

# Zero Waste Washington Fall Quarterly Enewsletter

July 19, 2019

## Prepping for the upcoming legislative session

Last session was amazing. Washington State legislators championed a slew of zero waste bills, and with the support of Zero Waste Washington, terrific partners, and all of you, five bills passed. A suite of bills are in the pipeline for January 2020, addressing plastic bags, food “to go” ware, batteries, medical sharps (i.e., needles and syringes), flushable wipes and more.

### Plastics bills are coming back!

**Plastic bags.** Senator Mona Das (D-Kent) and Representative Strom Peterson (D-Edmonds) led the charge last year to ban plastic carryhome bags. The senate version came oh so close to passing. The legislators have already been calling for it for January. In the meantime, wonderful community groups and city and county council members have been busy passing plastic bag ordinances throughout Washington State, so that we are now up to 37! This represents 33% of Washington’s population. Are we finally at the tipping point?



**Single-use plastic food “to go” ware.** There are a number of bills getting tee’d up to reduce this other ubiquitous plastic source. Keep your eyes open on these bills. More details to come as issues get worked out.

### Producer responsibility: batteries, sharps and solar panels

**Sharps.** Medical sharps (i.e., needles and syringes) are a public health concern. In our parks and public places, discarded sharps can be a danger to children and pets. And many people mistakenly place sharps in recycling bins. Up to 1200 sharps per day are found at one of our local recycling facilities. Workers at the recycling facilities have to wear heavy, clunky gloves so that they will not be pricked by needles. Representative Strom Peterson is the sponsor of a sharps producer responsibility bill and many public health departments and local municipalities are helping provide technical information to insure a strong bill is drafted.



**Batteries.** There is value in recycling batteries – the metal in regular household batteries and the lithium and other materials in rechargeable batteries. Batteries that get tossed into the recycle bin can cause fires in the recycling facilities. It is costing cities and counties significant funds to accept household batteries for recycling. Representative Jared Mead (D-Mill Creek) is spearheading a product stewardship bill to address the need for proper disposal and effective recycling.

**Solar panels.** Two years ago, Representative Norma Smith (R-Whidbey Island) led the effort to include mandatory recycling and product stewardship for solar panels at the end of their useful life in the solar incentives bill. A few technical fixes to the bill are needed and may be addressed this session.

## Food labels and flushable wipes

**Food labels.** In Washington, a shocking 17% of our landfill load, by weight, is food – about half edible and half inedible food. This costs consumers and businesses millions of dollars each year and represents a missed opportunity to feed food-insecure people in our state. Representative Beth Doglio (D-Olympia) led the charge to pass significant food waste legislation earlier this year and is continuing the work next session with a food labeling bill. *Confusion about and misinterpretation of the sell by or consume by date labels on foods is a key factor leading to food waste.*

**Flushable wipes.** The City of Seattle is leading an effort for a bill to require that wipes (baby, make-up, etc.) that are marketed as flushable actually be flushable! Most of the wipes currently available do not fall apart, are full of plastic and cause sewage clogs. They were blamed for a large sewage overflow in Seattle earlier this year.



## To follow these bills and others that will come into play

Please check our legislative webpage. Starting in January, we will update this page regularly:  
<https://zerowastewashington.org/legislative-work/>

*Thank you all for your help in moving bills forward last session and, in advance, thanks for your help during the upcoming 2020 legislative session. If you have any questions, or would like to help, please contact Heather at [heather@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:heather@zerowastewashington.org).*

# Residential recycling and organics collection report

Zero Waste Washington is pleased to announce the publication of our new report – *The State of Residential Recycling and Organics Collection in Washington State* – written by our fabulous UW fellow, Nicolás M. Díaz Huarnez. We found that residential recycling and organics collection is highly variable across the state, with the most robust service available in the Puget Sound region. Some highlights:

- Residential **curbside recycling** collection is available in **58%** of jurisdictions and **organics** collection is available in **49%** of jurisdictions in Washington.
- 57% of local jurisdictions accept **plastic bottles** at curbside and an additional 21% accept them at drop-off stations and boxes.



# The study

This report seeks to describe the state of residential recycling and organics curbside and drop-off collection programs administered by local governments in Washington State. Specifically, the study compiled existing information (as of October 1, 2019) about service areas, providers, frequency and type of collection, lists of accepted materials, and available drop-off locations.

We examined online materials for jurisdictions and associated service providers, including digital pamphlets, lists of prices and materials, handling instructions, associated UTC permits, and current solid waste management plans. We also interviewed key actors in Washington’s recycling system to obtain their impressions, perspectives, and opinions about challenges and potential policy solutions.



It was a major challenge to compile the information because of the high variability of the words and the images used to describe recyclables on the websites for each jurisdiction or service provider. To this end, the report includes a number of recommendations about suggested improvements to Washington’s overall recycling system.

## Additional recycling highlights

For residential curbside service and drop-off at transfer stations and drop-off boxes:

- 58% of jurisdictions pick up **mixed paper** and an additional 25% accept it at drop-off locations
- 24% of jurisdictions pick up **paper cups** and an additional 1% accept them at drop-off locations
- 34% of jurisdictions pick up **glass bottles and jars** and an additional 34% accept them at drop-off locations
- 58% of jurisdictions pick up **aluminum cans** and an additional 29% accept them at drop-off locations



The *State of Residential Recycling and Organics Collection in Washington State* and accompanying excel data spreadsheet is available at <https://zerowastewashington.org/publications/>

# The Mazama Store ditches coffee cups

By Elisabeth Archer and Xenia Dolovova

50 billion paper cups are thrown away in the US, every year. That is almost 140 million coffee cups a day tossed in the trash. As anyone who travels around Washington knows, we have many, many coffee shops. A rough estimate is that Washington coffee drinkers are responsible for 3.6 million paper cups being tossed every single day. Imagine the impact if 50% of people brought a reusable cup.



## The Mazama Store

The Mazama Store is a family-run general store in the North Cascades with a focus on quality, care and locally made products. This includes a dedication to sustainability. And they are a community hub, which includes a popular coffee counter.

The Mazama Store decided to take a pro-active role in decreasing their contribution to the waste stream. They contacted Zero Waste Washington in the late spring to share their intention and to learn from the experience of others.

“Last January, we followed Seattle’s mandate and removed straws. We are now considering removing paper cups from our espresso bar. We feel that compostable cups are not a sustainable option as we don’t have a commercial composting facility near us. It would be a huge decision and we are expecting some kick-back,” said Claire LeDuc, the store’s owner.

## Decision to stop offering paper cups



Starting on May 1st, 2019, The Mazama Store stopped offering paper cups as their primary option for to-go coffee drinks. Since then, they’ve been offering a variety of alternatives, ranging from glass jars for \$1 to fancier stainless-steel mugs. In less than five months, fewer than 5% of the 25,000 drinks served at The Mazama Store were taken away in a disposable container.

A single small store diverted 8,000 plastic (polyethylene) lined coffee cups, 7,000 plastic cold drink cups, 10,000 plastic lids and countless plastic straws from the landfill.

“It’s been a (mostly) positive experience, with almost all our customers being open to making the switch. We’re thrilled. It’s rare that we get people making a fuss...most haven’t even

thought about getting coffee in something other than a paper cup. We've really enjoyed this journey and we hope others will follow suit!" shares Claire.

Following their own success, The Mazama Store is going even further. They decided that once they have used up their inventory of paper cups, they won't reorder more: "So our single-use offerings will be done. It's going to be crazy...but we're excited to see what happens. I guess our thought is that if it deters customers from shopping with us, it's a risk we're willing to take."

## Other stores taking action

Many retailers are taking sustainable steps – in particular the grocery co-ops. PCC has been an exemplary leader in researching compostable alternatives for all of their food service products.

Taco Time has largely gone to 100% compostable. If you go to their store in Burien, for example, they do not even have a trash or recycle bin. Just a compost bin.

If you know other stores that have taken action, please share with us! We would love to highlight stores that are leaders in future newsletters.



## Food service product ordinances

There are nine local ordinances in place in Washington that ban styrofoam food "to go" items. We are currently working with community members and city staff in multiple other locations to help create next-gen ordinances that include requirements such as:

- Straws, utensils and condiments on-request
- Durable items for in-store dining
- Ban styrofoam and replace with compostable-only alternatives.

*For more information about these issues, including the use of durable product for in-store dining and the state food safety code update (to allow people to bring their own containers), please contact Elisabeth at [elisabeth@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:elisabeth@zerowastewashington.org).*

## Fixers speak out

After a successful year in Tacoma, Fix-it Fairs are expanding to Seattle and Kitsap county starting in January 2020. These will add to the growing list of fix-it and repair events occurring all across Washington.

We were curious. What do fixers think about these events? We asked our fixers.

## Here are comments from our fixers

*“What drives me to keep coming back is the connection with people that we make. Many people don’t realize things CAN be fixed. I’m big into conservation and some of that is simply not immediately going out and buying something new when something breaks but taking the effort to try and fix it first. The fixit Fairs work on actually changing mindsets. We are fixing points of views, not just items.” – Kathryn, jeweler*

*“My motivation is the challenge of fixing the unfixable... I really love the idea of keeping things out of the landfill, especially precious sentimental pieces. I am inspired by all the people I meet and some of them have become new friends that I look forward to seeing at the next fair.” – Leisa, jeweler*

*“I’m a professional sewer and I’ve mended a lot of things in my life. I love when people bring things that they are emotionally attached to. I feel the significance of this repair. I feel this event is very much needed in the community and I feel that it will be welcomed even more in the future.” – Dee, sewer*

*“What motivates me to do the fix-it fairs is that I see people throwing away items that can be repaired or sent to a charity shop. Our landfills are growing quickly, and thousands of pounds of stuff shouldn’t be in there in the first place.” – Dee, sewer*

*“The thing that motivates me, is meeting people and getting to know them. And helping the community.”  
– Bart, electric and mechanical engineer*

## Fix-it Fairs coming up

The next fair in Tacoma is December 7, 2019 at the downtown Library main branch (see: <https://tacomatoollibrary.org/fix-it-fairs>)

The first fair in Kitsap County will be January 25, location TDB. (See [www.kcowa.us/FixIt](http://www.kcowa.us/FixIt))

The first fair in Seattle will be in February. We will publicize this and other repair events in Seattle at [www.fixitfair.org](http://www.fixitfair.org)

*Xenia is working to support Fix-It Fairs in Tacoma, Seattle and Kitsap County, as well as other new zero waste projects. Please contact her at [xenia@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:xenia@zerowastewashington.org) with any questions and if you are interested in being a fixer or volunteer at Fix-It Fairs.*



# Commercial composting, from a Kyrgyzstan perspective

By Chinara Sultanalieva, Community Solutions Program Fellow from Kyrgyzstan at Zero Waste Washington

Commercial composting is complicated. I experienced this first-hand when I attended the terrific Washington Organic Recycling Council (WORC) Compost Facility Operator Training at WSU-Puyallup in October. We learned how high-quality compost is produced. Basically, it is all about math and formulas.



## A recycling story from Kyrgyzstan

There is not much recycling or composting in my home country of Kyrgyzstan. Since 2016, I have been the coordinator at the Inon Public Foundation, in Bishkek, the capital city, which works to reduce waste. As a start, we conducted a pilot project to introduce waste segregation to a small community of 150 residents. We collected plastic, paper, metal, glass and food waste. We installed a very small anaerobic digester in our pilot community. Since the beginning of the project in 2016, we have diverted 68% of all collected waste from the landfill. Basically, our assumption worked – we could divert recyclables from the landfill and use organic waste to produce compost.



## Looking into composting

A couple of years ago, after spending hours sorting a pile of waste from a dumpster into categories, my co-workers and I had a clear understanding that almost half of the pile consisted of organic waste. It was the same after we conducted many similar waste sorting experiments. We knew this was an important discovery, and we knew that we had to test the assumption. But it was not until I recently completed the Washington Organic Recycling Council (WORC) Compost Facility Operator Training at WSU that I realized exactly what we should do. This professional training attracts participants from across the US.

Going into the training, I was afraid that I would not understand anything since I did not have a lot of experience. My fear grew during the first day when everyone introduced themselves – compost facility operators, wastewater treatment plant managers, regulators, government representatives and myself – with little knowledge and no idea of how compost facilities in the US operate.

Before the training, the organizers sent out the list of things they wanted participants to bring: vest, hard hat, rain boots, rain coat, and a compost sample. Bringing the compost sample from Kyrgyzstan would be very expensive, so I missed this step. But raincoat and rain boots were a must!

## Composting is an art and a science

The training consisted of technical information, basics of compost, site visits, panel discussions, as well as a comprehensive practical part where participants actually build their own compost piles and monitor them during the training. The first part of the training included presentations on the basics of composting: biology of composting, manufacturing process, compost facility designs, etc.

And right at the moment when I started to think that this was going to be easy and we would be provided with exact formulas to create a high-quality product, the trainers reminded us that composting is both an art and a science.

I discovered that math plays a huge role in composting. This was a major challenge for me, partly because I am not that strong at math and also, in addition to having to convert numbers in my head, I also had to learn the American way of calculating math and even the way of writing formulas.

Beside building our own compost piles, the practical part of the training included site visits, where we could see how three composting facilities operate and learn about their practices. We also learned about end-users of compost and regulations for compost facilities.



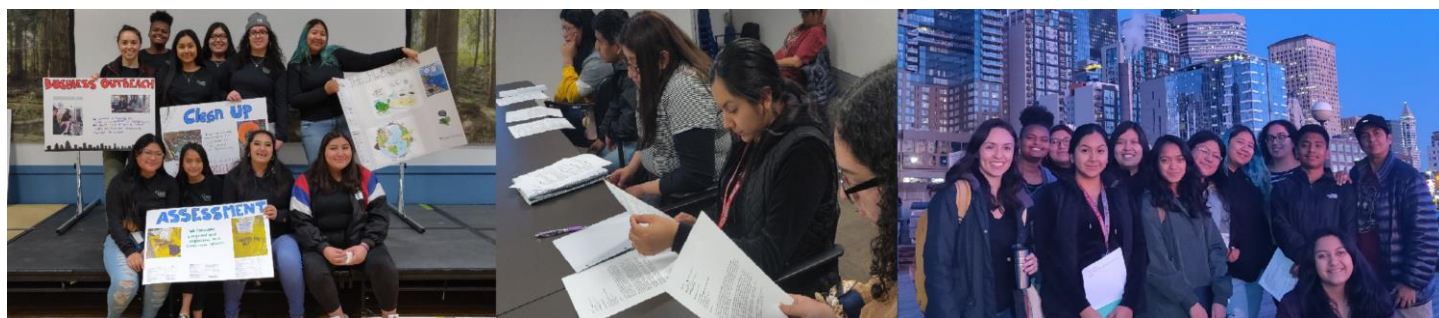
WORC has been conducting this training since 1995, attracting academics and practitioners as instructors. I consider this to be the best training that I have ever attended! I am heading back home in a month, as my fellowship is coming to end, and even though I still have a number of concerns, I feel empowered by the knowledge I have obtained during the training to start a new composting project in Kyrgyzstan.



# Duwamish Youth Corps: Plastic waste education and videos

*By Marisol Diaz*

We have wrapped up our first year working with youth in the Duwamish Valley Youth Corps and as interns for Zero Waste Washington. Throughout both projects, the youth have done amazing work including litter cleanups, developing outreach materials, conducting business outreach and making videos. You won't want to miss these fabulous videos (<https://m.youtube.com/user/ZeroWasteWashington/videos>). Thank you to the youth and all our partners who helped make the projects great!



*For more information about the Duwamish youth projects, please contact Marisol at [marisol@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:marisol@zerowastewashington.org).*

## Annual end-of-year campaign underway!

We here at Zero Waste Washington could not do our work without you. We have two annual fundraising efforts – GiveBIG in May and our annual appeal in November/December. As we approach the end of 2019, please consider a gift to ZWW to support our work for policy changes, less plastic in our world and ultimately, a sustainable zero waste world.

And thank you for all that you do in your own lives and in the community to help create a zero waste future. Actions you take every day help reduce the amount of waste going into the trash!

Thank you for your generous support which is paving the way for a zero waste future in Washington. Send us your success stories! We'd love to hear them and maybe even include them in a future newsletter.

**Donate [here](#)**

Zero Waste Washington

816 Second Avenue, Suite 200 \* Seattle, WA \* 98104

(206) 441-1790

[info@zerowastewashington.org](mailto:info@zerowastewashington.org)