

## NERC survey offers insight into today's MRF economics

Posted on August 27, 2019

by [Jared Paben](#)



The Northeast Recycling Council released its first estimate of average bale value in the northeastern U.S. | Grisca Georgiew/Shutterstock

An average ton of recyclables in the northeastern U.S. is worth \$46, according to the Northeast Recycling Council. The estimate came from what will be an ongoing survey.

After surveying 15 public materials recovery facilities (MRFs) in 10 states, the Northeast Recycling Council (NERC) estimated the value of an average ton of recyclables during the second quarter of 2019 at \$45.83, including the negative value of residuals. Without counting the impact of residuals, the average ton was worth \$51.65.

The MRFs were also asked about their gate tipping fees and processing costs in 2018. The average fee charged to municipalities under contract with MRFs was \$38 per ton. For commercial or municipal customers without contracts, the average fee charged was \$48 per ton.

Meanwhile, the average MRF processing cost per ton was \$82.

The [first-of-its-kind report](#) from NERC illustrates how a MRF near these averages would be barely hanging on in today's markets. Much of what recycling facilities sort and sell is at record-low prices.

As examples, the NERC report estimates mixed paper makes up 28% of a ton of recyclables and OCC makes up 24%. According to [RecyclingMarkets.net](#), mixed paper is sitting at an average value of negative \$2 per ton and OCC is at \$28 per ton across the U.S. That OCC price, down from \$70 a year ago, is at a 25-year low.

UBCs (used beverage cans) are typically the highest-value material a MRF processes, but they make up a small percentage of the average ton – the NERC survey estimated UBCs contribute less than 1% by volume. And even they [aren't pulling as much weight](#) as they used to. They're now averaging less than 55 cents a pound, down 20 cents from a year ago.

NERC plans to conduct the survey and publish a report quarterly. It was spurred by the newly formed Regional Recycling Markets Development Committee, which was formed by NERC in partnership with the Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA).

"The Committee determined that having regional information about the value of recyclable commodities would be extremely helpful for assessing regional market trends and would serve as an educational tool for promoting improved residential recycling and participation," according to a NERC press release. "North Carolina's Department of Environmental Quality has been doing a similar survey for many years. The results have been invaluable to recyclers, MRFs, and also municipalities and state agencies."

### More stories about markets

- [Industry leaders tackle challenges in Big Easy](#)
- [These projects are boosting domestic capacity for recycled paper](#)
- [Tomra CEO: Industry has an opportunity for greater value recovery](#)



Posted in [News](#) | Tagged [industry groups](#) [markets](#) [MRFs](#) |

### Read more recent stories

- [Industry leaders tackle challenges in Big Easy](#)
- [CEO responds to concerns over impacts of plastic gravel](#)
- [China to increase tariffs on US OCC and other materials](#)
- [These projects are boosting domestic capacity for recycled paper](#)
- [Tomra CEO: Industry has an opportunity for greater value recovery](#)

#### Subscribe today for weekly updates

Name

First

Last

Email \*

Choose from our free e-newsletter offerings below \*

- Resource Recycling (weekly)
- Plastics Recycling Update (weekly)
- E-Scrap News (weekly)
- Plastics Recycling Update: Technology Edition (monthly)
- Friday Recap (weekly)

In addition to our e-newsletters, Resource Recycling Inc. will occasionally send emails related to the specific recycling industry sectors you've selected.

You are encouraged to review our [privacy policy](#).

Submit

Resource Recycling

Search



Help shape the evolution of recycling

**RESOURCE  
RECYCLING**  
CONFERENCE AND TRADE SHOW

**SIGN UP NOW TO ATTEND,  
EXHIBIT OR SPONSOR**

Click to secure your spot in  
**NEW ORLEANS AUGUST 26-28**

#### The latest recycling industry news

##### Industry leaders tackle challenges in Big Easy

Measurement and markets – two keys to strengthening recycling – were highlighted on the first day of the Resource Recycling Conference in New Orleans.

##### CEO responds to concerns over impacts of plastic gravel

A startup won money and media attention for its recycled plastic gravel, but some readers are concerned the product could cause more environmental harm than simply landfilling the scrap plastic.

##### China to increase tariffs on US OCC and other materials

U.S. exporters who are still moving OCC and other recyclables to China may face higher costs, after the Chinese government last week announced additional tariffs on key scrap materials.

##### These projects are boosting domestic capacity for recycled paper

As North American paper mills make investments to take in additional recovered fiber, Resource Recycling is charting expansions on an online map.

##### Tomra CEO: Industry has an opportunity for greater value recovery

The leader of a global recycling equipment company says improved processing infrastructure will be vital to the industry's future. But collaboration among all stakeholders is just as important.

##### Indorama will invest to meet increased RPET demand

Citing the need to meet rising demand in the near future, plastics producer Indorama is investing \$1 billion in its recycling operation.

##### Large cullet end user coming to Southeast

A newly formed company plans to build what it calls the first new U.S. glass bottle factory in over a generation. The \$123 million plant will use recycled glass.

See more [Resource Recycling headlines](#)

