New Public-Private Partnership to Boost Plastic Film Recycling in Wisconsin

The Associated Press

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and two national business groups have announced a first-of its-kind, state led-partnership to expand the recycling of flexible film packaging. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the American Chemistry Council's (ACC) Flexible Film Recycling Group (FFRG), and GreenBlue's Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to develop and implement a three-part program this year to significantly increase the recycling of post-consumer plastic bags, wraps and other film packaging throughout Wisconsin.

The program will create new opportunities for small- to mid-sized businesses to recycle commercial film (pallet wrap and packaging), raise consumer awareness and participation in plastic film recycling, and encourage businesses to use the SPC's How2Recycle "Store Drop-off" bag/film recycling label on plastic bags and other polyethylene film packaging. The new educational label is intended to help consumers easily identify which plastic film packaging is suitable for recycling at participating stores.

Programs such as these to expand the supply of recoverable film plastics will help support and grow small manufacturing businesses in Wisconsin, who seek more of this valuable material to supply their markets, according to a new study by the Wisconsin DNR.

"This new partnership builds on significant gains in plastic film recycling in recent years and demonstrates Wisconsin's leadership," said Steve Russell, ACC's vice president of plastics. "We look forward to expanding recycling success in Wisconsin and creating a model that other states will want to follow."

"We are pleased to partner with the ACC and SPC to increase plastic film recycling in Wisconsin," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. "This is a win for both the environment and the economy."

"The SPC's How2Recycle Label just completed its soft launch with overwhelmingly positive results, and this partnership will provide a unique opportunity to encourage both industry and consumer participation through a collaborative effort," said Anne Bedarf, Senior Manager at GreenBlue. "We are thrilled to partner with ACC and Wisconsin, and believe that we will see an increase in plastic film recycling as a result."

The project is expected to launch this spring and will focus on expanding collection options for small- to mid-sized businesses, which collectively generate the largest volume of film packaging, by establishing a network of recycling service providers.

At the end of the project, a final report will present the results as well as recommendations for maintaining and expanding flexible film recycling in Wisconsin.

The members of the Flexible Film Recycling Group are: Dow Chemical, ExxonMobil, Berry Plastics, Petoskey Plastics, Sealed Air Corporation, Wisconsin Film and Bag, SC Johnson, Avangard Innovative, and Trex Company.

The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a $760 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation's largest exporters, accounting for ten cents out of every dollar in U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure.

Contact: Allyson Wilson (202) 249-6623 Email:

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