



Preserving Resources,  
Preventing Waste

# The New Jersey WasteWise Bulletin

Newsletter of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network – Spring, 2016  
WasteWise...improving your bottom line and the environment  
through waste reduction, recycling and recycled product procurement.

## MCIA Waste Study Points the Way

Just as smart businesses conduct waste audits to improve their recycling programs, so do county solid waste management programs. The Mercer County Improvement Authority (MCIA) undertook such an analysis in 2013 in the hopes of getting a better understanding of the materials that are being disposed as trash by county residents, businesses and institutions. The results of their waste composition study were recently released and shed light on those materials that should be the focus of the county's (and the State's) future recycling initiatives.

The waste audit was conducted at the county solid waste transfer station in Ewing and involved sorting waste samples over four one-week sample periods, which represent the seasonal variations of municipal solid waste. During each day of the sample week, approximately 12 waste load samples were collected randomly from tipped waste collection vehicles at the MCIA Transfer Station. The garbage was then sorted into numerous categories and weighed. Food waste was found to be the largest component in the county's solid waste stream. In fact, nearly 25% of the garbage that was sorted in this study was food waste. While very little glass and metal were discovered in the waste stream, over 21% of the waste sorted in the audit consisted of various paper grades. In addition, 16% of the incoming waste at the transfer station was plastic material.

The MCIA will use the information from this study to identify strategies that will enable the county to increase its food waste, paper and plastic recycling tonnage and ultimately reach the 50% municipal solid waste recycling goal established in state law. Visit [www.mcianj.org](http://www.mcianj.org) for further details.

## The Lost Market Value of Recyclable Materials Disposed as Trash

Readily recyclable materials that find their way into the trash are not only wasted natural resources, but also wasted economic resources. This can be viewed as something akin to throwing away money. The lost market value of recyclable material that is disposed as waste instead of being recycled is significant even when recyclable commodity prices are low, as they are at this time. The lost market value of these materials will be even higher when recyclable commodity prices rise again. Mercer County will be used to illustrate this point since its 2013 waste audit provides valuable data on the make-up of its waste stream. In this illustration, the annual lost market value of recyclable materials disposed as trash in Mercer County is \$5,996,095. (Note: the avoided cost of disposal is not factored into this equation.)

It is understood that it is not realistic to expect to capture 100% of the recyclable material generated in any jurisdiction, that there are costs associated with processing, and that contamination issues come into play. Nevertheless, this exercise is intended to make one think differently about waste, the environmental and economic possibilities of enhanced recycling and the inherent wastefulness of disposing recyclables as trash.

### Case Study - Mercer County, NJ

(Note: Paper = combined lost market value for Mixed Paper, Corrugated Cardboard, and Sorted Office Paper; Plastics = combined lost market value for PET and HDPE; Metals = combined lost market value for Aluminum Cans and Tin Plated Steel Cans; and Glass = lost market value for Clear ("Flint") Glass.

Material	Tons Disposed	Lost Market Value of Recyclables Disposed
Paper	47,385	\$ 2,904,015
Plastics	7,323	\$ 1,879,860
Metal	4,361	\$ 1,106,710
Glass	3,517	\$ 105,510
Total	62,586	\$ 5,996,095 (Annual)

## Did You Know...

- The Green Sports Alliance leverages the cultural and market influence of sports to promote sustainable strategies, including recycling, renewable energy and water efficiency. To learn more about this organization, visit [www.greensportsalliance.org](http://www.greensportsalliance.org).
- The United States Department of Agriculture and the United States Environmental Protection Agency recently announced a first-of-its-kind goal for America to cut its food waste by 50% by the year 2030. For more information, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov).
- Walgreens recently announced that it will be installing safe medication disposal kiosks in its drugstores in 39 states, including New Jersey.
- The "Ocean Collection" is the world's first and only line of sunglasses made of 100% recycled fishing nets! Check them out at <http://bureo.co/>.
- The Reusable Packaging Association and StopWaste.org have teamed up to create "Reusables 101" and "Reusables 102," which provide an overview of the basics of reusable transport packaging and a cost comparison guide that includes case studies. To learn more about this waste prevention strategy visit <http://reusables.org/learning-center/research-reports/reusables-101>.
- Reduce waste by leaving your grass clippings on your lawn! Learn more at <http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/brochures/recycling%20brochures/grass.pdf>.
- The Rockefeller center Christmas tree was milled into lumber for Habitat for Humanity projects!
- Old guitar strings and other musical instrument strings can be recycled! Visit <https://www.terracecycle.com/en-US/brigades/daddario-playback> for details.

## Egg Harbor City School Wins Recycle Bowl

The Egg Harbor City Community School, a 4th – 8th grade school located in Egg Harbor City, was recently named the national champion of Keep America Beautiful's Recycle-Bowl! Competition in this nationwide recycling program for

elementary, middle and high schools was fierce as 1,266 schools across the United States participated in the Recycle-Bowl this past fall. Egg Harbor City Community School's students and teachers earned the top prize thanks to their recycling efforts which saw them recycle 50 pounds of materials per student and teacher during the four-week competition. The school will receive a recycled content plastic park bench and \$1,000 worth of recycling bins as their prizes for this outstanding achievement.

## Communication...One of the Keys to Success

With recycling well established in New Jersey, it would be easy to assume that everyone knows why they should recycle, what they should recycle and where they should recycle, but the fact is that many people do not have a good understanding of the ABCs of recycling. This not only applies to residents participating in curbside recycling programs, but also to employees who participate in recycling programs set up in businesses and institutions. According to research conducted by the Ad Council, only 52% of Americans say that they are "very" or "extremely" knowledgeable about how to properly recycle. Educational and promotional campaigns must not only explain the nuts and bolts of the recycling program, but must also raise awareness about the benefits of recycling (both environmental and economic) with the goal of making recycling a daily social norm whether at home or at work.

By getting program participants to better understand that recyclable materials are not garbage, but rather materials of value, contamination levels should decrease while participation rates should rise. Social media can be instrumental in getting this idea, as well as the basics of the recycling program, out to today's population and should be an integral part of any public or corporate recycling communication campaign.

### ***New Jersey WasteWise Business Network***

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*<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/wastewise/brbn03.htm>*

*[www.epa.gov/wastewise](http://www.epa.gov/wastewise)*

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