Product Stewardship & Extended Producer Responsibility policies are being adopted and implemented nationally and internationally. In general terms these policies mean that, whoever designs, makes, sells, distributes, uses or manages a product at the end of its useful life, is responsible for minimizing its environmental impact. This responsibility spans the product’s entire life cycle.

The goals of product stewardship and extended producer responsibility are to:

- Encourage manufacturers to develop & design products containing fewer toxic and virgin components,
- Encourage source & waste reduction,
- Make products more environmentally favorable by encouraging increased durability, reusability, and recyclable,
- Increase use of recycled materials in product manufacture,
- Educate all stakeholders about the environmental and health impacts of the entire life cycle of products,
- Educate consumers about the environmental impacts of their purchases and encourage them to consider these impacts when making purchasing and end-of-life management decisions,
- Provide a level playing field for all product producers,
- Shift costs of end-of-life product management from tax payers to consumers and product manufacturers,
- Be results oriented,
- Be transparent and accountable to all entities, and
- Includes all parties of the product’s life cycle.

We need to change thinking and behavior from consumption and use perspective towards waste minimization and sustainable production. Product stewardship and extended producer responsibility policies should help balance the responsibility for end-of-life management between the public sector (government and taxpayers) and the private sector (manufacturers, retailers and the consumers). End-of-life management places a priority upon source reduction, reuse, recycling and strategies other than disposal.

Background
The Northeast Recycling Council, Inc. (NERC) is a ten-state non-profit organization dedicated to recycling market development. NERC has been actively involved in product stewardship and extended producer responsibility initiatives since the early '90s. NERC worked directly with Northeast newspaper publishers to negotiate a commitment to use more recycled newsprint, and working with the Direct Marketing Association and Yellow Pages Publishers to use recycled content paper and improve
the recyclability of the Yellow pages. In addition, NERC was an active stakeholder in the national carpet recycling product stewardship initiative and a signatory to the national agreement, and an active stakeholder in the National Electronics Product Stewardship (NEPSI) Dialogue. It also adopted the first used electronics market development policy in the United States, which embraces principles of shared responsibility.

**Purpose**
The purpose of this Policy Statement is to articulate guiding principles for NERC to use as it works with policy makers, manufacturers, retailers, consumers, regulators, legislators, waste managers and other stakeholders to develop programs that more safely, cost-effectively and appropriately manage products throughout their entire life cycle including: design, distribution, use, and end-of-life disposition. NERC's mission focuses on solid waste minimization and recycling market development, therefore NERC should focus on those products that, due to the materials that they contain or other important characteristics, require special collection, handling, recycling or disposal practices, or products that represent a significant percentage of the waste stream.

**POLICY STATEMENT**
NERC believes that it is in the best interest of the public welfare and environment to reduce the adverse health, financial, environmental, and other impacts associated with the entire life cycle of consumer products. NERC endorses a product stewardship and extended producer responsibility strategy that includes various incentives, as an effective and significant strategy to achieve this result.

**Responsibility:** The responsibility for reducing product impacts must be shared among industry, retailers, government, and consumers. NERC believes that the greater the capacity and efficiency an entity or interest group has to minimize a product's life cycle impacts, the greater is its degree of responsibility and opportunity for addressing those impacts.

**Life Cycle Impacts:** The environmental impacts of product manufacture, distribution, use, and disposal should be minimized to the greatest extent possible. These impacts should be shared among the product manufacturers, retailers and consumers. Market competition, sustainable natural resource use, consumer preference, and system efficiencies should provide financial incentives for manufacturers to reduce these life cycle impacts.

**Incentives for Cleaner Products & Sustainable Management Practices:**
Government can and should provide incentives to manufacturers. Such incentives may include procurement policies and practices, and grant and loan programs.

**Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation:** It is through regional and multi-stakeholder dialogue and cooperation that product stewardship strategies will be most effectively developed and implemented. NERC should continue to work with other national, regional and multi-stakeholder groups to advocate for the adoption of product stewardship and extended producer responsibility policies.
**NERC Action Guidelines**

To implement this policy NERC will pursue actions, including, but not limited to:

1. Initiating, participating in and/or facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue and national and regional cooperation activities to establish negotiated agreements that
   - Promote the (re)design and manufacture of products to minimize environmental and economic life cycle impacts and facilitate source reduction, reuse, and recycling, and decrease the use of toxic and virgin components.
   - Include measurable performance goals.
2. Working with government to develop and establish policies and programs that encourage product stewardship and extended producer responsibility. This may include developing model procurement standards, policies and practices.
3. Cooperate in outreach and educational activities that encourage and support product stewardship and extended producer responsibility strategies.
4. Assess and consider available research and data relative to EPR initiatives and the associated environmental impacts before making strategic decisions.

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**Endorsement**