



RECYCLING ADVOCATES

August 2002

Involving people in creating a sustainable future through local efforts to reduce, reuse, and recycle

Americans Trashed 50 Billion Aluminum Beverage Cans in 2001

The Container Recycling Institute (CRI), a non-profit research group, released a new report on July 9 titled, "Trashed Cans: The Global Environmental Impacts of Aluminum Can Wasting in America." The report details the global environmental impacts of replacing 50 billion wasted cans each year with new cans made from virgin materials.

"This can wasting represents a tremendous lost opportunity to save energy and resources," said the report's author, Jenny Gitlitz. "The energy required to replace the 50 billion cans trashed last year was equivalent to 16 million barrels of crude oil, enough to meet the electricity needs of all the homes in New York City, Dallas, Detroit, Seattle and the Washington-Baltimore Metro Area."

According to the report, over half of the 100 billion cans sold in the United States in 2001 were not recycled and last year's 49% aluminum can recycling rate dropped to the lowest in 15 years. The report states that 33,764 Boeing 737 jets could have been built with the 759,625 tons of aluminum wasted in 2001. Aluminum can waste last year was 28% more than a decade ago (594,420 tons).

"The public often views the aluminum can as 'environmentally

friendly' due to its recyclability," Gitlitz said, "but just because something is recyclable, it doesn't always follow that it is recycled. In the case of aluminum cans, for every six-pack of beer or soda cans recycled, another six-pack ends up in a landfill."

"Most people are unaware of the many adverse environmental impacts that aluminum production entails, and that aluminum wasting exacerbates," she said, citing environmental impacts that included air and water pollution, the emission of millions of tons of greenhouse gases, the loss of habitat from mining bauxite and hydroelectric energy production, and the disruption of human settlements in many different countries.

John Passacantando, Executive Director of Greenpeace USA said, "The innocent looking aluminum can truly leaves a global imprint. The lesson: convenience comes with a price and a responsibility. Now more than ever, recycling mandates for aluminum and other waste should clearly be a part of the national energy policy."

According to the report, the rising tide of can waste is due primarily to a decreasing financial incentive to recycle aluminum cans. "The value of a pound of aluminum cans to folks who collect scrap cans for cash hasn't changed much in the past decade, but the value of a dollar has declined," said Gitlitz.

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A National Bottle Bill

The first Congressional hearing in a decade on container recycling, held July 11 in a packed Senate committee room, began with a strongly worded challenge to industry from one of the Senate's most influential environmental policy-makers, Senator James Jeffords, an independent from Vermont.

"I hope that today's hearing galvanizes the beverage industry to work cooperatively with other stakeholders to accept deposit systems or develop other solutions to the beverage container waste problem," Jeffords said.

Jeffords, chair of the Senate's Committee on Environment and Public Works, called the hearing to build support for his version of a national bottle bill and to call attention to falling national container recycling rates, including for plastics. PET recycling rates, for example, have dropped from 38 percent in 1994 to 22 percent today.

Jeffords' hearing comes as a group of state and federal environmental officials are considering starting a national dialogue with the beverage industry on boosting recycling rates.

Note: Recycling Advocates has endorsed the Beverage Producer Responsibility Act of 2002. For more information, visit www.grn.org/beverage/jeffords.

RA Annual Meeting and Staffing Update

On July 24, Recycling Advocates held its annual membership meeting followed by a public forum, "Obsolete Computers: Problems and Solutions for Consumers."

The members present unanimously re-elected Lori Stole and Kate Wells to the Board offices of Vice-President and Treasurer, respectively. Lori is beginning her third two-year term, and Kate started her second two-year term. Congratulations, and the members appreciate your dedicated service!

Over 35 members and non-members attended the electronics forum. Lori Stole, Betty Patton and Wayne Rifer gave an update on the Western Electronic Product Stewardship Initiative (WEPSI), talked about why computers shouldn't be tossed in the garbage, discussed the ins and outs of electronics recycling and summarized local reuse and recycling options for electronics. Leslie Byster of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition presented the video, "Exporting Harm: The High-Tech Trashing of Asia," detailing electronics recycling conditions in a Chinese village.

The first phase of WEPSI is almost complete and the Action Plan for electronics product stewardship will be published this month. RA now is involved in the planning stages of WEPSI's second phase.

RA also is on the verge of a staffing change. After two years as the RA contractor, Tanya Schaefer has returned to full-time employment. The Board has advertised for a new contractor and will be meeting with applicants this month. Stay tuned!

Do You Want to be a Master Recycler?

Do you hate to see anything go to waste? Do you love to share knowledge with others? Do you want to make a difference in the world? If so, you may have what it takes to become a Master Recycler.

The popular eight-week course, which includes two field trips, provides 30 hours of instruction in topics such as waste reduction, recycling processes, alternatives to hazardous household products and composting.

Once training is completed, course graduates put their skills to work to help others learn the three Rs: to **reduce** the amount of solid waste generated, **reuse** material for the purpose for which it was intended and **recycle** material that cannot be reused. Master Recyclers volunteer at least 30 hours staffing information booths at community events, making presentations and working on special projects.

The next Master Recycler class begins October 1 at Metro, and will meet Tuesday evenings from 7-9:30 p.m. The application deadline is September 19. For more information and an application, visit <http://extension.orst.edu/multnomah/recycling/index.html> or call Megan at 503-725-2035.

Note: Recycling Advocates helped found the Master Recycler program, and continues to support it today. Program graduates receive a free one-year Recycling Advocates membership, and RA member Tanya Schaefer serves on the Master Recycler Advisory Board.

Help Save the Earth While Improving Your Public Speaking Skills

Do you want to help support Recycling Advocates, along with 71 other leading environmental organizations — in just 10 minutes? Interested in sharing the message with people in your community about how important it is to preserve Oregon's natural heritage? Join the Earth Share of Oregon (ESOR) Speakers Bureau! ESOR is a coalition of 72 non-profit organizations that raises money through workplace contributions to help preserve ancient forests and wildlands, reduce air and water pollution, restore rivers and wetlands, and much, much more.

Apart from helping to increase financial and volunteer support for Recycling Advocates and other worthy groups, you can sharpen your public speaking skills with ESOR's training. This fall, ESOR will make presentations to employees at workplaces across Oregon. You can make a real difference by sharing the importance of preserving Oregon's natural environment and quality of life.

Join our team of speakers for the 2002 Fall Charitable Giving Campaign. It's easy, fun and rewarding! For more information, please contact Margie at ESOR: 503-223-9015 or mbb@earthshare-oregon.org; or visit www.earthshare-oregon.org.



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RA at the Table

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality recently appointed Rob Guttridge, RA President, to its Solid Waste Advisory Committee. Rob is representing Recycling Advocates and its citizen members on this advisory group. The SWAC was created to assist DEQ in identifying creative and workable solutions to ongoing and emerging issues in solid waste prevention and management, and to provide a forum for input and recommendations to DEQ on solid waste policy and programs direction.

Advisory committee members represent a broad range of interests related to solid waste, such as recycling and solid waste collectors, recycling processors, disposal site operators, local and regional governments, public interest and business groups interested in environmental issues, and generators of solid waste.

The advisory committee will meet on the third Wednesday of every month through November 2002. Meeting information and minutes are available at <http://www.deq.state.or.us/wmc/solwaste/swac.html>.

Trashed Beverage Cans, cont.

“People are also drinking more beverages on the go, away from the convenience of residential curbside recycling bins, and many of these cans are ending up in the garbage,” Gitlitz said. “Consumers in the ten U.S. states with bottle bills, on the other hand, have a 2.5¢–10¢ incentive to recycle, and they are able to achieve recycling rates of 70% to 95%.”

“This report paints a vivid picture of the alarming environmental impacts of this ‘throwaway’ package,” said CRI Executive Director Pat Franklin. “We hope it will motivate policymakers and environmental advocates to take steps to eliminate the needless wasting of energy and material resources embedded in the billions of cans wasted in America each year.”

On July 11, Sen. James Jeffords (I-Vermont) held a committee hearing on recycling, including a discussion of his own bill: S. 2220, the Beverage Producer Responsibility Act of 2002. The Act would require all beverage containers except milk to have a 10-cent deposit, and be recycled at a rate of 80% (*more information about the hearing on page 1*).

“The recycling rate for our most recyclable material has dropped below the 50% mark. A national recycling policy is needed to reverse this egregious waste of energy and resources,” said Senator Jeffords from his Washington office, where he chairs the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

Gitlitz said that passage of the Jeffords bill could enable the national aluminum can recycling rate to climb above 85%, as it has in Sweden and several Canadian provinces, where similar legislation exists. “A national deposit law has the potential to recycle 36 billion more cans than we do today, saving the additional energy equivalent of 11 million barrels of crude oil, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 2 million tons, and reducing countless environmental impacts around the world.”

The report can be ordered from the Container Recycling Institute by phone at 703-276-9800 or on the Web at: <http://www.container-recycling.org/publications/order.htm>.

For more information and to take action, visit <http://www.container-recycling.org> and <http://www.bottlebill.info>.

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RECYCLING ADVOCATES

Membership Application

\$25 Regular \$10-24 Living Lightly \$50 Sustainer \$_____ Other
 Please enclose a check and mail to: PO Box 6736, Portland, OR 97228-6736

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Day _____ Evening _____

E-mail _____

**Your membership contribution to RA is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.*

Upcoming Events

August 4, 1-3 p.m. SCRAP Volunteer Orientation. Learn more about SCRAP and all the possibilities. SCRAP, 3625-B North Mississippi Ave. Portland, a block North of Fremont. Please pre-register by calling 503-294-0769. Check out SCRAP's new Web site at <http://www.scrapaction.org/>

August 11, 1-4 p.m. SCRAP Quilting class – learn the basics. May become a regular group if interest exists. SCRAP (see above).

August 14-15, 1-8 p.m. Cracked Pots Garden Art Show, McMenamins Edgefield. More than 70 artists will exhibit and sell their art made from recycled materials. Cracked Pots is a non-profit devoted to the creation of art with recycled materials. Call 503-669-8610 or visit <http://www.mcmenamins.com/Edge/events.html>.

August 20, 7:30 p.m. Recycling Advocates Board meeting. For location and information, call 503-777-0909.

August 25, 1-4 p.m. SCRAP Workshop. Make-it and Take-it Reusable Fabric Shopping Bag. SCRAP (see left column).

Resale and Rental Resources

For years, Master Recycler program participants have had to hunt down certain reused or recycled items in their neighborhoods. The most recent class culled through these assignments, verified stores and locations and created a resource list. Check it out at <http://extension.orst.edu/multnomah/recycling/index.html>. Click on "Resale and Rental Resources" on the left-hand sidebar.

Still Chasing Arrows After 25 Years: AOR Fall Conference

Association of Oregon Recyclers, one of the first state recycling associations, officially began in 1977. Help AOR celebrate its 25th anniversary in Seaside, Oregon, September 12-14.

The conference kicks off on Thursday with an Open House at the CART-M Recycling and Reuse Store, followed by a welcoming reception. Friday and Saturday are jam-packed with fun and educational sessions, including New Opportunities to Recycle, The Three Rs of E-Scrap, Does Your Compost "Stink"?, and Household Hazardous Waste: Prevention, Education and Collection.

Go to <http://www.aorr.org/> or call 503-661-4475 to register. August 23 is the early-bird deadline!

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

**Ten Ways to Stop Junk Mail –
see special insert!**