



A Hybrid Facility Supporting Plastics Recycling in California and Beyond

Valemi, Pico Rivera, California: Case Study

With the passage of Extended Producer Responsibility laws such as California's Plastic Pollution Prevention and Packaging Producer Responsibility Act (SB 54), entities must achieve unprecedented levels of circularity. As California prepares for EPR and the potential to see substantial new tons enter the recycling stream, PET reclaimers are positioning themselves for growth and differentiating themselves in feedstock preferences, which will result in more demand for the Pico Rivera MRF, a hybrid secondary sort business in Los Angeles County.

Operated by California-based company Valemi Inc., the Pico Rivera facility processes materials from several other MRFs and redemption centers, creating bales with specialized specs for sale on the secondary market; it also processes materials for clients such as bottle manufacturers, creating high quality PET bottle bales from various lower-grade material streams.

With upgrades partially supported by a grant from The Recycling Partnership's Coalition, Valemi Inc. is building more capacity to sort clear, pigmented, and opaque PET, including non-bottle containers, from residential and commercial sources. An optical sorter and related equipment will enable 3.73 million more pounds of sorting capacity per year at the Pico Rivera facility, an increase of about 70% over what it currently handles.

The Pico Rivera MRF is a critical player in the evolving recycled plastics supply chain. Because it aggregates material from other facilities, it can capitalize on economies of scale to mine PET bales more thoroughly than other facilities would be able to manage on their own. That makes it an important link for companies that need help in maximizing PET recycling to meet the eventual targets of California's EPR program.

One bale type that Valemi specializes in aggregating is the PET non-bottle bale, which can be challenging for conventional MRFs to generate because volumes can be slow to accumulate. The upgraded facility will be able to mine this material much more quickly and significantly increase the amount of non-bottle PET that gets recycled.

"We pride ourselves on the fact that if a load comes in with multiple commodities, we have an outlet for those commodities, from a market standpoint,"
Juan Hernandez, President of Valemi Inc., said.
"Landfill is not an option we entertain."



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