

The trash polluting our oceans and warming our planet is a problem we can no longer ignore.

California throws away 48 million tons of materials every year.

Resources are extracted from our planet – designed to be used once – then dumped into our landfills forever;

- Filling limited space
- Contaminating our air
- And sometimes seeping into the groundwater and soil
- Further polluting our most vulnerable communities.

California set a goal to reduce the human health and climate impacts of landfilling by reducing or recycling 75-percent of our trash by 2020.

But then countries overseas stopped taking our recyclables and the garbage that came with it.

The use of single-use products skyrocketed, made worse by COVID-19. Our recycling rate dropped to 37-percent.

Right now, our current economic model relies on mining and cutting down resources; sending them on a one-way, disposable journey from manufacturing plant to trash heap.

Waste warming our planet, contributing to climate change, and polluting our land, water, even the air we breathe.

With California already experiencing the devastating impacts of the climate crisis, it's time for the state to do what it does best: innovate.

A new movement is already underway in California and is now gaining momentum.

Matt Henigan, CalRecycle Deputy Director, Materials Management and Local Assistance: "We're seeing incredible innovation in technology in the recycling space."

It's called a circular economy. A system in which every product and resource, whether it's food, clothes, buildings or vehicles, every "thing" is designed to last as long as possible, and at the end of its use, cycle or loop back into the system for a useful next life.

A new model, reducing and even eliminating waste, creating green jobs, and cutting down on greenhouse gasses.

Matt Henigan: "The idea is to create living wage jobs while protecting the environment."

California wants to be a leader in creating this remanufacturing, circular economy.

CalRecycle already oversees programs to recycle products like: bottles, cans, mattresses, used oil and paint.

The department is also working with local communities to expand food and yard waste collection programs statewide by January 1, 2022 for recycling into green products like compost and clean energy.

“The advantage of making new products from recycled materials in-state is that it happens under California’s strong environmental protection rules and strong labor standards.”

CalRecycle is creating an office of innovation that brings together the department’s current market development efforts with the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development or “Go-Biz,” to recruit and support businesses developing green technologies to re-use, recycle, and remanufacture products.

Henigan: “This new office will really get into the nitty gritty of setting up the recycling infrastructure.”

The office of innovation will streamline business processes, help overcome siting and permitting barriers, and connect businesses with loans, grants, tax incentives and other financial support -combining state services with CalRecycle programs that have already helped a number of businesses.

Henigan: “California is home to the world’s first paper bottle manufacturer. We’ve also seen companies come up with cardboard alternatives to six-pack rings and replacements for plastic film.”

Support for green innovation that builds a circular economy, will create-green jobs, with less pollution and trash.

Henigan: “California is already a climate leader so it makes sense that we’d be a leader in creating a circular economy too.”