



# Waste Wise

Reduce - Reuse - Recycle

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## DOES RECYCLING STILL WORK?

A lot has changed in the recycling world during the past couple years, and it is important that people know exactly what happens with the materials they studiously rinse, clean, separate and collect, and then drop off at one of Tillamook County's recycling locations.

During the past few decades, more and more communities shifted their collection systems to so-called commingled collection. In order to reduce the increasing costs of collection, the commingled system allows people to mix paper, plastics and metals together in one cart, which are later separated by machines and people in so-called Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). Unfortunately, the machines have not been able to keep up with the ever-changing improvements in packaging materials, and levels of contamination rose. For many MRFs, the easy solution was to export almost-sorted materials to other countries, where poorly paid workers tried to sort materials well enough to be used for production. Several years ago China, the largest importer of such materials in the world, announced that contaminated loads would no longer be accepted. Following a few trial periods, China implemented a near-total ban on most recyclables in 2018, called the Blue Sky program. Since then, recycling markets throughout the world have been in turmoil.

Everyone has been affected by these changes - including those places where people have never hoped to unmix their commingled recycling. When Chinese and other Asian markets closed, the laws of supply-and-demand caused prices offered for recyclable materials to plummet. Materials that used to be revenue drivers, like cardboard and metal, may only bring

in enough revenues to cover the transportation costs, and lower-value materials, like glass, may not even cover the cost of transportation.

The greatest changes have been noticeable where commingled recycling is practiced. Many cities have reduced the types of materials accepted in their recycling mix, others have increased trash rates by as much as 15%, and a few have done both. Some communities have suspended commingled collection altogether.

Even in times of economic turmoil, proper recycling still makes sense. We continue to provide a full line of source-segregated recycling opportunities at all Tillamook County transfer stations, free-of-charge.

The Solid Waste Department is funded primarily from disposal fees, not from recycling. To cover the costs of recycling in these turbulent times, the Solid Waste Advisory Committee recommended and the Board of Commissioners approved a Solid Waste Surcharge, charged on each trash transaction. The surcharge is intended to offset the decrease in revenues from recyclable materials so that recycling remains viable for Tillamook County residents.

If you have questions about what happens to the recyclable materials you drop off at a Tillamook County recycling location, feel free to ask. We strive for transparency, and will provide you with answers. This way you can rest assured that your recycling is truly being recycled, and we're doing things properly.

David McCall, Solid Waste Program Manager, Tillamook County



## WHAT'S IN YOUR PICK-IN-ICK BASKET?

Cartoon classic Yogi Bear is famous for seeking out the family picnic basket, but my memory doesn't recall him ever having to deal with a basket full of single-use plastic dinnerware and utensils. Now that the rains have lessened and it looks like the sun is here to stay, many of us are dusting off the picnic basket and getting ready for summer picnic fun. But wait! The basket is full of plastic silverware, plastic cups and Styrofoam plates. Those are expensive and even worse, they aren't good for the environment and, to be honest, they aren't good for us either.

So, what do we do? Follow the practices of our grandparents. Pack your picnic basket with durable dinnerware. Get rid of the single-use plastic stuff and pack things that can be reused. Packing foods in cloth napkins, and using bowls, and plates worked for grandma and grandpa, why not us?

Don't get me wrong. I get it. I'm not fond of doing dishes, I mean, that's why we invented dishwashers right? But using the plastic stuff one time and throwing it in the trash is not only wasteful, it's extremely harmful and which is worse? I think our future generations will tell us that the plastic pollution is worse. I can do a few dishes in an effort to help protect our environment. Can you?

Start by making wise, thoughtful decisions when getting ready for the family picnic. Of course, using durable (reusable) dinnerware is the ultimate and wisest decision but I admit, taking our everyday dinnerware on a picnic may not be the most practical option. Maybe it's heavy or special, there is a variety of reasons not to use them off the shelf but what about compromising with some inexpensive but practical options?

Reusable plastic plates, bowls and cups can be found quite inexpensively if you shop around. I know, they are still plastic, but they are reusable, so they don't end up in the landfill as often. It's not a perfect solution, but, it's a start. Many of them are even dishwasher safe so you aren't stuck doing the dishes by hand when you get home from your picnic. So even though it's still plastic, there are some advantages in both convenience and environmentally.

Consider bamboo silverware. It also is reusable and what makes it even better is that it will break down in the landfill so it doesn't have a negative impact. Or my personal suggestion and what I've done, is to buy some of the random assorted pieces from a secondhand store for pennies each. They last "forever" and are dishwasher safe, a win-win for everyone. Besides, have you ever tried to cut anything using plastic utensils?

Avoid plastic and Styrofoam cups! Those are one of the worst offenders in the single-use plastic world. A reusable drinking bottle may be a little more expensive initially, but they can be reused enough times to pay for themselves many times over and they don't clutter the landscape in the process.

Generations past used to pack their picnic foods wrapped in cloth wrappers. That may not work for many picnic foods, but if they do, why not try it? No dishes OR plastic.

As usual these are very general suggestions and I only make them to encourage you to think about what you pack and to find ways to protect the great outdoors you are enjoying. If we don't take steps to protect it, who will?

Contributed by Sue Owens, Tillamook County Solid Waste Outreach and Education Specialist

## DEAR MS. WASTEWISE:



**Dear Ms. Wastewise:** I heard Tillamook County has a recycled paint program. What does that mean? Does it remain paint and where can it be purchased? I am fixing my shed and it is in need of paint. - "Shed Project Sam"

Dear "Shed Project Sam": Recycled paint is just as the name implies. It is paint that has been recycled. In this case, it is unused

paint that has been collected and re-bucketed into "new" paint. Tillamook County has an agreement with PaintCare that allows us to collect old, unused paint as part of the Oregon Paint Stewardship Program. The PaintCare program allows collection of architectural paints, such as latex and acrylic paints, paint-related materials, stains and polyurethanes. In Tillamook County, we collect the latex paint for remixing at our Household Hazardous Waste collection events. These collections are generally held the first Saturday of the month excluding January, April and November at Tillamook Transfer Station, 1315 Ekloff Road, Tillamook, 9:00am to 1:00pm. Please note, these events are for households and not businesses.

The collected latex paint is recycled into one of seven colors; white, ivory, blue, yellow, green, brown and gray. Collected paint is sorted by color and then poured into the appropriate color vats. Full vats are then emptied into 3 1/2 gallon buckets. Each batch of paint is uniquely numbered and is indicated on each bucket along with a dab of the lot color. Although there is generally only a slight difference between batches, if color matching is important, you may consider purchasing extra to ensure you won't run out as there can be no perfect matching of colors.

Due to the mix of being interior and exterior, it is recommended to use the recycled paint for exterior projects--perfect for your shed or fence project. The County has many satisfied customers and a sample of the paint can be seen on the buildings at the Tillamook County Public Works Department.

The paint is \$24 for 3 1/2 gallons and can be purchased at Habitat for Humanity's ReStore, Pacific City Transfer Station, Manzanita Transfer Station, and the Solid Waste office in Tillamook.

If you have leftover paint, bring it to a Household Hazardous Waste collection. It can also be taken to the Manzanita Transfer Station and the Pacific City True

Value store during open hours. Remember, if your paint cans are empty or if the paint is dried, they are no longer considered hazardous and can be thrown away. Happy Painting!

**Dear Ms. Wastewise:** I'm a card maker and frequently have small scraps of paper left over. While putting my small scrap paper in the paper recycling bin at the Manzanita Transfer Station I was informed by another recycler that my small paper pieces and shredded paper would ruin the entire batch of paper. Is this true? - "Avid Recycler"

Dear "Avid Recycler": Thank you for being conscientious. Although there can be affects with recycling small scrap paper, ruining an entire batch of paper is not one of them. Small pieces of paper are problematic more for the collection and transportation than in the actual recycling process.

Tillamook County, like most collectors, bales collected paper into large bales often weighing nearly a ton. These bales are "tied" with wires spaced at approximately 8 inches making it difficult to catch and hold small pieces of paper. These same small pieces are the ones that have a propensity to get caught in working parts of machinery as well leading to costly equipment maintenance and down time.

Paper collected in co-mingled collections are even more problematic as this collection method collects all recycled items in one container requiring separation at some point during the process. Co-mingled recycling is taken to a Materials Recovery Facility, called a MRF, for processing. Here all the items are cycled through the process generally using machinery and human labor to sort items by material type. As you can imagine, small pieces of paper are extremely hard to single out and contain making the process less efficient.

All paper, large or small tossed into a recycle bin is eventually sent to a paper mill where it is processed into more paper products. As I have explained, although small pieces of paper can be problematic, they will not ruin a batch of recycled paper.

Paper that can potentially ruin a batch of recycled paper would be things like your aseptic cartons, and food cartons that have multiple layers of different materials. These materials cannot be separated easily or at all in most cases, thus will contaminate a batch of pure paper.

Add some color to your summer



With our **RECYCLED LATEX PAINT**



Buy one 3 1/2 gallon bucket for \$24 and get a second one free

7 colors to choose from

No coupon necessary. Offer good until August 29, 2019 at the Solid Waste Department only.

It is also available at regular price at the following locations:

Manzanita Transfer Station  
34995 Necarney City Rd  
Manzanita, OR 97130

Habitat for Humanity Restore  
4192 Hwy 101 N  
Tillamook, OR 97141

Tillamook County Solid Waste  
503 Marolf Loop  
Tillamook, OR 97141

Call 503-815-3975 for more information

For more information, call the Tillamook County Solid Waste Department at 503-815-3975 email [recycle@co.tillamook.or.us](mailto:recycle@co.tillamook.or.us) or see us online at [www.tillamook.or.us/gov/solidwaste](http://www.tillamook.or.us/gov/solidwaste)

