



PEER  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESPONSIBILITY



PEER  
PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESPONSIBILITY



## PRESS RELEASE

# Artificial Turf's Big Lie: Old Fields Not Recycled

Jan 30, 2020 | Tags: artificial turf

For Immediate Release: Thursday, January 30, 2020

Contact: Kyla Bennett (508) 230-9933; Kirsten Stade (202) 265-7337

### **No Recycling Facilities, So Tons of Plastic Carpet Dumped**

*Washington, DC* — Artificial turf fields have been marketed as an environmentally responsible alternative to grass fields, providing a solution for a nasty solid waste problem by reusing old tires that are later recycled after removal. But this greenwashing is all a hoax, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Since there are no U.S. facilities for recycling, the plastic carpets and rubber crumb infill are often dumped or sent back to landfills in a form that is even more environmentally problematic.

There are currently an estimated 13,000 artificial turf fields in the U.S., a number that is growing by more than 1,000 each year. A synthetic field usually covers about 80,000 square feet and contains roughly 400,000 pounds of infill,

consisting of shredded tires or other material, and 40,000 pounds of carpet. An artificial turf field will last eight-to-10 years, with most warranties running for only eight years. At that point, the turf is ripped out at which point new difficulties arise.

An 80,000 square-ft. sports field fills between fifteen and twenty 30-yard dumpsters. That volume would cost roughly \$30,000 to \$60,000 to landfill. To avoid that cost, vendors routinely advise municipalities that there are recycling facilities in the U.S.; specifically, they point to a company called Re-Match with a facility in Pennsylvania. One typical pitch claims –

“By partnering with Re-Match Turf Recycling, we will take the necessary steps to ensure that the synthetic carpet is recycled and does not end up in a landfill.”

Despite these claims, the Re-Match facility does not exist. An email from the CEO of Re-Match says, “there is no synthetic turf recycling plant in America yet.” Even the Synthetic Turf Council admits “Unfortunately, converting synthetic turf to a recyclable material that is useable cannot be done at the point of removal. Material must be shipped to different processing locations.” However, those unspecified recycling locations have yet to be identified.

“In reality, rather than being recycled, these old turf fields and their rubber crumb infill are dumped in abandoned lots, alleys, and even wetlands,” stated PEER Science Policy Director Kyla Bennett, a scientist and attorney formerly with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, noting EPA previously championed crumb rubber fields as a solid waste solution, turning waste into a product. “Crumb rubber fields do not solve a solid waste disposal problem; they merely delay and compound it.”

In addition to the shredded tire infill, the plastic carpets are another waste disposal challenge. PEER has documented that they contain toxic per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as “Forever Chemicals” because they do not break down in the environment.

“Both current and retired synthetic turf fields are sources of contamination, leaching zinc, PFAS and micro-plastics into nearby waters,” added Bennett, noting that some vendors even tantalize potential customers with hopes of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) points for these toxic fields. “When the true costs are considered, artificial turf makes fields of delusions, not dreams.”

[View a syn-turf sales pitch](#)

2:09:55 Speaker talks about the TWO recycling facilities in the US – the Rematch one in PA, and another nameless one in the mid-Atlantic

1:14:47 F Speaker says turf is fully recyclable

Around 1:16 Speaker says they turn the turf backing into plastic railroad ties for decks and things

[Read the Re-Match email](#)

[See the Synthetic Turf Council statement](#)

[Look at PFAS contamination of artificial turf](#)

[See claims about LEED points for synthetic turf](#)

## PEER

Phone: 202-265-7337

[Send an email](#)

---

### RECENT PRESS RELEASES

[Sewage Spills Pose COVID-19 Risks](#)

[Questionable Termination Undermines Climate Science](#)

[Court Orders Limits on National Park Air Tours](#)

[Suit Against EPA's Elimination of Clean Water Protections](#)

[Lawsuit Threat on Illegal Interior Appointments](#)

[Reopened National Parks Must Curb Overcrowding](#)

[EPA COVID-19 Guidance Sows Employee Confusion](#)

---

### RECENT BLOG POSTS

[Blog: Sliming Lincoln's Memorial](#)

[EPA Should Sit Out Earth Day This Year](#)

[PEER During the Pandemic \(Updated Apr 10, 2020\)](#)

[Losing Our Voice: The Attack on Public Health Science](#)

[Can National Parks Practice Social Distancing?](#)

[National Parks Epitomize Trump COVID Inconsistency](#)

[BLOG: Trump's War on Watchdogs](#)

**CONNECT:**

**SUBSCRIBE TO PEERMAIL »**

**Privacy Guarantee • Contact PEER • Donate**

Copyright 2001–2019 Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility



962 Wayne Avenue, Suite 610 **Phone: 202-265-7337 Fax 202-265-4192**  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-4453