

Introduction to  
**Resource Conservation  
Challenge**



# RESOURCE CONSERVATION CHALLENGE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In late 2002, EPA created the Resource Conservation Challenge (RCC) as a major national effort to find flexible, yet protective, ways to conserve our national resources. It challenges all Americans – makers of goods, sellers of goods, and buyers of goods – to prevent pollution and promote recycling and reuse of materials; reduce the use of toxic chemicals; and conserve energy and materials.

To achieve these goals, the RCC has enlisted many partners and is always looking for more. The RCC is comprised of voluntary programs and projects with a materials management and resource conservation focus that produce results. Through education and outreach, the RCC asks Americans to make smarter purchasing and disposal decisions that conserve our natural resources, save energy, and preserve the environment for our children and future generations.

EPA is moving from a cradle-to-grave approach to waste management, where the cradle is the generation of waste and the grave is the ultimate safe disposal of waste, to a cradle-to-cradle approach through the RCC. The RCC is championing a system of efficient materials management by identifying waste that can be safely recycled and reused as material inputs and examining inputs to processes that create waste in an effort to eliminate inefficiencies and toxic materials altogether.

When you have completed this module, you will be able to explain the purpose and goals of the Resource Conservation Challenge. Specifically, you will be able to:

- list and describe the goals of the RCC
- explain the education and outreach programs and list the target groups
- list the four national priorities of the RCC
- describe how the goals of the RCC relate to the GPRA goals in EPA's Strategic Plan
- explain the five steps to becoming an RCC partner
- identify the voluntary partnerships of the RCC and explain how each program contributes to the overall purpose of the RCC
- describe the future direction and priorities of the RCC.

Use this list of objectives to check your knowledge of this topic after you complete the training session.

## 2. NATIONAL PRIORITIES

In an effort to better focus its resources and make progress towards the goals of the RCC, EPA has identified four national focus areas or priorities for the RCC:

- municipal solid waste recycling
- beneficial use of secondary materials
- priority and toxic chemical reductions
- green initiatives – electronics.

In selecting these areas, EPA considered several factors:

- current and future Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals in the EPA Strategic Plan
- areas of significant partnerships with non-governmental stakeholders
- existing coordinated efforts by EPA regions and states.

From these criteria and based on current resources, EPA determined that the four areas would be the national focus of the RCC. These areas are not the only activities going on within the RCC, as much of the important on-going work being accomplished by the EPA and the states will continue. However, the above four areas will be the RCC's core national priorities. As described in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, the RCC Strategic Plan and Action Plan provide more background on the development of the priority areas.

### 2.1 MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE RECYCLING

Municipal solid waste recycling is the first national focus area of the RCC. The municipal solid waste recycling initiative targets specific wastestreams based on generation and recovery rates and the potential for increased recovery or diversion. Currently, this initiative encompasses the following wastestreams: paper and paperboard, organic waste, and packaging/containers. The goals for these wastestreams are represented in the Table 1.

<b>2001 MSW</b>					<b>Proposed 2008 Recovery Goals</b>			
	Generation (MT)	Generation Rate (%)	Recovery (MT)	Recovery Rate (%)	%	MT	% Increase	MT Increase
<b>Organic Waste</b>								
Food, Other	26.2	11.4	0.7	2.8	5	1.28	2.2	0.58
Yard Waste	28.0	12.2	15.8	56.5	60	16.8	3.5	1.0
<b>Paper</b>								
Paper and Paperboard Products (includes folding cartons)	81.85	37.2	36.7	44.9	53.8	44.1	8.9	7.32
<b>Packaging and Containers</b>								
Wood Packaging	8.17	3.6	1.25	15	24	2	9.2	0.75
Plastic Wraps	2.58	1.1	0.17	6.6	19	0.5	12.8	0.33
Total Beverage Containers	11.3	5.0	2.93	26	39	4.36	12.7	1.43
<b>Total</b>	<i>158.1</i>	<i>68.9</i>	<i>57.55</i>	<i>36.4</i>	<i>43.7</i>	<i>69.04</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>11.5</i>

In the future, EPA will decide whether to target additional wastestreams or to increase goals and targets for the three current streams based on the ability to meet current goals.

EPA has decided to focus the municipal solid waste recycling initiatives on a select group of business sectors. These sectors were selected for inclusion because they generate more than one of the targeted waste streams, present opportunities for recycling, and have the availability of established partnerships or viable potential partners. Based on these criteria, EPA selected the following focus sectors:

- schools
- office buildings
- landscapers
- food service industry
- hospitality industry
- recycling on the go venues (shopping centers, ball parks, special events, convenience stores, health clubs, recreation centers, and parks)
- tribally operated facilities
- federal government facilities.

More broadly, EPA will work at the national and regional level to enhance public commitment to recycling, increase public access to recycling opportunities, and engage national stakeholders in the national recycling goal. In doing so, the Agency will work closely with states and local governments and strategically target efforts toward the community streams identified and the commercial and municipal sectors that provide the greatest opportunities for success.

## **2.2 BENEFICIAL USE OF SECONDARY MATERIALS**

The vision of beneficial use is a future where everyone generates less waste, recycles as much as possible, and beneficially uses waste and materials through environmentally sound practices. The objective is to achieve the economic and environmental benefits of using the by-products of our lives as inputs to new products and to extend the useful life of landfills, conserve virgin materials, and reduce energy use and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

The following materials have been targeted for inclusion:

- coal combustion products (CCPs), including fly ash, bottom ash, flue gas desulfurization (FGD) gypsum and wet and dry scrubber materials, boiler slag, and fluidized bed combustion (FBC) ash
- “green” foundry sand, a molding material by-product from the production of ferrous and nonferrous metal castings, which uses clay as a binding material
- construction and demolition debris (C&D Debris), including materials generated from the construction, demolition, and renovation of buildings and infrastructure, including roads and bridges, and from land clearing.

EPA is pursuing four broad strategies in increasing the beneficial reuse of these materials: analyzing and characterizing the target materials; identifying environmentally safe and beneficial practices; identifying incentives and barriers to beneficial reuse; and increasing outreach and education on the benefits of source reduction, recycling, and beneficially using wastes/materials.

## **2.3 PRIORITY AND TOXIC CHEMICAL REDUCTIONS**

The use of chemicals in industrialized nations has brought about tremendous advancements in technology and improved virtually every aspect of society. Although useful, certain chemicals in use today are highly toxic, do not break down when released into the environment, and can be dangerous even in small quantities. EPA has identified thirty-one priority chemicals that meet these criteria. While this list represents the EPA’s priority for reduction, it is certainly not exhaustive and other candidates for national attention are likely to be identified. Considerations in selecting other toxic chemicals of national concern may include: increased or widespread use, significant production volumes, availability of safer or greener alternatives, presence in common products that contribute to the wastestreams, frequent findings that the substance has created environmental cleanup problems, interest to more than one EPA program, existence of available



or likely solutions, and other factors such as presence in humans or the environment indicating potential significant exposure, release, or risk.

EPA plans to eliminate or reduce priority chemicals and other chemicals of national concern from commercial products, wastestreams, and industrial releases through pollution prevention, waste minimization, and recycling/reuse.

These chemical reduction goals have resulted in five basic operating principles:

- substituting priority and other toxic chemicals with safer alternatives whenever possible
- minimizing the amount of toxics used whenever substitution is not possible
- maximizing recycling whenever minimization or substitution is not possible
- emphasizing cradle-to-cradle chemical management
- minimizing exposures to toxics and the volume and toxicity of waste through better product and manufacturing process design.

EPA will establish a process with relevant manufacturers, processors, users, and other stakeholders to identify, implement, and realize toxic chemical reduction opportunities.

## **2.4 GREEN INITIATIVES - ELECTRONICS**

Each year, approximately two million tons of used electronics are discarded. Additionally, an estimated 128 million cell phones are retired from use each year. The RCC addresses environmental concerns along the entire life cycle of electronics, including design, operation, reuse, recycling, and disposal of equipment. The electronics initiatives will focus initially on computers (PCs), televisions, and cell phones, but may add other electronic wastes in the future.

The RCC aims to meet three electronic waste objectives:

- foster environmentally conscious design and manufacturing, including reducing or eliminating higher-risk materials (e.g., priority and toxic chemicals of national concern) in electronics products at the source
- increase purchasing and use of more environmentally sustainable electronics
- increase safe, environmentally sound reuse and recycling of used electronics.

These green initiatives depend on partnership programs, such as Design for the Environment, the Federal Electronics Challenge (FEC), and Plug-in to eCycling, for success. In addition, EPA plans to broaden the utilization of the Electronics Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPAT), an environmental procurement tool designed to help institutional purchasers in the

public and private sectors evaluate, compare, and select desktop computers, laptops, and monitors based on environmental attributes.

## **2.5 RELATIONSHIP TO GPRA GOALS AND EPA STRATEGIC PLAN**

The 1993 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) holds federal agencies accountable for using resources wisely and achieving program results. GPRA requires agencies to develop plans for what they intend to accomplish, measure how well they are doing, make appropriate decisions based on the information they have gathered, and communicate information about their performance to Congress and to the public.

GPRA requires agencies to develop a five-year Strategic Plan, which includes a mission statement and sets out long-term goals and objectives; Annual Performance Plans, which provide annual performance commitments toward achieving the goals and objectives presented in the Strategic Plan; and Annual Performance Reports, which evaluate an agency's progress toward achieving performance commitments.

GPRA requirements – a long-range Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plans, and Annual Performance Reports – forge links between several activities:

- planning, to achieve goals and objectives
- budgeting, to ensure that resources are available to carry out plans
- measuring, to assess progress and link resources actually used to results achieved
- reporting, to present progress achieved and impacts on future efforts.

To comply with certain GPRA requirements and further enable the Agency to manage for results, EPA has built a framework that aligns planning, budgeting, and accountability in an integrated system. EPA continues to look for ways to improve planning and priority-setting – both in terms of annual planning and budgeting and longer-range strategic planning.

EPA's 2003 Strategic Plan serves as the road map for the next five years by establishing five long-term goals. It also helps to establish annual goals, measure progress towards achieving those goals, and recognize where approaches or directions need to be adjusted to achieve better results. Finally, it will provide a basis from which EPA's managers can focus on the environmental issues with the highest priority and ensure effective use of taxpayer dollars.

The Strategic Plan is built around five goals, centered on the themes of air and global climate change, water, land, communities and ecosystems, and compliance and environmental stewardship. These themes reflect EPA's mission, "To protect human health and the natural environment." In addition, the Plan discusses strategies that EPA is applying across all five goals, in areas such as science, human capital, innovation, information, homeland security, partnerships, and economic and policy analysis.

In selecting the National Priorities for the RCC, EPA considered current and future GPRA goals in the Strategic Plan. More broadly, the RCC's three goals are also drawn from the EPA's overall strategic goals and direction. Specific goals and strategies have been identified in the action plans to support the goals and commitments of EPA's Strategic Plan.

The RCC is currently a part of both Goal 3 and Goal 5 of the Agency goals. Goal 3 relates to land preservation and restoration, and Goal 5 relates to compliance and environmental stewardship. The RCC is working on projects that also support EPA Goals 2 and 4. Goal 2 promotes clean and safe water, and Goal 4 addresses healthy communities and ecosystems. During each cycle of the Agency's Annual Performance Plan, the RCC will add specific targets and measures that support the goals established by EPA's Strategic Plan.

### **3. PARTNERSHIPS**

A discussion of becoming an RCC partner, voluntary partnership programs, and education and outreach programs can be found below.

#### **3.1 BECOMING A PARTNER**

Currently, EPA has developed two ways that partnership projects can join the RCC. EPA 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.

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. Partners need to define and reach specific RCC goals, and they must measure and promote their successes. Together, EPA and its many partners can achieve the RCC goals and improve the environment.

The following sections describe the five steps to becoming an RCC partner.

#### **STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM AND DEFINE ITS CHALLENGE**

Potential partners should identify and define the environmental problem that they plan to address, and specify activities that they will undertake to resolve the problem. The selected challenge may address the entire environmental problem identified, or it may cover any portion of it. EPA recommends that the challenge address one of the following:

- a new problem or one that is not covered by current regulations
- one or more of the three RCC goals
- a problem of national importance.

#### **STEP 2: IDENTIFY AND TALK WITH PARTNERS**

Working with existing partners is 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.

### **STEP 3: IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP SOLUTIONS, OBJECTIVES, TARGETS, IMPLEMENTATION PLAN, AND TIME LINE**

EPA is looking for environmentally sound solutions that improve public health or the environment. The most desirable solutions will likely be flexible, non-regulatory, 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.

The partners should also 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 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. Objectives and targets should be linked to at least one of the RCC goals.

Finally, 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. The plan should describe the major events identified above, and may include a number of other appropriate elements. 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. At the highest level of commitment, the details of the agreement will be documented in an MOU that is signed by all key partners. Therefore, partners should discuss the level of agreement while deciding how best to announce the agreement.

### **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 make this announcement (e.g., press release, Web site, 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 is met and the success has been announced, the partnership determines what additional work can be done. A

successful pilot project might be ready to expand to the regional or national level, or a project targeted at certain segments of the population might now focus on other segments.

## **3.2 VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS**

EPA is relying on voluntary partnerships and projects to meet the goals of the Resource Conservation Challenge. EPA works collaboratively with industry, states, tribes, schools and others to reduce the use of toxic chemicals and eliminate waste. These partnerships are designed to provide smarter, faster, and acceptable solutions that safeguard our environment. A short description for each of the existing partnerships follows.

Additional information on any of the partnership programs below can be found at [www.epa.gov/rcc/partners.htm](http://www.epa.gov/rcc/partners.htm)

### **NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRIORITIES**

In April 2004, the National Waste Minimization Partnership Program (NWMPP) became the National Partnership for Environmental Priorities (NPEP). The name of the partnership was changed to reflect the expanded scope of the program to focus on reducing or eliminating the use or release and use of certain priority chemicals. The NPEP is working to find solutions that prevent the formation of wastes containing these chemicals at the source of production, and by recovering and/or recycling these chemicals where they cannot easily be eliminated or reduced at the source. EPA encourages companies to form voluntary partnerships with EPA to find ways to reduce one or more priority chemicals or other hazardous chemicals. Companies participating in this partnership program receive public recognition for voluntary reductions of the priority chemicals, as well as technical and training assistance.

The list of thirty-one priority chemicals was selected following an EPA review of scientific information available on many chemicals. Based on its initial review, EPA concluded that twenty-seven organic chemicals were persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic (PBT), are generated in industrial waste and can be found in soil, sediment, ground water, surface water, air, and/or biota as a result of past and present releases. Even when released in very small amounts, these chemicals accumulate and can be harmful to the environment. Many of these organics are also very difficult and costly to clean up once released into the environment. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were added in 2004 because of their chemical properties. The remaining three chemicals in the list are metals: cadmium, lead, and mercury. These metals are known to occur frequently in RCRA regulated industrial wastes, and often exhibit RCRA's toxicity characteristic for these metals, which triggers the hazardous waste management requirements.

### **THE GREENSCAPES ALLIANCE**

The GreenScapes Alliance Partnership Program is designed to help preserve natural resources and prevent waste and pollution by encouraging companies, government agencies, and other entities to make more holistic decisions regarding waste generation and disposal. This partnership program provides cost-efficient and environmentally friendly solutions for large-

scale landscaping projects. An example of greenscaping is using recycled plastic lumber in benches, tables, and other structures at parks and recreation areas.

The GreenScapes Alliance focuses on reducing, reusing, recycling, and repurchasing to improve both a company's bottom line and the environment. In addition, it provides information about the cost savings that can be achieved from reducing material use and waste, resource conservation, and on the performance and durability of environmentally preferable products. The GreenScapes Alliance will help educate land managers on how environmentally beneficial landscaping efforts yield water and energy savings, conserves landfill space, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Case studies will publicize success stories, and technical assistance will help alleviate concerns regarding alternative practices and product. Organizations that achieve environmental excellence in reduction, reuse, recycling, and repurchasing for waste prevention and pollution prevention will be recognized by EPA.

## **THE PLUG-IN TO eCYCLING PROGRAM**

In the past decade, our growing reliance on electronics has given rise to a new environmental challenge – the safe and resource-wise management of electronic waste. In the next five years, nearly 250 million computers will become obsolete. Currently, 2,054,800 tons of electronic waste are disposed of in landfills each year. The Plug-In To eCycling Partnership Programs aims to increase the safe recycling of used electronic products by providing recognition and other incentives to partners. Plug-In To eCycling partners include manufacturers, retailers, government agencies, or nonprofit businesses, all of which participate in the collection, reuse, recycling, or refurbishing of old electronic equipment. Initiatives developed under the Plug-In To eCycling Program are not exclusive to partners; EPA encourages everyone who handles used electronic equipment to maximize reuse, refurbishment, and recycling activities.

## **PRODUCT STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIPS**

Product Stewardship Partnerships involve efforts to reduce the life-cycle impacts of products through voluntary product stewardship partnerships with manufacturers, retailers, other governments, and non-government organizations. Product stewardship is a product-centered approach to environmental protection. Also known as extended product responsibility, product stewardship calls on those in the product life cycle, including manufacturers, retailers, users, and disposers to share the responsibility for reducing the environmental impacts of products. For example, the Federal Electronics Challenge is a new voluntary partnership program that encourages federal agencies and facilities to purchase greener electronic products, reduce impacts of electronic products during use, and manage obsolete electronics in an environmentally safe way.

Product stewardship recognizes that product manufacturers can and must take on new responsibilities to reduce the environmental impact of their products. Without serious producer commitment, significant progress toward improved resource conservation and a sustainable economy cannot be made. However, real change cannot always be achieved by producers acting alone; retailers, consumers, and the existing waste management infrastructure must also pitch in for product stewardship to be successful.

## **THE WASTEWISE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM**

Many companies, institutions, and governments have demonstrated that they can save money by reducing waste and recycling material that would otherwise be disposed. The WasteWise Partnership Program is designed to assist companies, states, local governments, Native American tribes, and other institutions in developing cost-effective practices to reduce municipal solid waste. These partners set and achieve certain goals within three areas: waste prevention, recycling collection, and buying or manufacturing recycled products. Participation as a WasteWise partner offers several advantages including technical assistance, publications, and program updates. Successful waste reduction efforts are highlighted in EPA documents, magazines, and trade publications. Participating organizations can also use the WasteWise logo to promote their participation. These benefits, along with the direct financial savings that result from waste prevention and recycling activities, are helping to improve waste management and resource efficiency. Since its inception in 1994, WasteWise has grown to include more than 1,300 corporations, government agencies, universities, hospitals, and other organizations committed to cutting costs and conserving natural resources through solid waste reduction.

## **THE COAL COMBUSTION PRODUCTS PARTNERSHIP**

The Coal Combustion Products Partnership (C<sup>2</sup>P<sup>2</sup>) Program is a cooperative effort between EPA and the coal combustion products (CCPs) industry to help promote the beneficial use of CCPs and the environmental benefits that can result from that beneficial use. CCPs are the by-products generated from burning coal in coal-fired power plants. These by-products include fly ash, bottom ash, boiler slag, and flue gas desulfurization gypsum.

There are significant environmental, economic, and performance benefits from using CCPs in a number of applications, which is why EPA is sponsoring the C<sup>2</sup>P<sup>2</sup> Program to further their beneficial use. Environmental benefits can include reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced land disposal requirements, and reduced utilization of virgin resources. Economic benefits can include reduced costs associated with coal ash and slag disposal, increased revenue from the sale of ash, and savings from using CCPs in place of other, more costly materials.

## **AMERICA'S MARKETPLACE RECYCLES!**

EPA and the International Council of Shopping Centers have formed America's Marketplace Recycles!, a partnership program aimed at shopping centers, their retail tenants and employees, as well as the public. Shopping centers are in a unique position as they have the ability to reach suppliers and consumers and can encourage a more recycling conscious mindset. The purpose of America's Marketplace Recycles! is to promote recycling, energize the recycling message, and encourage waste reduction in packaging. EPA hopes that encouraging more shopping centers to recycle will increase the national recycling rate of thirty percent closer to the goal of thirty-five percent.



### **3.3 EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

EPA is not just focusing on industry, but is challenging everyone to improve their waste management practices, and to accept responsibility for improving our environment. In order to accomplish this goal, everyone needs to change his or her habits and processes. Businesses, consumers, and governments must work together to make changes across the whole supply chain to include better product designs and make products easier to reuse and recycle. Manufacturers can make products less toxic and more recyclable; however, those products need to be purchased by consumers and require that individuals and businesses change their buying and disposal habits.

To facilitate better understanding of proper waste management, EPA has created programs under the RCC that focus on particular groups of citizens. These programs include Hispanic Outreach, Urban African American Outreach, Native Americans Outreach, Aging Americans Outreach, and the Youth Outreach. All of the programs utilize tactics aimed at capturing the attention and interest of the targeted group. For instance, outreach materials specific to solid waste management on tribal lands were developed for the Native American Outreach efforts. Each program's objective is to engage the targeted group, raise environmental awareness, and encourage waste reduction, recycling, and neighborhood revitalization.

EPA provides general resources through the RCC for all citizens to learn how to reduce, reuse, and recycle materials and how to get involved and make a difference in their community. The RCC also provides a forum for sharing information and educating partners on various innovative technologies and methods for efficient materials management.

Additional information on the above mentioned education and outreach programs can be found at [www.epa.gov/rcc/consumer.htm](http://www.epa.gov/rcc/consumer.htm)

### **3.3 SCHOOLS CHEMICAL CLEANOUT CAMPAIGN (SC3)**

Every year, throughout the country, hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent on incidents in schools such as chemical spills and fires. These incidents involve potentially dangerous chemicals that had been unused for many years, more than thirty years in some cases. In addition to financial costs, these spills may also cause school closures that result in a loss of valuable education time. The Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) seeks to address this issue by cleaning out excess, legacy, unused, and improperly stored chemicals, and also implementing preventive mechanisms in schools.

In the summer of 2004, EPA provided initial funding to the ten regions to support SC3 programs. Each region is using this money to fund former, current, or newly developed school cleanout programs in schools with a self-identified need for assistance.

The goals of the campaign are to:

- remove potentially harmful chemicals from schools

- emphasize the implementation of preventive programs such as chemical management training for lab instructors and microscale techniques
- raise national awareness of the issue of chemicals in schools.

The ultimate goal of SC3 is to create a safer environment in schools by ensuring that chemicals are purchased wisely, stored safely, handled by trained personnel, used responsibly, and disposed of properly.

## 4. PROGRAM DEVELOPMENTS

The RCC has made a lot of accomplishment towards its goals of preventing pollution, reducing toxic chemical use, and conserving energy. However, there is still much work to be done. EPA has begun integrated planning to determine the future direction of the RCC. The following sections describe the RCC Strategic Plan, the national priority areas of the RCC, and the action plans for each priority area.

### 4.1 STRATEGIC PLAN

In Beyond RCRA: Prospects for Waste and Materials Management in the Year 2020 (2020 Vision), EPA and state environmental officials initiated discussion on the direction of waste and materials management in the United States over the next twenty years. The 2020 Vision examines trends and future directions in materials use and technology use. It identifies three overarching goals:

- reduce waste and increase the efficient and sustainable use of resources
- prevent exposures to humans and ecosystems from the use of hazardous chemicals
- manage wastes and clean up chemical releases in a safe, environmentally sound manner.

Furthermore, EPA is developing a Pollution Prevention (P2) Vision to provide strategic focus and identify current P2 priorities. The P2 Vision frames three broad strategic categories:

- greening supply and demand
- P2 integration
- delivery of P2 services.

EPA is now charting its direction, building on the 2020 and P2 Visions. The RCC is a way to achieve a future where waste is a concept of the past. When it is economically feasible, the RCC's goals are to reduce what comes into the waste management cycle, using pollution prevention, waste minimization, source reduction, and manufacturing process and/or product design changes. Moving to an efficient and safe materials flow is central to the RCC. EPA acknowledges industry's progress and willingness to move forward with this shift in focus toward resource conservation. EPA also acknowledges that some waste disposal will always continue to be a necessary, yet less desirable, option.

The Agency Strategic Plan and the 2020 and P2 Visions call for a transformation of the nation's current waste-handling system to more of a materials management system. The RCC – in partnership with the states – aims to achieve this transformation.

EPA has developed a strategic plan that describes the RCC's direction, focus, vision, and broad goals for the next five to ten years. To complement the RCC Strategic Plan, EPA has identified

four key areas for national focus, which are described in the following section. EPA has developed a national action plan for results in each of these four areas that describe specific goals and actions needed to move toward the overall goals of the RCC. The action plans are described in more detail below in Section 4.3.

This RCC Strategic Plan, with its focus on waste and toxics, aligns internal EPA and state projects, goals, and strategies. In the short term, the RCC will focus primarily on solid waste and pollution prevention. Ultimately, the RCC challenges us to put resource conservation and recovery into the design and manufacturing of products or recycling options and purchasing decisions.

To establish a strong foundation for the RCC, the program will harmonize the work of OSW and the Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances (OPPTS) to attain waste and toxic substance reduction goals. The RCC Strategic Plan focuses on specific waste and toxic reduction principles that will provide national coordination, while allowing the continuation of work in other important environmental areas. The RCC program is working to enhance state participation by working through various state organizations. EPA is also interested in reaching out to states that are engaged in exploring materials management programs, projects, activities, and resource conservation.

The RCC Strategic Plan is the key to establishing the path along which the RCC will continue to grow. The RCC will grow from a collection of individual, ambitious projects and achievements into a cohesive set of robust programs. These programs identify opportunities for, and ways to achieve, pollution prevention, recycling, reuse, toxics reduction, and energy and materials conservation. The strategy is dynamic, gaining greater specificity as the RCC identifies areas of national focus, further identifies goals and measures specific to different areas, and develops specific action plans. The goals of the RCC Strategy are to:

- coordinate OSW and OPPTS waste and toxics reduction programs and projects
- better align EPA and state focus to attain effective materials management
- build on current partnerships and attract new partners
- describe the measures used to track success for future projects.

The RCC Strategic Plan is available at [www.epa.gov/rcc](http://www.epa.gov/rcc)

## **4.2 NATIONAL PRIORITY AREAS**

After completing the strategic plan development, EPA focused on the identification of national priority areas and the development of accompanying action plans. This is a critical step because all regions and EPA Headquarters offices are expected to commit resources to achieving the stated objectives and targets for each area. Only by coordinating efforts across the country will EPA begin to move forward in achieving effective materials management. To accomplish this goal, EPA held a series of meetings with OPPT and regional P2/Toxics staff and discussed

possible areas of national focus. At the conclusion of these meetings, four national priority areas were selected:

- achieving the national thirty-five percent recycling rate for municipal solid waste
- beneficial use of secondary materials
- priority and toxic chemical reductions
- green initiatives – electronics.

These areas were initially identified as priorities in the RCC 2005 Action Plan, a living document that will be amended as key milestones and targets are met. These priority areas may be amended or changed as necessary to achieve the ultimate goals of the RCC. In addition, the RCC continues to work in other key areas for resource conservation, such as energy conservation and schools, that have existing champions in other program offices or within the Office of Solid Waste (OSW).

### **4.3 ACTION PLANS**

Once the national priority areas were identified, participants established workgroups to draft an action plan for each area. Each workgroup consisted of a small number of headquarters and regional RCRA and OPPT program experts with a focus on pollution prevention, risk reduction, and resource conservation. For each plan, the groups were asked to identify the scope or breadth of their area, key objectives to be achieved, measurable environmental targets or outcomes, and the means and strategies that would lead to success.

From these drafts, EPA gathered input from a broad group of RCRA and P2/Toxics managers and staff from EPA and states. This input brought a national perspective to the areas and helped shape the action plans for successful implementation. The action plans identify specific on-going and new activities, and associated means, benefits, measures, and outcomes, and outlines the implementation priorities and responsibilities of participating EPA offices and key stakeholders. These plans are consolidated in the RCC 2005 Action Plan. This document is a living document that will be amended as the RCC reaches key milestones and identifies new objectives and targets that will help to achieve the ultimate RCC goals.

The RCC 2005 Action Plan is available at [www.epa.gov/rcc](http://www.epa.gov/rcc).