June 12, 2018

RE: Update on China Waste Import Restrictions and Impacts on Provincial and Local Recycling Programs

Now that China has implemented waste import restrictions and recycling programs and operations are being affected in many parts of the country, SWANA is providing an update so you can be informed about the latest developments and participate in upcoming events that will help you and recycling stakeholders in your state respond to the situation. We encourage you to share this update with provincial officials and others in your chapters.

In January 2018, China’s ban on 24 categories of scrap and recyclables took effect, and in March 2018, the 0.5 percent contamination (“carried waste”) standard was implemented. These actions have caused a dramatic decline in the amount of scrap and recyclables exported from Canada to China.

As a result, other countries, primarily in Asia, have increased their import of these materials from Canada and other countries. In recent months, several of these countries, particularly Vietnam and Indonesia, have announced measures to reduce the flow of recyclables into their ports. In May, Vietnam advised that it would not accept imported containers of plastic from other ports from June 25 to October 15, due to the overwhelming volume of material being received. Indonesia recently announced that it has started pre-shipment inspection of all fiber imports. These actions have significantly disrupted commodity markets and the international movement of scrap and recyclables.

SWANA has taken aggressive steps to respond to these disruptions. Earlier this year, SWANA established a Recycling Task Force (RTF) consisting of industry and municipal leaders from the United States and Canada to help guide our response. The RTF, which has held several conference calls, has prioritized: (1) identifying best practices for reducing contamination of curbside recyclables; (2) creating demand for recycled content; and (3) calling on the U.S. Congress to include support for recycling in the Infrastructure bill.

SWANA is working with other recycling stakeholders to amplify our messages and concerns. A group of associations and organizations met this Spring to collaborate on improving the quality of the recycling stream and address the challenges posed by China’s waste import restrictions, and a follow-up meeting will occur at WASTECON® in Nashville, Tennessee. A similar group, whose membership overlaps somewhat with the group identified above, submitted a letter in April 2018 to the congressional leadership in the U.S. urging inclusion of recycling-related funding in the Infrastructure bill. SWANA is a leading and active participant in both groups.

If you would like additional background information about this issue, please visit SWANA’s China Waste Import Restrictions webpage where you can find other resources that help explain the topic further.

SWANA is also providing education on the impact of the Chinese waste import restrictions at online and in-person events. This subject was included in numerous SWANA chapter conferences and events earlier this Spring, and SWANA will be holding a webinar on June 28th at 1:45pm EDT exploring how the recycling
landscape has changed and what provincial and local officials need to do to maintain sustainable recycling programs. We hope you will join us for this timely discussion.

We are also holding a MRF Summit at WASTECON in Nashville, Tennessee on August 22-23. We are partnering with the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) to develop this event, which is intended to bring together provincial/local government officials, recycling industry leaders, consumer brand owners, and others to review the changing market for recyclables and potential solutions to current challenges.

The MRF Summit provides a unique opportunity for all recycling stakeholders to gather to discuss these issues and establish productive working relationships for the future.

Finally, the China/recycling issue is receiving increasing media attention throughout the United States and Canada as it affects recycling programs and systems from coast to coast. Examples of some of these articles are below:

- **Boston Globe**
- **Cleveland Plain Dealer**
  [https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/06/recycling_were_doing_it_wrong.html](https://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/06/recycling_were_doing_it_wrong.html)
- **Montreal La Presse**
- **New York Times**
- **Texas Monitor**
  [https://texasmonitor.org/chinas-recycling-suspension-reverberates-throughout-texas/](https://texasmonitor.org/chinas-recycling-suspension-reverberates-throughout-texas/)
- **Wall Street Journal**

We continue to monitor developments domestically and overseas, and will provide additional information as warranted. SWANA remains committed to recycling and resource management, and working with members and partners at the local, provincial, and federal levels to improve and expand recycling programs in Canada. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at dbiderman@swana.org or 240-494-2254, or SWANA Canadian Representative Allen Lynch at lyncha54@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

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