

Feature A Deeper Dive into Diversion

As we mentioned in last month's issue (see article in issue #18, "The Hard Facts"), since the rates for processing and transporting garbage and single-stream recycling are going up, (this month, in fact – see notice in this issue) diversion away from the waste stream may be our best path to savings. Diversion also helps us realize the goals of energy and natural resource conservation, and in many cases leads to less of a carbon footprint. Diversion of waste to specialty markets is increasingly attractive financially for the community, and could be reflected in lower waste costs in the future. This article focuses on certain of those items that are recyclable but are not included in single-stream recycling, specifically, electronics, mattresses, box springs, clothing and accessories, and metal.



So what is the Solid Waste and Recycling Authority doing about all this? For a few years now, the Transfer Station (the recycling drop-off and waste transfer component of the Authority) has been providing a robust solution in diversion of the materials mentioned above. (Incidentally, most of these materials will also be represented at our collection event, **Hometown Recycling Day**, coming October 15th.)

Here's the breakdown, by category:

These items are NOT acceptable in your curbside recycling bins, but should still be recycled; some are mandated to be recycled by law. Your diligence in bringing them to the Resident Drop-off over the years has led to very substantial collection volume, and in most cases a steady upward trend in recycling!

Electronics – such as computers, monitors, t.v.'s, cell phones, printers, stereo amplifiers, radios, and wires are all accepted at the Transfer Station.

Collected last three years: 115.9 tons
yearly average collection*: 38.6 tons
% of waste in NH diverted: .09%
% of waste potentially: 2%

Mattresses and box springs – (acceptable at the Transfer Station in decent condition with no bugs, mold or moisture)

Collected last three years: 133.4 tons
yearly average*: 44.5 tons
% of waste in NH diverted: .1%
% of waste potentially: .27% (a little over a quarter of a percent)

Textiles – clothing, leather shoes, leather apparel and accessories, linens, towels, stuffed toys

Collected last three years: 11.2 tons
yearly average*: 3.7 tons
% of waste in NH diverted: .009%**
% of waste potentially: 6%

**textiles are collected at other locations in New Haven and are not accounted for, so the amount diverted is actually higher

Metal – any item that is made mostly of metal by weight (some items, such as propane tanks and car batteries, are excluded)

Collected last three years: 68.4 tons
yearly average*: 22.8 tons
% of waste in NH diverted: .05% **
% of waste potentially: 9%

**metal is collected at other locations in New Haven which are not accounted for, so the amount diverted is actually higher

If we recycle 100% of what is possible in these 4 categories alone, we will reduce our Waste-stream by 17% more, or approximately 7,000 tons a year, more than doubling New Haven's diversion rate to over 36% , which would be slightly more than the state average.

*figures are the average for the last three fiscal years

Feature **The State of Single-Stream Recycling in CT today**

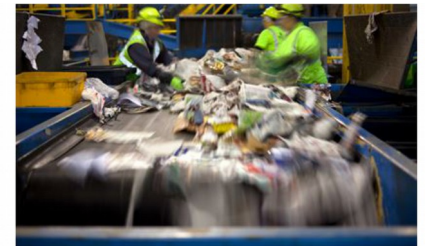
Once upon a time, in the not-too-distant past, curbside recycling in Connecticut (and most of the country) was separated into as many as 4 different containers by the consumer. This made recycling, a relatively new concept in the early 1980's, a seemingly undue burden on those suddenly required to do it.

Haulers lobbied for mixing of all curbside recycling into one stream, “single-stream,” an easier (and less expensive) way to pick up materials for recovery. Citizens of the State gladly agreed: Not only was it cheaper, the 'participation' rate of those who actually would be enticed to comply with recycling mandates would arguably increase.

Facilities were built and/or expanded in order to handle the separation process at the “back end” of the collection process. They were called MRFs. (Materials Recovery Facilities).

And the world was a happier and more efficient place.... Or was it?

Turns out, participation rates went up (as much as 26%), but consequentially, so did contamination with unwanted materials (averaging 17%). Some of our citizens felt that “anything goes” when it came to recycling. They practiced “wishful” recycling as the new way. Not only that, some mandated materials (such as glass – **see insert box** below) when compacted along with other recyclables, made the MRF's job harder. So rejection of loads of unsorted material increased, and at additional cost, were landfilled.



ONE STOP PROCESSING: Workers pre-sort single-stream recycling at a MRF

And China's restriction and ultimate rejection of single-stream recycling, though due to a rise in their own capability to recycle efficiently, was in no small part due to higher levels of contamination found in baled recyclables coming from the U.S.

So, not only was the process more expensive and more wasteful, the markets, once flourishing, became very soft.

The recycling 'loop' became disrupted and increasingly problematic.

Let me just take time out and tell you that today's single-stream recycling, when done correctly, actually DOES get recycled – it has just become a more involved process.

All of this brings us to today in New Haven, at what may be considered an “inflection point” or a time for change:

As we discussed in our article on diversion in last month's issue of R-N-H-, and as is mentioned more specifically in this month's issue (see the new Transfer Station user fee **notice**), due to new contracts being negotiated, and the state of recyclables markets in general, recycling, once considered a net loss of \$0 now will cost in excess of \$68/ton. A contributing factor to this price was our currently high recycling contamination rates of 15-20%. (And yes, that is something that you as a curbside recycler in New Haven, have control of!)

For the foreseeable future, single-stream recycling is here to stay, and other measures that can be taken on a large or legislative scale (like incentivizing for more local markets for sorted recyclables from MRFs, for instance) are a long way down the pike.

But don't feel powerless – you as an individual can contribute to lower costs and more sustainability of materials down the line by first thinking of source reduction and re-using, and finally, if you have to recycle, make sure what you put in that blue bin is indeed recyclable! *To find out what is recyclable in CT, click our website here: <https://www.nhswra.com/recycling/single-stream/>, which gives you a basic idea. For more detail, go to www.nhswra.com and at the bottom of our Home page you will see a place to type in any material you may have, called the “Waste Wizard,” -- it will tell you how and where to dispose of it. If you don't find the material in question on either of those links, we encourage you to write to info@nhswra.com to inquire.*

Glass in single-stream recycling – a closer look

Glass is one of those materials that is mandated as acceptable in single-stream recycling in Connecticut. HOWEVER, depending upon the capabilities of the MRF that is actually part of the supply chain, this may present a problem. A very few of the MRFs in the State have advanced sorting equipment for glass installed, but at most facilities (and as is the case at the MRF that we use), glass can slow down the sorting process and contaminate other materials during the collection, packing and transporting process. It would make sense to say that separation of glass, as in bringing your containers and bottles to a redemption center at your local food market, is the best move in this case. And that would be true. Recently, CT did pass an amendment to the 'bottle bill,' which includes raising the redemption rate from \$.05 to \$.10 / bottle. This increased rate will undoubtedly increase the amount of glass recycled separately, thus taking it out of the single-stream stream, but it will not go into full effect until a couple of years from now. In the meantime, the rate of redemption at these centers is still about 50%. *I must at this point remind you that recycling glass is required by law in the state of CT, so if you can't get to the redemption center, by all means put acceptable glass containers into your blue curbside bin.*

 **Events Hometown Recycling Day!**

The New Haven Solid Waste & Recycling Authority hosts and sponsors this city-wide community event for New Haven citizens and resident students...



Time to start thinking about what you can pack in your car, pickup, van, (or even under your arm if you are walking or biking), to bring on down to our annual recycling collection and awareness event, **Hometown Recycling Day**. This time we will be in the Hill North Neighborhood, at Hill Career High School, 140 Legion Ave. – proud partner in this year's event!

GOT an old mattress and/or box spring collecting dust in your garage? Maybe an eight track player, cell phone or PC or 1-ton projector t.v. – ancient or recent it doesn't matter – bring them all on down on Saturday, October 15 between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Oh, and what about that fall and winter clothing and accessories clean-out? Textiles are 95% recycled by our new vendor, Helpsy! Don't know what to do with your rechargeable batteries that have been sitting around the house, ruining your Feng Shui? Bring them too! And while you're at it, I KNOW you have some old bills and sensitive documents that you've been hesitant to just throw in your recycling bin – and for good reason... Yes, we are offering free document shredding on-site while you wait and watch.

All of our staff will be ready to assist you in unburdening yourself of these worldly possessions, and you will literally feel lighter after you are done dropping them off on October 15th!

Wait, there's more! (no, we're not offering ginzu knives). You can find out about how to compost your discarded food along with lawn clippings, where and how to dispose of household hazardous waste, pick up tips on how to make unused items into clever crafty creations. And maybe you might want to refresh your knowledge of curbside recycling, or find out what Parks & Public Works collection programs are available for larger items.

IF that's not enough, we'll even give you the shirt off our back (well, maybe off our rack): **Hometown Recycling Day 2022** T-shirts will be available on a first come – first serve basis. So do the right thing for you and sustainability, and *get ready to come on down!*

 **Notice:**

As of August 10, 2022, the following New Haven Transfer Station user fees for waste apply, in accordance with CGS Section 7-273bb(9):

Waste Type	User Fees
Residential MSW – Mixed ¹	\$112.50
Commercial MSW – Mixed ¹	\$112.50
Commercial C&D ²	\$112.50
Commercial Yard Waste	\$ 49.50

- 1) Municipal Solid Waste (MSW), bulky waste and mixed waste loads.
2) Construction and Demolition Debris (C&D).

City of New Haven meeting schedule:

<https://newhaven-ct.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

New Haven Parks and Public Works info:

A Message from Parks and Public Works Resident Services:

The Parks and Public Works office located at 34 Middletown Ave will be closed on Monday, September 5th. The Residential Drop-Off Station located at 260 Middletown Ave will also be closed. Please note that trash and recycling pick up will be a day delayed. Trash and recycling totes should be close to the curb the night before your scheduled pick up. Totes placed above the sidewalk, or on the side of the house, or on the front lawn, and or the driveway will not be emptied. Bulky waste such as furniture, mattress, clothing and electronics should not be placed on the tree line unless you have a scheduled bulk appointment. Bulky items must be brought to the Residential Drop-Off Station. Leaves must be placed inside brown bags and cannot weigh more than 50-lbs. to be picked up. Branches cannot be longer than 4-ft long and must be bound. Once branches are bound together, it cannot be more than a foot wide. Yard waste that exceed these dimensions and weight must be taken to the Resident Drop-Off Station. Lastly, please take the time to properly clean and sanitize your totes. The extra care of regularly cleaning your totes with mild detergent will keep them clean and in top condition.

Coupons continue to be available! Free coupons may be obtained with a valid ID at Parks and Public Works Resident Services Office, located at 34 Middleton Avenue. Our hours are Monday-Friday 7am–

4pm. Remember: you *must* present a coupon (one per load) to dispose of items at the Residential drop-off center at the New Haven Transfer Station.

As always, if you have any questions, give Parks and Public Works Resident Services a call at (203) 946-7700. We have been experiencing heavy call volume but if you leave your name and phone number with a question we will get back to you.

Remember you can always report Public Works issues at **See Click Fix** found on the New Haven City website (see “Links,” below).

Links:

New Haven Public Works-

<https://www.newhavenct.gov/depts/pw/>

Public Works paving schedule-

<https://www.newhavenct.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/15028/637903861608081376>

See Click Fix-

<https://seeclickfix.com/new-haven>

NHSWRA contact info and link:



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