Fact Sheet: Scrap Tire Management in Virginia

Policy Statement

- The Northern Virginia Waste Management Board (NVWMB) opposes efforts to reduce or eliminate the Virginia Tire Recycling Fee and opposes efforts that redirect the use of those funds for other purposes.

- NVWMB supports efforts that increases reimbursement rates under the End-User Reimbursement to ensure that all regions of the state have affordable access to state-permitted scrap tire processors.

- NVWMB supports efforts that stimulates the growth of existing and emerging markets for scrap tires, including increased state purchase of rubber-modified asphalt and civil engineering uses of scrap tires to enhance the Commonwealths sustainable infrastructure.

- NVWMB supports efforts to stimulate current and emerging technologies for managing scrap tires in Virginia, (such ground tire rubber and pyrolysis) and including scrap tires in the Commonwealth’s overall energy and climate policies.

- NVWMB supports efforts that improve the transparency of Virginia’s Waste Tire Program, including publishing a report containing the total Tire Recycling Fee revenues generated, the number tire piles cleaned up including number of tires, and amount of funds distribution under the End-User Reimbursement Program (both current and stockpile tire management).

The Issue

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), an estimated 8.5 million scrap tires were “managed” in Virginia during 2021. At the same time, the US Tire Manufacturers Association notes that Virginia is one of the six states with the highest number of stockpiled tires in the country. Virginia’s Waste Tire Program dates to the late 1980’s to address the problem of waste tire piles at the time. Tire piles are breeding grounds for mosquitos and are at risk for fires. While the Waste Tire Program has performed and important function and has successfully cleaned up more than a thousand tire piles across the Commonwealth, the program needs updating to reflect today’s scrap tire challenges of limited markets and a lack of scrap tire processors. Further, Virginia may have diverted Tire Fee revenues for uses other than the tire recycling and clean-up activities authorized under the Code and the program lacks transparency. The Waste Tire Program needs to retain the ability to remediate orphaned tire piles, encourage the growth of reuse and recycle markets.

Current Processing in Virginia

Scrap tire processors are primarily located in the Blue Ridge, Piedmont, and Southeast regions of the state. There are no scrap tire processors in heavily populated Northern Virginia. Until March 2021, a significant amount of the region’s scrap tires was being converted to Tire Derived Fuel (TDF) which was being sent to power plants located in Roxboro and Southport, North Carolina. According to Capital Power, the Roxboro and Southport plants ceased operations on March 31, 2021, and are undergoing decommissioning. The closure of these plants has placed significant strain on the scrap tire market in the Mid-Atlantic and has left Virginia’s tire processors’ scrambling to find new outlets for their scrap tires.
Scrap Tire Management in Virginia

Virginia Programs for Scrap Tires

The Virginia General Assembly adopted a Tire Recycling Fee in 1989 and directed funds to the Waste Tire Trust Fund to fund the state’s tire pile clean-up efforts. Tire retailers charged customers a Tire Recycling Fee ($0.50 since 2011) for each new tire purchased. Beginning in 1994, DEQ shifted Waste Tire Trust Funds to the End-User Reimbursement Program (EUR). During FY2021, the Tire Recycling Fee generated $2,893,000 for the EUR program which provides rebates of $15 per ton to eligible businesses that beneficially use Virginia-generated scrap tires in their product or process and $100 per ton to cover the cost of cleaning up certified tire piles in the state. According to the DEQ, there are currently 10 permitted tire processors facilities located in Virginia. Without the fee to fund the EUR, the number of tire processors could decrease making it more expensive to manage scrap tires. While tire piles remain a challenge today, there are fewer tire piles and DEQ is no longer actively contracting for their clean-up but instead works with tire processors to recover scrap tires from certified tire piles within the Commonwealth. In addition to overseeing the EUR program, DEQ also administers a voluntary registration process for scrap tire haulers, permitting of scrap tire processors, maintains a list of the number of tire piles in the Commonwealth, and regulates tire storage at tire repair shops, licensed salvage yards, permitted tire processors, and solid waste management facilities. Tire Recycling Fees have been mainly been used to clean up tire piles and to help support scrap tire infrastructure in the Commonwealth. Revenue generated through the Tire Recycling Fees have been responsibly used to encourage proper management of scrap tires and to prevent pollution and the hazards associated with illegal tire disposal and to provide a system for legal tire recycling or disposal in the Commonwealth.

Scrap Tire Management in the U.S.

The U.S. Tire Manufacturers Association (USTMA) has tracked U.S. scrap tire markets since 2011. Figure 1 provides an summary of scrap tire markets in the U.S. during 2021. According to the USTMA, 32% of scrap tires were processed into tire derived fuel (TDF), 32% were used for ground rubber, 17% were land disposed, 6% were used in civil engineering applications and, and the remaining 13% of scrap tires were either exported, used in reclamation projects, used as fuel in electric arc furnaces or other miscellaneous uses. TDF involves combustion of whole or cut up scrap tires at cement kilns, pulp and paper mills and power plants. Ground rubber uses increased 29% from 2019 to 2021 and includes rubber-modified asphalt (RMA) which many experts believe offers the most growth potential compared to other management options for management of scrap tires. Lastly, the USTMA noted in their 2021 report that land disposal of scrap tires has increased 124% from 2013 to 2021.


![Figure 1: US Scrap Tires Managed 2021 (1,000 T)\*](https://www.ustires.org/publications_bulletin?publication_categories=398)