



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, September 6, 2011

Contact: Keefe Harrison, SERDC Projects Director, keefe@serdc.org, 864.222.2997, www.serdc.org

Recycling Sector Creates Job Growth During Down Economy ***Industry Leaders, Elected Officials Scheduled to Meet to Discuss Possible Market Expansion***

Amidst regular reports of decreased economic activity comes news of a steadily growing industry: recycling. According to the S.C. Department of Commerce Recycling Market Development Advisory Council, the South Carolina-based recycling industry announced more than \$438 million in capital investment in 2010. That investment created 1,130 new jobs with 28 new or existing companies for the state. That amounts to a 22 percent increase over the prior year recycling investment of \$354 million.

Regional Decision Makers Actively Support Local Job Development

The Southeast Recycling Development Council reports fielding an increased number of inquiries from economic development and elected officials eager to get current information when it comes to recycling and its successful economic impact. "Who doesn't want to learn more about a steadily growing sector providing good paying, green jobs for Americans? This is encouraging news in a discouraging economy and the research to support it keeps coming in," says SERDC Policy Director Will Sagar. The demand for more details has resulted in the development of the Recycling & the Economy Symposium, October 26-27 in Memphis, Tenn.

A 5 Percent Job Growth Rate in this Economy?

The growth trend continues across the Southeast. A recent study by the North Carolina Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach finds that more than 15,000 North Carolinians are employed by statewide recycling companies specifically. Those jobs add up to an impressive payroll of more than \$395 million.

State officials say recycling continues to be a driver of economic activity and job growth for the state. Scott Mouw, State Recycling Program Director details, "Successive studies from 1994 – 2010 have shown consistent increases in recycling employment in the Tar Heel state. Our latest study documents that despite the deepest recession in decades, recycling jobs in North Carolina grew by nearly five percent in the last two years."

Vertical Integration Helps Ensure Supply of Recycled Feedstock

Georgia officials point to the recent RockTenn announcement of 500 additional jobs and \$5million of investment at their Gwinnett County corporate headquarters as a further example of regional industry growth. As an international paper

Eleven states united to develop and promote sustainable recycling programs.

**Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana,
Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia**



product packaging company, the Georgia-based investments allow RockTenn to both tap into and help supply regional and even global recycling markets. As a vertically integrated company jointly recovering recyclable packaging such as cardboard and producing containers made with recycled content materials, RockTenn is part of growing trend of international companies working within the southeast to secure steady sources of supply. Sonoco, Signode, and DAK Americas are other such international companies that work regionally to both source supply and produce consumer ready goods.

Landfill Disposal Savings Sweeten the Investment

It's common knowledge that recycling saves in landfill disposal costs. "In 2010, Tennessee's community recycling programs collected 1.9 million tons of material, saving landfill disposal fees of approximately \$69 million," explains Larry Christley, Manager of the Tennessee Department of Planning and Financial Assistance. What investors and community development officials are keying in to, however, is the ability of the recycling industry to support economic recovery and create local jobs.

Tennessee officials are curious to explore ways to support local manufacturers. Christley continues, "The costs associated with virgin material extraction and refining are magnitudes higher than materials reclaimed through recycling and turned back into that same feedstock. Keeping these material costs lower often helps manufacturers bridge the troubled economic times coming out on the other end ahead of where they started. If we could recover 75 percent of the top four commodities in our waste disposal stream, Tennessee's local governments and business could realize as much as \$882 million in revenue generation."

Manufacturers Look to Recycled Feedstock to Make New Consumer Goods

Beyond the direct impacts of the recycling industry alone, regional officials attending the Recycling and the Economy Symposium are interested in tracking the way that yesterday's cans, bottles and paper can turn into tomorrow's packaging, car parts or carpeting – all without leaving the Southeast. "Recycling isn't just about saving natural resources – it's about supporting domestic manufacturing and local jobs. The demand for postconsumer recycled feedstock is growing because it's a dependable, green, affordable material for manufacturing," explains SERDC Chairman Stephanie Baker. In a study released last year, SERDC determined that more than 206 Southeastern industrial facilities depend on recycled feedstock to make new consumer goods. These companies collectively employ more than 47,525 persons and see a sales volume exceeding \$29.4 billion per year.

Alabama Invests for Regional Economic Return

Many states are looking for ways to fuel recycling across the supply chain. The Alabama Recycling Fund grants program was created to provide reimbursable grants to local governments to develop, implement and enhance recycling and waste minimization projects. In the three grant cycles since the program start date, the Alabama Recycling Fund (ARF) has provided more than \$4,873,233 in grants to 33 municipalities within Alabama. "With the ARF grants program, we hope to bring access to recycling to areas who otherwise would not be able to afford to begin a program on their own, increase the collection volumes of recyclables to show end market users that we have the feedstock to support their business, and increase access to those markets to boost our local recycling program's success," details Gavin Adams, Chief of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), Materials Management Section. "When awarding grants, ADEM gives preference to applicants who are in areas with no access to existing recycling programs, who partner with their neighboring communities to increase the collection area, and those who request recycling infrastructure and promotion/outreach as the majority of their request."

Eleven states united to develop and promote sustainable recycling programs.

**Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana,
Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia**



Symposium Pulls in Recycling and Economic Heavyweights

The October Recycling and the Economy Symposium brings together experts in the areas of policy development, economics, commerce, jobs and supply chain management. Held in Memphis, the keynote address on long term perspectives for the industry will be delivered by Jerry Powell, Executive Editor of *Resource Recycling*, *E-Scrap News* and *Plastics Today* nationally distributed industry magazines. Symposium Speakers include industry leaders from Proctor and Gamble, ReCommunity, Alcoa, Sonoco and the newly formed sustainable packaging group AMERIPEN, as well as governmental officials such as the mayor of Nashville and the assistant secretary of the Virginia Commerce and Trade. In attendance will be key policy makers, industry leaders and economic development officials from across the region.

###

Symposium details can be found at www.serdc.org/symposium. SERDC's study on the demand for recycled feedstock can be found at www.serdc.org/regionalresources. The North Carolina Jobs study can be found at <http://www.p2pays.org/ref/53/52107.pdf>.

Eleven states united to develop and promote sustainable recycling programs.

**Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana,
Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia**