

Waste Recycling

Recycling Works. If We Don't Counter the Naysayers, It Won't

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You've probably seen a newspaper, television, or online article insisting that recycling isn't working. They say what we put in our recycling bins doesn't get recycled. Instead, it ends up in landfills.

Some of these stories come from organizations with an axe to grind against plastic products. They fear that successful plastic recycling will undercut their efforts to eliminate plastics, so they insist plastics can't be recycled. Some come from reporters who pass them on without taking the time to fact check them. Others pop up in letters to the editor or in online comments.



told their efforts are wasted.

As I noted in my last [column](#), I've gotten used to being asked by friends if their recyclables are being thrown away. This also happens when people I meet learn I am involved in recycling. They too want to know if all of their recyclables, not just the plastics, are being thrown away.

We need to turn the tide. It's time for recyclers to tell the story of where the stuff in our recycling bins goes. It's time to correct the lies and out-of-context statements that are eroding trust in recycling. If we don't, our silence guarantees our recycling efforts will fail.

Fortunately, some groups are telling the story. Last year, [MassRecycle](#), the state recycling organization in Massachusetts, decided enough was enough. The group put together a successful campaign to get accurate information to media in the state.

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businesses visited local MRFs to see how their recyclables are being processed and sent to end markets. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a MRF tour is worth hundreds of thousands. It shows recycling in action. Telling the story proves that recycling is working.

A year after launching its program, MassRecycle is still giving weekly MRF tours. As Gretchen Carey, MassRecycle President, said at a [fall recycling conference](#), “We believe the people who come to visit are our best advocates. We always ask them to tell people what they have seen and spread the word that recycling is really happening.” As a result, MassRecycle is a go-to resource for local reporters.

State recycling groups and local recycling officials are the best people to tell the story. They know the facts. They collect and process recyclables on a daily basis. They can set up MRF tours and become trusted news sources for reporters. They can proudly say, “These are our programs and they are working”.

Let’s tell the story in all fifty states. Let’s step up and counter the misinformation. We have a story to tell. Let’s go out and tell it.

About the Author(s)



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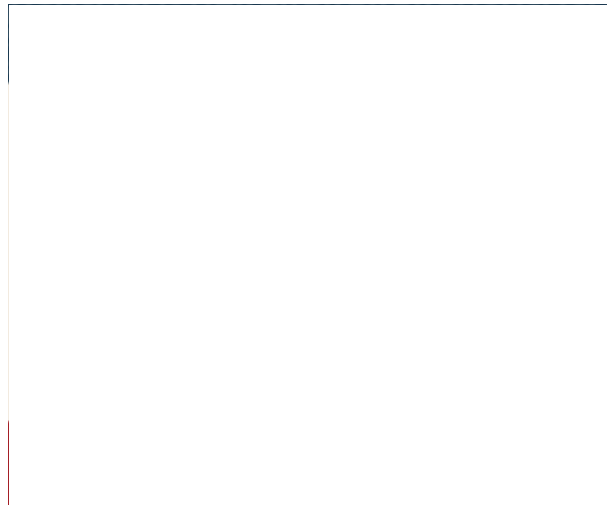
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