



# Study on the **ECONOMIC IMPACTS** of **RECYCLING**

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### 1. Why is this study being done?

In 2015, the Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 2763, which required the development of a study to assess current recycling activity in Texas and to look at the economic impact of the recycling industry throughout the state. The Study on the Economic Impacts of Recycling (Study) will build upon the efforts of prior recycling studies in Texas, including the Texas Recycling Data Initiative (TRDI), which was released in February 2015 and estimated a baseline recycling rate for the recyclable materials Texans produced in 2013. For a copy of the TRDI report and links to other related studies, please visit the project website at [www.txrecyclingstudy.org](http://www.txrecyclingstudy.org).

This Study will take a closer look at the economics of the recycling industry in Texas and will provide more detailed and robust job information, as well as report on a modified list of commodities. Through a competitive bidding process, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has retained Burns & McDonnell to complete the project.

### 2. What is considered “recycling”?

Consistent with HB 2763 the Study will define recycling based on the definition found in Texas Health and Safety Code Section 361.421(8). This defines recycling as a “process by which materials that have served their intended use or are scrapped, discarded, used, surplus, or obsolete are collected, separated, or processed and returned to use in the form of raw materials in the production of new products. Recycling includes:

- (A) the composting process if the compost material is put to beneficial reuse as defined by the commission
- (B) the application to land, as organic fertilizer, of processed sludge or biosolids from municipal wastewater treatment plants and other organic matter resulting from poultry, dairy, livestock, or other agricultural operations.”

The study will focus on municipal solid waste (MSW), post-consumer recyclables, and will utilize the MSW Texas Health and Safety Code definition found in Section 361.003(20). MSW is defined as “solid waste resulting from or incidental to municipal, community, commercial, institutional, and recreational activities, and includes garbage, rubbish, ashes, street cleanings, dead animals, abandoned automobiles, and other solid waste *other than industrial solid waste*.”

### 3. Which materials will the study cover?

The study will cover a more detailed MSW materials list than the TRDI study as respondents may now list specific material types (e.g., PET#1) in addition to the primary materials (e.g., plastics). The Study will cover: glass (containers and other glass), metals (ferrous and non-ferrous), paper (mixed, old corrugated containers, and other paper), plastics (PET #1, HDPE #2, and plastics #3-7), organics [biosolids, food and beverage materials, green waste (includes brush and yard trimmings)], C&D materials, electronics, textiles, tires, and household hazardous waste (HHW). New to the Study are biosolids for land application, which is included in the definition found in Section 361.421(8).

### 4. Who will be surveyed?

The Project Team, led by Burns and McDonnell, will survey recycling processors and end markets to collect information on recyclable materials diverted from the MSW stream.

## 5. Is participation voluntary?

Yes, participation in the study is voluntary.

## 6. How is this study different than the TRDI study?

TRDI provided a baseline recycling rate and limited job information, and this study intends to build upon the methodology of TRDI with a focus on the economic impacts of the recycling industry in Texas. This study will also collect commodity information on a more specific and detailed basis, including breaking down the plastic material category by type, unlike what was seen with TRDI.

This study will also utilize a slightly different definition of recycling (*see Question 2*). TRDI included information on select industrial recycled materials, including coal combustion by-products and ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal. This study differs in that it will focus solely on MSW sources and will not include any information about industrial materials.

Lastly, the Study will not only document current recycling efforts, but it will also expand upon economic information such as:

- Methods to increase recycling, such as the development of new markets for recycled material and businesses that may result from increased recycling in both public and private sectors.
- Funding methods to increase recycling
- Job creation from recycling
- Infrastructure needs and opportunities for rural and underserved areas

For more specific detail on what economic information HB 2763 instructs the study to include, download a copy of the bill text from the project website at [www.txrecyclingstudy.org](http://www.txrecyclingstudy.org).

## 7. How will the project address the confidentiality of the data?

As with TRDI, the Study will request recycling and economic data from private recycling companies through a voluntary, online survey. TRDI achieved an excellent response rate for a state-level, voluntary program, and a high level of participation will be crucial moving forward with this study as well. In an effort to encourage participation, the Project Team will take every reasonable measure allowed by law to protect confidentiality and is developing a confidentiality plan that will be available for review.

## 8. Is this something that can be used to compare Texas to other states?

A number of states report recycling quantities and rates, but comparing that information across states has been historically challenging. Some states may utilize different definitions of recycling that might include activities like energy recovery or reuse, and some states may also have mandatory reporting requirements for recycling facilities potentially resulting in higher recycling rates. This should be kept in mind when considering comparing TRDI data or the results from the Study to data reported by other states.

## 9. How can I help with the survey?

As was the case with TRDI, the Project Team will be conducting a voluntary statewide survey to measure recycling and its economic impact in Texas. In the Fall of 2016, the Project Team will ask recycling processors and end users to participate in a confidential, online survey. Please let us know if you would like to participate in the survey, and encourage other industry representatives and recyclers in Texas to contribute to this effort. Contact information for this project is included in *Question 11*, below.

## 10. What time period is the data for, and when will the study be complete?

The Study will reflect recycling activity and economic information for the 2015 calendar year. The study is expected to be complete in 2017, and the results will be included in the TCEQ report, "Municipal Solid Waste in Texas: A Year in Review, 2016 Data Summary and Analysis."

## 11. How can I find more information about the survey?

For more information on the Study of the Economic Impacts of Recycling: [www.txrecyclingstudy.org](http://www.txrecyclingstudy.org)

For questions, please contact Scott Pasternak ([spasternak@burnsmcd.com](mailto:spasternak@burnsmcd.com)) at Burns & McDonnell.