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Recycling in Dunn County

People often wonder why recycling guidelines aren't uniform in Wisconsin. Travel costs, methods of travel, sorting equipment, and recycling markets that dictate what can be recycled and how it must be prepared all affect the standards differently. Today I hash out the details of why recycling is done the way it is in Dunn County.

Transportation

It costs money to transport recyclables all across the world for sorting, cleaning, and processing. In general there are higher transportation costs in Wisconsin due to the lack of ports and harbors on lakes, lack of developed rail, and a highly concentrated population.

Every time a recycling box is shipped from an Area Collection Station to the Transfer Station it costs money. Depending on which site it came from it can really add up. How can you help? Crush your recyclables before putting them into the bins. Shipping air is not efficient and it costs a lot of money to do so.

Separating

Markets, lack of specialized sorting equipment, and a small work force, all play a role in recycling costs. Sepa-

rated materials are "cleaner" with very little contamination. This makes them easier to sell and at a higher rate than materials that are not separated or "dirty". Dunn County has a reputation for having high quality, clean recyclables, and therefore we don't have trouble selling them. Numerous buyers want Dunn County's material, which is not the case for all communities.

Specialized sorting equipment is very expensive to purchase and maintain. Furthermore, contaminants must still be removed before the recyclables are sorted by machine. Sorting equipment would require more than the 2 or 3 employees that currently handle the work load at the Dunn County Transfer Station and Recycling Center. Also, there is a lack of equipment that would fit our Transfer Station and the needs of our community. It's like buying a SUV when a Volkswagen Beetle is all that will fit in the garage. Our 'garage' just isn't big enough. That's not to say Dunn County hasn't looked into upgrading our Transfer Station. The Solid Waste Director looks into this issue every 2 years. Like everything else it's an investment and currently that investment

wouldn't pay off.

With numerous tasks necessary to run our sites, our attendants rely on you, the public, to sort and crush recyclables. This is the best way to ensure our sites are clean, safe and efficient, while keeping costs down.

#1 and #2 plastic bottles & jugs

Number 1 and 2 plastic bottles and jugs have the highest resale value and are the easiest materials to recycle and process at a recycling facility. This is due partially to their uniform shape, streamlining of modern technology, and the fact that these materials have been recycled for a longer period of time therefore making equipment more efficient and widely available.

Other plastic containers can still be recycled elsewhere but they need to be collected and sold in large volumes to be competitive in the market. Since Dunn County has a small population we cannot collect enough to be competitive. Stockpiling material isn't an option for our small Transfer Station either. We don't have enough space inside to hold materials until we can sell. Plastics degrade when set out in the elements and lose value quickly so that isn't an option either.

Stump the Grump

What are nurdles?



HINT

It's slang for what's in the picture above.

Answer on page 2.

Dunn County's Material Recovery Facility (MRF)

Here is a sneak peak into what our Transfer Station, also known as a Materials Recovery Facility or MRF, looks like.

Bunkers

Presorted recyclables get dumped into their respective bunker. These bunkers run along the northeast wall of the Transfer Station.



#2 Plastic Bottles & Jugs



#1 Plastic Bottles & Jugs



Mixed Paper



Cardboard

“Sorting Equipment”

If mixed materials come to the Transfer Station our employees have to hand sort recyclables inside the bunkers. Hand sorting material takes away from other duties they need to get down to run a safe and efficient MRF. Usually only 2 or 3 employees work on any given day.



Machinery

One loader is responsible for loading recyclables into the baler and garbage into a semi that will then be transported to the landfill. The loader seen here is scooping up trash to be put into the semi. The semi is located to the right of the loader just below the floor.



Dunn County has a single baler that bales all recyclables (not glass) that enters the facility. The baler compresses materials into squares so they can be efficiently transported to a processing facility.



Once materials are baled they are moved around using the fork lift.



Bales

Plastic and mixed paper bales are stored inside to keep them from degrading in the outside elements. Many of the materials collected in Dunn County are sold to processors in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan.



Stump the Grump



Nurdles are little pellets of plastic that are sent to various manufacturing plants to be turned into usable plastic products. Nurdles, though great for our plastic industry, can cause trouble for the environment. Sometimes they spill when being transferred from railcar or truck to plastic manufacturing facilities. As a result, these tiny pellets can be found in waterways, washed up on beaches, or on the sides of the road. Animals often mistaken nurdles for food and can end up starving to death if they consume too much.

ReCyclone Winners



The name ReCyclone was actually submitted separately by two different people, Holland Webinger of Menomonie (left) and Anne Behrens of Eau Claire (right). Behrens also submitted the tag line “A Force of Nature for Nature”. For their efforts, the winners were given gift certificates to local businesses.



Holland Wbinger, currently taking Drivers Education, was elated when our recycling staff handed him a \$25 gift card to Mills Fleet Farm.



Ann Behrens is the resident costumer for the Eau Claire Children's Theatre. Her lovely smile may be due in part to receiving a \$25 gift certificate to the Grain Bin and Bakery.



ReCyclone made its' debut at the Rock & Roll themed SummerDaze celebration in Menomonie. Pictured with ReCyclone from left to right are: Rock, &, Roll.

Meet Chelsea Wiegand

Dunn County Solid Waste welcomes a new Recycling Intern, Chelsea Wiegand. Chlelsea will be a senior at University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, majoring in Environmental Policy and Planning. Born and raised in the city of Green Bay, her parents were always strict recyclers and taught her the significance of recycling at a young age. Her interest in environmental affairs stemmed from her love of outdoor activities such as fishing, biking and gardening.

This summer, Chelsea will be promoting a Crushing Campaign which will teach a Dunn County residents the importance of taking that extra step to crush their recyclables. She will calculate the cost and environmental savings of our bins if materials were crushed instead of their current mostly uncrushed state.

Additional projects she'll be working on include encouraging recycling at special events and helping with restaurant, apartment building and convenience store audits.

