

Case for EPR

Extended Producer Responsibility (also called Product Stewardship) is a policy that ensures that those who design, market and use products and packaging are responsible for ensuring that these goods do not become environmental liabilities. In other words, if a producer is required to manage a product and its packaging at the end of its life, they will design it differently. They will design for reduction, re-use and recycling.

[Waste & Unsustainable Consumption](#) | [Local Governments](#) | [Business](#)

44 Percent Products and Packaging EPR Addresses Climate Change

Products and packaging contribute 44% of total US greenhouse gas impacts globally! Household energy use and transportation get the lion's share of attention in addressing climate change. But they are not the largest 'end of pipe' contributors to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

A report by Product Policy Institute concluded that 44% of total U.S. greenhouse gas impacts are due to the *provision and use of products and packaging*. The report, *'Products, Packaging and US Greenhouse Gas Emissions'*, built on a similar report by the US Environmental Protection Agency that examined US greenhouse gas emissions by end use.

Since most greenhouse gas emissions occur in the production phase, and are determined in the design phase, making producers responsible for closed-loop recycling of their products is a critical, market-based way of reducing 'upstream' impacts including greenhouse gas emissions. By providing feedback to producers, EPR policies can stimulate source reduction and cradle-to-cradle recycling.

- *For example* - When Washington State legislators decided to address climate change in 2008, their tool of choice was EPR. They called out EPR/Product Stewardship legislation in a draft Climate Action Plan, believing that if EPR policies were enacted in Washington, they would be positively affect climate change.

Read [Climate Change, Peak Oil and the End of Waste](#) [1] by Bill Sheehan and Helen Spiegelman for more details about the relationship between EPR and climate change. These topics justified their own chapter in *The Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21st Century's Sustainability Crises*.

EPR Addresses Waste and Unsustainable Production & Consumption

It's not WASTE until it's WASTED! (Waste Hauling Truck) [2]

[Download Poster!](#) [3]

Household waste is often overlooked in discussions of big issues like climate change and peak oil. Even dedicated environmentalists sometimes share the prevailing view that waste 'will always be with us.' But in fact, the material in landfills and incinerators was not waste until it was packed into a garbage truck instead of being recycled or composted. Discarded products and packaging should be managed by manufacturers, and turned into new products and packaging. Waste as we know it today is not an inevitability, but an indicator of massive failure in both markets and market regulation. There is currently **no connection between the producers & manufacturers of products and the entities** (waste management companies and local

governments) **that take care of the products at the end of their life.**

Producers don't have to manage landfills, so you could say it's "out of sight, out of mind" once their products enter the marketplace. And local governments and waste management companies have no effective way to tell the producers how hard or easy it is to deal with their products at the end-of-life. EPR policies mandate that there is a **feedback loop** between producers and waste managers.

By creating feedback loops between manufactured discards and the producers who design and make them in the first place, EPR policies can help reduce waste by making production more sustainable and providing accurate price signals to consumers.

Establishing a feedback loop between the producers and the waste managers is one aspect of EPR and will certainly address waste. But another aspect to tackle is the **sheer quantity of waste that we generate**. Since 1960 throw-away products and packaging waste has tripled - growing at more than twice the rate of population growth. Take just one example of the waste we generate: cell phones.

Images by Chris Jordan, from [Running the Numbers: An American Self Portrait](#) [4], used with permission

[The Story of Stuff - with Annie Leonard - Go watch it!](#)

[5]While legislation is being crafted and a very few companies are beginning to undertake EPR, activist Annie Leonard is taking the issue of consumption to the consumers. And she's getting their attention, with 12 millions hits and counting, her [Story Of Stuff video](#) [5] has people all over the US talking about consumption and waste. View the video now for a unique perspective on consumption and waste generation in the United States.

EPR transforms Local Government's Role in Waste

We know that waste prevention and recycling are the best way to reduce all of these harmful impacts. And yet many communities are declaring that waste reduction and recycling have reached their limits. They are contemplating investment in waste incinerators in hopes of recovering some value from non-recyclable waste. But this introduces new risks to public health and safety in their communities and also creates an ongoing demand for waste to feed the incinerators.

How can we break the cycle of wasteful production, consumption and disposal? We believe that local governments -- and the communities they serve -- hold the key to transforming the waste management system.

City Hall

Local governments have been unwitting "enablers" of throw-away products and packaging for the past century (see [History of Waste](#) [6]). Local communities incur not only costs of managing waste but risks in the provision of waste services. Many common household products contain toxic substances that can cause injury to recycling and sanitation workers and harm the health of communities living near disposal facilities.

EPR advocates for a producer-led, market-based, closed-loop recycling system that will shift the burden of managing manufactured discards onto producers and consumers ? and off the backs of government, taxpayers and garbage ratepayers. As a garbage ratepayer, should I have to pay for the disposal and management of dangerous substances that I didn't use? Or should the producer who designed and the consumer who purchased those products bear the responsibility for its disposal?

Local governments got into the business of hauling waste away from the curbside at the turn of the century because the waste was causing a public health crisis! But the composition of our garbage has changed in the last 100 years, so shouldn't our waste management system undergo a change as well? While we're examining the waste management system, we should also examine who should be responsible for managing all the waste. Should it still be our local governments? Or should the responsibility be shared among producers, manufacturers and consumers?

See what actions local governments are already taking with a visit to the [Local Governments](#) [7] section of our site.

EPR Provides Opportunity to Businesses

Businesses large and small know that there is a lot to be gained from providing excellent customer services. Increasingly consumers want to do the right thing and they are becoming more educated about the products they buy and the actions of the company they buy from. Businesses that provide take-back opportunities for their customers or participate in hEPR programs can gain a distinct advantage in the marketplace, create customer loyalty, and enhance the image of their brand. Home furnishing giant IKEA says "Making it easy for visitors to recycle old CFLs and purchase new ones in the same trip...turns visitors into customers."

And according to the California Product Stewardship Institute "smart businesses are taking back their products through reverse distribution systems and using those materials to make new products and avoiding the cost of buying virgin materials."

[Read more about business and EPR](#) [8].

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`$('#para-fade').fadeIn(3000,function() { });`

Links:

[1] <http://www.productpolicy.org/content/climate-change-epr>

[2] <http://www.productpolicy.org/ppi/graphics/waste-truck-802x621.jpg>

[3] http://www.productpolicy.org/ppi/attachments/LP_WasteFlyer_FINAL-2.pdf

[4] <http://www.chrisjordan.com/>

[5] <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>

[6] <http://www.productpolicy.org/content/history-waste>

[7] <http://www.productpolicy.org/content/local-government>

[8] <http://www.productpolicy.org/content/business-case-epr-0>