

EDITORIAL

Home/News

Photo Gallery

Special Reports

Departments

Opinion

Archives

RESOURCES

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Environmental
Library

Commodity Pricing

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Nestle Waters seeks recycling increase

By: Joe Truini
November 10, 2008

Nestle Waters North America wants to improve the nation's plastic beverage container recycling rate to 60% or better and plans to develop a bottle made entirely from recycled plastics or renewable resources.

The Greenwich, Conn.-based bottled water company outlined the plans in its first corporate citizenship report titled, "The Shape of Corporate Citizenship." In it, the company calls for increasing the polyethylene terephthalate bottle recycling rate to at least 60% by 2018 and says it wants to develop and produce a next-generation plastic bottle made entirely from recycled materials or renewable resources by 2020.

The PET recovery rate was 23.5% in 2006, according to the latest information from the National Association of PET Container Resources.

Nestle Waters, North America's largest bottled water company, credits the nongovernmental organization As You Sow for increasing its recycling awareness.

"Its 2006 container recycling report and scorecard got our attention and encouraged us to look at the recycling challenge more broadly," said Alex McIntosh, director of corporate citizenship for Nestle Waters. "As a result, our company has developed a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of improving container recycling rates and recycled content, and has helped us adopt a bolder vision and commitment to comprehensive recycling in the U.S."

In return, As You Sow credited Nestle Waters CEO Kim Jeffrey for calling for a container deposit law based on a new legislative model that is fairer to consumers, retailers, manufacturers and recyclers.

Nestle Waters plans on reaching the 60% recovery goal through partnerships, coalition building, consumer education, improved curbside recycling and policy initiatives, the company said.

Nestle will have to get the rest of the industry onboard to be successful achieving its ambitious target, said Conrad MacKerron, director of As You Sow's corporate social responsibility program.

"We recognize Nestle Waters' leadership in proposing a beverage industry goal when no other beverage company has been willing to do so," he said. "However, it is important for the company to follow up and provide sufficient stakeholder engagement to get buy-in from the rest of the industry."

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