

The Resource Conservation Challenge

Guide To Becoming a Resource Conservation Challenge Partner



The Resource Conservation Challenge (RCC) is a challenge to all Americans—makers, sellers, and buyers of goods—to conserve our nation’s natural resources by changing behavior. The RCC is the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) program that promotes a new resource conservation ethic by encouraging everyone to: operate more efficiently; purchase more wisely; make, use, and reuse products that contain reduced levels of toxic chemicals; and make products that are easy to recycle and that are made from recycled materials. EPA welcomes partners to the RCC, and challenges them to help make America a better place. A place where products, materials, and waste are less toxic; where they pose lower environmental threats; where they are reusable and recyclable; and where they are made and used more efficiently.

Currently, EPA has developed two ways that partnership projects can enter the RCC. The Agency may select projects, or they may be nominated by industry, government agencies (local, state, other federal), tribes, or any nongovernmental organizations. EPA will evaluate all nominated projects on the scope of the problem identified; goals and measures expected; and methods used to conserve resources and to address environmental problems. The selected projects are managed by a Steering Committee, which reports to the EPA Assistant Administrators.

Each partnership project is expected to be different, and many types of partnerships may be formed. EPA’s commitment level and response to a partnership challenge depends on the type of challenge the partnership is pursuing, and the partnership’s degree of commitment to the project. The more recognizable and proven the results of the challenge, the more EPA will express its commitment and reward the participants. Therefore, entry into an RCC partnership depends on the project identified and on discussions with EPA. It is also expected that projects may enter the RCC at different points during the development process.

This guide explains how to become an RCC partner. Partners need to define and reach specific RCC goals, and they must measure and promote their successes. Together, we can achieve the RCC goals and improve the environment.

Interested participants can find more information on the RCC website at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/osw/conserve or, to propose a challenge, contact the RCC team at rcc-challenge@epa.gov.

Goals of the RCC

- Prevent pollution and promote recycling and reuse
- Reduce priority chemicals at all product life cycle stages
- Conserve energy and materials

Tire Partnership Identifies Its Challenge

Every year, the United States faces the task of managing millions of scrap tires. In 2001 alone, the United States generated approximately 273 million scrap tires. Historically, these tires were placed in landfills, stockpiled, or illegally dumped. In landfills, tires take up valuable space. Tires that are stockpiled or dumped become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and rodents—not to mention a detriment to neighboring properties and to the aesthetic value of the nation's country side. Tire piles also are prone to fires that are hard to extinguish. These fires emit noxious pollutants into the air, water and soil and can cost millions of dollars to mitigate.

The specific challenge identified by the RCC Tire Partnership is that only 76 percent of the current supply of scrap tires have end-use markets as recycled products or fuels. The tire cluster determined that new end-use markets are needed to address the remaining 24 percent of scrap tires as well as existing used tire piles. New end-use markets are sought. Developing new end-uses that recycle the used tires will support the recycling/reuse RCC goal and new fuel markets will support the goal of using alternative energy sources.

Step 1: Identify the Environmental Problem and Define Its Challenge

You should identify and define the environmental problem that you plan to address. Once defined, you should specify activities that you will undertake to resolve the problem (your challenge). The selected challenge may address the entire environmental problem identified, or it may cover any portion of it. We recommend that the challenge address: (1) a new problem or one that is not covered by current regulations (for example, getting to “unfinished business”); (2) one or more of the three RCC goals; and (3) a problem of national importance.

Step 2: Identify and Talk with Partners

The key to the RCC is its partners. Partnerships are essential for developing

and implementing environmentally beneficial solutions. These partnerships may include members of industry, trade associations, universities, public interest groups, tribes, or state, local, or federal agencies, including both Regional and Headquarters EPA offices involved in all programs (waste, toxics, water, air, etc). As part of the dialogue, the partners will likely discuss a number of areas that include: defining roles and responsibilities; identifying and prioritizing projects; and working collaboratively on results. Different partners may be identified for each project chosen for a specific challenge.

Partnership Shares Responsibility for Recycling Electronics

The Plug-In to e-Cycling partnership aims to increase the availability of safe electronic recycling. The project has taken a two-pronged approach. One route is to identify partners who have committed to advertise information about recycling used electronics equipment, and to provide increased opportunities to recycle these products.

The second Plug-In approach is still early in the development process. This partnership will pilot voluntarily shared responsibility for collecting, transporting, and recycling old consumer electronics. Manufacturers, retailers, governmental agencies, recyclers, and nongovernmental partners will take part in this effort.

The following partners have joined forces with EPA in the Plug-In to e-Cycling Partnership:

Arlington, TX	Clinton County, MI	Intel	Recycle America Alliance
AT&T Wireless	Dell	JVC	Sharp
Best Buy Company	Earth 911	Leon County, FL	Snohomish County, WA
Chelmsford, MA	Envirocycle	Lexmark	Sony
Citrus County, FL	Fairhope, AL	NxtCycle	Staples
City of Thousand Oaks, CA	Indianapolis Virtual Scavengers	Panasonic	Village of Northbrook, IL
		Per Scholas	

Step 3: Identify and Develop Solutions, Objectives, Targets, Implementation Plan and Time Line

We believe it is important for partners to discuss and reach agreement on proposed solutions to the identified environmental problem. To minimize duplication of effort and to prioritize solutions, partners should factor in the existence of ongoing projects in the challenge area that meet the goals of the RCC. It may be appropriate to develop more than one solution to reach the desired objective(s). EPA is looking for environmentally sound solutions that improve public health or the environment. The most desirable solution(s) will likely be flexible, nonregulatory, ambitious, sustainable, and approached on a life cycle basis. Solutions that prevent the creation of pollutants and waste, and produce durable, recyclable, and less hazardous goods are preferred. The solutions also may be, or set the stage for, a national effort.

We also believe the partners should identify and discuss the necessary tools, drivers, and incentives to produce the desired change. Potential barriers should be identified and environmentally sound remedies proposed. Together, partners must decide

Reductions in Toxic Chemicals Are Goals of the Targeted Chemicals Partnership

The Targeted Chemical Partnership defined a measurable overall objective to cut the generation of 30 targeted chemicals in hazardous waste by 50 percent by 2005. It intends to reduce the use of targeted chemicals at all stages in the life cycle of products (including design), purchasing, and end of life (i.e., waste materials and emissions). Since this goal is very broad in scope, the subgroup believes that it should develop an overall strategy which will help focus energy on the highest priority activities and will narrow the scope for the partnership. Initially, the subgroup intends to focus on the most prevalent targeted chemicals: lead, dioxin, mercury, and naphthalene, by forming partnerships and gaining commitments from the highest volume generators and users of these chemicals.

A check of existing projects related to the Chemical Partnership revealed 30 current projects. The group selected nine high priority projects. Each priority project was given overall objectives and targets which, when reached, will feed into the RCC's overall objective. For example, one high priority project entitled Dioxin Reduction at DuPont Titanium Dioxide Plants has set an overall goal to modify DuPont's current titanium dioxide process to cut dioxin generation in half by 2005 at domestic and overseas plants. Generating less dioxin waste will feed into the partners' overall objective of cutting the generation of 30 targeted chemicals by 50 percent by 2005.

Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool

Projects under the Electronics Partnership cover all areas of the product lifecycle stages, from initial design through end use and ultimate disposition. The group has developed an implementation plan and time line that includes all their current projects as well as individual plans and time lines.

One such project, the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT), will result in a national assessment tool that will facilitate identification of environmentally preferable design in personal computing devices. Specifically, participants plan to develop a functional rating system for electronic equipment designed to minimize environmental impacts throughout the lifecycle of these products.

The implementation plan for the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool includes the following information:

1. Description of the project
2. Specific objectives, expected outcomes, and outputs
3. Schedule of accomplishments, progress, and milestones
 - Phase 1: Lay the foundation for the structure of the rating system
 - Phase 2: Build the structure & preliminary guidelines
 - Phase 3: Peer review & finalize the guidelines & standards
 - Phase 4: Commission the system and initial operations
4. Time line for the phases

**More information
on this project
can be found on
the web at
www.epeat.net.**

how success is to be determined and agree on an overall measurable environmental objective, sub-objectives and targets. Solutions should measure the results achieved against a baseline and the set objectives and targets. Partners should consider whether a third party is necessary for monitoring, evaluating, and assessing progress towards the set objectives and targets. We recommend that objectives and targets be linked to at least one of the RCC goals.

Finally, we believe it is important for partnerships to develop a plan for implementing each solution in the defined challenge, as well as an overall plan that describes how everything fits together in the entire RCC area. The plan should describe the major events identified above, and may include a number of other appropriate elements. For example, the implementation plan may include a strategy that identifies how the partnership will communicate its message to the necessary parties, and the type of education materials needed (such as training or outreach) to ensure the desired outcome or behavior change. If a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be used, the implementation plan may also identify the process of developing and signing an MOU as well as the responsibilities of all parties. EPA also recommends that a time line be developed that includes all important elements of the implementation plan.

Step 4: Announce Partnership and Agreement

Elements of the agreements are expected to vary depending on the partnerships' solutions, objectives, targets, and commitments. Consequently, the degree to which the partnership and agreement will be publicized depends on the scope of the commitment attained. For example, an agreement to supply a small grant for research in a certain area—although important to achieving a stated objective—may call for a limited announcement. Conversely, an agreement concerning a significant environmental improvement with a high level of commitment between parties may prompt a greater degree of publicity. We expect that, at the highest level of commitment, the details of the agreement will be documented in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is signed by all key partners. Therefore, partners should discuss the level of agreement while deciding how best to announce the agreement.

Recycling Lead from Bullets and Lead Shot

Lead exposure can pose serious health risks. Lead from lead shot or bullets can contaminate the environment by migrating into soil, surface water, and ground water. Around the country, approximately 9,000 shooting ranges can deposit over 100 million pounds of lead into the environment each year. Partnering with national shooting range organizations, states, and other interested organizations, EPA's Region 2 (New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands) is leading a national program for enhancing the recovery and recycling of lead from outdoor shooting ranges.

After creating a Best Management Practices manual with its partners, and conducting outreach and technical assistance, Region 2 is recognizing ranges that implement acceptable Environmental Stewardship Plans (ESPs). An ESP is a document that explains how lead shot and bullets will be managed, reclaimed, and recycled at an individual range. It also discusses documentation and record keeping activities. Ranges that commit to an ESP receive Certificates of Recognition from EPA. Out-

reach and technical assistance activities continue to encourage new partners to join.

The Best Management Practices for Lead at Outdoor Ranges manual is available at www.epa.gov/region2/waste/leadshot. From this outreach effort, 20 Environmental Stewardship Plans (ESP) have been received from shooting ranges around the US. Based on commitments received, EPA estimates that approximately 50,000 pounds of lead will now be properly managed and reclaimed.

In January 2003, EPA, the Izaak Walton League of America, and the National Association of Shooting Range entered into an MOU. This MOU addresses the 105 member ranges, which together deposit over 100,000 pounds of lead in the environment each year.

The signing of the MOU was announced using a number of different techniques. The press was invited to attend the signing: a press release was issued; trade associations magazines highlighted the event; and a number of websites (both public and private) herald the partnership.

Step 5: Publicize Reaching Major Milestones

EPA and its partners will announce significant progress toward reaching the defined objectives or major milestones of the project. Partners should determine the best way to do this (e.g., press release, Websites, trade journals, or public service announcements). Announcements can publicize progress towards the stated goals, pilot program successes, or reaching the final outcome of the challenge.

Finally, once the overall objective for the challenge is met and the success has been announced, the partnership determines what additional work can be done. For example, the partnership might focus on longer term solutions after achieving short-term goals. A project that may have produced a successful pilot might be ready to expand to the regional or national levels. A project targeted at certain segments of the population might now focus on different segments. In any of these cases, the partnerships could decide to circle back to Step 2 and begin the process again.

Outreach to the Hispanic Community

EPA unveiled its new campaign to encourage Hispanic Americans to reuse and recycle used motor oil. Entitled "You Dump It, You Drink It," the campaign rolled out at the 2003 League of United Latin American Citizens Annual National Convention. The material includes a variety of printed information that is available in both Spanish and English. Promotion of the material has been through many venues: targeted mailings, press releases, public service announcements, and national conferences. EPA plans to expand this outreach campaign to a larger audience and is currently identifying partners.

WasteWise

WasteWise is a voluntary program within the RCC that solicits organizations, businesses, institutions, and state, local, and tribal governments to partner with EPA by committing to cut their waste (i.e., paper, computers, food waste) by practicing waste reduction, recycling, and reuse. WasteWise is a flexible program that allows partners to design their own waste reduction programs. Since 1994, over 1,300 partners have collectively reduced more than 69 million tons of waste.*

EPA draws attention to WasteWise partners and their waste reduction accomplishments through a variety of activities, such as press releases, web sites, and magazines. Each partner is encouraged to use and display the

WasteWise logo. In addition, the companies that achieve the most outstanding reductions are presented awards. These top reporting partners receive their awards at the National WasteWise Recognition Ceremony and their accomplishments are publicized in the WasteWise Annual Report, on the program's web site, and through articles in trade publications, Internet news agencies and association bulletins. More information on the WasteWise program can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/wastewise>.

**This total is calculated using data voluntarily reported by WasteWise partners. These figures represent aggregate results from all waste prevention and recycling programs implemented by the companies and therefore may include activities not directly related to WasteWise goals.*

EPA Limits on Partnerships

Participation in an EPA-RCC partnership neither implies nor constitutes endorsement of any company, product, or service by the Environmental Protection Agency. RCC partners cannot create advertising which expressly or implicitly violates this prohibition and remain a partner with EPA.

EPA is authorized to cooperate with private and public efforts to reduce the adverse effects of releasing waste in the environment, and to encourage the recycling of industrial and commercial materials. The RCC is open to all companies and organizations that wish to join the Agency in this endeavor. Press releases and promotional materials may advise to the public of your participation in the RCC, and may identify any recognition awards that EPA provides to the partner.

All commitments are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. Neither the Agency nor its partners are under legally binding obligations of continued participation in the RCC.



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