

**NRC's 2025 National Recycling Congress**  
**Wichita State University**  
**October 1 - 3, 2025**  
***"Strategies for Circularity"***

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

**DAY 1: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1**

**3:00 pm | Congress opens**

**3:00 pm | Registration opens [Aster Lounge] + Concurrent Activities**

**3:15 pm - 5:15 pm | Exhibit Hall opens [Begg's Ballroom]**

**NRC Recycling Organizations Council (ROC) Roundtable [Venters]**

- Leaders: Bob Bylone, Charles Kamenides
- Overview: NRC's ROC Roundtable is a forum for local, state and regional leaders to share ideas, address challenges and strengthen collaboration across the reuse and recycling network.

**Workshop: Grant Funding 101 [McKay]**

- Leader: Michelle DeHaven, Wichita State University
- Overview: This intensive workshop introduces the essentials of grant funding—how to find opportunities, write strong proposals and align with funder priorities. Participants will gain practical tools and strategies to boost their chances of success.

**5:30 pm - 6:30 pm | Welcome Reception [Gridley + Terrace]**

*Strings Performance*

**6:30 pm | Registration closes**

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**DAY 2: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 2**

**7:30 am | Registration opens [Aster Lounge]**

**7:45 am - 8:30 am | Concurrent Activities**

**Meet & Greet: NRC Campus Council [Aster Lounge]**

- Host: Jack DeBell, NRC Campus Council
- Overview: This session offers an excellent opportunity to connect with the NRC Campus Council, learn about its initiatives and explore ways to get involved in advancing Sustainable Materials Management curriculum, campus recycling and sustainability efforts.

**Speed Networking [Gridley]**

- Hosts: Christine Kiourtsis, Sue Momberger

- Overview: This dynamic session gives participants the opportunity to make quick connections, exchange ideas and gain insights from peers and leaders in our field. Plus it's a great opportunity to connect with some of NRC's Board Members.

**8:00 am | Exhibit Hall opens** [Begg's Ballroom]

**8:00 am - 8:55 am | Coffee & Tea Break** [Begg's Ballroom/Aster Lounge]

*Jazz Performance (8:15 - 8:45)*

**9:00 am - 9:55 am | Opening Plenary** [Begg's Ballroom]

### **Opening Remarks**

- MC: Teresa Bradley, NRC President | Welcome to the 2025 Congress
- Charles Kamenides, NRC Executive Director | Sponsor Recognition

### **A Welcome by the Original People**

- Rose Red Elk, Red Feather Woman, accompanied by Eric Many Winds Herrera
- Overview: Join Rose Red Elk, Red Feather Woman, for a Welcome by the Original People, honoring the Indigenous communities of the region. This opening acknowledges ancestral lands, traditions and the enduring connection to the environment that guides sustainable practices.

### **Wichita: All Heart, All Welcome**

- Councilman Brandon Johnson, City of Wichita
- Michelle DeHaven, Wichita State University

### **Keynote Address: "Speaking Truth to Plastic—from Awareness to Action"**

- Jackie Nunez, The Last Plastic Straw/Plastic Pollution Coalition
- Overview: An inspiring keynote on transforming awareness of plastic pollution into meaningful action, exploring strategies, challenges and opportunities to reduce waste and advance sustainable practices across all levels.

**10:00 am - 10:30 am | Exhibit Hall + Networking** [Begg's Ballroom]

**10:30 am - 11:45 am | Concurrent Sessions**

### **Panel Discussion: Problematic Plastics and a Shift to Reduction & Reuse** [Venters]

- Moderator: Kristine Kubat, Recycle Hawai'i
- Panelists: Katie Drews, Eureka Recycling and Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers | Kee Kee Julien-Judson, Rural Roots Louisiana | Leslie Lukacs, Zero Waste Sonoma | Samantha Romanick, University of Rochester
- Overview: This discussion will highlight innovative approaches to tackling problematic plastics by advancing reuse systems and reducing dependence on single-use items. Speakers will share real-world experiences, community-driven initiatives and scalable solutions that are paving the way for lasting change.

### **Panel Discussion: Driving Circularity through 3R Programs** [McKay]

- Moderator: Stephanie Barger, USGBC

- Panelists: Antonio Rios, Coalición de Reciclaje de Puerto Rico | Delaney Demro, Center for Sustainable Materials Management | Stan Chen, RecycleGo
- Overview: This session explores how waste reduction, reuse and recycling programs are accelerating circular progress, with insights on effective strategies, successful initiatives and practical tools for advancing sustainability across communities and organizations.

#### **Panel Discussion: The ROI of Reclaiming Furniture, Mattresses and Textiles [Prairie]**

- Moderator: Martie Solomon, City of Chula Vista
- Panelists: Grant Johnson, International Sleep Products Association | Amy Cox, Flourish Furnishings | Christine Kiourtsis, Renewable Recycling, Inc.
- Overview: This session examines innovative approaches to reclaiming mattresses, textiles and furniture, highlighting recycling and reuse strategies that reduce waste while delivering triple bottom line benefits—environmental, economic and equity.

#### **11:45 am - 1:05 pm | Lunch Plenary [Begg's Ballroom]**

##### *Lunch Buffet*

#### **Opening Remarks**

- MC: Teresa Bradley, NRC President | In Memoriam
- Leslie Lukacs, NRC Immediate Past President
- Bob Gedert, Xavier University, “Untangling Plastics: The Missing Link in Mitigating Climate Change”
- Heidi Sanborn, Stewardship Action Foundation/National Stewardship Action Council, “Reinvesting in America, Remade in America”
- WSU President, Dr. Richard Muma “Welcome to WuShock Country”
- Overview: NRC leaders and sustainability experts will share insights on advancing recycling, product stewardship and circular economy practices. Participants will hear perspectives on emerging challenges, innovative strategies and collaborative opportunities shaping the future of the field.

#### **1:15 pm - 2:30 pm | Concurrent Sessions**

##### **Workshop: Circular Design 101 Intensive [Venters]**

- Leader: Madelyn Morgan, City of Austin
- Overview: An interactive workshop introducing circular economy fundamentals and real-world examples—from edible water bubbles to reclaimed-plastic 3D printing—before participants collaborate in small groups to reimagine everyday products through a circular lens. Based on a proven City of Austin program, this session moves beyond passive learning, engaging attendees in hands-on, innovative design.

##### **Roundtable: Co-Creating a Plastics Policy for NRC [Prairie]**

- Facilitator: Jeremy Drake, Strategy Zero Waste Solutions
- Resources: Bob Gedert, Xavier University | Marissa Segundo, Transformations PR
- Overview: This interactive roundtable discussion invites participants to actively contribute to shaping a new plastics policy for NRC, providing input and ideas to help create a practical, impactful framework for reducing plastic waste.

##### **Panel Discussion: NRC Campus Council Building Tomorrow's Circular Leaders [McKay]**

- Moderator: MaryEllen Etienne, NRC National Standards Certification Board
- Panelists: Jack DeBell, NRC Campus Council | Jill Donello, GreenEducation.US

- Overview: A panel discussion among college educators and graduates, professional trainers and employers to provide vertically aligned programs which are accurate, consistent and actionable.

**2:30 pm - 2:50 pm | Snack Break** [Aster Lounge]

**2:50 pm - 4:05 pm | Concurrent Sessions**

**Panel Discussion: Critical Policy Trends in EPR** [Venters]

- Moderator: Linda Christopher, Race to Zero Waste
- Panelists: Kimberly Carroll Steward, Nebraska Recycling Council | Jason Bergquist, RecycleMe | Lucy Mullany, Alliance of Mission-Based Recyclers (AMBR) | Doug Kobold, California Product Stewardship Council
- Overview: This session explores emerging policy trends in Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) and reuse, highlighting strategies, regulatory developments and collaborative approaches that advance circular solutions and sustainable materials management.

**Roundtable: Higher Education/SMM Industry Strategic Planning** [Prairie]

- Facilitators: Jack DeBell, NRC Campus Council | Peter Adrian, NRC Board
- Overview: Participate in strategic planning through discussion groups on top priorities. Connect with campus organizations and industry groups and take advantage of the NRC Campus Council's opportunities for students, faculty, state representatives and professionals.

**Panel Discussion: Building Scalable Reuse Programs for a Sustainable Future** [McKay]

- Moderator: Sue Momberger, Global Impact Accelerators
- Panelists: Adam Schlachter, Donify USA | Marty Metro, UCB Environmental | Mehreen Chowdhury, Goodwill Omaha
- Overview: This panel explores practical strategies for designing and scaling reuse programs across corporate, nonprofit, higher education and municipal settings. Panelists will share approaches that keep materials in use longer, reduce waste and create more sustainable material flows.

**4:15 pm - 5:30 pm | Concurrent Activities**

**Exhibit Hall + Networking** [Begg's Ballroom]

**Members Meeting: National Recycling Coalition** [Begg's Ballroom]

- Hosts: President Teresa Bradley, Executive Director Charles Kamenides, Treasurer Martie Solomon, Slate Committee Chair Peter Adrian
- Overview: Our annual members meeting will provide updates on the National Recycling Coalition's priorities, activities and finances, introduce the board slate and offer members the opportunity to engage directly with leadership on the organization's direction and initiatives.

**5:30 pm - 6:00 pm | Sponsor Meetings** [Aster Lounge]

**6:00 pm - 9:00 pm | NRC Awards Reception** [Begg's Ballroom]

*Dinner Buffet*

*Special Musical Performances*

- MC: Sue Momberger / Co-Hosts: Christine Kiourtsis | Colleen Foster | Ann Gibbs | Peter Adrian | Jack DeBell
- Overview: Join us for an evening of connection and celebration, featuring a reception, awards recognizing leadership in reuse and recycling and special performances by Native American storyteller and singer Red Feather Woman, Rose Red Elk accompanied by Eric Many Winds Herrera and WSU's Jazz Band.

**6:30 pm | Registration closes**

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### **DAY 3: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3**

**7:00 am | Registration opens + Concurrent Activities**

**7:00 am - 8:30 am | Tour: Sculpture Stroll** [Meet at Aster Lounge]

- Leader: Staff from the Ulrich Museum of Art
- Overview: Overview: Join us for a leisurely, guided walk through Wichita State University's campus, exploring its unique sculptures and enjoying the sights and atmosphere of this vibrant campus environment.
- Note: Participants should convene at registration at least 10 minutes early. This is a walking tour, please wear comfortable shoes.

**7:30 am - 8:30 am | Meet & Greet: NRC Recycling Organizations Council** [Prairie]

- Host: Bob Bylone, Pennsylvania Recycling Markets Center
- Overview: Join us for an opportunity to informally connect with the NRC Recycling Organizations Council, learn about its work strengthening state and regional recycling efforts and explore ways to collaborate and share resources nationwide.

**8:00 am | Exhibit Hall opens** [Begg's Ballroom]

**8:00 am - 9:00 am | Coffee & Tea Break** [Aster Lounge]

*Jazz Performance*

**9:00 am - 10:15 am | Opening Plenary** [Begg's Ballroom]

#### **Opening Remarks**

- MC: Sue Momberger, NRC 2025 Congress Chair
- Charles Kamenides, NRC Executive Director
- Overview: We'll be setting the stage for another day of dynamic learning and collaboration, spotlighting the state of the industry, key priorities and opportunities to advance recycling and the circular economy.

#### **Keynote Address: "Drawing on U.N. Resources to Achieve Zero Waste"**

- Dr. Saleem Ali, United Nations Zero Waste Advisory Board
- Overview: This engaging keynote will explore the United Nations' resources and strategies for achieving zero waste. The session highlights global initiatives, best practices and practical approaches to advancing waste reduction and circular economy goals worldwide.

#### **Plenary Panel: "Women in Circularity—Strengthening the Circular Economy"**

- Host: MaryEllen Etienne, U.S. Green Building Council

- Panelists: Dr. Jess Watson, earthday365 | Heidi Sanborn, Stewardship Action Foundation/National Stewardship Action Council | Michelle Balz, Hamilton County Resource
- Overview: This session celebrates women shaping the circular economy, sharing practical strategies and stories that drive action and create impact through stakeholder engagement, change management and beyond.

**10:15 am - 10:45 am | Exhibit Hall** [Begg's Ballroom]

**10:45 am - 12:00 pm | Concurrent Sessions**

**Panel Discussion: Advancing Circularity through Collaboration and Innovation** [Prairie]

- Moderator: Stacy Savage, State of Texas Alliance for Recycling
- Speakers: Megan Byers, US Plastics Pact | Jennifer Lake, Goodwill of the Finger Lakes | Paul Hussian, WM
- Overview: Packaging and textiles don't have to be waste—when design meets collaboration, they become the engines of a circular economy. The U.S. Plastics Pact will showcase bold packaging redesigns, while Goodwill and WM reveal game-changing approaches to textile recovery. Get an inside look at partnerships turning big challenges into real solutions—and walk away ready to drive circularity in your own work.

**Panel Discussion: Addressing Behavior Change through Outreach & Education** [Venters]

- Moderator: Keima Borsuah, Oklahoma Recycling Association
- Panelists: Evan Belk, Race to Zero Waste | Michelle Balz, Hamilton County Resource | Jess Watson PhD, earthday365
- Overview: Explore how outreach and education drive behavior change in waste reduction. Panelists will share strategies, programs and success stories from community, organizational and educational initiatives that inspire individuals and groups to adopt more sustainable practices.

**Workshop: Zero Waste and EPR—Setting the Stage for Systemic Success** [McKay]

- Leader: Darla Arians and Hanz Atia, Product Stewardship Institute
- Resource: Marta Keane, Illinois Product Stewardship Council
- Overview: As EPR policies gain traction across the US, zero waste communities are uniquely positioned to lead the way. This interactive session explores how zero waste planning, data collection, inclusive stakeholder engagement and government oversight can strengthen EPR implementation and drive true circularity.

**12:00 pm - 12:55 pm | Lunch Plenary** [Begg's Ballroom]

*Lunch Buffet*

**Plenary Presentations: Circular Journeys—Learning, Leading & Driving Change**

- MC: Jack DeBell, NRC Campus Council
- Megan Chan, Murray J. Fox Scholarship “Reflections on My Scholarship”
- Lael Kylin Judson, Rural Roots Louisiana, “Emerging Leader in a Fenceline Community”
- Stephanie Barger, USGBC, “Circular by Intention, Not by Accident”
- Overview: Journey through the arc of circularity with presentations that celebrate emerging leaders and showcase strategies for intentionally designing circular systems.

**1:00 pm - 2:15 pm | Concurrent Sessions**

### **Panel Discussion: Navigating Challenges of Siting and Permitting Organics Infrastructure**

[Prairie]

- Moderator: Antonio Rios, Coalición de Reciclaje de Puerto Rico
- Panelists: Sue Momberger, Global Impact Accelerators | Christy Hurlburt, Viably
- Resource: Marissa Segundo, Transformations PR
- Overview: Examine the regulatory hurdles, community challenges and public relations strategies that shape the siting and permitting of organics infrastructure. This discussion will include audience participation, share lessons learned from addressing community resistance, building public trust and advancing policy and explore how municipalities, developers and stakeholders can navigate this complex landscape together.

### **Panel Discussion: Closing the Loop From E-Waste Disposal to Circular Design** [Venters]

- Moderator/Presenter: Sarah Alessio Shea, Pennsylvania Resources Council
- Panelists: Patrick Greenfield, Universal Recycling Technologies | Ruby Thuy Nguyen, Idaho National Laboratory
- Overview: Discover key strategies for creating a full lifecycle approach to electronics, from responsible e-waste disposal to circular product design. Panelists will share insights on recovery, refurbishment and design practices that keep materials in use longer while reducing environmental impact.

### **Panel Discussion: Changing Fashion—Redesigning Textiles and Reshaping Consumer Habits**

[McKay]

- Moderator: Gena McKinley, City of Austin
- Panelists: Michelle Gabriel, Columbia University & Yale University | Haley Chitty, Planet Aid
- Overview: Learn how these industry innovators are transforming the fashion sector through textile redesign and shifts in consumer behavior. Panelists will discuss sustainable production practices, approaches to extending garment life and programs that encourage more responsible consumption.

**2:00 pm - Exhibit Hall closes**

**2:15 pm - 2:25 pm | Coffee & Tea Break** [Aster Lounge]

**2:25 pm - 3:40 pm | Concurrent Sessions**

### **Panel Discussion: Innovative Climate Solutions—Organics, Compostables & Food Rescue**

[Venters]

- Moderator: Kimberly Carroll Steward, Nebraska Recycling Coalition
- Panelists: Marcel Howard, Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives | Brian Pontious, Ingevity | Christopher Dipnarine, 4MyCity
- Overview: This panel explores community- and policy-driven strategies that reduce emissions through composting, compostables and food rescue. Speakers will share practical approaches and innovative policy mechanisms that turn local action into lasting climate impact.

### **Workshop: From Data to Action: Leveraging Measurement & Gamification for Community Impact**

[Prairie]

- Moderator/Presenter: Gena McKinley, City of Austin
- Panelists: Tracy Bugh, RecycleByCity | Barbara Coombs, Environmental Benchmarking
- Overview: Learn how data and gamification can accelerate sustainability outcomes. This interactive session starts with the business case for data-driven decision-making, followed by real-world examples of gamified

community engagement. An interactive how-to on data measurement equips participants with practical tools, before closing with key takeaways to apply in their own work.

**Panel Discussion: Local and State Planning and Compliance [McKay]**

- Moderator: Martie Solomon, City of Chula Vista
- Panelists: Dr. Dianna Bryant, Mid America Regional Council Solid Waste Management District | Lisa Puckett, BayArea Compliance
- Overview: This panel brings together local and state leaders to explore how planning and compliance shape solid waste and recycling programs. Speakers will share insights from municipal, regional and state perspectives, highlighting both challenges and opportunities in meeting evolving regulatory requirements. Attendees will gain practical strategies and examples to strengthen compliance efforts in their own communities.

**3:45 pm - 5:00 | Concurrent Sessions**

**Panel Discussion: Toward Zero Waste—Strategies for the Tire Industry [McKay]**

- Moderator: Stratton Kirton, Liberty Tire Recycling
- Panelists: Josh Borgmeyer, Trek Bicycle Company | Scott Gerber, Better Play Initiative | Steve Callahan, Liberty Tire Recycling
- Overview: This panel presents a range of strategies for reducing waste in the tire industry and moving toward zero-waste operations. Panelists will discuss approaches for tire recycling, circular product design and initiatives that minimize environmental impact while maximizing resource recovery.

**Fireside Chat: Living Through It—Real Stories of Climate Resilience [Prairie]**

- Moderator: Leslie Lukacs, Zero Waste Sonoma
- Speakers: Marialyce Pedersen, NRC | Stacy Savage, Zero Waste Strategies | Kee Kee Julien-Judson, Rural Roots Louisiana
- Overview: This session brings together three powerful voices who have faced-down profound climate-related challenges—ranging from losing a home in California wildfires and mass poultry cull due to avian flu to growing up in the shadow of major climate polluters in Texas’ oil country. Through personal stories and hard-earned lessons, they’ll explore how these experiences shaped their resilience and fueled their commitment to environmental action.

**5:00 pm - 5:45 pm | Closing Plenary [Begg’s Ballroom]**

**Plenary Presentations: Markets Trends, Closing Reflections and a Look Ahead**

- MC: Charles Kamenides, NRC Executive Director
- Emily Sanchez, Recycled Materials Association “Markets Update—Key Trends and Future Outlook”
- Teresa Bradley, NRC President
- Antonio Rios, NRC 2026 Congress Chair
- Overview: Join us for the Closing Plenary of the 2025 National Recycling Congress, featuring Emily Sanchez of the Recycled Materials Association with a Markets Update—Key Trends and Future Outlook. NRC leaders Charles Kamenides, Teresa Bradley, and Antonio Rios will then share closing reflections and invite you to join us in Puerto Rico for the next Congress.

**5:45 pm | Congress ends**

**BONUS RECORDED CONTENT**



**Keynote Address: “Strategic Priorities in Advancing Materials Circularity”**

- Bryan Staley, Environmental Research and Education Foundation
- Overview: This informative keynote will explore the strategic priorities driving materials circularity, highlighting key initiatives, emerging trends and actionable strategies for advancing sustainable materials management and circular economy practices.

***Notes***

- *Speakers and session programs are subject to change.*
- *Event is Hybrid (in-person and virtual) but all speakers will be in-person*
- *All times are local to Wichita, KS (CDT)*