

Letter from the Janitor October 27, 2008



Food waste and used paper towels from the Visitor Center are composted here, and help fertilize this vegetable garden.

The Next Level

We have proved here that waste can be handled in a responsible manner. A diversion rate over 80% is pretty respectable. Can you imagine what would happen if the entire country – or world for that matter – did the same? It would require a major restructuring of the labor force as emphasis shifted from resource extraction and refining to material reclamation. Think of the land preserved, the greenhouse gases and pollution prevented, energy saved and compost fertilized farms created. It would be a dramatic change, but entirely feasible - and critically important we do so.

80% is great, but we can do better. *We need to generate less*, remembering that even recycling takes energy and causes some pollution in reprocessing.

Paper is by far the largest waste stream leaving this facility. We can all be more judicious in our paper use by using double-sided copy features, copying only when necessary, and making the minimum number needed.

An easy 75% of our unrecyclable trash is food packaging. It doesn't weigh much, but it's bulky and takes up limited landfill space. Here's where I'll probably tread on a few toes, but I'm going to offer some suggestions anyway and hope at least a few folks will see merit in them...

- Get a mug. Most coffee shops will discount .10 to .25 per cup if you use your own mug. Coffee cups are among the most prevalent castaways.
- Bring a lunch. Avoid buying take out lunches - take time to make your own. Make it the night before. Make it interesting and enviable, so the aroma draws salivating coworkers out of the office-warren searching for the source, inspiring them to do the same.
- Reuse bags. Paper, plastic, ziplock – all can be used multiple times.

Just a little extra effort could put us over 90% - and until more plastic recycling markets open up, that will be about as good as it gets.

Diversion Rate: 84%

For the year spanning 6/1/2007 to 5/30/2008, all garbage generated by the staff and public at Islands and Ocean Visitor Center was sorted, weighed and logged. The rate average for the year was 84%, with a low in July '07 of 81% and a high in April '08 of 89%.

The "diversion rate" is the amount of material diverted from the Homer bailing facility through recycling, composting and reuse.

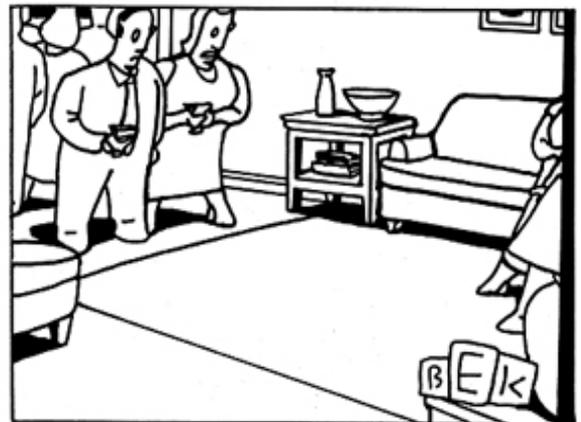
The only item not truly recycled is glass, which is smashed at the landfill and used as a cover for waste cells.

Glass isn't cost effective to recycle here, but I'd rather see them run it through a glass pulverizer, which can turn it into non-sharp aggregate, for use in concrete and paving.

Please Note:

- *The landfill only accepts # 2 HDPE plastic milk jugs and large laundry detergent jugs now. No other types of # 2's.*
- *Would greatly appreciate office eaters putting food waste in compost bins instead of trash cans. Desk top compost cans are available in 2nd floor closet. I'll empty them Sunday if you forget.*
- *Biodegradable cups, plates, clamshell takeout containers and cornstarch cutlery are a vast improvement over plastic – but unfortunately won't break down in my compost piles in one season. Regrettably, please throw in trash.*

As always, your cooperation is appreciated.



"Oh God, here they come—act green."