



MEMORANDUM

To: Autumn Salamack, Environmental Services Coordinator, City of Shoreline

From: Kevin Kelly, General Manager

Date: January 19, 2021

Re: Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments Update

We would like to inform you of a change in international policy regarding the handling of specific types of plastic waste that will have implications for local recycling programs.

Background – The Basel Convention

The [Basel Convention](#) is an international treaty that was designed to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between nations, and specifically to prevent the transfer of hazardous waste from developed countries to less developed countries. In 2021, the scope of materials covered by the Convention increased to include the international import/export of certain types of plastic waste (known as the [Plastic Waste Amendment](#)).

Following China's Green Fence and National Sword policies, global plastic waste trade moved from China to other parts of South East Asia. This change coincided with heightened public concern and policies focused on the mismanagement of exported recycled materials and impacts of plastic waste (especially on marine life). The Plastic Waste Amendment to the Basel Convention is seen by many as an obvious and initial step to better control trade in problematic plastic waste.

The Plastic Waste Amendment

Effective January 1, 2021, The Plastic Waste Amendment (PWA) to the Basel Convention aims to provide better control and transparency for the movement of plastic wastes which have the likelihood of not being properly recycled.

The types of plastics that will be controlled, and therefore impacted, by the amendment include:

- Mixed Rigid Plastics (MRP) and
- Mixed Plastics 3-7 (MP 3-7)



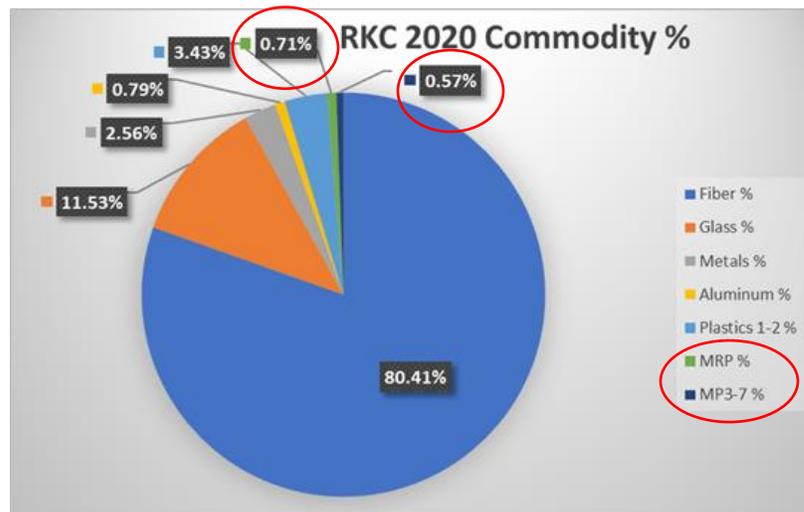
Both the MRP and MP 3-7 commodities are made up of many different types of plastics, including high-density polyethylene (HDPE), polypropylene (PP) and polyethylene terephthalate (PET). When sorted and marketed as separate commodities, these plastics are both valuable and have domestic markets.

Effective January 2021, it is illegal for Basel Party countries that do not have a predetermined bilateral trade agreement with the US that permits this trade to accept these controlled plastics (i.e. MRP and MP 3-7) from the US.

186 countries including the European Union are parties to the Basel Agreement, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, India, and the Philippines, which are the countries where mixed plastics are currently shipped to be recycled. The only countries that are now able to accept controlled plastics from the United States are Mexico and Canada (due to the USMCA). Canada has stated they will continue their existing policies related to the import/export of nonhazardous waste materials. It is currently unclear what Mexico's policies and procedures will be.

Impact on Local Recycling Programs

The new rules will result in an impact on the ability of North American recyclers to effectively market MRP and MP 3-7 materials. Currently, MRP and MP 3-7 commodities make up approximately 1% of Recology King County's total commodity production.





Even though the US is not an official member of the Basel Convention, Recology will be in compliance with the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Amendments and starting January 1, 2021 and no longer export controlled low-grade plastic materials. Recology will continue to seek opportunities to domestically process and recover plastic, while strongly advocating for policies that require producers of plastic products to financially support their end-of-life management.

Recology remains committed to socially and environmentally responsible resource recovery practices and will continue to identify opportunities to develop and promote domestic markets for plastic waste and reinvest in processing technology that improves our ability to recover valuable materials from the waste stream. Recology will continue to partner with local communities to find creative, real-world solutions that prioritize responsible management of recovered plastics and transparency into the materials recovery process.

What Does This Mean for Shoreline

Currently, Recology continues to have domestic end-markets for MRP and #5 plastics. Domestic markets for commingled plastics # 3, 4, 6, & 7 do not currently exist or are actively evolving. We are hopeful that new domestic infrastructure and markets will soon be emerging to address this need. In the meantime, these materials will be removed from the stream at our MRF and disposed of as residual waste.

We will be in touch to schedule a time to follow up with a virtual meeting to discuss specific impacts to your city's recycling program and expect this to be an on-going conversation as markets continue to adapt and respond to changing conditions.