

MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2020

National Recycling Crisis Hits Home

Amidst catastrophic market conditions, OCRRA's Recycling 2020 Report identifies strategies for our County

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (March 11, 2020) — Sustained low-to-negative value for recovered recyclables threaten curbside collection programs across the United States, including here in Onondaga County. OCRRA's Recycling 2020 Report released today is a call-to-action to state and local leaders to help rejuvenate recycling.

“Onondaga County residents are excellent recyclers and recycling is an environmentally sound practice to reduce waste and conserve natural resources and energy,” said Dereth Glance, executive director, OCRRA. “The problem is that markets have changed faster than the recycling industry can adapt. New policies and increased funding is needed to sustain municipal recycling programs, so we ensure valuable resources aren't incinerated or lost to a landfill, forever.”

OCRRA is a not-for profit, public benefit corporation that funds recycling for residents without the use of taxpayer dollars. OCRRA's costs have risen dramatically in the past three years. In 2017, OCRRA earned \$123,000 on recycling. In 2020, OCRRA will spend \$2.5 million to support recycling.

The OCRRA board of directors created an ad-hoc committee to explore options and provide recommendations on sustaining recycling despite extremely challenging economic times. They determined the current model and costs are not financially sustainable and action is required by local and state leaders.

OCRRA implements our community's Solid Waste Management Plan on behalf of Onondaga County. In response to the recycling crisis, OCRRA developed the following options:

SHORT-TERM

- If market conditions worsen, begin charging haulers to deliver residential recyclables (currently OCRRA subsidizes this, so there is no fee to haulers).
- Seek permit variance from the NYSDEC to temporarily send recyclables to the WTE Facility, for electricity generation, when costs exceed budgeted resources.
- Explore removing glass from curbside recycling to control costs and improve quality of paper and cardboard recycling, prior to a NYS Bottle Bill expansion.

LONG-TERM

The Committee recommends OCRRA continue to vigorously support the following state policy solutions:

- Ask the Governor and NYS Legislature to direct municipal financial relief to help cover residential material sorting costs, estimated at nearly \$60 million statewide (outside of NYC) in 2020.
- Expand the NYS Bottle Bill to include wine and liquor bottles, as well as non-alcoholic glass beverage containers, which comprise approximately 50% of the incoming glass stream at the Material Recovery Facility (MRF).

Glass collected in blue bins adds to the cost of processing; it contaminates other materials at the MRF and is abrasive to MRF sorting equipment. Expanding the NYS Bottle Bill could result in recycling more than 100,000 tons of clean glass annually.

- Establish Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging and paper, thereby shifting the end-of-life management of these materials to manufacturers and consumers, and relieving taxpayers and municipalities of the costs to sort, recycle and market these materials.

Locally, the Committee further recommends that OCRRA work with economic development agencies and manufacturers to increase local demand for recycled materials recovered in Onondaga County.

“After 30 years, we know recycling at the curb works,” said John Copanas, chair, OCRRA board of directors. “We can become a Recycling Resilient community by supporting and developing local markets, which transform our recyclables, while reducing our exposure to global market shifts; avoiding long-distance transportation costs and emissions; and sustaining local jobs and businesses.”

A high-quality recycling stream is essential to program sustainability. Onondaga County residents and businesses should continue to recycle – and recycle right. Visit www.OCRRA.org for the latest recycling instructions. Together, we recycle more than 37,000 tons of materials each year!

The Recycling 2020 Report and its appendices are available here:
www.tinyurl.com/Recycle2020Report

About OCRRA: *OCRRA is a not-for-profit public benefit corporation created by the New York State Legislature in 1990 to deliver a comprehensive solid waste management and resource recovery system to Onondaga County residents.*

OCRRA's system includes: a strong recycling and composting program, a foundation for local waste disposal at the Waste-to-Energy Facility, a convenient trash and

recycling drop off site, a robust education component and programs for hard to manage materials, such as household hazardous waste, batteries, fluorescent bulbs and other mercury-containing devices. OCRRA's award-winning programs are funded by trash drop-off fees and the sale of electricity generated at the Waste-to-Energy Facility in Jamesville, NY. Learn more and get involved at www.OCRRA.org, or follow us on [Facebook](#).

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