

The Sensible Environmentalist

Recycling Industry Needs Our Help

(NAPSA)—**DEAR DR. MOORE:**

How much of the paper used in the U.S. is recycled?

According to the American Forest and Paper Association, the paper recovery rate hit an all-time high of 50.3 percent in 2003, which averages 339 pounds for each man, woman and child in the U.S. More paper is recovered than all glass, metal and other materials combined—but it still isn't enough.

The industry has set itself a goal of increasing the waste recovery rate to 55 percent by 2012, which translates into an extra 12.5 million tons of paper collected each year.

From an environmental perspective, this is great news. Among other things, recycling extends the life of our forest resources, diverts waste from landfill sites and incinerators, and reduces energy consumption—which lowers greenhouse gas emissions and helps fight global warming.

It also makes economic sense. There are more than 56,000 recycling and re-use facilities nationwide. The industry employs more than a million people and tends to pay higher-than-average salaries.

Some paper products can't be

recycled, such as soiled pizza boxes. But we're still only recycling half of what we use, so there's clearly room to improve. Despite the fact that the paper recovery rate has grown steadily since 1990, the U.S. EPA says the item most often found in landfills is still—you guessed it—paper. Office paper in particular offers a huge potential increase. The same is true of paperboard packaging such as drink containers and cereal boxes.

The U.S. EPA and the paper industry have teamed up to educate and encourage more towns and cities to recycle, and they're also working to increase the recovery rate in offices and schools. Ultimately though, it's up to each and every one of us to recycle that stray piece of junk mail or empty paper towel roll.

We can take pride in the fact that, over the last 15 years, we've made recycling part of our culture—and it's had an impact. We can also do more. Let's help the recycling industry to meet its 55 percent goal, because it makes sense.

Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder of Greenpeace, he holds a PhD in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to Patrick@SensibleEnvironmentalist.com.



Dr. Moore