

Improving Residential Recycling

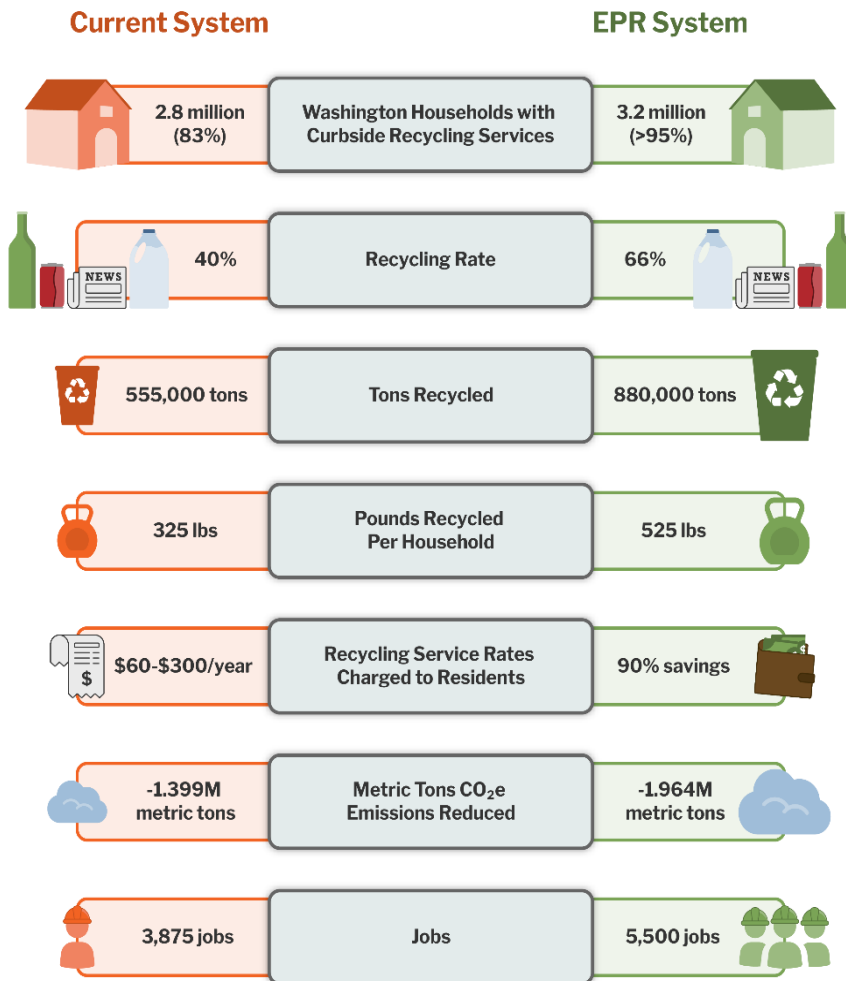
The Recycling Reform Act and Extended Producer Responsibility

Overview

The Recycling Reform Act (Senate Bill 5284) will create an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for the packaging and paper products that residents recycle. Packaging includes boxes, bottles, and cans made from cardboard, paper, plastic, metal, and glass. EPR requires producers of consumer goods to take responsibility for recycling their packaging and paper products and to provide resources that improve Washington's residential recycling system. Washington has joined six other states with a packaging and paper products EPR law: the other states include California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, and Oregon.

Expected impacts from the Recycling Reform Act¹

Here's how the Recycling Reform Act will improve the current system:



- Establish statewide lists of recyclables, reducing confusion about what can be put in the recycling bin or dropped off or collected elsewhere. This will result in more marketable recyclables.
- Provide curbside recycling to households with curbside garbage service, an increase of nearly half a million homes.
- Boost our residential recycling rate from 40% to 66%, capturing about 525 pounds per home per year.
- Reduce household recycling bills by 90% by 2032.
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 565,000 fewer metric tons due to increased recycling.
- Reduce materials going to the landfill and provide more living wage jobs.

¹ Ecology publication 22-07-022: [Washington Consumer Packaging and Paper Study - Recycling Rate Assessment and Recommendations](#) and Ecology publication 23-07-060 [Washington Recycle, Reuse, and Source Reduction Target Study and Community Input Process](#)

How the Recycling Reform Act EPR program will work

Producers of consumer products will be responsible for managing their product's packaging after its use. The law requires producers to reimburse 90% of the recycling system cost to service providers (residential packaging and paper product material collectors and processors) and to invest in system improvements. The EPR program will provide convenient and responsible recycling service to all Washington residents. Here's how it works:



PRODUCERS (consumer product brand owners) join and pay fees to a nonprofit Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO).

PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY ORGANIZATION (PRO) uses producer fees to pay for existing, improved, and expanded residential recycling service. The PRO reimburses 90% of private company or local government costs to provide collection service and process materials. The PRO funds two needs assessments that will identify improvements to ensure an equitable program. The PRO provides grants for reusable packaging and reuse infrastructure.

STATEWIDE COLLECTION LISTS will be set by the Department of Ecology, to allow people to recycle the same items everywhere in the state. PRO funding enables collection of those items regardless of location or distance from recycling markets.

RECYCLING SERVICES are provided to all households with curbside garbage service and drop-off access is improved. This expands service for people living in rural communities and apartments. Current solid waste service providers continue to deliver recycling collection services and get reimbursed by the PRO for 90% of their costs.

EDUCATION about how to recycle along with programs to reduce contamination (trash) in our recyclables is provided by the PRO. Outreach materials are accessible, meet the needs of diverse communities, and are usable by local governments and solid waste service providers.




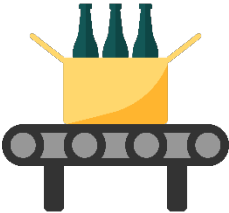


PROCESSING of recyclables happens at existing facilities, with additional upgrades or new facilities if needed. Facilities annually report on the material processed including quantity, quality and end markets.

END MARKETS must manage recyclables appropriately, without creating undue pollution or other harms, must purchase the materials, and recycle them into something new. Service providers, processors, and the PRO ensure that materials collected in Washington reach responsible end markets.

OVERSIGHT AND ENFORCEMENT of the program is conducted by Ecology. An advisory council provides ongoing feedback about program startup, implementation, and operation to Ecology and the PRO.

PROGRAM STARTUP efforts include development of statewide collection lists, two needs assessments, consultation with interested parties, rulemaking, and program plan approval. Statewide, consistent, and increased curbside recycling services start four years after the law is enacted.

Recycling Reform Act EPR Program Key Players

 <p>DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY State of Washington</p>	<p>Department of Ecology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee program activities, compliance, and enforcement • Register service providers annually • Appoint and facilitate an advisory council • Develop statewide collection lists • Conduct two needs assessments • Establish regulations for the program • Notify the Legislature of the draft PRO plan and program economic analysis • Review and approve PRO plans and annual reports
	<p>Advisory Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represent interested parties, with an equity subcommittee • Provide program guidance and recommendations • Review and provide comment on program development, rules, statewide collection lists, needs assessments and other studies, PRO plan, and annual reports
	<p>Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set and collect producer fees, fund Ecology's costs • Implement and fund program requirements • Develop the program plan, including performance targets, methodology for reimbursement rates • Fund and operate a reuse grant program • Reimburse cities, counties, and service providers 90% of their costs • Invest in infrastructure to expand and improve collection of recyclables • Submit annual reports
	<p>Producers - product brand owners, manufacturers, importers, distributors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join the PRO • Pay annual producer fees to fund the program and report information • Redesign packaging materials to improve waste reduction, reuse, and recycling outcomes
	<p>Service Providers - companies or local governments that provide or contract for collection, transport, and processing of materials on the collection lists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register with Ecology • Contract with the PRO to be reimbursed for 90% of costs
	<p>Residents - single and multifamily dwellings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive reduced rate curbside recycling service everywhere there is curbside garbage service • Access free drop off collection of recyclables

Recycling Reform Act EPR Program Timeline

Phase 1

REGISTRATION AND ASSESSMENT

2025 - 2027

January* 2026 - Ecology starts rulemaking

January 2026 - Advisory council established; service providers register with Ecology (annually)

March 2026 - PRO registers with Ecology (annually)

October 2026 - Ecology publishes statewide collection lists

December 2026 - Ecology publishes preliminary needs assessment

December 2027 - Ecology publishes second needs assessment

Phase 2

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

2028 - 2029

June* 2028 - Ecology adopts rules

August* 2028 - PRO submits draft program plan to the advisory council

October 2028 - PRO submits draft program plan to Ecology

January 2029 - Ecology publishes economic analysis of the PRO draft plan

January to April 2029 - Legislature considers PRO draft plan and economic analysis of the PRO draft plan

March 2029 - Producers who are not members of the PRO cannot sell their products in Washington

July* 2029 - Ecology approves the PRO plan

July* 2029 - PRO begins reuse grant program (\$5 million/year)

Phase 3

IMPLEMENTATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

2030 AND BEYOND

January 2030 and onwards - PRO implements approved program plan

- Residents receive reduced cost recycling services
- PRO reimburses service providers, by 50% in 2030, by 75% in 2031, by 90% in 2032 and after
- PRO uses existing infrastructure and invests in improvements

July 2031 - PRO submits program report to Ecology (annually)

2032 - Ecology completes equity study to inform future plan improvements and updates needs assessment

2034 - PRO submits updated plan to Ecology

2038 - Ecology submits independent review of the program to the Legislature

*Estimated dates



Dan Weston
(360) 791- 4849
recyclingreform@ecy.wa.gov



To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6381 or visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>. People with impaired hearing may call Washington Relay Service at 711. People with speech disability may call TTY at 877-833-6341.