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## **ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAIL NEW FINDINGS ON BEVERAGE CONTAINER RECYCLING**

### *Report Could Break Historic Impasse*

(SEATTLE, Wash.) U.S. environmentalists are cheered by a new report on beverage container recycling that suggests that we can double the recycling of beverage containers – and save money at the same time. These were the unexpected findings of *Understanding Beverage Container Recycling: A Value Chain Assessment*, a study carried out under the watchful eyes of both beverage industry and environmental group representatives.

“These findings have the potential to break the historic impasse between environmentalists and the beverage industry on bottle bills.” said Bill Sheehan, executive director of the Athens, GA-based GrassRoots Recycling Network (GRRN), which worked alongside beverage industry and government representatives on the Multi-stakeholder Recovery Project (MSRP) that carried out the study. “We found ways to achieve the environmental performance that we want along with the cost-savings that industry wants.”

The data were gathered by leading researchers who often work for the beverage industry, under the lead of R.W. Beck and Franklin & Associates. Beverage industry leader Coca-Cola sponsored and participated in the study along with Waste Management Inc. and other industry stakeholders.

“We are encouraged that some major corporations now agree we have a problem – 114 billion beverage containers wasted annually — and are willing to work toward a solution,” said Pat Franklin, executive director of the Washington DC-based Container Recycling Institute and an active participant in the in the MSRP. “The report shows we can recover those containers with financial incentives -- deposits -- and keep the costs down.”

The report shows that when deposit systems are designed to use revenues from the sale of recycled materials and unredeemed deposits (deposit money left in the system by

consumers who do not return their containers), these revenues offset program costs significantly.

“In California and several Canadian provinces, beverage containers do not have to be sorted by brand. That saves a lot of time and cuts costs,” said GRRN Board member Rick Best, who also helped oversee the study. “Additional cost-savings are realized in many places by the use of automated ‘reverse vending’ machines for returning containers.”

The ground-breaking study was the first accomplishment of a project called Businesses and Environmentalists Allied for Recycling (BEAR), which is working under Global Green USA to pursue a ‘fact-based approach to public policy making.’

“While cost effective deposit/return systems don’t take us to GRRN’s goal of zero waste immediately,” Sheehan said, “they create the infrastructure that encourages producers to move to more sustainable beverage container design and management systems, such as the use of refillable bottles and recyclable materials.”

CRI and GRRN see the next step as working with industry to structure a ‘modified deposit/return’ proposal that takes advantage of these cost savings, and working with industry in test states to establish or improve optimal deposit systems. Ultimately, CRI and GRRN think that a national ‘bottle bill’ will be needed to harmonize beverage container recycling across the United States.

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For information on model deposit systems, visit [www.grn.org/beverage/deposits](http://www.grn.org/beverage/deposits).

**GrassRoots Recycling Network** ([www.grn.org](http://www.grn.org)) is a North American network of waste reduction activists and professionals promoting producer responsibility and Zero Waste as critical elements of a sustainable economy.

**Container Recycling Institute** ([www.container-recycling.org](http://www.container-recycling.org) and [www.bottlebill.org](http://www.bottlebill.org)) studies and promote policies that reduce beverage container waste and shift the costs of recycling from government and taxpayers to producers and consumers.

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