

## 20 Years of Impressive Accomplishments!

For a small organization, NERC can boast an amazing series of accomplishments since its founding in 1987. Always focused on supporting source reduction, recycling, and recycling market development, NERC has demonstrated leadership with its projects and has broken new ground in a number of important areas.

During its tenure, NERC has implemented more than 50 projects funded by grants, dues, and contracts. Staff has participated as stakeholders in national and international dialogues, and NERC has produced dozens of publications and resources. And all of this with a staff of never more than five people, and at times as few as three!

### ***Regional & Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues***

NERC can boast that it was among the first organizations in the country to use the strategy of regional and multi-stakeholder dialogues to address market concerns.

In the early 1990s, under the leadership of Executive Director Ed Boisson, NERC initiated conversations and forums that included the:

- [Direct Mail Association \(DMA\)](#),
- [Yellow Pages Publishers Association \(YPPA\)](#),
- United States Postal Service (USPS), and
- Northeast newspaper publishers.

Program Manager Michael Alexander, Board Members Randal Coburn of New York, Judy Belaval of Connecticut, and Guy Watson of New Jersey, and the [Newspaper Association of American \(NAA\)](#) also played leadership roles in these initiatives.

The result?

- In 1994, DMA announced the DMA Corporate Environmental Stewardship Challenge. Over 100 DMA members have accepted the Challenge. Each participating company has provided a checklist that addresses waste reduction, recycling collection, and buying or manufacturing recycled products.
- NERC assisted the YPPA in developing the organization's Environmental Action Plan. The YPPA then started using recycled content paper and providing information about local recycling programs.
- NERC organized forums to assist the USPS with retaining and expanding recycling levels during a marked downturn in the market for mixed paper and enabled USPS facility managers to be more effective players in the recovered paper marketplace. USPS officials reported that increased knowledge of the processor and mill marketing preferences influenced them to be more flexible in their contracting for services. The forums also served to provide information to USPS officials on successfully operating stable recycling programs in a volatile and dynamic recovered paper marketplace.
- The Northeast newspaper publishers signed commitments to increase the use of recycled content newsprint and to report annually on their usage. As a result, the average recycled content of newsprint in the region has increased from a baseline in 1997 of 27% to almost 33% in 2005. The [Northeast Newspaper Publishers Agreement](#) remains an active initiative, now being managed by the NAA.

EPA provided funding for each of these projects.

## ***Financing Recycling Markets***

One of the ongoing challenges for recycling markets, and entrepreneurs, is financing. NERC was among the first organizations – public or private – to tackle this problem head-on. NERC Assistant Director Mary Ann Remolador, who was then Project Manager, led several significant initiatives:

- Recycling Investment forums (1995 – 1999)

NERC was one of the primary organizations that developed the Recycling Investment Forum (RIF) as a strategy to stimulate the development of businesses processing or manufacturing products from recycled materials. Between 1996 and 1999, 43 recycling firms presented business plans to 93 potential investors at the Forums. As a result, 35% of the presenting businesses received \$20.14 million in investments. These investments created or retained 221 jobs, and increased the amount of recycled materials used in processing or manufacturing new products by 181,291 tons per year. Four RIFs were held. Primary project funding: EPA.

- Recycling Financing Seminars for Business Owners (1997 – 1998)

Eight seminars assisted recycling business owners to understand financing options and secure funding. Project funding: EPA.

- Recycling Finance Seminars for Business Development Specialists (2000 – 2001)

Four one-day seminars for business service providers focused on the unique issues faced by recycling firms and the nuances of the recycling industry, which financiers often misunderstand. The goal was to enhance funding opportunities for recycling businesses. Project funding: Chelsea Center for Recycling and Economic Development, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation, and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.

## ***The Recycling Economy***

NERC took the national lead in evaluating the relationship between jobs, the economy, and the recycling industry. Ed Boisson and Michael Alexander were lead staff on these projects, and technical consulting was provided by Roy F. Weston and R.W. Beck.

- Fostering Economic Development Through Recycling (1993 – 1996)

The goal of this two-phase project was to increase investment in the region's recycling industry by promoting the industry to the economic development and financial communities.

In Phase 1, NERC researched the economic benefits of the Northeast recycling industry. This resulted in a report entitled *Value Added to Recyclable Material in the Northeast*.

In Phase 2, NERC conducted three recycling economic development workshops, based on the model developed in Phase 1. The goal of the workshops was to educate state economic developers and financiers on their state's recycling industry and to explore opportunities for state economic development programs to be applied to recycling businesses. Project funding: EPA, U.S. Economic Development Administration.

- Recycling Economic Information Project (1996 – 1998)

This project developed a recommended methodology for obtaining economic information on the nation's recycling and reuse industries. The project's *[Final Report](#)* was published in 1998. Project funding: EPA.

- Recycling Economic Information Study (REI) (1998 – 2000)

The methodology described above was then applied to study the 10 Northeast states – with state-specific information developed, with state funding, for Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. The *Recycling Economic Information Study*, published in 2000, was the first study in the country to document the vital role that recycling and reuse play in the local and regional economies. The study found that in the NERC region, there were:

- 13,000 recycling and reuse establishments,
- 206,000 people employed in the recycling and reuse industries,
- \$6.8 billion in annual payroll, and
- \$44 billion in annual revenues.

In 2001, the National Recycling Coalition used the same methodology to develop a national profile of the recycling and reuse industries. Project funding: EPA, and individual states.

NERC is now updating the REI study for the states of Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania, with the services of DSM Environmental.

### ***Electronics Recycling***

NERC was the first organization in the U.S. to tackle the issue of the end-of-life management of electronics. Our Advisory Members led us to this new area in 2000, when they told the Board that the primary obstacle to the development of the electronics recycling industry in the region was the lack of a consistent and predictable flow of materials. They felt that residential collection could play a key role in this. In response, the NERC Board developed and adopted a [Used Electronics Recycling Market Development Policy Statement](#). NERC also sought and obtained funding to conduct the first [national survey of government-operated electronics collection programs](#). Program Manager John Leigh and Executive Director Lynn Rubinstein were the key staff on this project. That study has become the basis of the work that *Resource Recycling/E-cycling Magazines* now do on an annual basis.

- Electronics Recycling and Collection Guides

NERC wrote the first comprehensive guidance document for [Setting up and Operating Electronics Recycling Programs](#). This document has been incorporated into many other similar local documents around the United States. Project funding: EPA.

NERC also authored the electronics collection curriculum and training document used by the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA).

- Electronics Recycling Business Guides and Survey

Mary Ann Remolador and Lynn Rubinstein authored several guidance documents on behalf of the state of Nebraska for electronics recycling businesses.

- [Nebraska Electronic Recycling Business Resource Guide](#)
- [Nebraska Guidance For Potential Electronics Recycling Entrepreneurs ~ Before Writing A Business Plan](#)
- [Nebraska Toolkit For Setting Up Electronics Collections](#)

Project funding: Nebraska Recycling Organization

In addition, she conducted a comprehensive survey of existing electronics reuse and recycling businesses and wrote the first [Used Electronics Market Study Survey Analysis](#). Project funding: EPA.

- Electronics Stakeholder Activity

Lynn Rubinstein represented electronics recycling market development interests on the National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative (NEPSI), as well as serving on the national multi-stakeholder task force that developed [EPEAT®](#) (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool).

- Model Electronics Legislation

In 2005, NERC was approached by the Council of State Governments/Eastern Regional Conference (CSG) to collaborate with them to develop model regional electronics legislation. This unique effort resulted in the publication of the [model legislation](#) in April 2006. Since then, the model legislation and versions based on it have been filed – and in some cases adopted – in a number of states around the region. Lynn Rubinstein was the NERC lead for this effort.

Other electronics projects, lead by Patricia Dillon and Lynn Rubinstein, include developing and launching the [State Electronics Challenge](#) in 2007, promoting the use of [EPEAT®](#) by large organizations, and posting Web pages dedicated to [electronics recycling, reuse](#), and [green procurement](#).

### ***Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP)***

Promoting environmentally preferable purchasing is one of the cornerstones of NERC's mission, and Ms. Remolador has been the lead staff person in this arena. NERC created and hosts the only national listserv dedicated to environmentally preferable purchasing: [EPPnet](#). Currently, there are more than 470 subscribers. EPA provided funding for the development of EPPnet and its archive.

- North American Green Purchasing Initiative

Represented by Ms. Remolador, NERC is a participant in the [North American Green Purchasing Initiative \(NAGPI\)](#). NAGPI was developed by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation - an international organization created by Canada, Mexico, and the United States under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation to complement the environmental provisions of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). One of NAGPI's goals is to increase green purchasing within the three member countries. The identified purchasing priorities are office products (paper and electronic equipment), custodial products, and clean energy.

- Peer-to-Peer EPP Training

Another unique NERC effort was the development of [peer-to-peer EPP training](#). Ms. Remolador worked with businesses in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont to assist peers with implementing or expanding EPP programs. Project funding: USDA.

- Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT®)

By working with large companies, educational institutions, and health care facilities, among others, Ms. Rubinstein and Ms. Dillon have been promoting and tracking the use of EPEAT® for the procurement of computers. An EPEAT® listserv has been created to support this effort. Currently, there are approximately 625 members on this list. A [Web page](#) with resources dedicated to promoting the green procurement of computers has also been created. Project funding: EPA.

Launched in October 2007, the [State Electronics Challenge \(SEC\)](#) is a voluntary program that encourages state, regional, and local governments, including schools and other public entities to:

- Purchase greener computer products.
- Reduce the impacts of computer products during use.
- Manage obsolete computers in an environmentally safe way.

Government agencies and organizations participate as "Partners" in the program. The SEC provides Partners with resources and technical assistance for improving electronics management practices, and offers annual recognition to Partners that have achieved specific goals. This project is managed by Ms. Rubinstein and Ms. Dillon. Project funding: EPA.

### ***Unwanted Medications***

NERC was the first entity in the country to tackle the complex issues associated with the collection and destruction of unwanted medications. Why NERC? Because part of the mission is to decrease the toxicity of the solid waste stream, and evolving science was revealing that medications are a component of that toxicity. Both EPA and the USDA, agreeing with NERC that this presented a solid waste concern, provided funding to research the legal issues, develop strategies for legal and safe collections, and pilot that strategy. The result has been a unique [guidance document](#) about setting up and operating such collections, as well as pilot collections in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Ms. Rubinstein has been the project lead. Project funding: EPA, USDA, Community Pharmacy Foundation.

### ***Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse (TPCH)***

The [Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse](#) was formed in 1992 to promote the Model Toxics in Packaging Legislation. This model legislation was drafted by the Source Reduction Council of the Coalition of Northeastern Governors in 1989. It was developed in an effort to reduce the amount of heavy metals in packaging and packaging components that are sold or distributed throughout the United States. In 2004, TPCH moved to NERC for staffing and administrative support. Patricia Dillon, Program Director, staffs the Clearinghouse. As of February 2008, membership in TPCH has expanded to include 11 states: California, Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Washington. The TPCH is also supported by Industry Members: the American Chemistry Council, Society of Glass and Ceramic Decorators, and the Steel Recycling Institute.

In 2007, TPCH announced the results of a groundbreaking study that tested packaging for compliance with state toxics in packaging laws: [An Assessment of Heavy Metals in Packaging](#). Project funding: EPA.

### ***Climate Change***

One of NERC's most popular resources is the [Environmental Benefits Calculator](#). This resource is free, downloadable, and provides users with the ability to assess and measure the impact of their recycling and reuse activities, as well as "what could be." Launched by Ed Boisson, the Calculator moved to the leadership of Michael Alexander, then Jessica Rajotte Wozniak, and now rests with Athena Lee Bradley. Original project funding: EPA.

**Website**

NERC's [Website](#) is a powerful resource, providing links to dozens of NERC publications, practical tools, and [state level resources](#) and information. It includes topic area resources on:

- [Business Assistance](#)
- [Construction & Demolition](#)
- [Compost/Organics Management](#)
- [Electronics](#)
- [Environmental Benefits Calculator](#)
- [Environmentally Preferable/Green Purchasing](#)
- [Green Procurement of Electronics](#)
- [Newspapers Publishers Agreement](#)
- [Recycling Economic Information Study](#)
- [Regional Electronics Legislation Project](#)
- [Reuse Opportunities](#)
- [Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse](#)
- [Unwanted Medications Collections](#)

Also easily available on the Website is information about [NERC's conferences](#), [NERC's policy positions](#), and [NERC's Advisory Members](#). NERC's monthly [Email Bulletins](#), distributed to 600 people, are posted and archived on the Website as well. Ms. Rubinstein is the Bulletin editor.

Amazingly, this is just a sample of what this remarkable organization has contributed to the recycling markets field in the past 20 years. I'm honored to have been NERC's Executive Director for the past eight years, working with remarkable staff and supported by dedicated Board members. I extend my heartfelt thanks to them.

[Lynn Rubinstein](#), Executive Director