

**Recommendations to
Stimulate Jobs and the Economy Through Plastics Recycling
Prepared for the
Council on Recycling
by the
Plastics Recycling Subcommittee
December 2013**

A DNR-commissioned *Wisconsin Plastics Study*, published in early 2013, estimated the value of the thousands of tons of landfilled plastics at about \$64 million in 2009. Most plastic discards come from commercial establishments and typically represent potential value to the Wisconsin manufacturers and processors that seek them for feedstock. In the spring of 2013, the Council on Recycling launched a stakeholder process to identify strategies to stimulate economic and job growth by recycling more of the valuable plastics that currently end up in Wisconsin landfills. For more information on the DNR plastics study and the Council stakeholder process, see the Council on Recycling webpage at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Recycling/council.html>.

More than 60 people representing industry and national trade associations, state and local government, recycling and waste service providers, and private citizens and citizen action groups attended ten in-person workgroup meetings and a number of conference calls between April and October, 2013. All meetings and calls were open to the public. The Council is pleased to share below the recommendations developed by the workgroups formed as part of this process under the leadership of the Council's Plastics Recycling Subcommittee. The recommendations focus on recovering plastics from three major sources: commercial establishments, public events, and farms.

Up to this time, no state funding has been requested or allocated to this process. It appears likely that in the immediate term, one or more trade associations are willing to invest in necessary additional research. However, the Council anticipates the projects may stimulate interest in capital investment or infrastructure development for which state financial assistance may be prudent. Therefore, the Council also voted to continue to explore establishment of an industry-led Plastics Recycling Corporation which would organize Wisconsin-specific plastic producers and recyclers. The organization would represent their common interests in growing the plastic recycling industry in Wisconsin and would facilitate raising funds for projects...

The Council voted to continue its leadership role and to continue to seek stakeholder involvement in guiding the process through the implementation stage. It is extremely appreciative of the commitment demonstrated by all involved in this process and pleased that the workgroups have each committed to continue with implementation of their recommended projects. The Council also wishes to thank the DNR for embracing its offer to host a stakeholder process to flesh out recommendations suggested by the Plastics Study and providing staff resources to assist in coordination of the stakeholder process.

Recommendations listed below are summarized from the original voted on by the Council. The original list is posted on the Council website (<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Recycling/council.html>).

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Increase collection of plastic packaging at commercial establishments

Problem statement: *Commercial establishments generate a large quantity of high-value film and rigid containers in their “back-of-store” operations but are unaware of the recycled value of these products and of how to recycle these through an efficient cost-neutral process.*

1. Secure funding for a study to assess the amount, type and distribution of rigid plastics containers generated, landfilled and recycled by Wisconsin commercial businesses.
NOTE: funding is likely to be available through a national plastics trade association.
2. Improve bale quality to create recycled plastics of higher value for Wisconsin manufacturers and processors through training and outreach, working with the program launched by the Association of Postconsumer Plastics Recyclers (APR).
3. Explore potential for a Wisconsin Grocer Rigid Plastics project, based on APR’s nationally launched Grocer Initiative, through a Memorandum of Understanding between DNR, APR, the WI Grocers’ Association and/or individual grocery companies.
4. Provide technical assistance on cost effective processes to collect commercially generated plastic film through implementation of on-site demonstration projects; create “How To” tip sheets on effective collection programs. Set up demonstration projects to target commercial distribution centers, industrial parks, rural recycling centers and shopping malls.
NOTE: A Wisconsin processor in conjunction with a national trade association have committed to coordinating this project and making available on-site balers as needed.
5. Facilitate information exchange among plastic scrap generators and markets by promotion of the industry supported Plastics Markets online directory.

Increase recovery of plastic bottles at public events.

Problem Statement: *Recycling opportunities are limited at many public places, such as parks, special and sporting events, malls and institutions. A large component of this waste stream is single use plastic bottles in high demand by manufacturers and processors. Public events are an efficient and effective venue to reinforce Wisconsin’s message to “recycle everywhere and all the time.”*

1. Work with the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) to provide recycling at larger highly visible high school sporting events.
2. Increase access to recycling bins by establishing a distribution network for recycling barrels that can be provided from beverage bottlers through the Wisconsin Beverage Association. Coordinate distribution with training and commitment to recycle at events.
3. Provide technical assistance for recycling at public places and events.

Increase opportunities for recycling of agricultural plastic film

Problem statement: *Wisconsin farmers generate a large amount of plastic waste. Recycling collection options are limited and many farmers burn instead of landfilling plastic film, releasing toxic air emissions. Past initiatives to develop a convenient collection process have been problematic, but recent events are encouraging.*

1. Reconvene the Agricultural Plastic Film workgroup at regular intervals (once every 4-6 months) to plan future activities.
2. Identify team to coordinate development of a recycling manual (a document to assist coordinating agency staff, farmers and farm organizations in planning and implementing successful collection events).

This workgroup has already completed these two recommendations:

- *Held an Agricultural Film Webinar* (Oct 15, 2013), hosted by UW Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center. Principle topics include end markets update, case studies of proven collection methods, baler demonstration preview, planning for local film collection programs.
- *Held baler demonstrations* at several on-farm sites (October 2013) to demonstrate options for smaller farm applications.