

New Opportunities to Advance Container Recycling

Exciting news! CRI recently received a grant from Arconic Foundation to complete a report on aluminum can recycling and ensure its findings are shared with all stakeholders.

The independently endowed Arconic Foundation provides funding and support for leading nonprofits worldwide, with a focus on education, social equity and environmental sustainability. It invests in the communities of Arconic Corporation, one of two companies formed when Alcoa, Inc. split in 2016.



**ARCONIC
FOUNDATION**

Titled “Optimizing Aluminum Can Recycling in the United States,” the report will look at recycling best practices for aluminum used beverage containers (UBCs).

Aluminum UBCs are considered one of the most valuable consumer recyclables and have an especially high potential for direct recyclability. However, missorted materials and commodity degradation

due to contamination can result in significant recycling system operating inefficiencies, equipment downtime, compromised product quality, increased environmental impacts and reduced competitiveness vis-à-vis manufacturers in other countries.

In the U.S., the biggest missed opportunity is that roughly half of all aluminum UBCs are not collected for recycling each year. They are littered or landfilled instead.

In addition to assessing material losses, contamination and the costs of contamination, the report will discuss the creation of a roadmap for optimal recycling. Its findings will serve as the basis for engaging stakeholders to:

- Advance the conversation about UBC recycling.
- Achieve cost savings at each stage in the recycling process.
- Ensure maximum reuse of materials in new products with minimal waste, cost and environmental impacts.
- Demystify sorting requirements for the recycling public.

CRI is grateful to Arconic Foundation for making this vital work possible. Stay tuned for the report results in 2023! ■

A U.S. Plastics Pact “Activator”

Earlier this year CRI joined the U.S. Plastics Pact (<https://usplasticspact.org/>), a consortium of some 115 companies and organizations focused on accelerating progress toward a circular economy for plastic packaging.

Originally led by The Recycling Partnership and World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the U.S. Plastics Pact was launched in 2020 as part of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s global Plastics Pact network. According to the consortium, it is “unifying stakeholders across the entire plastics value chain to rethink the way we design, use and reuse plastics, keeping plastics in the economy and out of the environment.”



Ambitious 2025 goals for the pact include making 100% of plastic packaging reusable, recyclable or compostable; and effectively recycling or composting 50% of plastic packaging.

As a U.S. Plastics Pact member (a.k.a. “Activator”), CRI is providing expertise on beverage container deposit programs, given that a national bottle bill or many state bottle bills are essential to meet the pact’s recycling rate targets. With PET the largest type of plastic packaging produced in the U.S., bottle bills are the only feasible way to collect and recycle all of the PET needed to meet the pact’s 2025 goals.

We look forward to continuing our involvement with the U.S. Plastics Pact as part our ongoing work as the leading U.S. source of original research, objective analysis and responsible advocacy on the recycling of beverage containers. ■

In Other Networking News ...

At CRI, we continue to update stakeholders about beverage container deposit legislation and the value of deposit-return systems. Since our last newsletter, CRI president Susan Collins has served as plenary speaker at the in-person Missouri Recycling Association Conference, and has spoken during the Container Deposit Best Practices Session at the (virtual) National Recycling Congress. The CRI webinar she led on Oct. 5, titled “Big Changes in California’s Beverage Container Recycling Program: AB 179 and SB 1013,” had 61 registrants and received

detailed coverage in the trade press.

In addition to sharing our expertise through conferences, special events and webinars, we continue to prepare data-based briefings and analyses to help elected officials, regulators and other stakeholders make informed decisions on beverage container deposit legislation. To read the latest, visit www.container-recycling.org, click on “Publications” and then on “CRI Letters and Briefings.” We look forward to many more opportunities for education and advocacy in 2023! ■