begin to think more broadly about what the future of recycling will look like, it's also important to remember how we got here. In the months ahead, we'll continue to update this page with our top stories on the China shift, valuable coverage from others and links to external industry resources. If you have information that would be a good fit for this — or our state tracker page — we welcome emails at [waste.dive.editors@industrydive.com](mailto:waste.dive.editors@industrydive.com)

**[Click here to jump to most recent stories](#)**

**July 2017**

## **What comes next after China's scrap ban surprise?**

Early reactions from industry associations about where material would go next and what it might take to expand U.S. processing infrastructure.

**September 2017**

## **Insights on the unknown effects of China's scrap import ban**

A podcast dispatch from the 2017 Resource Recycling conference in Minneapolis with multiple MRF operators and industry figures about how they were adapting so far.

**October 2017**

## **Surprise OCC price drop seen as latest sign China is serious about new trade policy**

Trade analysts and industry figures react to troubling signs for the one commodity many recyclers were still counting on.

## **Recycling Partnership's Harrison on China, single-stream and the future of recycling education**

CEO Keefe Harrison emphasizes an optimistic outlook and discusses next steps for recycling policy.

**November 2017**



## **Market effects vary by state, but widespread agreement is recycling needs to change**

In honor of America Recycles Day, Waste Dive launches the 50 state page with a companion feature highlighting market conditions around the country.

## **China proposes new 0.5% contamination standard with March 2018 enforcement**

Waste Dive is among the first to report on China's finalization of tight new contamination specifications.

### **December 2017**

## **Disruptor of the Year: China's Import Policies**

China's outsized effects on the U.S. industry are recognized with a 2017 Dive Award.

### **March 2018**

## **SWANApalooza: How the industry is (and isn't) adapting, post-China**

A report from the Denver conference about how officials from the EPA and local governments viewed the policy effects to date.

## **Waste Management's Bell on the tough job of MRF sorters and life after China**

An in-depth interview with the head of America's biggest recycling operation on the market's shifting economic and labor realities.

## **April 2018**

### **With China's 'nearly impossible' contamination standard, where are MRFs looking now?**

Early reactions one month into the enforcement of China's 0.5% contamination standard.

### **ISRI: No 'panacea' on import restrictions — what China wants is more complicated**

The leading scrap association offers more historical and economic context about what led China to this point.

### **China announces formal ban on 32 scrap categories**

The list grows longer as China makes good on a promise to eventually move away from all scrap imports by 2020.

### **Catching up with 'king' of the industry Jim Fish**

A Waste Expo interview with the Waste Management CEO, including how his latest earnings call got dominated by recycling questions.

## **May 2018**

### **Republic VP Pete Keller on transforming the recycling business model**

A Waste Expo interview with the head of America's second-largest recycling operation on changing the economic equation.

## **May-June 2018**

## **Vietnam to temporarily stop accepting scrap plastic imports**

## **Indonesia implements 100% pre-shipment inspection policy on fiber**

## **Thailand temporarily stops plastic, e-scrap imports**

Three key Southeast Asian export markets take steps to either pause, or limit, the amount of scrap they're receiving after China limits its intake.

**July 2018**

## **5 charts that show the trade flow effects of China's import policies**

## **Closed Loop Partners CEO talks infrastructure investments in light of National Sword**

## **The future of recycling for people, packagers, policymakers**

Waste Dive marks the anniversary of China's WTO announcement with multiple stories about what it has meant for commodity supply chains, infrastructure investment and the broader national recycling dialogue.

## **Other Key Coverage**

- From Green Fence to red alert - A China timeline — *Resource Recycling*
- China's Changing Import Regulations – What Does It All Mean? — *Waste 360*

- The perplexing pace of policy changes — *Recycling Today*
- Your Recycling Gets Recycled, Right? Maybe, or Maybe Not — *The New York Times*
- Recycling, Once Embraced by Businesses and Environmentalists, Now Under Siege — *The Wall Street Journal*
- America Doesn't Know Where to Send Its Recyclables Anymore — *Vice News*
- So Where Should We Put Our Recycling? — *Bloomberg*
- As China gets tough on recycling, will America get cleaner? — *PRI*
- 07/24/2018 05:01 am ET Updated 8 hours ago The Dirty Truth Is Your Recycling May Actually Go To Landfills — *HuffPost*

### Industry Resources

- **ISRI:** China's Scrap Trade Policy
- **SWANA:** What You Need to Know About China's Waste Import Restrictions
- **NWRA:** China's Changing Policies on Imported Recyclables