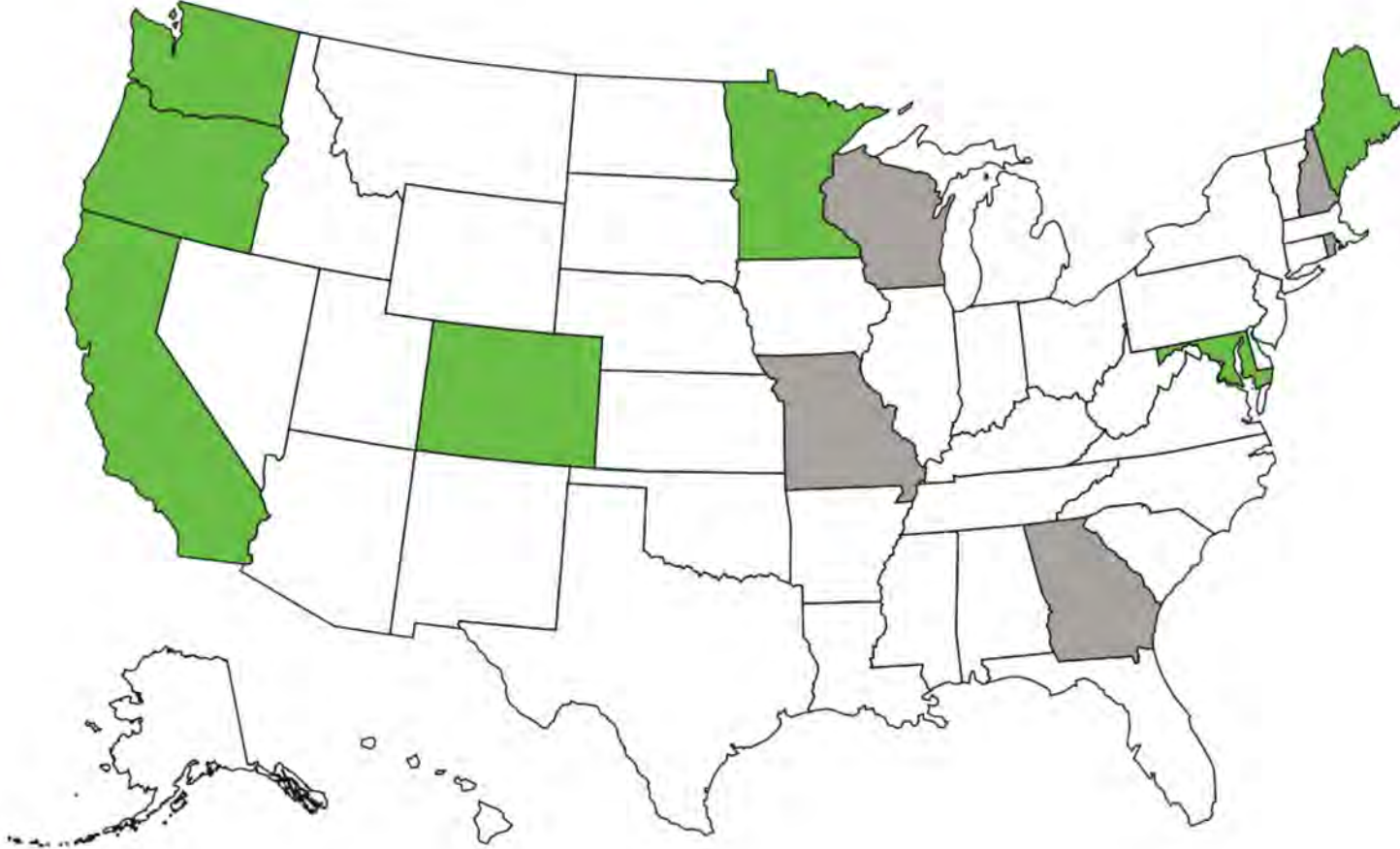


Advancements in EPR in the US - California Zero Waste Plan



Ruth Abbe, Zero Waste USA

Plastic Waste: The Next Steps Forward • April 9, 2026



7 EPR for packaging bills
have passed in the U.S.

5 States have introduced
legislation on EPR for
packaging in 2026

Motivations are Different by State

Maine	2021	Reimburse municipalities for recycling program costs
Oregon	2021	Modernize state's recycling system
Colorado	2022	Expand equitable recycling access across the state
California	2022	Reduce plastic pollution and require that all packing is recyclable or compostable
Minnesota	2024	Reduce the environmental and human health impacts
Maryland	2025	Modernize state's recycling system and reimburse municipalities
Washington	2025	Make curbside recycling available and affordable for most people in the state

EPR shifts the costs of material recovery from governments and taxpayers to private industry and consumers.

EPR Laws Can Include Other Product Policies

- Eco-modulated fees
- Recycled content minimums
- Mandatory recycling
- Product or material bans
- Light weighting
- Reuse
- Define “recyclable” and “recycling”
- Exclude “chemical recycling” or “plastics to fuel” approaches
- Require “responsible end markets”

Addressing “Hard-to-Recycle” Materials and Expanding Access

HARD-TO-RECYCLE MATERIALS

- Expanded polystyrene
- Flexible packaging
- Film plastics
- Packaging too small for material recovery facilities to process

EXPANDING ACCESS

- Multifamily complexes
- Small businesses
- Rural areas

Circular Action Alliance is the Producer Responsibility Organization for Paper and Packaging in the United States



Circular
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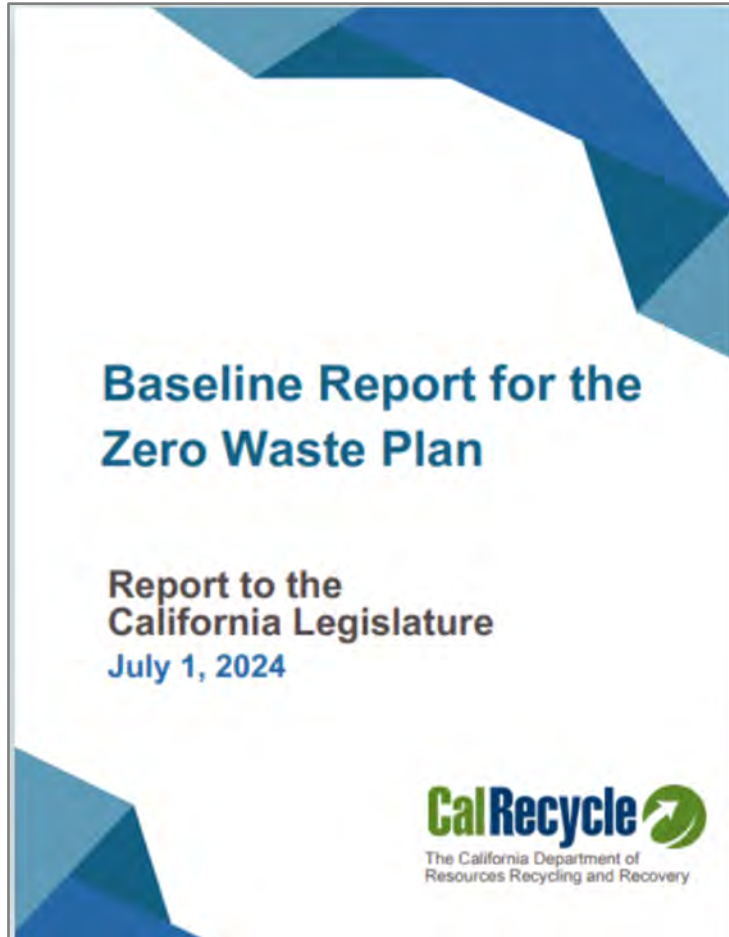
scJohnson
A family company
at work for a better world




Unilever

Walmart 

California Zero Waste Plan



July 2024



January 2026

Collected to Date



11.2 Million Tons
Organics (2022) Landfill
GHGs Reduced: 949,565
cars off the road



338 Million
Meals Saved (2022)
Landfill GHGs
Reduced: 17,211
cars off the road



493 Billion
Beverage Containers



304 Million
Tires



2.7 Billion Lbs.
E-Waste

Extended Producer Responsibility Progress



2.4 Billion
Gallons
Used Oil



9.7 Million
Mattresses



1.1 Billion Lbs.
Carpet



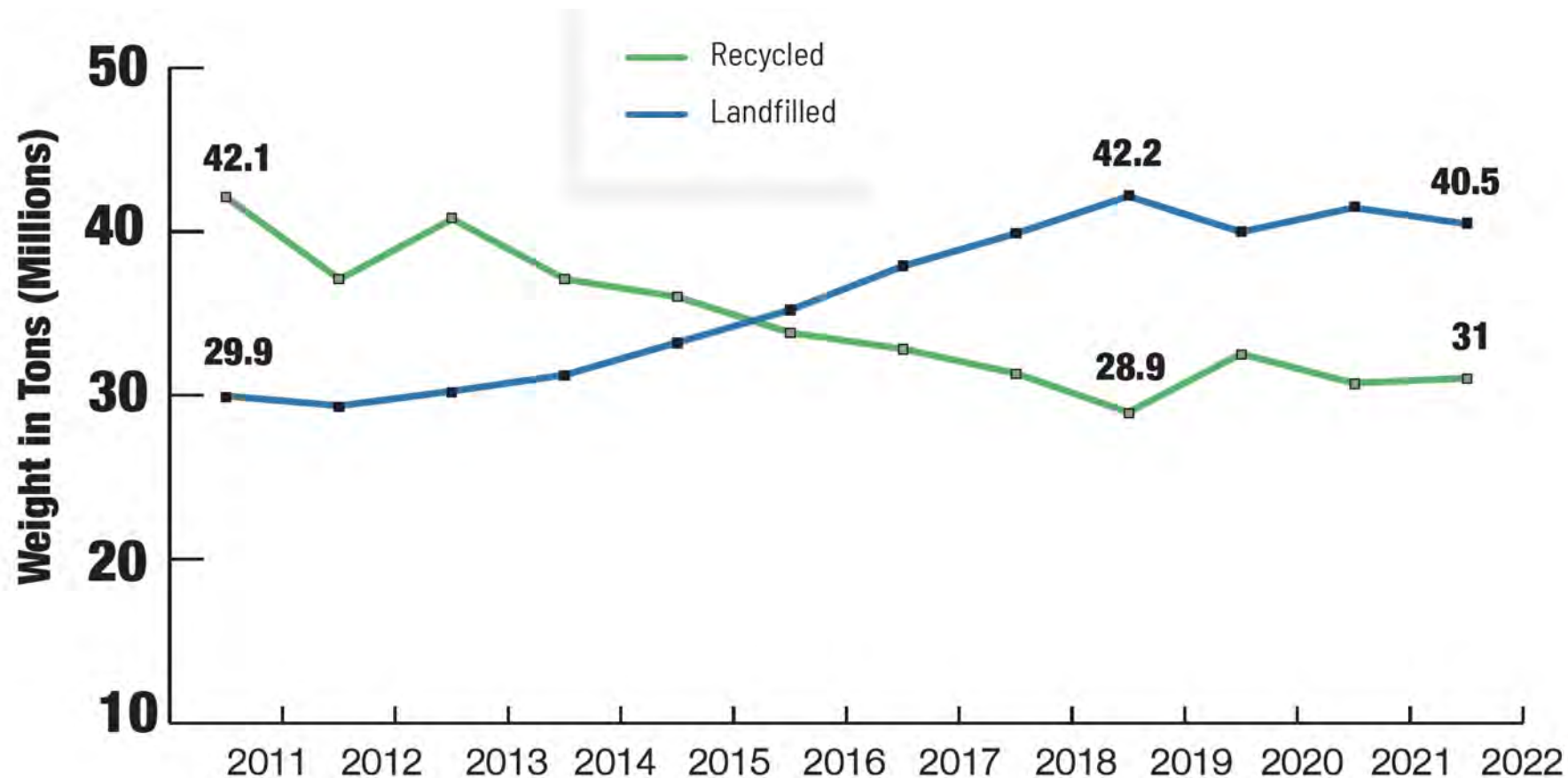
37.3 Million
Gallons
Paint



1 Million Lbs.
Pharmaceuticals
& Sharps (2023)

Still, California Landfills Over 40 Million Tons of Material Each Year

Disposal increased while recycling and exports decreased over the past decade.



Disposal
went up



Recycling
went down



Coming Soon

Extended Producer Responsibility for

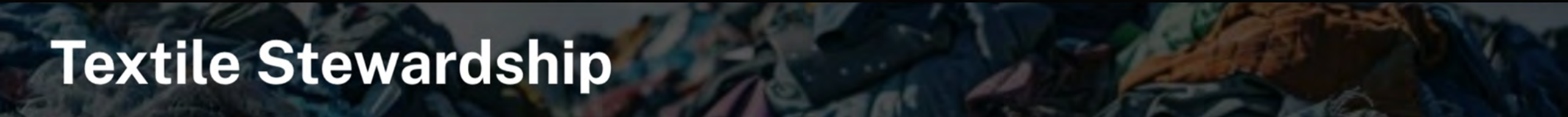
Packaging & Plastic

Batteries



Plus

**Battery-embedded
products join
e-waste program.**



Textile Stewardship

Recommendations to Move from the Baseline to Zero Waste

1. Overcome barriers to reach all mandates.
2. Address gaps and overlaps in current systems.
3. Understand the full lifecycle of materials to reduce waste.
4. Minimize impacts of waste on the environment, public health, and disadvantaged communities.
5. Maximize the environmental, social, and economic benefits of a circular economy.
6. Grow California's circular economy infrastructure and responsible end markets.

The Plan has 15 recommendations that prioritize

- Refusing to make waste and rethinking design
- Reusing and repurposing
- Recycling, composting, and digesting remaining materials

CalRecycle's Next Steps

CalRecycle manages waste but lacks authority over many materials and could serve as California's coordinator for a transition to a circular economy.

CalRecycle will continue engaging interested parties, working with policymakers, providing technical support, formalizing cross-agency coordination, and partnering with communities. Components of this plan could require expanding CalRecycle's authority. The road to zero waste requires collaboration between state agencies, the private sector, and residents.

Circular Economy Strategies for Rural Counties

- Coming Soon in 2026
- Funded by U.S. EPA Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program
- Addresses reuse, recycling and composting infrastructure needs in rural areas
- Expanding rural transfer stations to include Resource Recovery Parks (multi-material drop-off centers)

Thank You

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