



For Immediate Release

The Florida Recycling Partnership Foundation Releases Composition Study *University of Florida Finds 25% Contamination in Recycling Stream*

Tallahassee, FL June 23, 2020 - The Florida Recycling Partnership Foundation commissioned its first study to more accurately determine the amount of contamination in the recycled materials being collected. Dr. Tim Townsend and the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences at the University of Florida (UF) conducted the research on the current and historic composition of recycled materials at Materials Recovery Facilities' (MRFs) and amount of contamination.

Materials from curbside bins and commercial businesses taken to MRFs are sorted to separate valuable recyclable materials from contamination. Recyclable materials are sent to processors to become new materials. Contaminated materials are sent to a landfill for disposal.

Contamination occurs when garbage or non-recyclable items are mixed in with valuable recyclables in the bin or cart. The contamination can cause an entire load of recyclable material to go to the landfill instead of being recycled.

The UF research focused on studying the types and weights of valuable materials and contamination handled at the facilities. The data was used to quantify historic contamination rates, which is defined in the study as the percent of total inbound weight that was ultimately landfilled.

The study found that on a historic average weight basis, the overall contamination rate is 25% for all MRFs, 27% for single stream MRFs, and 18% for dual stream MRFs. "In the last few years we have seen a gradual increase in the contamination rate and anticipate that more attention will be needed to maintain the cleanest recyclables stream," said Dr. Townsend.

"Increasing the collection of more valuable recyclable materials is the top priority," said Kim Brunson, – Publix Super Markets Facility Services Business Relationship Manager and Foundation Chair. "Our goal, as a Foundation, is to increase participation in recycling the right things and reducing the use of recycling bins for things that belong in a garbage can. The UF study has developed a baseline of how much non-recyclable materials are going to the MRFs. Hopefully with education and positive messaging, we can change consumer habits so that only proper recyclables are placed in recycle bins in order to reduce the amount of contamination going to MRFs."

This Florida Recycling Partnership Foundation's mission includes improving recycling of valuable recyclable materials, reducing the amount of raw materials used and the reuse of materials whenever possible. The Foundation will use the information provided in the study to demonstrate how important it is to place the correct items in the recycling bin.

To review the study, go to www.flrecycling.org

About The Florida Recycling Partnership Foundation ...

The Florida Recycling Partnership Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization created to educate policy makers, business leaders, and the general public on the benefits of recycling and for the advancement of recycling education and science.

The Foundation focuses on the improvement of recycling and the reduction of waste in Florida. The Partnership believes that through the dissemination of information relating to recycling and the reuse of materials whenever possible.

About the University of Florida – Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences ...

At the University of Florida and within the Department of Environmental Engineering Sciences, the Sustainable Materials Management Research Group specializes in solid and hazardous waste management and engineering research. Dr. Timothy Townsend, Jones Edmunds Professor, leads the group as the principal investigator. The group conducts research with local and state government, private waste industries, and national funding agencies. The research areas include sustainable materials management in policy, waste life cycle assessment, recycling of waste materials, sustainable landfill design and operation, landfill leachate and gas management, construction and demolition debris, electronic waste, waste leaching, and waste management in developing countries. For more information please visit: <https://legacy.essie.ufl.edu/home/townsend/>.

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