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For Immediate Release

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New Mexico Recycling Rate Holds Strong at 16% ***Focus on Organics Diversion to Increase Recycling Rates***

Santa Fe – The New Mexico Environment Department: Solid Waste Bureau recently released the 2012 annual recycling and diversion rates. The state average recycling rate continues to hold strong at the 16% range over the past several years. The New Mexico Recycling Coalition (NMRC), a statewide recycling advocacy nonprofit, has set a goal to reach a 35% rate by 2018 and would like to see the recycling rate continue to steadily increase.

Although NMRC recommends offering as many recycling options as possible, working to divert organic materials is the secret to high diversion numbers in many of New Mexico's communities. In fact, there are a couple of communities that have very little traditional household recycling options in their area, but work hard to keep yard waste, tree trimmings and scrap metals from entering the waste stream. As these materials weigh a lot more in comparison to household recyclables, their diversion adds up quickly when calculating the recycling rate.

“We have huge opportunities here in New Mexico to divert more materials from the waste stream,” explains English Bird, NMRC Executive Director. “The City of Albuquerque just announced their plan to implement a Pay-As-You-Throw solid waste trash collection rate structure, with the City of Las Cruces heading in that direction as well. Pay-As-You-Throw is another tactic that ensures an increase in local recycling participation.”

According to US EPA national waste characterization studies, yard trimmings account for 13.5% with wood coming in at 6.3% and food scraps following at 14.5%. Combined, organic material diversion totals up to more than 34% of the waste stream.

A couple of the highest recycling rates in New Mexico are located in Lincoln and Otero Counties; both areas have seen great success keeping organics and scrap metals out of the landfill.

In Lincoln County, with a 57% recycling rate, there are two composting and mulching entities that keep just about all of the local forest thinning and yard trimmings out of the waste stream. Greentree Solid Waste Authority, which manages solid waste and recycling for the region, also has a strong recycling program which includes commercial cardboard, and residential collections where materials are collected using the single stream method at drop-offs and at the curb. The Village of Ruidoso has their own robust recycling collection program as well, which includes businesses having access to cardboard and mixed recyclable drop-offs throughout the town that are conveniently located near existing trash dumpsters. Almost half of the recycling tonnage reported in Lincoln County came from yard trimmings and brush recycling. Scrap metals and cardboard were the next most recycled items.

Otero County has a 22% recycling rate and a 54% diversion rate. Diversion rates include materials that have been beneficially used on a local application, while recycling rates are calculated using US EPA



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recycling rate standards for such items as traditional household recyclables, yard waste, scrap metal, electronics and glass. These rates include the extensive recycling activities on Holloman Air Force Base and at the Mesa Verde Landfill, which hosts a robust green waste diversion program. The recycling rates in this county were accomplished in part due to their strong yard waste, scrap metals, cardboard and tire diversion programs. Holloman Air Force Base has a strong recycling and diversion program, to include its own residential curbside collection program on the base. Otero County accepts tires, yard waste, scrap metals, cardboard and other household recyclables from throughout the county.

Recycling and diversion information by county can be found online at the New Mexico Environment Department: Solid Waste Bureau's website:

<http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swb/documents/2012CountyTotalsFinal.pdf>

New Mexico Recycling Coalition is a non-profit member-supported organization with the mission of leading New Mexico to value waste as a resource. The organization serves as a recycling advocate working with a diverse group of stakeholders, communities, businesses, schools and grassroots activists to help build sustainable and efficient recycling programs. To learn more, visit

www.recyclenewmexico.com.

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