



**The Association of  
Plastic Recyclers**



*2015 Annual Report*

*January 2016*

## A LETTER FROM STEVE ALEXANDER



Happy New Year,

On behalf of the APR Board of Directors, along with Kara, John, Dave, Sandi, Liz Bedard, Meredith Leahy and myself, let me thank you for your continued support of APR in 2015. We extend our best wishes to you and your family for a safe, healthy and prosperous 2016.

Once again in 2015, APR realized significant membership growth, in spite of industry and market challenges. As you know, we operate on a relatively modest budget, but our efforts as the technical resource to the industry, and our role as the Voice of Plastics Recycling® continue to carry tremendous weight. Clearly, significant challenges for plastic recyclers continue to mount, and a clear priority for the APR board is to ensure we have the structure and resources to provide the industry the technical resources it requires, while continuing our search for additional sources of good, clean supply.

To ensure we are positioned to meet the needs of the entire plastics recycling market, 2015 saw APR implement several slight organizational changes. The Technical Committee was divided into both PET and Olefin committees. A new staff director, Sandi Childs, was hired to provide additional technical expertise to these groups and direct the Film and Flexibles Recovery program. Our communication program continued to grow and expand, and Meredith Leahy was brought on board to run our Membership Programs.

APR continued to focus on key issues impacting supply and quality of material. Focal points included: labels, bale quality, degradable additives, and innovations that contaminate recycling. Market conditions, along with a media effort questioning recycling, served to provide additional challenges.

Significant efforts were focused on updating the APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recyclability. One of the most comprehensive documents of its kind, the guide serves as the ultimate reference guide for designers and engineers to ensure compatibility with recycling as they create new packaging or product innovations. Our ultimate goal is that this revised, user friendly document will result in recyclability being incorporated into the design phase of products, which will serve to significantly reduce contamination for recyclers.

The APR Consumer Brand Training program launched last year met with great success, and will only expand this coming year. In 2015, APR conducted at least 7 in house training programs for design engineers. The goal of these programs is to elevate the understanding of design on the recyclability of containers, and to explain how to utilize the APR Design® Guide in the decision making process. Aspects of this program will be included in presentations at several major recycling conferences this year.

APR continued efforts against oxo-degradable manufacturers to grow their presence in the packaging world. APR held calls with several APR members who were contacted by oxo-degradable additive producers about incorporating the additive into their packages. Currently, APR is assisting in the legal challenge before the Federal Trade Commission to ensure the use of the terms “degradable and recyclable” are not permitted on a container label. We will continue to follow this issue as it winds through the legal process

In California, APR worked with CalRecycle relating to the issue of continuing and expanding the Market Development Incentive Program, which over the years has helped develop the infrastructure for the recycling industry in the state. In 2016, APR will work on changes to the CRV take back program to ensure that all APR PET reclaimers have access to material collected at CRV centers in the state.

ASTM continues to require the attention of APR and its members. Efforts to categorize PETG as PET, a change in the Resin Identification Code, and the push by oxo-degradables were once again aggressively debated. Additional APR member participation going forward is vital.

APR continues to participate in projects designed to grow the amount of material available for recycling. We helped finance and provide technical support to the MRF Material Recovery for the Future Project; and continue to fund and serve on the Executive Board for the Recycling Partnership. In a little over a year, the Partnership has worked with more than 8 cities who have implemented new programs resulting in a significant increase in the amount of material they collect, thus making more material available for recycling.

As you know, the challenges never cease. In 2016 we will fund a Life Cycle Analysis for recycled PET, HDPE and PP, to provide additional data supporting the use of PCR. We will re-double our efforts to work with manufacturers who produce containers that serve to contaminate the recycling stream. We will continue to work with Consumer Product companies to educate them on Design for Recycling, and of course, we will continue our efforts each and every day to increase the supply of material, and enhance material quality.

As always, please feel free to contact me or any of our staff with any questions at any time. Your continued advice, counsel and support are greatly appreciated.

Thank you. We look forward to working with you in 2016.

Steve Alexander  
APR Executive Director

## 2015 PROJECTS AND DELIVERABLES



This crucial document received a major update in 2015 which has already been successful in generating more awareness and discussion of designing plastic products for recycling by brand companies and retailers.

A major goal of this update is to reach not only packaging designers and engineers, but brand and sustainability professionals as well. Access to the Guide is prominently displayed on the APR Home Page and Guidance has been rewritten and presented on the web site to be more assessable to a wider audience. Guidance is now linked to APR test methods and educational pieces providing technical background for recycled plastics and recycling methods.

The PET content of the APR Design® Guide was completed and approved in October 2015. Updated content for polypropylene and polyethylene will be added to the web site early in 2016. A similar process to improve and update the content of APR Test Methods will begin in 2016.

**Training Program.** Interest in APR's Recycling Training Program continued to grow in 2015 as we provided training for several brand companies as well as technical conferences. We anticipate ongoing opportunities for APR staff to be involved in several training programs each year.

**PET Technical Committee.** Through 2015, the Technical Committee and program teams advanced several topics including:

- An evaluation of PET thermoforms and their impact on recycling.
- A proposal to update the plastics recycling life cycle analysis.
- Creating an Annual Quality Report for PET recycling.
- Input to the APR Design® Guide update.

**Olefin Technical Committee.** The Olefin Committee also made significant progress in 2015 including:

- Creating structure and content updates for the PP content of the APR Design® Guide.
- Conducting a study of the float and sink behavior of plastics with fillers and additives that will allow us to create improved guidance on olefin density and float/sink performance.
- An analysis of options to separate PP from HDPE.
- Draft graded model bale specifications for HDPE bottles.

**APR Critical Guidance Program.** The vitality of the Critical Guidance Recognition program continues and helps drive packaging and recycling innovation. Several companies received Critical Guidance Recognition for label and resin technologies that benefit recycling this year, and we also began a new Responsible Innovation Program to recognize innovations that cannot be assessed by Critical Guidance Testing.

**The APR Plastics Recycling Showcase.** This inaugural program, established in 2015, will recognize APR member companies that have launched new commercial products that benefit plastics recycling. Nominations were accepted throughout 2015, and companies included in the Showcase will be announced at the 2016 Plastics Recycling Showcase.

**Grocery Store Rigid Plastics.** “Bale your rigid plastics” was the message sent to grocery chains in 2015 via a video, one on one outreach, a website update, as well as a national promotion campaign. The good work APR has done over the last few years is paying off. Ted Brown, Brown Sustainable Solutions, reports that over 4,000 stores now recycle rigid plastics, up from the 250 before the start of the program, and it is conservatively estimated that as much as 16 million pounds of rigid plastics are collected annually. The project’s website – [www.recyclegroceryplastic.org](http://www.recyclegroceryplastic.org) -consistently experiences record visits, and has been recently updated to a more streamlined format.



**Seventh Annual “Each State’s Largest City” Plastic Collection Survey.** Each year APR conducts a survey to assess plastic collection and recycling trends throughout the United States. APR’s annual “Each State’s Largest Cities Survey” once again confirmed three continued municipal collection migrations:

- From mixed to single stream recycling collection
- From “bottles only” to “all containers”
- From “1 & 2” plastics only to “1 – 7” plastics

This year’s survey revealed that 46 of the 51 cities (the District of Columbia was included) have single stream recycling and collect #1-#7 plastics.

**Non-bottle Bale Sort.** The results of 2014 Non-Bottle Rigid Bale Sort, considered the most comprehensive non-bottle bale sort done, were presented at the June 2015 APR meeting. Completed to determine the composition of mixed rigid plastic bales generated in North America, this sort provides critical data to reclaimers and other plastic recycling stakeholders as they work to expand the recovery of this material. An Executive Summary and webinar were developed to help get the word out on this important project of the Rigid Committee.

**Polypropylene Market Development Subcommittee.** A busy year for this subcommittee resulted in two major projects – a toolkit to promote non-bottle rigid plastic container recycling and the PP PCR “Fit for Use” Survey. The toolkit, which will include market lists, case studies, best management practices, as well as additional resources, will provide needed resources for cities and MRFs who only collect plastic bottles to expand to collect all plastic bottles and containers.

**Polypropylene PCR “Fit for Use Survey”** The 2015 “Fit for Use” survey, developed to update PP PCR demand information acquired three years ago, was officially kicked off in July. Unlike the previous survey, demand for only non-FDA PP PCR was addressed. An over 50% return rate will help ensure that solid resulting data on not only the quantity but also physical properties of PP PCR demand will be presented at the February 2016 APR meeting.

**MRF Subcommittee.** With the objective of promoting active communication with MRFs and APR, this new subcommittee undertook three important projects:

- Determining MRF plastic recycling issues and more specifically their concerns about recycling non-bottle containers.
- Creating a mechanism to inform MRF operators of changes in brand packaging.
- Identifying what MRFs see as needed before flexible plastic can be collected at the curb.

**Residential Bulky Rigids Subcommittee.** Research has confirmed that each year more and more cities collect residential bulky rigid plastics for recycling. Coupled with added domestic markets for this material led, the Rigids Committee formed a new subcommittee to promote its collection. Work will initially focus on developing marketplace based model bale specifications.

**APR Film Committee.** In 2015 APR formed a Film Reclamation Committee to address the needs of member companies who engage in recycling polyethylene film, or manufacture polyethylene flexible packaging, and want to ensure that a robust recycling system exists for this material. Currently comprised of 25 APR member companies, the committee hopes to add at least two additional film reclaimers. Sandi Childs, APR's newest staff member, serves as the Director of the Film Reclamation Committee.

**Film Committee Projects.** The Committee agreed to conduct several priority projects in 2016:

- Work on PE film supply and demand.
- Consumer education about the recyclability of film plastics
- Continue WRAP partnership – WRAP is the Wrap Recycling Action Program of the ACC's Film and Flexible Recycling Group (FFRG) and a leader in establishing best practices for bag and film recovery in grocery store drop-offs.
- Continue as a stakeholder in the ACC's Material Recovery for the Future (MRFF) program, a research project investigating the behavior of films and flexible packaging in MRFs.
- Provide guidance on the recycling potential of film packaging as additional brand companies seek to expand the use of the SPC's How2Recycle instructional label.
- Update the film section of the APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recyclability to support these efforts.

**Protecting Against Degradable Additives.** APR once again continued its role as a voice of responsibility in the debate about the presence of degradable additives in recycled plastic. In 2015, the Federal Trade Commission decision refuting claims by oxo-degradable manufacturers was appealed to an administrative judge, who stayed the decision. APR will continue to support the legal process challenging the FTC arguments on the impact of the additives on recycling. Despite what the FTC outlined in their final guidelines, marketing claims regarding the so-called recyclability of these additives remain ever present and growing in the marketplace. APR continues to develop and refine its test protocols and is prepared to give rigorous critique to claims made about recyclability of plastics with degradable additives included. We see no solid waste management benefit from the additives and many negatives to their use.



**California Attorney General Activity.** For the past several years, APR has been working to bring the mislabeling of bottles on California store shelves to the attention of the Attorney General. Bottles labeled “recyclable and degradable” have proven to be of particular concern. In October 2011, the Attorney General announced it was filing suit against those companies marketing their bottles as degradable, in violation of California law. In 2013, we worked to provide additional resources to allow the Attorney General to continue similar action against those bottles that continue to violate the law. In recent years, cases continue to be brought before the Attorney General for action. Cases determined to violate the statute result in a cease and desist order being implemented against the company to remove containers that were mislabeled. This will be an ongoing effort, and we will continue to work with the AG's office to ensure compliance in the marketplace over the long haul.



**Annual Recycling Rate Reports.** Once again, APR partnered with the American Chemistry Council and NAPCOR to fund the 2014 Recycling Rate Reports, which continue to be the seminal reports on plastics recycling. In order to provide a more detailed overview of the reports to APR members, webinar overviews of the reports were presented.

**Press and Media.** APR's media presence continued to grow in 2015. Announcements, activities and projects were detailed in press releases sent to media outlets throughout the year. Due to a greatly expanded media contact list, these releases, as well as other work that the APR has accomplished were covered in a wide variety of publications including Plastics News, Plastics Today, Greener Package, European Plastics News, Packaging Digest, Recycling Today, Plastics Recycling Update, with some new additions including Yahoo News, Live Science, Flexible Packaging News, Plastics Packaging Perspectives, and Environmental Leader. In addition to publicizing APR activities, we work to recognize member announcements and accomplishments through highlights posted on the APR website and APR LinkedIn page, as well as Member Newsletters. We encourage all members to send us press releases and announcements.

**Web Seminars.** The 2015 APR Plastics Recycling Web Seminar Education Series was announced in March last year. The scheduled series included 5 webinars, and two additional web seminars were held for APR members to provide a deep dive of the PET and All Bottle Rate Reports. Topics covered the Sort for Value Online Calculator, Foam Recycling, and overview of 2015 National Mixed Rigid Bale Composition Study, Resources to Support Domestic Plastic Recycling Markets, and an APR Caps- On Update. Registered attendees averaged around 300 participants, but that final number does not always represent a true count. Some attendees register only once, but share the presentation with many colleagues in conference rooms. Foam Recycling Facts and Figures was our most well attended of the year with 350 registered. Presentations and supporting materials are available on the APR website. APR has found the seminar program to be a highly effective and cost efficient way to communicate directly with solid waste and recycling officials, as well as a wide variety of industry members.

**APR Website.** The purpose of the APR website is to provide a valuable resource and tool for APR members and the recycling community. Up from 2014's average of over 7,000 unique visitors from all over the world each month, 2015 averaged over 9,000 unique visitors with a high for the year of 11,425 in May. All sections of the site were streamlined and reorganized, and pull down menus were also added to provide easier access to all the available information. The Champions for Change section was added to highlight Critical Guidance and Applications Guidance, as well as two new APR Programs – Responsible Innovation and the APR Plastics Recycling Showcase.

**Social Media.** APR's social media presence was expanded in 2015. Both the APR LinkedIn and Facebook group members continue to grow and we have now increased Twitter activity. APR news and member highlights are the main focus of our social media activity, but we also work to share resources, as well as the important work of partner organizations including The Recycling Partnership, CPRC, SPC, and others. The #RecyclingWorks social media campaign began in support of KAB's America Recycles Day to highlight jobs in the recycling industry. Member company photos were posted, along with supporting details. This campaign will continue in 2016. Send us photos of your employees hard at work!



**Communications Committee.** The APR Communications Committee formalized membership with 24 participants serving 3 year terms. Representatives from all other APR committees bring potential projects to the table during each meeting. Collaborative projects included: development of the APR Web Seminar Series, resources for the APR Design® Guide, Plastics Recycling Terms and Definitions, and updated Market Lists with links to member profiles and APR Model Bale Specs. The committee began work on a Media Toolkit and Moving Beyond Bottles Toolkit which will be completed in 2016.

**Sponsorship Activity.** APR Members are offered a variety of avenues to support our organization: PRC Sponsorship, APR Meeting Sponsorship, and APR Webinar Sponsorship. APR's partnership with The Plastics Recycling Conference to recruit sponsors continued in 2015. This activity generates revenue that contributes to Recycling Rate Reports, as well as other APR programs. APR Meeting Sponsorship was reorganized to include two levels: Official and Partner, and we began offering the opportunity to sponsor APR webinars in 2015.

**Thank you to APR Members who Sponsored PRC:**

[Click here to check out the full list](#)

**Thank you to 2015 APR Meeting Sponsors:**

Denton Plastics, Schupan Recycling, Entropex, and Berry Plastics

**Thank you to 2015 APR Webinar Sponsors:**

Avanagard Innovative and Avery Dennison

***Again, Happy New Year to you and your family. We look forward to working with you in 2016!***

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