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Report on Blended MRF Commodity Values in the Northeast

Period covered January 1 – March 31, 2021

Prepared with funding support from EPA Region 3

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Background

The Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) supports recycling market development and opportunities for improvements in its 11-state region: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

In 2018, in partnership with the Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA), we formed a *Regional Recycling Markets Development Committee*. The Committee determined that having information about the value of commodities processed by the region's Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs)¹ would be helpful for assessing regional market trends and to serve as an educational tool for promoting improved residential recycling and participation. The results have been invaluable to recyclers, MRFs, and also municipalities and state agencies.

This is the eighth report. The first report covered the period April – June 2019 and focused on NERC's 11-state region. The scope of the participating states expanded in the first quarter of 2020 with the receipt of a grant from EPA Region 3. This report reflects information received from 16 MRFs in 10 states. Among respondents are single stream, dual stream, and source separated MRFs. The survey is conducted quarterly.

These survey results reflect the differing laws and collection options in the participating states. Five of the states have beverage container deposit laws. As a result, fewer glass bottles, PET bottles and aluminum cans are processed in MRFs in those states. Those MRFs are also likely to have less revenue from those recyclables. In addition, the report reflects a mix of single stream, dual stream and source separation to collect recyclables with single stream being the most common approach. The type of collection used will have an impact on MRF design and operation. Thus, the data from this report reflects the unique blend of facilities and statewide laws in the reporting states.

A special thank you to Robert (Max) Babits, RRS for providing technical support.

At no time will any individual company information be shared with anyone outside of NERC staff. No participating facilities will be identified and no state-specific data will be released.

¹ MRFs are a facility that receives, separates and prepares recyclable materials from the public for marketing to processors and end-user manufacturers.

Average Commodity Value per Ton of Marketed Materials

Survey respondents were asked to provide the average value received/paid for each of the commodities listed below during the period January – March 2021. These values were then combined into a weighted average to reflect the blended value per ton for recyclables marketed in the region.

All Reporting MRFs	Blended Value January – March 2021	Percentage Change from Previous Quarter
Without residuals	\$99.73	+ 65%
With residuals	\$88.46	+ 57%

These increases can be attributed to strong increases in the value of almost every commodity.

Of the responding MRFs, 63% were single stream and 37% dual stream/source separated.

	Single Stream	Percentage Change from Previous Quarter	Dual Stream/Source Separated	Percentage Change from Previous Quarter
Without residuals	\$99.07	+ 50%	\$119.21	+ 90%
With residuals	\$87.65	+ 46%	\$111.62	+108%

Processing Costs

The MRFs were also asked about processing costs² for the period January – March 2021. The average processing cost per was \$87/ton. This quarter represents an increase of 9% from the previous period.

Conclusion

Values for most commodities processed at residential MRFs rose dramatically this quarter, a continuation of a trend that began in the last quarter of 2020.

² The cost to sort and prepare the commodities for sale.