

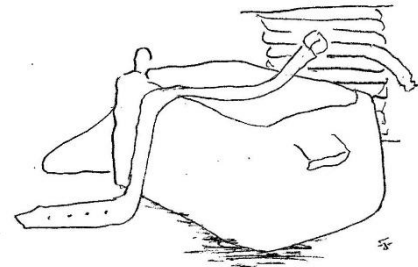
Recycle-News-Haven

The NHSWRA Newsletter

Recycling Awareness Aspirational (wishful) Recycling

You have a desire to do the right thing. However, you're unsure what the right thing is. You think it *should* be recyclable, so you drop it in the blue bin, because more recycling is a good thing...

Okay, so the shoelaces you dropped in the bin are on their way to the MRF (Materials Reduction Facility) to get sorted and baled and sent overseas somewhere, right? **WRONG!** Turns out your shoelaces caused a shutdown for maintenance at the MRF, because they weren't noticed by an employee – one of those that has to keep an eye out for “tangles” as they call such items, because if left on the conveyor, they do just that – tangle! **OR** – the load of would-be recyclables just got rejected in its entirety by the MRF operator because there were other unacceptable items in it, and then sent back, or your municipality was penalized, because of a high percentage of these items, (referred to as “contamination.”)



NOT acceptable in curbside recycling!

...So you get the idea, and now you are a repentant recycler – still wanting to do the right thing, but not knowing how.

There **IS** a solution: There are a few recycling “encyclopedias” out there which are just databases of ‘What's In / What's Out’ in your curbside bin or what's accepted at the Transfer Station. Go to www.nhswra.com and toward the bottom of the page you will see one such database: The “Waste Wizard.” Type in the item you are unsure about and it will tell you exactly how and where to dispose of your “wishful” item. Just for fun, test yourself here first by saying yes (recyclable) or no to recycling the following items.

garden hose / single use plastic cups / plastic forks, spoons and knives / books / pizza boxes / Styrofoam / shoes / plastic bags / fluorescent light bulbs / milk cartons

The answers will be at the end of this publication. No peeking!



Life of Materials Aluminum Cans



Although aluminum consumer products account for only about 1.9% of all trash collected in the U.S., Aluminum beverage cans are recycled at a very high rate, (between 50 and 60%) almost as high as paper (which is an estimated 25% of trash). There is a lot of incentive in recycling aluminum for manufacturers, in that it only takes about 5-10% of the energy (translation: cost) to produce recycled aluminum, and it is virtually as high-quality as virgin. This makes for a potentially closed loop of recycling – meaning the material is not discarded, but reintroduced back many times into the use-chain. Perhaps this is why almost 70% of aluminum originally mined is still in use today!

There is also some incentive on the consumer side to recycle aluminum – at least there is in 11 states, including Connecticut, where deposits on beverage cans have been in place since 1980. Oddly enough, though, aluminum in CT is not recycled at a higher rate than in the rest of the country, and almost half of it goes to waste. You would think that manufacturers and recycling advocates would be mounting a massive campaign to educate the consumer on this!

When discussing the life of materials, it is important to talk about where they come from. So where does “virgin” aluminum start out? Bauxite ore. Bauxite is very common on the surface of the Earth, but is very costly and environmentally damaging to extract: It must be strip-mined (taking up large areas and permanently disfiguring the landscape) and it usually takes about five tons of bauxite ore to produce one ton of aluminum.

With the advent of more recycling, more reprocessed aluminum can be produced at a very high ratio, and at dramatically lower energy costs as a result. One could say that if this model was implemented to its full potential, aluminum should have the same appeal as a product as renewable energy.

These days, more companies are making the switch and putting their beverages in cans than in PET (plastic) bottles, with canned water at the forefront of the change. This is also a boon to the environment, as PET is 90% only downcyclable and has a very short consumer life. So the good news is.... (wait for it).... ALUMINUM! But, as you can see, it is hardly the success story that it could be.

But that, in a way, is good news too, because there is room for improvement, and with education and awareness, aluminum is one recyclable that is easy to sell to the public!



More of this ↑

Means less of this ↓



Profile in Progress – Sherill Baldwin



Sherill Baldwin has been involved in the field of waste diversion and recycling for 30 years. She has been with CT DEEP, the State agency responsible for setting guidelines, mandates and best practices in recycling, for the last twelve of those years, having gained experience in materials management, including operating a creative reuse center in the San Francisco Bay area, and working for the recycling program at San Francisco State University. Along with her official capacity at CT DEEP, Sherill, a citizen of New Haven, is involved at the local level in various 'green' endeavors.

I had a great opportunity to ask Sherill about the programs at the State level, and her thoughts regarding recycling today. We wanted to focus on what she does that directly affects you, the consumer, though she does many other things within the industry.

What is the current focus of CT DEEP regarding waste diversion?

Sherill has been involved in the CT Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management, which formed four working groups 1) extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs (when manufacturers take responsibility for the end-of-life disposal of their products – such as mattresses and electronics), 2) Unit-based pricing, where the individual pays only for what they actually discard, 3) organics recycling such as food recovery and composting and 4) recycling in general. Sherill’s been working directly in the “increase recycling” working group with participating municipalities to identify low-cost programs to implement, such as textile recycling.

Other projects include the “What's in, What's Out” project, a major initiative to make recycling easier to understand, which incorporates the RecycleCT Waste Wizard, a search tool where residents can pose questions to determine whether the item should go IN the recycling bin or stay OUT. The Wizard can be found on www.RecycleCT.com

How does the DEEP arrive at what is acceptable in single-stream (or 'mixed recyclables' as it is now called)?

She says that a lot of it has to do with what can be managed by Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in a way that is safe for their employees, their facilities, and acceptable in recycling markets. In 2015, she posed these questions to MRF operators statewide and came up with a standardized list for consumers, eliminating all of the confusion surrounding this issue. Much of her responsibilities include administering programs for awareness and education in this area, and to that end she is responsible for the www.RecycleCt.com website.

	What's IN?	What's OUT?
PAPER	Cardboard & boardboard Food & beverage cartons Junk mail Magazines & newspaper inserts Newspaper Office paper Pizza boxes	Gift wrap & gift bags Ice cream containers Paper cups (hot & cold) Shredded paper Take-out food containers Tissue paper
GLASS	Beverage bottles & jars Food bottles & jars	Ceramic mugs & plates Drinking glasses
METAL	Aerosol containers (food grade only) Aluminum foil Cans & bottles Foil containers Metal lids from cans & bottles	Aerosol containers (deodorizers, cleaners, pesticides, etc.) Foil tops from yogurt containers Pain cans Pots & pans Small pieces of scrap metal Spiral wound containers
PLASTIC	Plastic bottles (with or without caps attached) Plastic containers, tubs & lids Plastic one use cups (no lids, no straws)	Loose bottle caps Plastic bags & wrap Plastic plates, bowls & utensils Prescription bottles Single use coffee containers Styrofoam cups, containers & packaging peanuts Wax filters

An item-oriented approach to what is acceptable curbside recycling

(continued)

What are your thoughts on Aspirational Recycling?

“Just because a product label says that it is recyclable, does not mean it is *acceptable*.” She also suggests that we frame the 'acceptability' response in terms of actual consumer items, so the message is clear. (referring to plastic resin types 1-7, for instance does not help the average person to know what's 'in or out' in recycling, and can be misleading). Rather, think in terms of containers when it comes to plastic: “Ask yourself – is it a bottle, tub, jug or a jar, and if it's not, then it's most likely 'out.' [not recyclable in your blue bin]”

When many communities switched to single stream, they also started using a larger bin or cart for recyclables. This does not necessarily mean more materials are acceptable; we should continue to focus on glass, metal and plastic containers and paper, such as newsprint, cardboard boxes (yes, including pizza boxes) and junk mail. She added that a container that is not rinsed out is *not* acceptable.

On the DEEP's 2024 mandate to divert 60% of waste away from trash and into recycling-

Instead of centering on “recycling” as the basis of the diversion rate, it is more effective to “focus on how much trash is generated...” This takes into account basic reduction in trash that may not show up in statewide recycling collection metrics (since some commercial recycling is diverted away beforehand, and other 'un-trackables' such as reuse or source-reduction cannot be accounted for and DEEP can only count data received. She suggests that these considerations, as well as adopting unit-based pricing, building a strong home-organics program and creating more EPR programs, could help us actually *exceed* the goal set by the State!

We are all wondering about recycling markets – is there a place for recyclables to go?...

Recycling markets come and go and come back again. It is cyclical and the businesses that process recyclables have been doing this for a long time, they will continue to weather market fluctuations. Sherill said that in some cases the China Sword, the policy that resulted in a lot less materials exported to China, helped create new markets domestically. Also, to those who are upset that we may have to pay for recycling, rather than get paid to do it, Sherill reminds us that “Recycling is a service, like snow removal. We should not expect to make money on a service.”

Lastly, did she have any tips for recycling during the pandemic?

An emphatic yes, a significant tip regarding take-out food: It's nice to support local businesses, but how about supporting source-reduction as well (*and* saving these businesses money). IF you are bringing the food into your home to eat, why not tell the restaurant or store to forego the extras – the napkins, eating implements and condiments (all of which are often packed in plastic as well). This would result in a significant reduction in waste.

We thank you, Sherill, for taking the time to talk with us about recycling, and in a larger sense, for your dedication and involvement in helping us make this a better place to live.



City of New Haven meeting schedule:

<https://www.newhavenct.gov/gov/depts/cadmin/calendar.htm>

New Haven Public Works info:

Resident Services:

Though this has been an extraordinary year, Resident Services at Public Works has and will continue to serve residents as best as possible with a "closed" office but "open" services. Call 203-946-7700 to schedule bulky item collection appointments, ask trash and recycling questions, get Residential Waste Center/Transfer Station information, report potholes, public space issues, sidewalk inspections, storm-related responses and general requests.

On the Public Works Calendar:

Christmas Trees – Public Works will be picking up residents' unadorned natural Christmas Trees placed out at the curb on scheduled trash and recycling days throughout January.

Holiday - Monday, January 18, 2021 - Martin Luther King Day. No Residential Trash/Recycling collection.

Links: What's New Page-

https://www.newhavenct.gov/gov/depts/pw/whats_new_.htm

NHSWRA link and contact info:



14 Trumbull Street, Suite 102

New Haven, CT 06511

Office: 203.691.5374

Fax: 203.691.5990

www.nhswra.com

info@nhswra.com

Answers to the Aspirational Recycling Quiz:

garden hose: No! (tangler – goes in bulky trash at Transfer Station)

Single use plastic cups: Yes (no lids or straws though)

Plastic forks spoons and knives: No!

books: pages - yes, bindings and glue - no

pizza boxes – Yes (if no grease stains)

styrofoam – No! (though specialty recyclers do exist for this item)

shoes: Yes (textile drop at the Transfer Station)

plastic bags: No!

fluorescent light bulbs: No! But can be brought to HazWaste Central

milk Cartons: Yes. But *please* rinse and throw caps in trash

So how'd you do? (6 out of 8 right indicates you are on your way to becoming a materials maven!)

Recycle-News-Haven is a copyrighted publication of
the New Haven Solid Waste & Recycling Authority. All Rights Reserved