The Future of Textile Reuse and Recycling in Illinois?

Textile Waste

The Problem - Environmental Impact of Textile and Clothing Waste

According to the US EPA, over 17 million tons of textile waste is generated nationwide each year with nearly 70% of that waste ending up in our nation's landfills. It takes over 200 years for textile waste to decompose in landfills which generate greenhouse methane gas and leaches toxic chemicals and dyes into the groundwater and our soil. For every pound of clothes that is collected for reuse purposes saves 15 pounds of CO_2 emissions.

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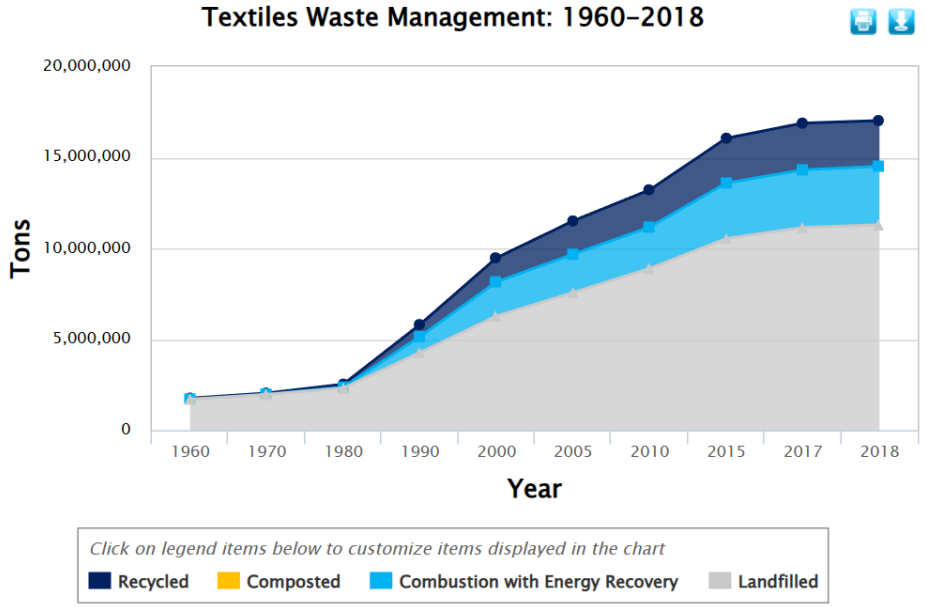
The Growth of Textile Recycling and Reuse

1960-2018 Data on Textiles in MSW by Weight (in thousands of U.S. tons)

Management Pathway	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2017	2018
Generation	1,760	2,040	2,530	5,810	9,480	11,510	13,220	16,060	16,890	17,030
Recycled	50	60	160	660	1,320	1,830	2,050	2,460	2,570	2,510
Composted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Combustion with Energy Recovery	-	10	50	880	1,880	2,110	2,270	3,060	3,170	3,220
Landfilled	1,710	1,970	2,320	4,270	6,280	7,570	8,900	10,540	11,150	11,300

Sources: American Apparel and Footwear Association, International Trade Commission, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Office of Textiles and Apparel, and the Council for Textile Recycling.

A dash in the table means that data is not available.



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Environmental Benefits of Reused Clothing vs. New Clothing

1) A new garment is responsible for almost 70 times more overall environmental impact than a reused t-shirt, and in terms of CO2-equivalents, the reuse of a t-shirt saves more than 3 kg CO2

2) Second-hand clothing presents opportunities for reducing environmental impacts as estimates suggest the production of 65-85 new items is avoided for every 100 pieces of reused clothing

3) The production of synthetic fibres for new clothing requires the equivalent of over 3 trillion plastic bottles every year

4) The production of 1 kg of fabric results in the emission of 23 kg of greenhouse gases (McKinsey, 2016).
    1) For example, producing a single cotton t-shirt emits 4.3 kg CO2e while production of a polyester one releases between 3.8 to 7.1 kg of CO2e, depending on whether it is knit or woven (Kirchain et al., 2015, p.14).

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Environmental Benefits of Reused Clothing vs. New Clothing

1) The purchase of 100 second-hand garments would save the production of between 60 and 85 new garments, providing 14% reductions in global warming (Farrant et al., 2010).

2) Confirming a global picture of savings generated by the SHC sector is somewhat challenging as estimates vary. Annual Nordic exports are estimated to result in a net reduction of 193,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases (Watson et al., 2016, p.7),

3) While the SHC sector in Ghana prevented the production of 98,800 new items of clothing in 2019, avoiding the disbursement of 3.26 million tonnes of CO2 emissions (Granskog et al, 2020) .

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Environmental Benefits of Reused Clothing vs. New Clothing

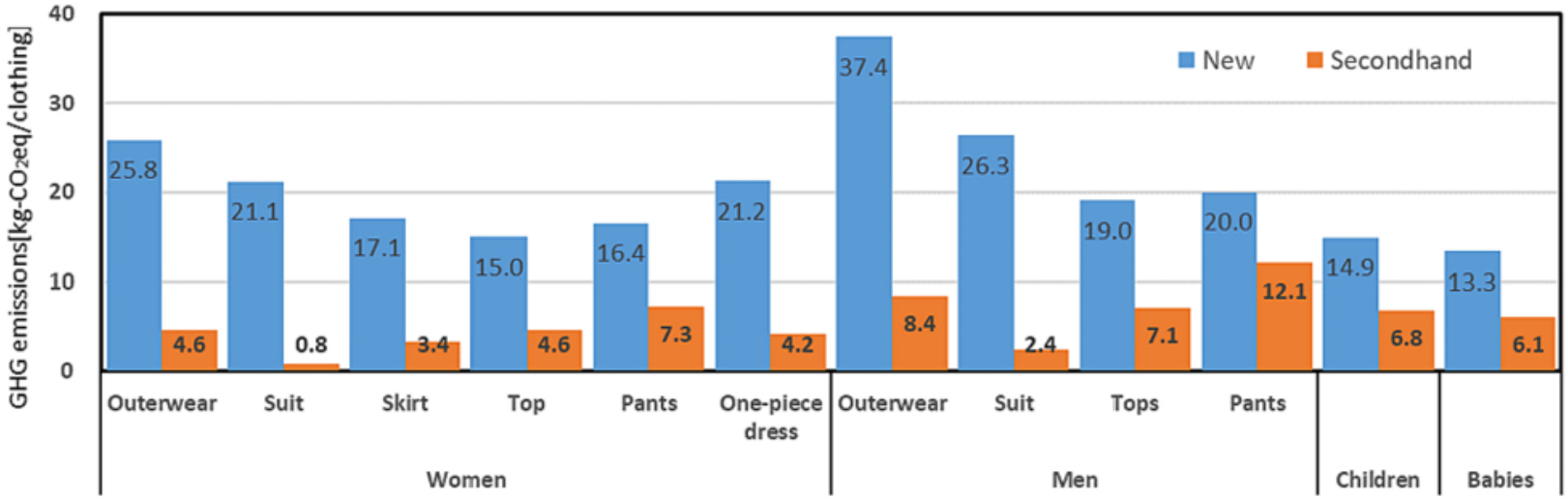

Fig. 6. Average GHG emission per unit by user category of new and secondhand clothing.

Source: *Promoting sustainable practices: Exploring secondhand clothing consumption patterns and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in Japan* by Dami Moon - Department of Urban Engineering, School of Engineering, The University of Tokyo, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spc.2024.01.007

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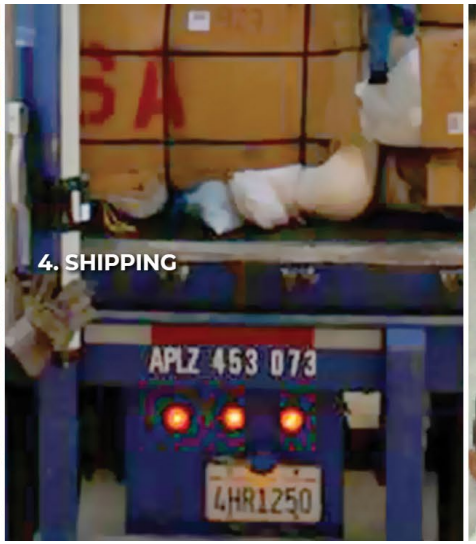
About USAgain

Originally founded in 1999 in Seattle, Washington, USAgain started with a mission to create a better world where PEOPLE and PLANET are given the value and priority they deserve. Our headquarters is in West Chicago, Illinois, we operate in 12 states and in over 500 cities.



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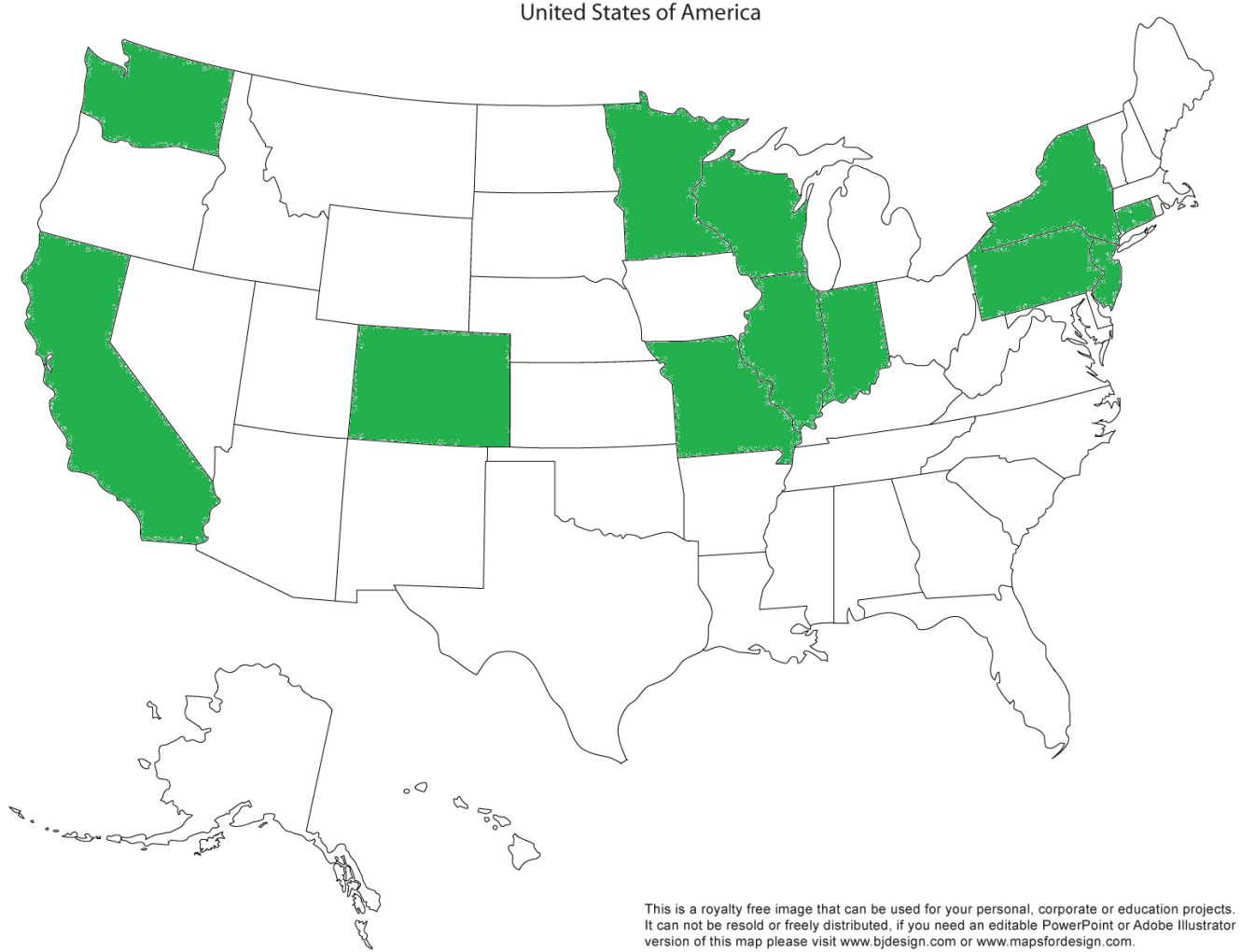
United States of America



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USAgain Collections

FY 2022 – 38.7 million pounds

FY 2023 – 45 million pounds

FY 2024 – 50 million pounds

FY 2025 – 54 million pounds

Chicago Area – 6 million pounds

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The Solution

- The typical Clothing Drop Spot collects between 3,000 to 5,000 pounds of donated clothes, shoes, and textiles each week
- This can result in over 156,000 to 260,000 pounds of clothes, shoes, and textiles being reused or recycled each year and diverted from your community's landfill.
- This equates to a positive environmental impact of saving 2,340,000 to 3,900,000 pounds of CO2 emissions on a yearly basis.

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Benefits of the Clothing Drop Spot

Staffed Daily

Monitored 24/7
with
Two-Way Communication

Larger Collection
Capacity
Eliminates Overflow

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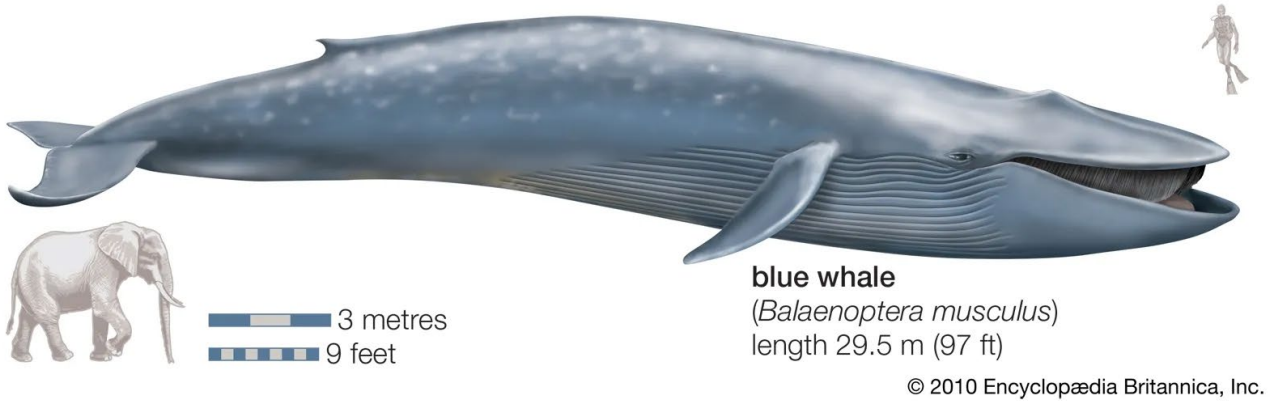
260,000 Pounds Equates to:

Or



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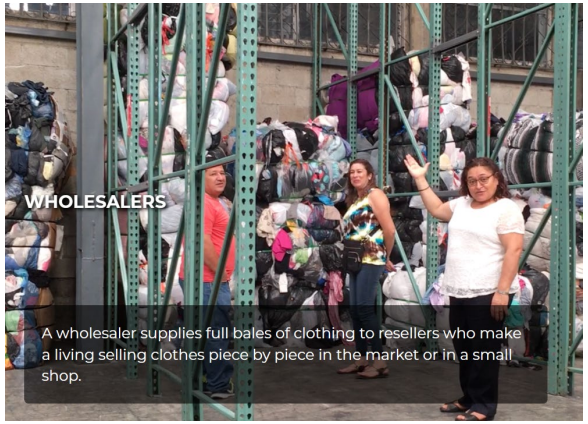
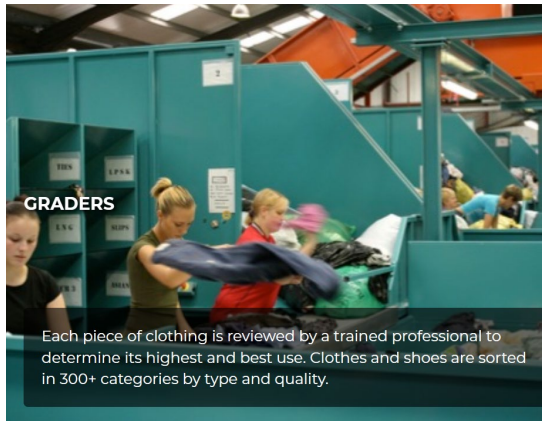
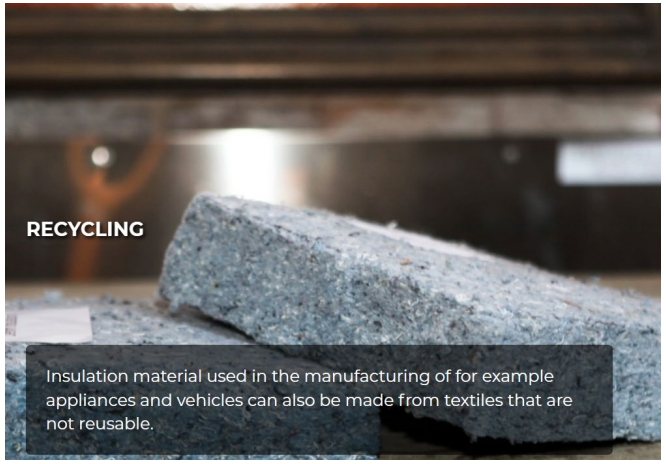
Where Do the Clothes Go?







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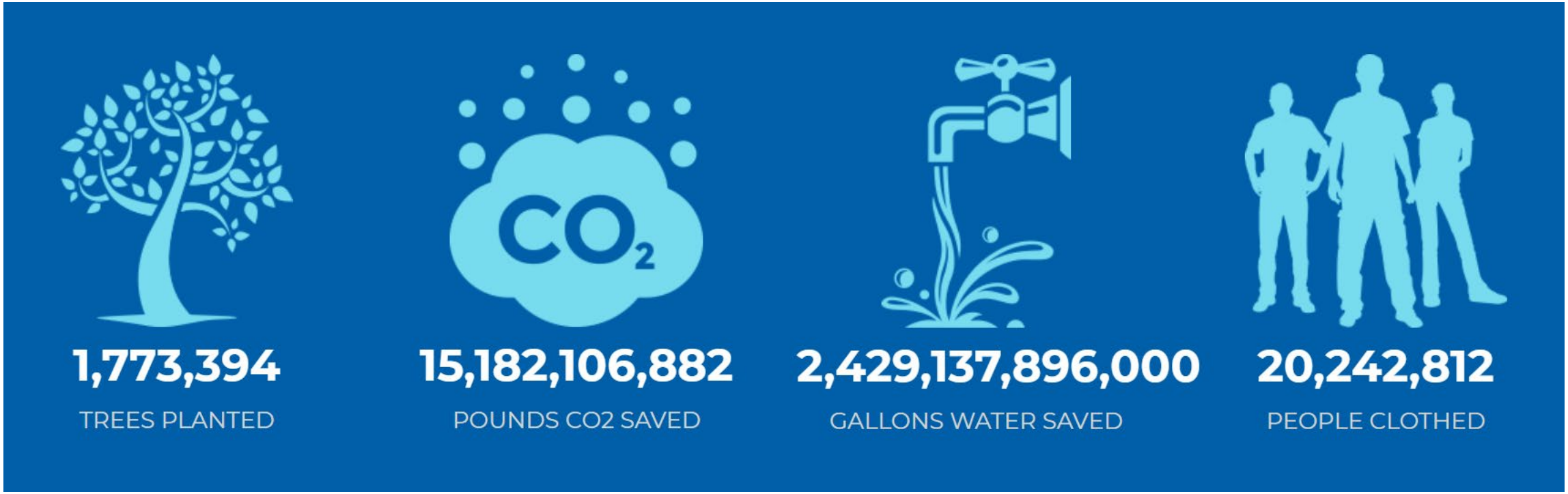
In partnership with Trees for the Future, a non-profit based in Maryland, USAgain plants a tree every time the TreeMachine is full, allowing us to support communities in developing countries in the fight against Global Warming and the Climate Crisis. Together we have planted more than 1 million trees since 2013.

Trees help restore the environment, mitigate the Climate Crisis and create a greener earth for future generations. When trees are planted with food crops this is called agroforestry and it helps people increase their crop yields to grow their own food and build sustainable incomes for their families by producing and selling a surplus. The program helps in creating sustainable sources of crop shade, soil rehabilitation, food, windbreaks, medicine, mudslide control and more for communities that need them.

Trees for the Future works in six Sub-Saharan countries where they have strong on-the-ground personnel and numerous clusters of farmers motivated to join the program. Though they have planted trees in 60 countries, they are actively replicating a pathway out of poverty in Senegal, Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania, Guinea, and Uganda. They work with farmers living below the poverty line, struggling to feed their families with the one or few crops they raise on increasingly degraded land. You can read more on the website of Trees for the Future.



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Bring on the Legislation!

Senate Bill 707 (Newman)

Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024.

Enacts a EPR program entitled the Responsible Textile Recovery Act of 2024.

- Introduced February 16, 2023
- **Signed by the Governor on September 28, 2024**
- **1st in North America!**

Senator Josh Newman
California Senate District 29

What SB 707 does:

- Creates EPR for Textiles
- Focuses on Reuse & Repair
- Internalized costs
  - ✓ 100% Producer funded
  - ✓ Equitable distribution of fees
  - ✓ Addresses overproduction
- Global accountability
  - ✓ Clear definitions
  - ✓ Program performance standards
  - ✓ Responsibility until final disposition
- Transparency
  - ✓ Public process for reviews and approvals
  - ✓ Annual reporting

Bring on the Legislation! (Cont'd)

SB 707 makes history with **158 endorsements**!

First EPR legislation in history to pass with **Zero opposition on record**.

Convenient Collection Standards

SB 707 supports existing collection infrastructure and takeback program, while encouraging more convenient collection through various collection

Storefronts	Curbside Pickup	Mail Back	Kiosks
Retailers, especially thrift stores could offer drop-off sites.	Collection with franchise haulers via partnerships or otherwise. Local government cannot be denied participation and franchise agreements are protected	Collection bags sent via mail, filled by residents, and sent back with prepaid labels. This option is becoming increasingly popular, but only as an add on once physical convenient collection standards are met.	Drop-off collection kiosks hosted by waste agencies and others

Responsible Textile Recovery Act 2024 Timeline

CPSC California Product Stewardship Council SM

2024

September 29: SB-707 (Newman) signed into law by Governor Newsom

2025

January: CalRecycle will establish public website and listserv for communications

March: CalRecycle will hold workshops throughout 2025 to hear comments and feedback for the program

2026

January 1: Applications to serve as PRO are due

March 1: CalRecycle must approve PRO; needs assessment is estimated to begin after approval

July 1: All producers must join approved PRO

2027

March 1: Needs assessment due to CalRecycle

2028

July 1: The CalRecycle is required to adopt regulations to implement the program no earlier than this date.

2029

January - December: PRO shall develop and write plan in accordance with the regulation requirements

*12 months shown is based on January 1, 2029 effective date of regulations

2030

July 1: Deadline for PROs to submit an approved plan or producers will face civil penalties if not compliant with the program.

2032

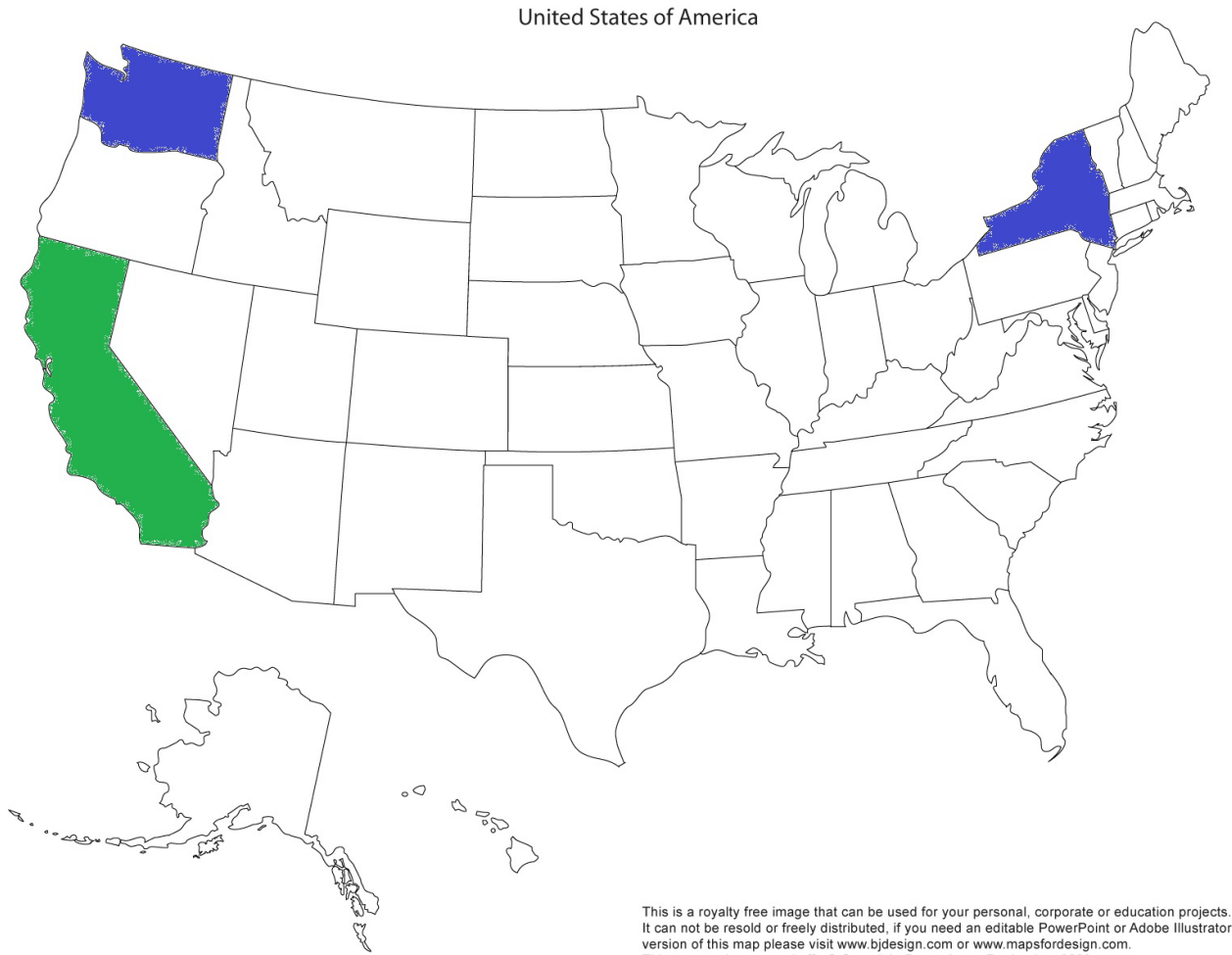
March 1: After this date, the department may establish, review, and adjust performance standards

Recurring Dates:
- Monthly CalRecycle Meetings
- Annual Report every July 1
- New Plan every 5 years

Informational Workshop
July 17, 2025

https://calrecycle.ca.gov/epr/textiles/

Future States



California – passed
New York – filed
Washington - filed

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European Examples - France

- The primary challenge has been the inadequacy of the eco-contributions (fees) paid by producers to cover the true net costs of the downstream waste management process (collection, sorting, reuse, and recycling).

- While the system uses eco-modulation fees (higher fees for less sustainable products), the impact has been criticised for being too marginal initially. The fees didn't immediately create a strong enough financial penalty to force brands away from linear, fast-fashion models

    - Early eco-modulation was too weak. The learning has led to a major revision under the AGEC Law (2020) to introduce new, more substantial financial incentives for durability, repairability, and recycled content, moving beyond simple fee adjustments

- The sharp drop in international prices for used textiles (driven by market shifts to cheaper Asian garments in destinations like Africa) meant that the resale value of collected clothing plummeted. This destabilised the economic model for sorters and reuse operators, who suddenly faced insufficient revenue, leading to a funding gap that threatened the collapse of the recycling network. France had to step in with large financial aid packages (e.g., $58 million in 2024) to stabilise the infrastructure.

- There have been persistent issues with fraud, particularly concerning under-declaration of product volumes by overseas actors and e-commerce platforms who place textiles on the French market.

    - The French response included requiring non-established producers to appoint a local representative, introduction of a mandatory Unique Identification Number (UIN) and making e-commerce marketplaces accountable.

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European Examples - Sweden

- With Sweden, the crux of the issue was that under the EU's Waste Framework Directive, all EU Member State were required to establish a separate collection system for textiles by 1 January 2025. Most countries ignored this because EPR schemes have not been set up yet to support the establishment of infrastructure for increased collections. However, Sweden decided to do public communications informing citizens of the need to now separate all their textiles from their other waste. They made no distinction between reusable or non-reusable textiles.

- Municipalities had not historically paid for clothing collections and so collectors were struggling to collect increased amounts of textiles (often with increased contamination/ low value materials) under the existing terms they had with municipalities. Without the resources to increase collections, they actually had to reduce collections which meant overflowing bins and a struggle to process the level of textiles mounting up.

- Crucially, the separate collection obligation (WFD mandate for 2025) was introduced before the EU-wide Textile EPR schemes were fully implemented and operational (EPR is mandated by mid-2028). This meant actors were forced to handle the initial surge in costs and logistics without the financial contribution from producers, creating a significant funding gap.

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Is Illinois Next?

1) According to the Illinois EPA over 550 million pounds of clothes are thrown away each year
    1) Cook County – 227 million pounds
    2) DuPage County – 41 million pounds
    3) Lake County – 31 million pounds
    4) Will County – 30 million pounds
    5) Kane County – 24 million pounds

Note: County data based on per capita rate of 43.8 pounds

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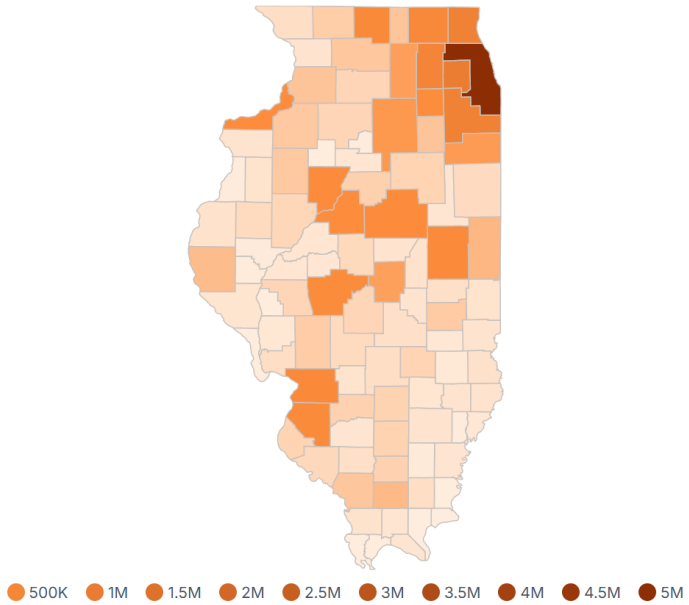
Is Illinois Next?

Illinois Counties by Population (2025)



1)	Cook County	5,038,084 pop	202 sites
2)	DuPage County	920,311 pop	37 sites
3)	Lake County	706,482 pop	28 sites
4)	Will County	706,092 pop	28 sites
5)	Kane County	516,668 pop	21 sites
6)	McHenry County	315,284 pop	12 sites
7)	Other Counties	4,281,116 pop	171 sites
8)	Total	12,484,037 pop	499 sites

Note: From SB 707 – 1 collection site per 25,000 people in each county

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Is Illinois Next?

550 million pounds of clothes thrown away each year in Illinois

Assume 15% donation/collection rate

499 collection sites

165,333 pounds per site, or 452 pounds per day

Note: Illinois EPA collection data

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What to Consider if Illinois Moves Forward

1) Existing companies and infrastructure already exists in Illinois that fulfils a large part of the collection, reuse, and recycling aspect goals of a textile extended producer responsibility program.

2) Invest and enhance the existing companies and infrastructure, don't replace them.

3) Global trade will always be a vital part of the textile circularity economy as that is where the greatest demand for reused clothing exists, don't restrict or hinder this aspect.

4) Increase the number of collection sites higher than SB 707 based on city level instead of county level.

5) Make sure the funding is adequate to support the goals of the program.

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