

# WASTE BYTES!

*Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program*

## *Maine Recycles Week Is Alive and Doing Well!*

MRW 2010 is alive and well – with your help! Maine Recycles Week is the opportunity to recognize recycling in each community, and the value of purchasing products made with recycled materials. Recycling happens because of the support and successes that take place at the community level. Each community does the best that they can at recycling with the resources that they have available. This is as true today as it was a decade ago. The noteworthy part is that during that time Maine Recycles Week and recycling have come a long way in the past 10 years.

Maine Recycles Week is celebrated on November 8<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> of each year. This inclusive block of days represents the week leading up to and ending on America Recycles Day. A day is not enough time to properly recognize and share the value of recycling that is done by Maine communities. This is the twelfth year of Maine Recycles Week. In that time, we have seen the week blossom into an entire community effort – and nearly all of Maine’s 495 communities have a recycling program in place. Recycling is available to about 98 percent of the population. About 95 percent submit their annual reports to us, so we have fairly good numbers to document your successes. So what do we need for this year? We need you! No excuses, but even with the physical move of the State Planning Office, everything has come together like a patchwork quilt. The presentation is beautifully set again. This year’s Maine Recycles Week poster is one of the best yet – thanks to our Scarborough High School student that steered us into fall colors that much of Maine is so fond of – Thank you, Kathy!



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On this year’s poster there appear the logos of: Maine Recycles Week, recycling in the State of Maine, and a huge cooperative effort to reduce the use of ‘first use’ shopping bags by 33 1/3% by 2013. Each of these three worthy campaigns is seeking success in the near future. Working together, we can realize our goals and enter into wonderful future. Once again for the Maine Recycles Week Steering Committee, I would like to thank each of you for your support.

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The poster contest last year yielded over 1800 posters (as compared to the 500 or so from 8 years ago). The steering committee would like to see more schools competing and receiving recognition for their recycling efforts. If we can bring in 200 or more poster entries than last year, these are the efforts that are so important – Maine Recycles Week 2010 can be and will be a resounding success!

I hope that I never forget to say “thank you” for all that you do in your communities and with your recycling programs! For the Maine Recycles Week Steering Committee, I would like to thank you for your support and participation in Maine Recycles Week and in recycling for Maine. The Maine Recycles Week 2010 Steering Committee is comprised of: Diane Doe, Auburn SHARE Center; Janet Cummings, AVCoG; John Albertini, MRRA; Tom Kane, CPRC Group; Jeff McGown, Waste Management; Beth Young, Casella Waste Systems; and the re-energized team of the State Planning Office’s Waste Management and Recycling Team that is represented by Suzanne Duplissis Bruce White.

The sponsors for Maine Recycles Week 2010 are so great: Poland Springs has been a regular; Baker Commodities is a personal favorite for their commitment; PERC has been with us from the beginning; Maine Resource Recovery Association has helped recycling programs across the state. In the Champion Sponsors category, there is Aggregate Recycling Corporation, who has been an example for loyalty to recycling. Others include L.L. Bean and Hannaford who are perhaps two of the most visible sponsors. The Maine Turnpike Authority returns this year with their support.

Two of the state’s largest solid waste service providers, Waste Management and Casella Waste Systems, are again ‘onboard’ with their continued support of this project. The Auburn ShareCenter is and will always be very special as a friend of Maine Recycles Week and we are grateful for their continued support.

Supporting Sponsors include: Bath Iron Works, who has implemented broad recycling efforts at their facilities; One Steel, who represents the metals recycling sector; and the Northern Maine Development commission which represents the recycling teams in northern Maine. AVCoG’s continued sponsorship that includes Sandi Fournier and Janet Cummings to help with the steering committee work.

## *What Can Be Done with Used Large Plastic Bags?*

Since the popularity of pellet stoves, the SPO Waste Management and Recycling program has received inquiries about what to do with reinforced shipping bags. These packages have become popular containers for wood pellets, grains, garden products and animal feed. It is often difficult to find a facility or program that will accept and process them.

At this year’s Old Hallowell Day celebration, the craft booths produced at least one novel answer, which just so happened to address a second initiative close to our efforts.

Colorful reuse bags hung from the edges of a white canopy. This was the stand of “Tess’s Totes: Recycled Feed Bags” and at a closer look the reusable were neatly sewn from empty feed bags. Tessier’s Farm of Skowhegan had begun this from their own waste stream of feed for rabbits, Dogs, Cats, Poultry, Wild Birds, and some unexplainable juice containers. Each bag is strategically split to crop the pictures, which when seen alone or on the bags are colorful professional quality illustrations. The seams are carefully stitched and secured to ensure service for a long time. A few bags have clear pockets sewn on to accommodate the owner’s picture of their pet. It was explained that many bags are reversible and turned inside out are a plain white washable bag.

When asked what the most popular bags were, it was suggested that the wild bird seed, dog and cat foods, and goat feed were the top three. When asked if all of the bags were from Tessier’s, we were told that for a while at first they were. Then their dogs and cats seemed to be begging for no more dry food; friends started saving their bags; and local supply stores added to the resources.

To date they have shipped orders to Montana Audubon and several places in California.

This cottage industry has found a colorful way to assist reducing the number of feed bags from the waste stream.

***Don't Toss Out Those Unwanted Organics!!***

Food residual composting hit the road in pursuit of municipal interest. Sam Morris of the State Planning Office, Mark King of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and Ron Slater of the Sandy River Recycling Association have been compatriots for a number of years. A few years ago, and again this year, their commitment to promoting the value and wisdom of composting leaf, yard and food discards has been shared with numerous groups of transfer station operators, farmers, restaurants and others from Aroostook County to Cumberland County.

Each will tell you that the interest in composting is there and activity has surfaced across the state. The most convincing story of their presentation is the development and success of the Sandy River Recycling Association's compost facility. That facility, now several years young, accepts food discards from the University of Maine at Farmington and the W.G. Mallett elementary school as well as manure from the Farmington Fairgrounds and leaves from municipalities.

With Ron's interest in and dedication to their composting initiative, and with support of the Association's Board, the project continues with hope for expansion to include organics from other local establishments, including grocery stores.



*View of Sandy River's Compost Facility*

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***Heads Up, Transfer Stations***

We have been made aware of bedbugs being identified in items being left at transfer stations. For those not aware of it, bedbugs are becoming a problem in many places in the nation. We would advise you to be especially wary about items left at stations with swap shops and those that encourage leaving unwanted items for others.

The Center for Disease Control advises us: "Although bed bugs are a nuisance, they are not known to spread disease"; however bed bug bites can turn into large itchy skin welts, and in large numbers can become a major problem. We should be able to recognize bed bugs and make sure that we are not caught in the position of spreading the creatures.

There are several good sites with information about bed bugs on the Internet to educate ourselves and workers. These are often related to the Center for Disease Control in each state, as is true of Maine: <http://www.maine.gov/DHHS/boh/ddc/epi/bedbugs/>. Know where you stand with bed bugs.



*Receiving Food from the school*

## *The Products We Purchase - - and their Life Cycle....*

How times change! As we talk about recycling, we can often begin with a material and then think what could it be used to make when it was recycled. Think about an item and try to follow it through many reiterations and we may be looking at the history of most reuse items. Pick one item and see if we can't follow history and then learn from our past.

Here's one to start the conversation: walking by a barber shop, I thought curiously enough about the Friday Night Fights. Actually my thoughts were about Gillette – the Gillette razors that sponsored the fights. If you remembered the Friday night fights, then you would remember the straight edged razors that certainly had a knife quality in a specialty package.

Next think in terms of the safety razor being replaced by the electric razor. There were different designs such as Remington and Schick before Norelco took up the rotary razors. Between Schick and Gillette, sports shows established a weekend viewing schedule of their own.

For those that went from a safety razor to the electric razor, a change happened with a return to disposable blade cartridges rather than just blades. The Track II and Atra I and II have been followed by even the Fusion, as most people know. The persistence seems to have squelched the need for disposable razors, such as those of "Bic" fame.

This overview does in a way reflect the evolution of our lifestyle and tells us that we never do learn.

The straight edge razor does represent quality of workmanship. Blades that with the help of a good strap could outlive the person that they served on a daily basis, gave rise to a quality of life.

The safety razor was kind of the equalizer as being fit for everyone and then reinforced when the US Army issued 2.5 million of them to new enlistees during WWII and Korean Conflict.

The electric razor caught the power craze of the masses as well. At the flip of a switch, the machine took over and released the individual from thinking.

Electricity added a new dimension to life in the 50's and 60s, which perhaps culminated with the introduction of the microwave oven in the late 60s.

Finally the cartridges came on the scene. Looking like the full thing, it promised something for everyone and with today's staying power enlivened by variety. This has evolved into another aspect of our society – a price for everyone. The Futura actually has a battery to move the banks of disposable blades. The Bic captured a side of our society as well.

In many ways, we have become a disposable society for many of the items and products we use, and there is typically something for everyone at a price. This would suggest that we have come full cycle – make it easy and convenient and when it goes away it goes away - out of sight; out of mind.

But for items and products that end up in the waste stream, instead of being reused, remanufactured or recycled, the life cycle ends. Consider your needs before making that next purchase...



## *Waste Bytes Recycling Survey*

We haven't tried a survey in quite some time. It is hard to recall if the electronic form ever begged information from our readers. In the electronic format, it should be easier to respond.

Do you seek information about recycling from the [www.mainerecycles](http://www.mainerecycles.com) web site?

Have you checked out the new Maine Recycles Facebook site?

Have you signed up or would you consider signing up?

Please explain your feelings about social networking?

Do you plan on doing anything special for Maine Recycles Week 2010?

Do you attempt to get businesses involved each year in MRW?

Do you work with schools and teachers each year during MRW?

Do you work with schools at other times through the year to promote recycling or composting?

Do you use or have you used the DEP web site for information about solid waste disposal?

Have you sought information from the EPA web site?

Where do you learn the most about recycling and waste reduction?

What themes and topics would you like to see developed for the MRRRA meetings and conference?

Online

Town Hall

Local transfer station

Newspaper

Broadcast media

Neighbors

Students or at school

Local Library

Events

Other -

Thank you for taking the time to respond. Please just return e-mail to [bruce.white@maine.gov](mailto:bruce.white@maine.gov) by November 8, 2010. The results will be in our next Waste Bytes.