

REBUILDING TRANSPARENT RECYCLING SYSTEMS TOWARD A CIRCULAR ECONOMY



The **Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR)** is a coalition founded by four of the original pioneers of mission-driven, community-based nonprofit recycling in the U.S. Together, we are guiding new recycling policies and infrastructure investments to rebuild credible, transparent recycling systems that serve as a bridge toward a circular economy and just, resilient local communities.

From a Linear “Take-Make-Waste” System to a Circular Economy. As recycling operators, AMBR members collect and sort tons of recyclables monthly, offering an intimate view of “take-make-waste” consumption. From our unique vantage point of processing piles of recyclables, we can identify, propose, and implement systemic solutions. From the pile, we look “upstream” at how products could be redesigned to be more resource-efficient, made from recycled content, reused and recovered more easily, and how unnecessary, toxic products could be eliminated. We also look “downstream” at how systems and infrastructure could better recover and remanufacture materials into new products. Informed by our unique perspective, we guide new recycling policies and infrastructure investments to build credible, transparent recycling systems that are in service of Zero Waste and a circular economy.

We Strive for Zero Waste. Voluntary brand commitments and consumer education have not led to the changes needed to address the plastic production and pollution crisis and rebuild our recycling system to be more circular. State and national policies must sustain existing recycling programs while also charting the course to fundamentally revamp our consumption systems to create a closed-loop economy. Amid historical supply chain disruptions, the intensifying climate crisis, and rampant plastic pollution, there has never been a more critical time to invest in a circular economy that prioritizes reduction and reuse.

What is mission-based recycling?
We recycle to keep natural resources in the ground.

Our goal is to create the bridge from a throw-away society that recycles to a truly circular economy and just, resilient communities.

Advancing Systems Change

AMBR works to advance state and national policy solutions, including:

Elimination of Unnecessary Plastics: Toxic, unnecessary plastics should be significantly reduced or eliminated rather than recycled. Plastic pollution reduction policies aim at reducing the prolific production of products like plastic bags or at eliminating materials like polystyrene and #3, #6, and #7 plastics.

Bottle Deposit Programs: Bottle deposit policies result in higher recycling rates for aluminum, glass, and plastic beverage containers. Policies should include expanding reusable and refillable beverage containers; a transition plan to help curb recycling programs and MRFs; minimum recycled content standards to increase bottle-to-bottle recycling; and fair and inclusive standards for informal workers.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): To address excess waste and the plastic crisis, thoughtfully designed EPR policies could be a key policy solution. Effective EPR policy should create incentives for packaging reduction and redesign, build equitable access to recycling services, reduce toxic chemicals in packaging, set source reduction targets, and prohibit false solutions like “chemical recycling.”



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