

Buffings: Buffings from retreaders are used extensively in certain market segments, especially pour-in-place playground surfacing, molded products, and landscape mulch products. In 2015 California tire processors received approximately 17.5 million pounds of buffings, most but not all of which was produced by retreaders located in California. Demand for buffings currently exceeds supply, with some firms expressing concern about both the ability to secure ample supplies and increased pricing.

Tire-Derived Products: Generally, TDP production capacity appears to exceed demand for most of the well-established products, including paving, turf infill, ground rubber/nuggets, and tire-derived aggregate. The molded/extruded products segment is more nuanced, with a variety of diverse firms with established products making efforts to incorporate crumb rubber feedstocks and expand sales. Some of these firms are focused on developing their production capacity and refining TDM/product quality in order to meet customer needs. Expanded and enhanced California capacity to produce a wider variety of molded TDPs would be highly beneficial, and could potentially help spur investment by one or more California crumb rubber producers to boost fine-mesh crumb rubber production.

Tire-Derived Aggregate: Sales of TDA for use in civil engineering applications was down 8 percent to 1.2 million PTEs, but has the potential for significant gains in the coming year with continuing use at several landfills, a growing mix of non-landfill applications, and a very large lightweight fill/road fill project in Solano County that is projected to use more than 4.2 million PTEs within a short window of time. With several processors actively supplying TDA in recent years, potential supply is well in excess of demand, and Northern California processors indicate that supplying TDA to this project should not pose a difficulty. That said, managing the delivery and application of such large quantities of TDA in a relatively short time frame could pose logistical and compliance challenges at the job site. Strong technical support from CalRecycle will aid in ensuring TDA supply needs are satisfied as demand ramps up.

Reuse

Reuse, including retreading and sale of partially worn used tires, remains strong in California. Overall, 7.4 million PTEs were estimated to be reused in 2015. Of this amount, 4.3 million were retread, and 3.1 million were culled, graded, and sold both domestically and internationally. (See “Export” in Table 1 in Section 2.)

Both retreading and sale of used tires are very strong, profitable market segments that are relatively mature and not expected to grow substantially. However, firms involved in tire reuse are concerned over the growing number of lower-tier tires made in China and sold at very low prices. These tires negatively impact reuse in several ways. First, some customers may be more likely to purchase low-price new tires rather than used or retread tires, even if they may be of lower quality. Second, according to many in the field, the lower-tier tires are produced to a lower standard than tier 1 or 2 tires, and consequently they may not be able to be reused or retread, or they may be able to be retread only a single time. Third, these issues could broadly damage consumer confidence in reused or retread tires over the long run. In response to formal complaints