

**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND  
ADVISE UPON THE DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE  
TO  
THE GOVERNOR  
AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



**House Document No. 33**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
Department of Purchases and Supply  
Richmond  
1975**

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The House Joint Resolution No. 79 requested that the Commission study and report on the feasibility of establishing regional centers for recycling paper, glass, metal and other products whose manufacture depletes the natural resources of the Commonwealth.

In preparing this report, the Commission concluded that several interpretations can be put on the term "Regional Recycling Centers." One concept is that of collection centers for scrap materials which are either purchased from the public or collected as a community service. These scrap materials are then segregated at the recycling center into various reasonably pure materials, further subdivided where it is required to obtain a higher market price (such as color sorting of glass), processed for shipment and sold to various industrial users.

Alternatively, "Regional Recycling Centers" could be interpreted to include large-scale processing centers for handling mixed household and commercial solid wastes. Sophisticated mechanical, chemical and thermal processing would be required to separate the mixed wastes into individual constituents for either direct sale of the recovered products or sale of by-products (such as energy from burning refuse). This latter definition encompasses major capital outlays and is currently being implemented in several other states.

The concept of large-scale regional resource recovery operations is a subject of major interest to the Commission. As part of its overall objective to developing a climate conducive to resource recovery within the Commonwealth, the Commission will be studying the financial and technical aspects of regional resource recovery operations as a long-term solution to the solid waste problem, particularly in urban areas.

Therefore, the Commission encourages metropolitan areas throughout the Commonwealth to begin planning for implementation of such systems, if they have not already begun to do. However, this major subject area will be included as part of the Commission's annual report to the Governor and General Assembly and is anticipated to be a major effort involving a great part of the Commission's future activities. It will not be included as part of this report on House Joint Resolution No. 79.

This report will be limited to the concept that regional recycling centers are considered to be collection depots for the separation and resale of waste materials. Under this definition, a number of operations have already come into being around the Commonwealth through the initiative of private industry or groups of individuals. Such operations are known to exist or have existed in the Norfolk area, in Williamsburg, in Richmond and in Northern Virginia.

In the main, these operations include some common elements. The material received is generally limited to consumer items, rather than industrial scrap. Commonly collected items include glass bottles and jars, steel and aluminum cans and corrugated paper, newspapers and magazines. The metals are separated into aluminum and steel and flattened, baled or shredded. The glass is often color sorted into green, brown and clear and crushed before shipment. Newspapers, magazines and corrugated paper may also be separated. The separated, prepared materials are then sold to various industrial users, either within the state or at the nearest out-of-state location. There are current outlets in Virginia for aluminum cans and other clean aluminum household scrap and the various grades of waste paper. Steel and glass, however, are generally hauled to the Baltimore area.

Major recycling centers or recycling networks for collected scrap materials are in operation elsewhere. For example, Beverage Industry Recycling Program (B.I.R.P.) in Phoenix, Arizona in a recent month recycled approximately 130 tons of steel, 225 tons of aluminum and 260 tons of glass. (B.I.R.P. does not recycle paper.) The public was paid over \$74,000 for this material.

In New York City, the Environmental Action Coalition (EAC) operated a network of about 50 centers for paper, glass, steel and aluminum. The EAC recycles approximately 170 tons of aluminum, glass, steel and paper each month.

Because of substantial citizen interest in collection systems for recycled materials, the Commission encourages the establishment of an information center within the Bureau of Solid Waste and Vector Control on such systems as they exist in the Commonwealth and nationwide. This information, which could be assembled, to a large degree, on the basis of written and telephone solicitations, would serve to inform citizens, companies and municipalities on the techniques and economics of operating a recycling center. This ready availability of this information would encourage private groups to begin recycling centers for scrap materials where it is economically feasible. The handling techniques required for various scrap materials, and the cost and type of equipment necessary to do the job should be included in the information to be accumulated.

It is not, however, recommended at this time that the Commonwealth of Virginia provide direct financial support for the establishment or operation of regional collection centers for scrap materials.

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Respectfully submitted,

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