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AMERICAN CARPET INDUSTRY MUST EMBRACE RECYCLING

AS WASTE CRISIS LOOMS LARGE IN CALIFORNIA, A NEW REPORT PROVIDES POLICYMAKERS WITH THE ANSWERS

(SACRAMENTO) - As states struggle to address the nationwide waste crisis caused by China's recent refusal to accept and process American plastic waste, advocates and researchers are urging America's carpet manufacturers to improve the recyclability of their products and take responsibility for the waste that they create.

Despite the Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE) being set up by the carpet industry over 15 years ago, only 5% of carpet is currently recycled, with 90% going to landfill. Clearly, CARE has not made a significant improvement in recycling nationally to date. Carpet is largely made of plastic from fossil fuels and it also contains a wide range of chemicals, used in adhesives and stain protectants, that, whether by affecting indoor air quality in homes or leaching into drinking water supplies, can be toxic to human health.

"We've known for years that carpets produced in the United States create problems for communities after they are thrown away. It's time for policymakers in every state to require carpet manufacturers to solve the problems created by their products," said Heidi Sanborn, Executive Director of National Stewardship Action Council and a key advocate for carpet recycling through a system growing in popularity across the United States known as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

EPR programs are designed to ensure that producers take responsibility for the costs created by their products after consumers have finished using them. Such programs are designed to reduce the costs of managing bulky waste for local governments that are currently paid for by consumers through taxes and garbage collection rates.

[New research, published today](#) by Eunomia Research & Consulting, outlines policy options for states to dramatically improve carpet reuse and recycling rates. The report, commissioned by

the Changing Markets Foundation, calls for state governments and manufacturers to adopt and develop effective take-back programs. By implementing proposals outlined in the Eunomia toolkit, policymakers can curb the use of fossil fuels, help resolve the carpet waste problem, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and [increase domestic jobs](#) in the carpet reuse and recycling sectors.

As the state that purchases – and disposes of – the greatest amount of carpet, California has led the country in promoting carpet recycling. In 2010, the state passed the world’s first carpet recycling law ([AB 2398](#)), which was updated in 2017 ([AB 1158](#)) to include a mandatory carpet recycling rate of 24% by 2020. To build upon this initial success, the Eunomia toolkit describes how lawmakers can strengthen the landmark California Stewardship Program, which will eventually become a critical component in the state’s longstanding effort to address its affordable housing crisis through new construction and building renovation.

“The toolkit aligns with our national goals to reduce waste, increase local markets, drive a circular economy and address climate change,” said Sanborn.

Beyond California, the report provides a blueprint for other states to implement their own producer responsibility programs for carpet. It outlines principles necessary for any U.S. carpet stewardship plan to succeed as part of the “circular economy,” where old materials are recycled into new products for consumers to buy and use instead of being discarded. These include:

- Creating incentives for “eco-design” – thoughtfully designed products that are more easily reusable and recyclable, without toxic chemicals or components that may go into landfills or be incinerated;
- Increasing carpet reuse and recycling rates; and,
- Shifting the cost burden of disposal and recycling from taxpayers and municipalities to producers.

[Mark Hilton](#), author of the report and Eunomia’s Head of Sustainable Business, said:

“Carpet is a very traditional product that is difficult to recycle and rarely reused. Some of the most forward-thinking manufacturers in the US and Europe are now tackling the design challenges and already making carpets with far fewer harmful chemicals, and using designs and business models that aid reuse and recycling. The policy makers are lagging behind, however, and this toolkit aims to provide a template that will progressively drive best practice into the mainstream at the state level.”

Nusa Urbancic, Campaigns Director at the Changing Markets Foundation, said of the report, “The U.S. is the world’s leader in carpet production. We believe the U.S. has the potential to also become the world leader in carpet reuse and recycling as part of the new circular economy.”

Beyond carpets, the toolkit envisions a “next generation” opportunity for producer responsibility systems with a variety of products. The overarching EPR philosophy creates incentives for manufacturers to make durable, non-toxic, easy to disassemble items, that can become raw materials to make new consumer goods that enter the circular economy.

Notes to Editors

For a PDF of the report, images for use by reporters if attributed to photographer, and social media content, [please see this Dropbox toolkit](#).

About Eunomia:

Eunomia Research & Consulting (‘Eunomia’) was established in Bristol, England in 2001. The company is an independent consultancy dedicated to adding value to organisations through the delivery of improved outcomes. Eunomia has over 80 employees in the UK, and has offices in Bristol, London, Manchester, Glasgow, Brussels, Copenhagen, Auckland and New York. Working across the world, Eunomia’s consultants have experience and expertise in environmental, technical and commercial disciplines. Eunomia’s main service areas include Waste management;

- Low carbon and renewable energy;
- Circular economy;

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About the Changing Markets Foundation:

The Changing Markets Foundation partners with NGOs on market-focused campaigns. Our mission is to expose irresponsible corporate practices and drive change towards a more sustainable economy.

www.changingmarkets.org/ @ChangingMarkets

About the National Stewardship Action Council:

NSAC was founded in 2015 as an affiliate of the [California Product Stewardship Council](#) (CPSC). NSAC is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization that will engage primarily in lobbying and advocacy work for EPR and Product Stewardship, anywhere in the U.S. and at any level of government interested in legislation that drives a circular economy.

NSAC’s Vision: Be a catalyst to effect accountable, nation-wide, producer responsibility.

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