

SUPPLEMENTARY

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before the Subcommittee on

Government Management, Organization, and Procurement

of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee

of the House of Representatives

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Chairwoman Watson, Ranking Member Bilbray, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I have uncovered some additional statistics that might be useful to this sub-committee and would like to respectfully submit it for inclusion in the official hearing record.

Why Recycle Materials? The United States represents less than 5% of the world's population, yet it consumes nearly 25% of most of the world's resources (Loh, Jonathan, et. al. 2004. *WWF Living Planet Report*. WWF International, New Economics Foundation, World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Switzerland).

Clearly this is not sustainable. Ever-increasing US consumption rates have for decades transferred "raw materials" from all over the world to the US in the form of products having a wide variety of lifetimes, but they all eventually reach end-of-life on US shores. Some of these commodities are re-buried in landfills or destroyed in incinerators, but many are mined "above-ground" from end-of-life products by material recyclers.

The Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, ISRI, is the primary trade organization for material recyclers in the US and it reports some impressive statistics (Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries "Scrap Recycling Industry Fact", June 2009.):

- The US scrap/recycling industry employs about 85,000 people and generated about \$86 Billion of revenues in 2008.
- It recovers about 150 million tons (over 300 BILLION pounds) of materials every year:
 - 85 million tons of Iron and Steel
 - 47 million tons of Paper

- 5.5 million tons of Aluminum
- 2 million tons of Stainless Steel
- 1.8 million tons of Copper
- 1.2 million tons of Lead
- 633,000 tons of Plastic (bottles)
- The majority of these recovered raw materials are recycled in the US, with only an average of 29% exported. Plastics are the exception. According to ISRI, about 75% of the plastic bottles are exported.
- 2 out of 3 tons of steel made in the US is manufactured using ferrous scrap
- 60% of metals and alloys produced in the US are made from nonferrous scrap
- More than 50% of the US paper industry's needs are met through the use of scrap paper with nearly 200 US paper mills using ONLY recycled paper
- 33% of the US aluminum supply comes from recycled materials
- Huge energy savings can be realized by recycling these materials compared to refining them from ore or petrochemicals. Example energy savings:
 - 92% for aluminum
 - 90% for copper
 - 85-90% for plastic
 - 68% for paper
 - 56% for steel
 - 34% for glass

The ISRI numbers suggest a plastics recycling rate for plastics of less than 2%, but it doesn't capture all of the plastics recycling that takes place because it just focuses on the single most prominent part that is recycled today: bottles. US EPA research in 2007 showed a plastics recycling rate of about 6.8% from municipal solid waste (MSW), but this overstates the overall rate because it only includes plastics that find their way into MSW and doesn't include streams like building and construction and automobiles, where a good deal of plastics are used and little or none is recycled.