

## WHAT WORKS

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### GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT RECYCLING

Faced with a lousy record on local recycling, the town of Smithfield, Rhode Island, took a drastic step: The town refused to pick up the trash of residents who weren't also putting out their recyclables. Many residents complained, but the plan worked, says recycling coordinator Gina Barbeau. "We had 10 to 15 complaints a day the first week," she says, "but now no one complains because people realized we're serious about it."



The recycling rate in the town of 6,300 households has increased from 20 percent to 25 percent since the program started.

Most Massachusetts towns take a different approach, encouraging residents to recycle by charging them a per-bag fee to pick up their non-recyclable trash. But the city of Boston has seen some improvement in recycling participation with a pilot program that allows single-stream recycling, in which residents toss all recyclables into one bin. It's now working in two neighborhoods and should be citywide within the next two years. Boston pays \$80 per ton to get rid of regular waste but only \$22 a ton for plastics, and the city sells waste paper for \$40 per ton.

Massachusetts officials estimate that an additional 1.5 million tons of paper could still be removed from the waste stream and sold for more than \$30 million. Toward that end, some 160 communities have signed on to the MASS RECYCLES PAPER! campaign, which encourages municipal governments and businesses to recycle more paper. As part of the campaign, 16 communities are planning public "shredding events" this spring, to which residents can bring documents they'd rather not toss into a recycling bin.

Paper recycling has changed a lot in the past decade, says Karen Patterson, who runs the MASS RECYCLES PAPER! program, which operates with donations and a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Many more types of paper products are now recyclable, and the market for used paper is booming.

Patterson estimates that the recycling and reuse industry supports more than 1,400 businesses and 19,000 jobs in the Bay State and generates \$64 million annually in state tax revenues.

Much of the paper collected in Massachusetts goes to the Newark Group Recycled Fiber Mill in Fitchburg, where it gets converted into hard covers for books (including the most recent Harry Potter tome), and boards for games like Monopoly, which is manufactured by Hasbro, in East Longmeadow.