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Environmental Report
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August 19, 2019

State's Recycle Programs in jeopardy

The August 5 closure of the can and bottle recycle kiosk at Von's parking lot is just a symptom of a large and more serious issue. Yes, it is an inconvenience to those of us who recycle beverage cans and bottles but the entire recycle system is in trouble. The collapse of Re-Planet the operator of the Von's and 284 other recycle kiosks in Southern California was the result of depressed pricing of recycled aluminum and PET plastic as well as increased costs of operation. The business was just not sustainable.

An even larger issue is the recycle waste collected by Valley Vista and other waste haulers. The market for these waste products has collapsed and mounds of unsold recycled trash are piling up in warehouses. China was a major customer for the recycle plastic and paper. In 2017 China placed severe restrictions on recycle trash claiming it was contaminated and not usable. Other Asian nations have followed suit and stopped importing recycle trash. Prior to 2017, Valley Vista and other trash haulers were paid for recycle materials and collection was encouraged by supplying extra "blue" recycle bins at no charge. Currently trash haulers are having to pay recycle companies to take the trash. Future contracts for waste collection will increase and extra "blue" recycle bins will carry a surcharge.

The issue has reached a point that "recycled" trash is being diverted to land-fill dumps rather than be recycled. The solution will require a reduction in trash and more creative ways to use recycled materials; a daunting task.