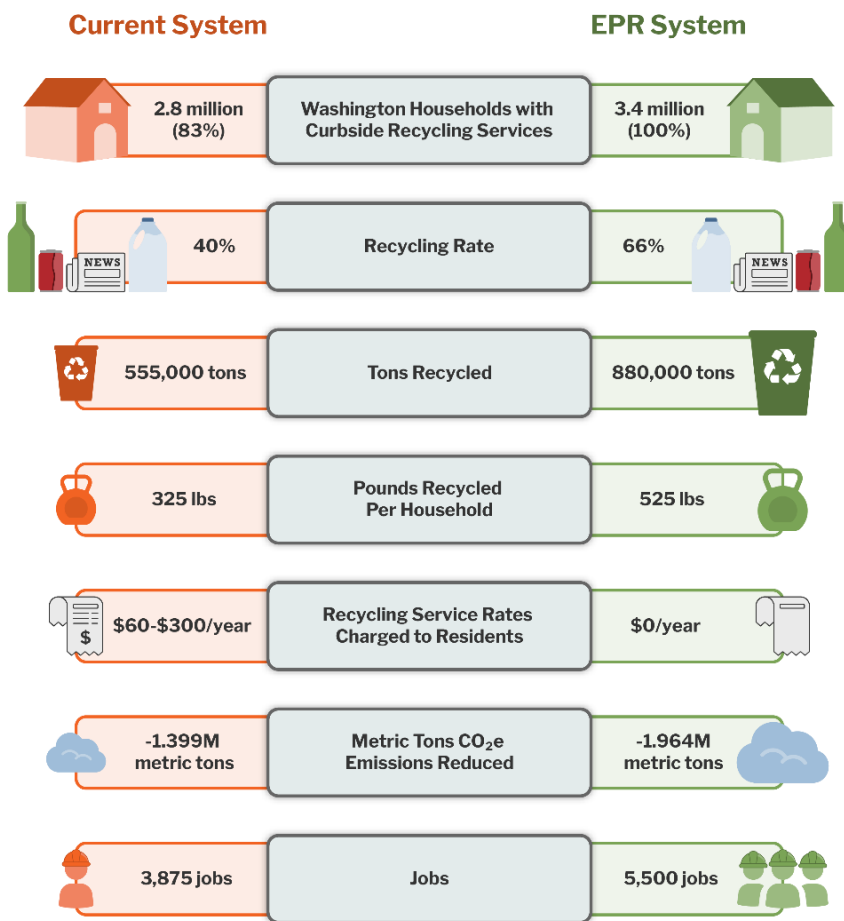


# Improving Residential Recycling

There are many benefits to reforming how Washingtonians recycle, as proposed in the Recycling Reform Act (House Bill 1150 and Senate Bill 5284). The Recycling Reform Act will create an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for the packaging and paper products residents recycle. This includes materials like bottles, cans, and boxes made from plastic, paper, metal, and glass. EPR requires consumer goods producers to take responsibility for recycling their packaging and provide resources to improve our current residential recycling system. California, Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, and Oregon all have packaging EPR laws. Washington could be next.

## Benefits from Improving Residential Recycling<sup>1</sup>



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

- Establish a single statewide list of recyclables, reducing confusion about what can be put in the recycling bin. This will collect cleaner, more marketable recyclables.
- Provide producer-funded curbside recycling to all households, an increase of half a million homes.
- Reduce or eliminate household recycling bills (by up to \$300 a year).
- Boost our stagnant residential recycling rate from 40% to 66%, capturing about 525 pounds per home per year.
- Reduce materials going to the landfill and provide more living wage jobs.
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 565,000 fewer metric tons due to increased recycling.

<sup>1</sup> Ecology publication 22-07-022: [Washington Consumer Packaging and Paper Study - Recycling Rate Assessment and Recommendations](#)

## How the Recycling Reform Act EPR program will work

Producers of consumer products will be responsible for managing their product packaging after use. They will reimburse recycling system service providers and 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 private companies or local governments that provide collection service. The PRO funds two needs assessments that identify improvements to create 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.

**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 others.


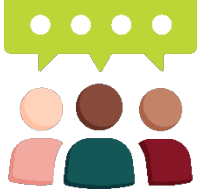

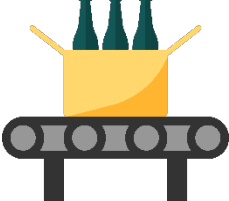


**PROCESSING** of recyclables happens at existing facilities, with additional upgrades or new facilities if needed. Facilities report on material quality.

**END MARKETS** must manage recyclables appropriately, without creating undue pollution or other harms, purchase the materials, and recycle it 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 done by Ecology. An advisory council provides ongoing feedback about program startup, implementation, and operation to Ecology and the PRO.

**PROGRAM STARTUP** efforts include two needs assessments, statewide list development, consultation with interested parties, rulemaking, and program plan approval. Statewide, consistent, and increased curbside recycling services starts four years after the law is signed by the governor.

# Recycling Reform Act Key Program Players

 <p>DEPARTMENT OF <b>ECOLOGY</b> State of Washington</p>	<p><b>Department of Ecology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee program activities, compliance, and enforcement</li> <li>• Register service providers annually</li> <li>• Appoint and facilitate an Advisory Council</li> <li>• Develop Statewide Collection Lists</li> <li>• Conduct two needs assessments (through a third-party)</li> <li>• Establish statewide requirements for the program</li> <li>• Review and approve PRO plans and annual reports</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Advisory Council</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent interested parties</li> <li>• Provide program guidance and recommendations</li> <li>• Review and provide comments on program development, rules, statewide lists, needs assessments, program plans, and annual reports</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set and collect producer fees, fund Ecology's costs</li> <li>• Implement and fund program requirements</li> <li>• Develop the program plan, including performance targets, methodology for reimbursement rates</li> <li>• Fund and operate a reuse grant program</li> <li>• Reimburse cities, counties, and service providers</li> <li>• Invest in infrastructure to advance progress towards statewide requirements.</li> <li>• Submit annual reports</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Producers</b> - product brand owners, manufacturers, importers, distributors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join the Producer Responsibility Organization</li> <li>• Pay annual producer fees and report information</li> <li>• Redesign packaging materials as able and necessary</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Service Providers</b> - 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"> <li>• Register with Ecology</li> <li>• Contract with the Producer Responsibility Organization to be reimbursed</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Residents</b> - single and multifamily dwellings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive free or reduced rate curbside recycling service everywhere there is curbside garbage service</li> <li>• Receive free drop off collection of recyclables</li> </ul>

# 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

**July\* 2027** - PRO begins reuse grants (\$5 million/year)

**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

## Phase 3

### IMPLEMENTATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

2029 AND BEYOND

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

**July\* 2029** - Ecology approves PRO program plan

**January 2030 and onwards** - PRO implements approved program plan

- Residents receive free or reduced recycling services
- PRO reimburses service providers
- 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



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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.