

REMARKS BY SUSAN BODINE
AMERICAN BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION
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Thank you all for coming by today. I know you've got a busy schedule for the rest of the day, so let's get started.

A week ago today, on Earth day, I attended a Boston Red Sox baseball game in Boston with the EPA Administrator, our regional administrator, and several members of the Natural Resources Defense Council. It wasn't the baseball that caused me to travel to Boston in the middle of the work week. Steve Johnson went to present an Environmental Merit Award to the Red Sox for their greening of the ballpark, and so the team invited him to present the award on the field before the game, and then throw out the first pitch. Between every half inning, a group of local college students known as the "green team" collected empty bottles from the water and soda and whatever else baseball fans drink at ball games, and they handed out environmental literature provided by NRDC. This is just one of many steps the Red Sox have taken to make their iconic ballpark a more environmentally friendly place.

That event last Tuesday not just a publicity stunt for Earth Day. Rather, a sign of how the country's attitudes toward the environment are changing. In one business sector after another – airlines, hotels, steel, automobiles, and many more – a commitment to stronger environmental values and more environmental action seems to be taking hold.

I hope the strengthening environmental ethic in this country will lead to much higher national recycling rates for bottles and cans, because our progress in this area over the past few years has flagged. According to industry sources, the 2006 recycling rate for PET bottles was 23.5 percent, which was less than in 1995, and the recycling rate for HDPE bottles was 26.4 percent, down slightly from 2005. The recycling rate for aluminum cans was 52 percent in 2005, compared to over 62 percent in 1995.

These flat or falling recycling rates are especially troubling because the costs of virgin materials have skyrocketed over the past few years, largely because of increasing demand from developing countries like China and India. That means the value of the recycled materials that replace them has gone up, too. It's likely that prices for virgin and recycled materials will remain high for a long time to come.

Since commodity prices are so high, and the money saved by using recycled aluminum and PET plastic in particular so impressive, why aren't recycling rates higher? There's probably no definitive answer to that question, but a couple possibilities come to mind. Some American families have recycled a good share of their bottles and cans at home for a long time. Recycling in the workplace hasn't caught on quite as well, and until recently we saw almost no recycling in public places like baseball parks. And younger families who weren't around during the initial rise in recycling don't seem as enthusiastic about recycling as their older neighbors. Maybe they haven't heard enough about the benefits recycling to motivate them. Maybe they don't know about recycling options in their communities. In any event, we don't seem to have the attention of younger families.

Another problem might be that recycling programs are not consistent across towns and across states. Different states have different recycling laws, and different towns have different collection methods, different rules for what can be recycled and when, and different ways of paying for it. And the lack of a consistent, recognizable national recycling message doesn't help, either.

For all these reasons, and others I'm sure, we're not doing a good enough job recycling bottles and cans nationally. And that's why I'm delighted to meet with you today to talk about some of the things we're already doing to improve recycling rates, both on our own and in partnership. And maybe throw around some ideas about what more we can do to get those rates up.

The American Beverage Association deserves a big hand for your Recycle it Now campaign that you kicked off in 2003. An effective pilot program that showed how much recycling rates will go up if people are given information consistently and effectively. Proven success in Pittsburgh, Hampton Roads, VA, Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio, and San Antonio. Good job engaging the public and providing a model for other communities nationwide. And I hear that your bottle-shaped recycling containers were a big hit with the public.

Now you're moving on to a national campaign being run by the National Recycling Coalition – the Rebranding Recycling in America campaign. EPA gave an early grant to NRC to help get this project off the ground, and I know you've contributed to it, too. Lots of potential in a national campaign to create a brand that sticks in people's minds. EPA's Energy Star is a

national brand that's been very successful at driving change, and people everywhere understand what Energy Star it means. I'm pleased to be a partner with you, NRC, the Food Marketing Institute, and other trade associations in this project, and I look forward to the emergence of a high visibility, national campaign to increase recycling.

Lots going on at EPA, too. Recycling on the Go: an effort to improve recycling when people are "at play". We're working with Major League Baseball to make recycling opportunities available in big league stadiums. Teams whose stadiums now recycle: St. Louis Cardinal, Seattle Mariners, San Francisco Giants, Pittsburgh Pirates, Cleveland Indians, Boston Red Sox, Houston Astros, San Diego Padres, Oakland A's Colorado Rockies, and Washington Nationals. In 2005 and 2006 we worked with the National Football League to recycle bottles and cans at the All-Star game in Honolulu. Now recycling is built into that event every year. Cherry Blossom festivities in Washington, DC. On mass transit in Washington, DC.

EPA is facilitating a dialogue between state environmental agencies and the Beverage Packaging Environmental Council to develop joint projects that support beverage container recycling. We recently launched a workplace recycling initiative with Georgia Pacific, Harmon Recycling -- a major fiber recycler -- , and CBRE, Inc., the world's largest commercial office asset management company. Goal: improved workplace recycling in almost 1500 CBRE facilities through waste audits, planning, education, reports. One facility has already moved from a 28 to 73 percent recycling rate.

We're working with WalMart to increase recycling of store waste. Also, WalMart interested in devoting some logistical capability to help recycle wastes in communities where it operates. Our work with WalMart is especially promising because such a large percentage of America's consumer products flow out their doors. When WalMart decides to take action, like asking their suppliers to change packaging so it's easier to recycle, believe me: the earth moves.

It's an exciting time for recycling – a lot is happening. And it seems that the public is ready for a new push. For example, one member of staff has a 13-year old daughter who joined with a friend to spread EPA's Recycling on the Go initiative in northern Virginia. These two young girls went before the Clifton, Virginia, city council and presented a plan for recycling beverage containers during a dozen or so city events – such as the town fair, a 5K run, and a Halloween parade – over the coming year. The town gave the green light enthusiastically. The girls were put in charge of planning, putting out the recycling containers, and collecting the empty cans and bottles at the end of the event. All profits are being donated to a good cause. The first event was this past weekend, and I'm sure the girls did a great job. This just shows how much progress we can make if we put our minds to it.