



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

OFFICE OF
RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND
RECOVERY

January 17, 2013

Ms. Lynn Bragg
Glass Packaging Institute
1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 301A
Alexandria, VA 22314

Ms. Bragg:

Thank you for your letter of November 16, 2012 with suggestions regarding glass recycling and the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Characterization Report. As you are aware, the EPA is in a process of reviewing the MSW Characterization Report and intends to make improvements to this report over the next few years. The first improvements will be included in the 2011 MSW Characterization Report which is scheduled to be released in early 2013.

The EPA agrees that recycling rates need to be improved so that fewer recyclables are disposed. It is important to recognize that how data is collected and presented impacts or shows policy makers opportunities for system enhancement or improvements. One issue of concern within the MSW Characterization Report is presenting data on what is collected for recycling and actually recycled versus what is collected for recycling but ends up being disposed. To incorporate this additional detail in recycling data into the MSW Characterization Report, this data would need to be collected from all or at least most of the materials addressed by the report. So far, this data has not been available for most materials. However, the EPA continues to work with stakeholders to develop or access this data for more materials.

Definitions are also an important component of the MSW Characterization Report. We solicited input on definitions in our Federal Register notice. We do not plan to change the definition of recycling to exclude one-time uses such as recycling of glass into aggregate. Both types of recycling are preferable to disposal. However, if data becomes available for most materials that show this distinction, that would be an important improvement to the report.

In the 2011 MSW characterization report we will introduce language on sustainable materials management (SMM). In addition, key summary charts will be provided in a format suitable for the www.data.gov website which will allow the public to download and manipulate the data. The greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits section will also be expanded and information on the disposal of packaging will be included in the Executive Summary, not just included in the body of the report. Other key improvements planned for reports after the 2011 include expanding the scope of our work to include wastes such as construction and demolition debris and incorporating economic data.

Working together, with you and other stakeholders, the EPA seeks to improve recycling while moving towards a future that embraces sustainable materials management.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald Vance".

Ronald Vance, Acting Chief
Materials Conservation and Recycling Branch