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Paper and Cardboard Waste in the United States/Geographic, Market, and Energy Assessment: National Renewable Energy Laboratory Announces Publication of Research Paper

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The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (“NREL”) announced the publication of research titled: *Paper and Cardboard in the United States: geographic, market, and energy assessment (“Analysis”)*

The Paper was published in Volume 2, Issue 1 of Waste Management Bulletin.

The authors include:

- Anelia Milbrandt
- Jarett Zuboy
- Kamyria Coney
- Alex Badgett

The authors are researchers at the United States Department of Energy’s NREL.

The NREL announcement states that the *Analysis* indicates that \$4 billion in lost economic value consisting of cardboard and paper that is being placed in United States landfills. This is stated to be based on figures from 2019.

Additional key figures include:

- Approximately 110 million tons of paper/cardboard waste was managed domestically in 2019.
- Approximately 56% of paper/cardboard waste is landfilled annually
- Approximately 6% of paper/cardboard waste is combusted
- Approximately 38% of paper/cardboard waste is recycled

The authors conclude that municipal solid waste management represents a:

. . . challenge and an opportunity in the United States.

The *Analysis* provides an assessment of paper and cardboard waste at the following levels:

- Regional

- State
- County
- Local

The results include waste composition by both material type and region. The *Analysis* is stated to focus on the landfilled portion of paper and cardboard waste in its geospatial analysis to illustrate what are described as:

. . . “hot spots,” or areas with substantial opportunities to divert these materials from disposal facilities and recover their technical and economic value.

Key sections of the *Analysis* include:

- Methods
- Paper and cardboard waste composition
- Paper and cardboard waste quantity and geographic distribution
- Market and energy value of paper and cardboard waste
- Results
- Paper and cardboard waste composition
- Paper and cardboard waste quantity and geographic distribution
- Market and energy value of paper and cardboard waste
- Uncertainty and validation of assumptions

The *Analysis* was funded by the United States Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Bioenergy Technologies Office.

The NREL describes its mission as achieving a clean energy future through leading research, innovation, and strategic partnerships to develop solutions for a clean energy economy.

A copy of the NREL announcement which contains a link to the *Analysis* can be downloaded [here](#).