

Growth in the Circular Plastics Market Creates Opportunities for Appalachian Manufacturers

Global demand for recycled materials is driving new supply-chain opportunities.

PITTSBURGH, PA, UNITED STATES, April 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The growing shift toward a circular plastics economy is creating new supply chain opportunities for manufacturers. A [new report](#) from the Energy & Manufacturing in Appalachia (EMA) initiative explores how Appalachian manufacturers can capitalize on the emerging circular plastics supply chain by providing the equipment, materials, logistics services, and manufacturing capabilities that support recycling, feedstock conversion, and plastics production.



The EMA initiative is led by [Catalyst Connection](#), southwestern Pennsylvania's economic development organization, along with the following regional partners: Alliance for Manufacturing and Technology (AMT), Innovative Manufacturers Center, Magnet, Manufacturers Resource Center, MANTEC, Maryland MEP, Northeastern PA IRC, Northwestern PA IRC, Reimagine Appalachia, and West Virginia University.

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Global brands are moving toward a more sustainable circular plastics approach. Appalachian manufacturers are ready and able to support the growing advanced plastics recycling market.”

Petra Mitchell, President and CEO of Catalyst Connection

“Global brands are moving away from single-use plastics and toward a more sustainable circular plastics approach,” said Petra Mitchell, President and CEO of Catalyst Connection. “Appalachian manufacturers are ready and able to support the growing advanced plastics recycling market.”

The circular plastics economy aims to move away from the traditional “make-and-dispose” model by extracting maximum value from materials through recycling, reuse, and regeneration. While federal funding has slowed in recent years, strong demand from global markets, corporate commitments, and state incentives continues to drive growth. The global market is projected to reach \$182 billion by 2034, while the domestic advanced recycling sector is expected to grow from \$8.9 billion in 2025 to \$14.4 billion by 2030. This is driving new investment in recycling infrastructure, advanced processing technologies, and materials recovery systems.

Plastics must be recovered before they can be recycled. A shift toward sophisticated “resource recovery” systems treats discarded plastics as valuable industrial inputs. Materials are collected through curbside programs, deposit return systems, and industrial take-back programs, then processed through shredding, grinding, or densification to make them ready for use in advanced recycling systems. Traditional mechanical recycling is still used to process PET and HDPE resins. Newer advanced recycling technologies, including pyrolysis, gasification, and enzymatic recycling, are enabling more mixed and contaminated plastics to be processed into useful feedstocks rather than disposed of as waste.

Manufacturing and Supply Chain Opportunities

New technologies, including AI-powered sorting systems, robotics, and data-driven waste management platforms, are improving material recovery rates and enabling more efficient, scalable recycling operations. EMA's Circular Plastics Supply Chain report highlights supply-chain opportunities for manufacturers, including:

- Equipment manufacturing, such as pyrolysis reactors, extruders, pelletizers, and high-viscosity pumps used in advanced recycling facilities
- Feedstock supply and materials handling systems supporting post-consumer and post-industrial recycled plastics
- Sorting, sensor, and automation technologies used in materials recovery and advanced recycling facilities
- Logistics and reverse logistics services for collecting, transporting, and aggregating plastic waste
- Engineering, environmental consulting, and process integration services supporting recycling infrastructure development

The Appalachian manufacturing sector already has the expertise to compete in this growing market.

[Read the full report](#) and watch a webinar recording on the key insights.

About Catalyst Connection

Catalyst Connection is a southwestern Pennsylvania economic development organization

dedicated to serving manufacturers. For more than 35 years, Catalyst has operated with a focus on powering potential through delivering technical assistance and management consulting services and developing long-standing partnerships across the region. Catalyst maintains a deeply held commitment to modernizing manufacturing and enabling opportunity across business enterprises, individuals, and throughout communities.

Catalyst Connection is supported, in part, by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP). As such, we are an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Industrial Resource Center (IRC) and the MEP National Network in southwestern Pennsylvania.

About the Energy & Manufacturing in Appalachia Initiative

The Energy & Manufacturing in Appalachia (EMA) initiative provides technical assistance and business support to small and medium manufacturers and enterprises in 156 counties of Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia seeking to expand business, production, and jobs in the energy supply chains or to be more energy efficient.

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