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## **CAMPAIGN TO RECYCLE ONE MILLION CELL PHONES TO BE LAUNCHED ON EARTH DAY**

*Campaign seeks to make cell phone recycling as easy as bottle recycling*

This Earth Day, April 22, EARTHWORKS will launch “Recycle My Cell Phone,” a campaign to recycle 500,000 cell phones in one year, bringing the total number of cell phones recycled to one million or double the current annual U.S. rate. The Recycle My Cell Phone campaign seeks to keep the toxic metals in phones, like lead, mercury and arsenic, out of landfills, save energy and reduce the number of new open-pit mines because phones that cannot be used will be recycled for gold, copper and other valuable metals.

By the end of this year, more than 500 million cell phones—more than one for every U.S. citizen—will be retired and probably headed to a landfill or incinerator because consumers are simply unaware that they can easily be recycled.

“Pulling that old cell phone out of the drawer and recycling it is an easy way for Americans to celebrate Earth Day, doing something good for the environment,” said Kimberlee Dinn, Recycle My Cell Phone Campaign Director at EARTHWORKS.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), those 500 million cell phones contain 250,000 tons of toxic materials, including lead, arsenic, and mercury. These toxics can persist in the environment for decades without breaking down and eventually leach out of landfills, contaminating drinking water and soil or polluting the air when incinerated. Exposure may cause serious human health problems.

“Recycle My Cell Phone” aims to make recycling cell phones, PDAs, and pagers as easy as recycling bottles, paper, and cans while raising money for charities, diverting toxics from landfills, and reducing the need for new, often highly polluting open-pit mines to produce gold, copper, and other materials used in cell phones.

Between 1999 and 2003, about 500,000 cell phones were recycled annually through voluntary programs. The feasibility of recycling cell phones was established, leading to the launch of this full-fledged national campaign to give consumers the information on how and where to recycle their phones.



The “Recycle My Cell Phone” campaign will team up on Earth Day with businesses, charities and schools in Washington, D.C., New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, New Orleans, Sarasota, Seattle, Oakland, Missoula, Denver, Durango and Boulder to set up drop-off boxes and educate consumers about the benefits of cell phone recycling. Bike couriers will also be picking up phones from businesses. In cities where there is no drop-off location, cell phones can still be recycled free of charge by downloading a pre-paid mailing label from the campaign’s website to send phones directly to the recycler. ([www.recyclemycellphone.org](http://www.recyclemycellphone.org))

Cell phone recycler CollectiveGood, based in Atlanta, Georgia, will either refurbish the phones to be reused by people in developing countries who may have no landline service and can’t afford new cell phones, or it will dismantle them and recycle the metals inside. Because of the valuable materials inside, most notably gold, recyclers have found there is even more profit to be had from recycling cell phones than most other electronic products.

“Consumers have been waiting for hassle-free recycling of their old electronic products. This campaign brings us one step closer to reducing the enormous amount of waste caused by the fast evolution of high-tech gadgets,” said Seth Heine, founder of CollectiveGood.

Mining, and gold mining in particular, is one of the world’s dirtiest industries ([www.nodirtygold.org](http://www.nodirtygold.org)) but gold is also the most profitable mineral recovered from discarded cell phones. Recapturing gold through the recycling process would lessen the need for new mining while providing compensation for recyclers.

This year alone an estimated 130 million new cell phones will be sold. If all of them were recycled at the end of their use – typically eighteen months – they would yield about 202,000 ounces of gold, according to EARTHWORKS. That is five times the amount of gold produced in 2003 at Canyon Resource’s Briggs Mine in California or the equivalent of all the gold produced at Placer Dome’s Sunlight Mine in Montana in 2003. In addition, those recycled phones would divert an estimated 65,000 tons of toxic waste from landfills and incinerators.

A fact sheet with more information on the Recycle My Cell Phone campaign can be found at [http://www.recyclemycellphone.org/RMCP\\_factsheet.pdf](http://www.recyclemycellphone.org/RMCP_factsheet.pdf)

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