

IMAGINE NO WASTE

Santa Cruz County is getting closer to a world with no waste. **INSIDE:** Find stories about how the county is at the forefront of waste reduction and recycling, and what **YOU** can do to help!



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

ZERO WASTE: A SUSTAINABLE PLAN

Santa Cruz County's goal is to eventually eliminate waste

BY ANNE STOKES

Santa Cruz County is a natural beauty. Visitors from around the world come to surf its shores, hike its redwood forests and catch a glimpse of its wildlife, from humpback whales to the noble banana slug.

It's that natural beauty that inspires a strong sense of conservation among those who know it best: its residents. Whether to preserve its natural resources, attract tourists or reduce the community's environmental impact, Santa Cruz County realized long ago that keeping its community clean is an important priority. Global efforts require local steps, and every little bit helps, whether it's backyard composting or dropping off batteries for recycling.

"There's a strong ethos of people having an environmental responsibility to keep our shores clean, our water healthy [and] to protect ... natural habitats," says Katherine O'Dea, executive director of Save Our Shores. "Along with that comes the sense of responsibility in terms of taking progressive action around waste management and other environmental policies."

To reduce the amount of trash and pollution that would otherwise end up wasting away in the landfill or harming wildlife, the County of Santa Cruz Department of Public

Works has introduced a Zero Waste Plan. Rather than managing waste, the plan seeks to better manage and conserve resources to avoid its creation in the first place and eliminate its effects on the environment, wildlife and community. Achieving such a goal requires a collaborative effort involving the public and businesses, as well as county and city municipalities to:

- **Reduce** the volume and toxicity of waste through trash diversion programs and eliminating single-use items such as plastic bags,
- **Reuse** materials — such as clothing, appliances and building materials — for their original or alternative uses as much as possible,
- **Recycle or compost** all other materials, including organic waste, glass and plastics.

While environmental initiatives have been a defining feature of Santa Cruz County's politics for nearly 50 years, the county has recently implemented several new measures to achieve its Zero Waste goal, including:

- **Sustainable packaging ordinances** requiring fully compostable or recyclable to-go food service ware (banning single-use Polystyrene foam products).

- **Banning single-use plastic bags.**
- **Extended producer responsibility** policies requiring manufacturers to provide for the safe collection and disposal of their products, including prescription medications and medical sharps.
- **Organic waste composting programs**, in particular commercial food waste from restaurants and supermarkets.

"We are trying to promote policies that can reduce the amount that comes into our landfills and reach that Zero Waste goal. We think there's a way we can have a smaller footprint on the planet as we go about doing our work," says John Leopold, chair of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. "Our goal is to reduce the amount of waste in our waste stream as much as possible, to help protect the environment and to get people to think about how they use materials."

"We think there's a way we can have a smaller footprint on the planet as we go about doing our work."

JOHN LEOPOLD
CHAIR OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



From left, Katherine O'Dea, executive director of Save Our Shores, Tim Goncharoff, resource planner for Santa Cruz County, John Leopold, Chair of the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, and Jackie Nunez, founder of The Last Plastic Straw, in front of Natural Bridges State Beach.

PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY

The late founder of O'Neill Wetsuits, Jack O'Neill (top), considered the protection of the environment to be vital to his business. In 1996, he created O'Neill Sea Odyssey, which gives children the opportunity to learn how human actions are impacting the ocean (below).
PHOTOS COURTESY OF O'NEILL WETSUITS AND O'NEILL SEA ODYSSEY

MAKING WAVES FOR A CLEANER FUTURE

Surfing industry leader educates young environmentalists

BY ANNE STOKES

Surfers are veritable canaries in a coal mine. Literally swimming in their environment, they're more invested than most in clean ocean waters. Few people knew this truth better than Jack O'Neill.

A surfing industry pioneer, he innovated the neoprene wetsuit, opening his Cowell Beach surf shop after moving to Santa Cruz in 1959. Today his company, O'Neill Wetsuits, is the world's leading wetsuit manufacturer.

"Jack firmly believed, and we believe at O'Neill Wetsuits, that the protection of coastal and oceanic resources is the bottom line, bedrock foundation of the success of our firm," says Mark Massara, general counsel and vice president of social responsibility. "You need a safe and healthy ocean environment in order to facilitate public enjoyment, recreation and education."

Massara says that after O'Neill's passing in 2017, the company continues to honor its founder's commitment to environmental protection, welcoming advancements and innovations that enable more ecologically sustainable business practices.

"We have always attempted to have those values apply to every aspect of our operations: design, manufacturing and distribution," he says. "We're looking at the full gamut of sustainability, including labor practices, recycling [and] solar."

Even with an accomplished corporate career and legendary status within the surfing community, O'Neill considered his greatest accomplishment to be the O'Neill Sea Odyssey (OSO). Founded in 1996, the nonprofit program aims to inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

OSO turns the Monterey Bay Sanctuary into a classroom. Aboard a 65-foot catamaran, fourth through sixth graders — many from Title 1 schools — get their hands wet and learn how on-shore actions impact the nearshore kelp forest habitat beneath them.

"There's nothing like being on the water, seeing the waves, feeling the wind in your hair that stimulates science learning and really engages students with a passion for the ocean," says Executive Director Dan Haifley. "Our hopes are that students will advocate for the importance of ocean protection to their families and friends."

The program is provided free of charge, but classes "pay" for their field trip with a community service project of their choosing. OSO also provides supplemental curriculum utilizing Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core-aligned lessons.

"The program was founded to instill a sense of stewardship in the ocean and we believe the program has been successful in doing that," Haifley says. "By establishing O'Neill Sea Odyssey, O'Neill didn't want to just be a part of another environmental group, he wanted to give the next generation a real in-depth look at why it was necessary to protect the oceans."

For more information on the O'Neill Sea Odyssey program, visit oneillseaodyssey.org.

"Jack firmly believed ... that the protection of coastal and oceanic resources is the bottom line, bedrock foundation of the success of our firm."

MARK MASSARA
VICE PRESIDENT OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY,
O'NEILL WETSUITS



At New Leaf Community Markets, employees inspect store displays for any unsellable food, which is collected for composting.
PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY

ANOTHER USE FOR FOOD WASTE

Keeping food waste out of landfills prevents climate change and it's easy to do in Santa Cruz County

BY LAURA HILLEN

YOU CAN COMPOST, TOO!

Are you a resident?

Taking care of food waste at home couldn't be any simpler in Santa Cruz County. These facts and resources make a beneficial act almost effortless:

- Anybody can compost!
- You don't need much space
- All organic waste can be composted
- Get FREE help and instruction at a county workshop
- Attend a workshop, get a FREE compost bin

Contact the county at 831-824-6484 or visit www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org to find the next composting workshop.

Are you a business?

As of January 1, 2019, all businesses that produce four cubic yards or more of solid waste per week are required to take part in an organic waste recycling program. Luckily, Santa Cruz County makes that easy. Here's how:

- Collection available everywhere in the county
- Service levels available to meet customer's needs
- Reduce trash capacity, save money!

Sign up for collection by contacting GreenWaste Recovery at 831-426-2711 or customerservice@greenwaste.com.

When Santa Cruz County's waste numbers rolled in nearly a decade ago, the results were shocking — nearly 40 percent of waste entering landfills was organic and, primarily, food waste. The county realized that if it was going to lower its waste output, managing food waste was crucial.

"We need to get away from this idea that materials are manufactured, used and then the leftovers are thrown away," says Tim Goncharoff, resource planner for Santa Cruz County. "There really is no away."

Ten years after adopting its food waste program, one of the first in the state, Santa Cruz County has drastically reduced its food waste numbers and is now working toward a new goal of "zero waste" — obtainable by reducing the amount of food waste generated and by composting.

Since 2006, Santa Cruz County's current program not only diverts food waste from landfills, but finds a way to reuse it — often saving residents and commercial businesses trash disposal costs along the way.

For businesses who can't compost on-site, county franchise hauler GreenWaste Recovery collects their food and organic waste materials up to three times a week. The collected waste is then shipped to the Monterey Regional Waste Management District where materials are mixed with other organics, composted and sold to local landscapers, gardeners and farmers.

Food waste that isn't collected contributes directly to climate change. Left in landfills, food scraps and organic waste produce carbon dioxide and methane — greenhouse gases that might escape and emit into the atmosphere. Organic waste in Santa Cruz County finds a second life as energy. Organics deposited in the landfill create methane, which is captured and turned into energy: "Enough to power 3,000 homes," according to Goncharoff. Food waste transported to the digester is also processed to produce energy, and the residue turned into rich compost which is returned to local farms and gardens.

Santa Cruz County makes it easy for commercial businesses to remove food waste from their trash, and implement collection with their own methods. For example, New Leaf Community Markets, a popular natural foods grocery chain in the county, has been reducing its food waste output since opening in 1985.

"The fact is that food waste is fuel," says Scott Roseman, New Leaf founder. "Whatever food waste is generated, we're going to try and

make sure that's appropriately reused."

Roseman explains that at some locations, like New Leaf's Capitola store, employees can take home any edible but unsellable food. What's leftover goes into bins which are then collected for commercial compost. Close to 100 percent of the store's food waste is being recycled.

"The fact is that food waste is fuel. Whatever food waste is generated, we're going to try and make sure that's appropriately reused."

SCOTT ROSEMAN
FOUNDER, NEW LEAF COMMUNITY MARKETS

TURNING TRASH INTO TREASURE

Grey Bears puts donated items to good use

BY ANNE STOKES

Even before “being green” was part of the public’s vernacular, Grey Bears was working to keep Santa Cruz’s environment and community healthy. What started out nearly 50 years ago to distribute healthy food to seniors has grown to encompass recycling and refurbishing programs that divert about 7,500 tons of materials away from the landfill annually — 500 tons of which are refurbished items such as clothing, appliances and e-waste.

“Reuse is at the core of our mission, to help preserve our environment by conserving food and other resources,” says Tim Brattan, executive director of Grey Bears. “Recycling is always the last step of course, so we try to reuse and refurbish everything the public drops off, whether it’s an appliance, a household item, or other recyclable materials.”

Grey Bears distributes a weekly brown bag of fresh produce and staples to 3,000 Santa Cruz County seniors, many of whom are homebound. Organic waste — such as the food they collect from local farmers, processors, markets and bakeries — is one of the most common items found in landfills. Through its food distribution activities, Grey Bears keeps 2.3 million pounds of food waste out of the waste stream.

To support its mission, Grey Bears relies on volunteers and funding from recycling and refurbishing programs, located at its Chanticleer Avenue facility and at the Buena Vista Landfill. According to Brattan, 65 percent of the nonprofit’s revenue is earned through recycling collection and thrift store sales.

Donated items such as clothing, furniture, books, appliances and other housewares are accepted at Grey Bears Thrift Store. For many items, including large and small appliances, experienced

“We’re just trying to keep it in the circle and reuse it. If there’s someone who wants it, we want to make sure they get it.”

TIM BRATTAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREY BEARS

volunteers repair and refurbish the items, which are then sold for a fraction of their retail price. Quarterly, Grey Bears hosts Repair Cafés, where the public can bring in items such as small appliances, clothing and even lawnmowers, and learn how to perform simple fixes.

While Grey Bears is a great place to find deals on common thrift store items, it also has an ever-changing inventory of electronics including audio-visual systems, flat screen, LCD and plasma television sets, and even refurbished computers. As a Microsoft-licensed refurbisher, Grey Bears’ volunteers load software and operating systems onto both Macs and PCs.

“Our goal is to say, ‘Yes’ to everything and to be able to do something with whatever it is that people don’t want anymore,” Brattan says. “We’re just trying to keep it in the circle and reuse it. If there’s someone who wants it, we want to make sure they get it.”

Visit Grey Bears Thrift Store at 2710 Chanticleer Ave., or their recycling center at the Buena Vista Landfill, 1231 Buena Vista Drive in Watsonville. For more information, visit www.greybears.org or call 831-479-1055.

Grey Bears keeps items out of the landfill in multiple ways, including reselling in its thrift stores and recycling. They also host repair clinics, where people can fix their small appliances — like waffle irons — in lieu of throwing them in the trash.
PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY



SECOND CHANCE STORES

Home improvement projects can be expensive. At Santa Cruz County’s Second Chance Stores, supplies are not! Whether you’re in need of paint, wood stains, household cleaners or any other type of materials, you just might find what you’re looking for, FREE of charge!

“A lot of people buy stuff they never use so there’s a lot of unopened, brand-new containers like motor oil or laundry detergent. We accept a variety of things there and they look good and they’re clean,” says Kasey Kolassa, Santa Cruz County recycling and solid waste services manager. “They’re good products, we’d rather give them back to our local community than send them away for disposal.”

Second Chance Stores are located at:

Buena Vista Landfill

1231 Buena Vista Drive, Watsonville
Open Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Ben Lomond Transfer Station

9835 Newell Creek Road
Thursdays, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

City of Santa Cruz Resource Recovery Facility

605 Dimeo Lane
Saturdays, 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org.

DISPOSAL MADE EASY

Santa Cruz County empowers businesses to keep toxic waste out of landfills

BY LAURA HILLEN

Greenspace has always done business with the well-being of the planet in mind. In fact, that's the very tenet it was founded on — working only with socially minded companies to source its interior décor products. Greenspace offering take-back programs isn't surprising, says Manager Cathy Brothers, but how much waste they save from the landfill is.

"Just seeing the quantity of recyclable material come into our store is surprising, and we're a small shop," Brothers says. "To see that there's so much toxic stuff that we've been able to take off the streets and out of the landfill, that right there is enough for us to know that it's been a success."

Greenspace offers sustainable solutions for home improvement, such as cabinetry and wall finishes. In line with its socially responsible mindset, Greenspace works in collaboration with Santa Cruz County to offer fluorescent light and paint take-back programs. Both programs operate the same — unused items are dropped off in the store, and Greenspace takes care of the rest.

"The concept of cradle-to-grave is yet another way for us to support the environment and our community," says Andrea Damon, office manager. "Our current recycling programs allow us to responsibly dispose of our recycling materials that would normally find their way to a landfill."

For each program, very little effort is required by Greenspace. Especially considering the detrimental effects that spilled paint and mercury can have on soil and the environment.

Greenspace collects unwanted paint in a large cardboard box, which gets picked up by PaintCare when full. From there, the paint is recycled into new paint products, or consolidated into fuel or cement. (Visit www.paintcare.org for a list of other drop-off locations.)

"Our customers love it, it doesn't cost them anything," Brothers says. "It feels good, if they know the kind of impact they can have."

The process is similar with Greenspace's fluorescent lights program. Fluorescent lights — which contain small, but dangerous amounts of mercury — are collected in-store



Andrea Damon, office manager at Greenspace, accepts unwanted paint for recycling at the store. PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY

"To see that there's so much toxic stuff that we've been able to take off the streets and out of the landfill, that right there is enough for us to know that it's been a success."

CATHY BROTHERS
MANAGER, GREENSPACE



and then shipped to a facility in Tustin, Calif., to be safely dismantled into recyclable components.

If not for these programs, Brothers says that people would just place their old paint and fluorescent lighting in the trash where it does not belong. Instead, customers have an easy and free option to dispose of paint at the same place where they purchased it.

"We would adopt all of the recycling programs if we could," says Brothers. "We've made a concerted effort to adopt programs that are well-organized and make it easier for us to do it, as well as have a huge impact environmentally."

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY...

Most household items can be reused or recycled instead of becoming landfill waste. But just what happens to these everyday goods once you're done using them? Follow the stream to find out.



Leaf Pile

Weekly green cart collection or drop off at waste and recycling facilities

Processed, composted

Turned into mulch or soil

Sold back to the public



Fluorescent Lights

Collected at retail take-back locations or hazardous waste facilities

Packaged in prepaid boxes, sent to recycling centers

Broken down by machines

Mercury safely collected and reused



Old TV

Collected at disposal sites or landfills

Sent to ECS Refining in Santa Clara

Components separated, then refined, smelted or disposed of

Materials reused



PUTTING RESPONSIBILITY FOR DRUGS WHERE IT BELONGS

Santa Cruz County's extended producer responsibility ordinance saves money and lives

BY LAURA HILLEN

“It’s not just about saving, it’s about getting producers to think about manufacturing in a different way.”

TIM GONCHAROFF
RESOURCE PLANNER, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

Used prescriptions aren't always harmful, but when households have no way to safely dispose of unwanted medicines it can lead to poisonings, accidental overdoses, addiction and criminal activity. The easiest way to prevent this? Get those unwanted drugs out of homes and into places where they can be safely destroyed.

“What has really brought some focus to this issue in recent years is the opioid crisis,” says Tim Goncharoff, resource planner for Santa Cruz County. “We realized if we can just collect all those extra drugs and make sure they’re properly disposed of, that’s going to help a lot.”

In response, the county instituted an ordinance in 2016 implementing a strategy called extended producer responsibility (EPR). This broadens the responsibility of producers from just selling drug and medical sharps all the way through to the end of life for these products.

“When producers don’t have that responsibility, they end up externalizing costs onto the public sector and the environment,” says Heidi Sanborn, executive director of California Product Stewardship Council.

Before, the burden of paying for drug collection programs fell on county residents. Now, under county law,

drug manufacturers that sell pharmaceuticals and sharps in unincorporated Santa Cruz County must establish and pay for take-back programs.

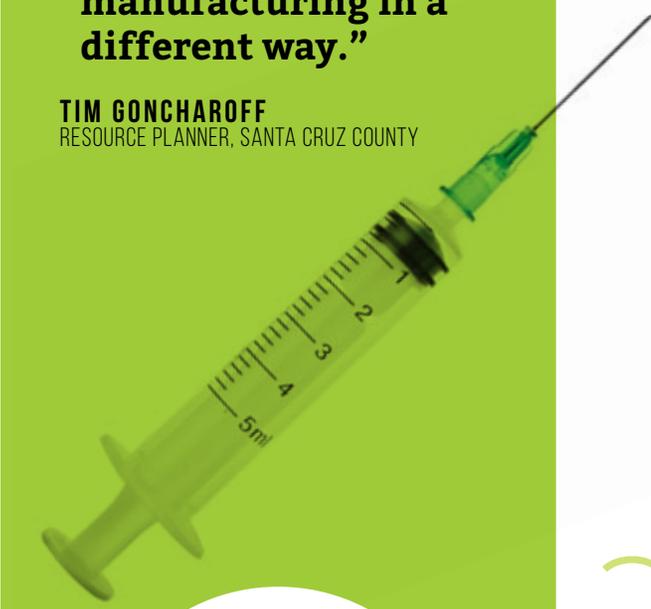
The county’s ordinance also inspired four local cities who were not covered to write ordinances of their own. Goncharoff says this included the City of Santa Cruz, which became the first U.S. city to adopt an EPR ordinance for drugs and sharps.

Since implementation, the only resistance the county has experienced is from producers — who don’t want to pay for disposal.

“I’ve heard every single reason you can concoct as to why producers oppose the ordinance,” Sanborn says. “They change their story constantly.”

The county dispels misinformation by repeating facts they’ve uncovered through extensive research — EPR programs are used all over the world, and they work.

“EPR is a way of implementing a more circular economy,” says Goncharoff. “It’s not just about saving, it’s about getting producers to think about manufacturing in a different way. If you know it’s going to come back, you’re going to start designing products that are easier to manage over their entire lifespan.”



Did you know?

Pharmaceuticals are any drugs sold with a prescription or over the counter. Sharps include all objects or devices used to puncture or lacerate the skin.

THE DANGERS OF IMPROPER DRUG DISPOSAL

Improper disposal of pharmaceuticals and sharps not only adds to landfill waste, it also causes significant damage to our environment and poses a huge safety risk.

Residents with no disposal methods often flush medical waste down the toilet. “Studies have found shocking levels of pharmaceutical residues in our waters and in marine organisms,” says Tim Goncharoff, resource planner for Santa Cruz County.

Sharps that are improperly disposed of can accidentally stick waste and sanitation workers as they sort through trash and recyclables. The needles can also cause large clogs in disposal systems and sewage pipes, which result in costly repairs that must be done by workers. Sharps can carry diseases like Hepatitis and HIV.

“A toilet is not a trash can, you cannot get everything out of the

water,” says Heidi Sanborn, executive director of California Product Stewardship Council. “With improper disposal, you have an accident waiting to happen.”

To find disposal locations in Santa Cruz County, visit www.sharpmedsolutions.org or www.med-project.org/locations/santa-cruz-county.

ILLEGAL DUMPERS BEWARE

County helping to stop blight with new ordinance

BY ANNE STOKES

Santa Cruz County is known for its beautiful coastal landscapes and redwood forests. Nothing ruins that picturesque scene faster than a dirty mattress dumped down a ravine, a shredded tire lying on the side of the road or a rotting pile of garbage left at a pullout area.

Whether collecting on rural roads or accumulating on an urban corner, illegally dumped trash is a problem for all Santa Cruz County residents. Not only does it create a visual blight, but some items can create health and environmental hazards.

“We get a lot of calls related to illegal dumping,” says Beau Hawksford, assistant departmental analyst for solid waste and recycling. “It creates a nuisance for communities because once someone dumps something and no one reports the site, more trash accumulates and the site grows. People think it’s permissible until it gets to the point where the pullout basically becomes a transfer station.”

He adds that vermin such as bedbugs, cockroaches and rats can start to become a problem with illegal dumping sites. Homeless encampments tend to pose an added safety threat as, oftentimes, a large amount of needles are found at such sites. And any materials poured down storm drains — paint, motor oil, pesticides and more — goes straight into waterways.

“I think a lot of it is just lack of education,” Hawksford says. “People don’t realize that certain things can be dumped for free at the landfill, including mattresses. ... There’s a perception that it’s too expensive to drop off a large item like a couch. A lot of times the inability to get materials to the landfill without paying somebody to do it, I think, is a big hurdle.”

Hawksford says that several Santa Cruz County departments, including Public Works, Parks and Recreation as well as Code Enforcement, are collaborating on an ordinance to hopefully stem such issues. Initial plans include a \$100 citation for first offenses, plus the cost of cleanup. Additional offenses will result in increasing fines. The County is also in the process of recruiting additional environmental program coordinators who would have the ability to issue those citations. But they still need the public’s eyes and ears to find dumpers and the trash they leave behind.

And now, there’s no excuse to dump bulky items: Beginning in January 2018, GreenWaste Recovery customers can have up

to three bulky-item pickups each year for FREE, as long as items weigh 200 pounds or less.

“It’s basically anything you can think of that’s large in your house [that you] want to get rid of,” Hawksford says.

“It creates a nuisance for communities because once someone dumps something and no one reports the site, more trash accumulates and the site grows.”

BEAU HAWKSFORD
ASSISTANT DEPARTMENTAL ANALYST
FOR SOLID WASTE AND RECYCLING



Did you know?

GreenWaste Recovery customers can have up to three bulky-item pickups each year for FREE. Call 831-426-2711.

Illegal dumping sites in Santa Cruz County are a blight and a health and environmental concern.
PHOTO COURTESY OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

TOP 5 MOST HARMFUL ILLEGALLY DUMPED ITEMS

- 1 Biohazards** such as medical sharps (needles) or medical waste.
- 2 Chemical waste** such as oil, solvents, gasoline, antifreeze or paint are hazardous to the environment.
- 3 General trash** can attract rats, cockroaches and other vermin which create health hazards themselves.
- 4 Abandoned cars** not only create a blight issue, but can leach hazardous waste such as oil, antifreeze and rusty automotive paint into the environment, potentially contaminating groundwater.
- 5 Mattresses and other bulky furniture**, the most commonly illegally dumped items in the county, tend to “encourage” others to dump trash and other items at the same site.



Help stop illegal dumping

The most expedient way to report illegal dumping is through the county’s smartphone app, **Citizen Connect**. You can take a photo of illegally dumped items, pinpointing its exact location via Google Maps and automatically notify the county’s 24-hour dispatch. You can also call the 24/7 reporting hotline at **831-477-3999** or send an email to Public Works at www.santacruzcountycycles.org.

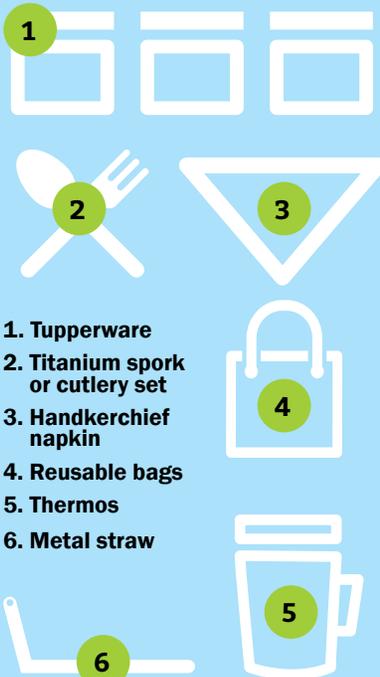
THE SUSTAINABLE WAY TO DINE OUT

Many to-go containers that come with a quick bite to eat are in fact non-biodegradable items that can spend an eternity in a landfill.

Whether you're grabbing coffee or picking up dinner, here are some helpful tips on how to avoid plastics on the go:

- Ask for no straws, plastic utensils, napkins or plastic bags
- Bring your own containers for food/ beverages (see below)
- Get rewarded! Sometimes sustainable shoppers receive extra food or discounts from appreciative businesses!

How to Make a Reusable To-Go Meal Kit!



1. Tupperware
2. Titanium spork or cutlery set
3. Handkerchief napkin
4. Reusable bags
5. Thermos
6. Metal straw

TAKING PLASTIC OUT OF TAKEOUT

Santa Cruz County is getting plastics out of our ocean — and our lunch plans

BY LAURA HILLEN



Jackie Nunez, founder of The Last Plastic Straw, dines at The Windmill Cafe, which implemented the county's sustainable packaging ordinance.
PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY

It's an act that occurs without thought: order a drink, receive a straw. But what happens to the plastic tube after your iced latte is gone? Rarely recycled, straws end up in overfilled landfills or as litter.

"Every piece [of plastic] that's ever been made is still in our environment, even if you burn it," says Jackie Nunez, founder of The Last Plastic Straw, an organization dedicated to replacing plastic single-use items. "It's coming up through our food chain [because] our waterways are contaminated."

Santa Cruz County was becoming infested with plastics — thousands of straws littered the beaches and clogged the oceans that tourists flocked to see. Meanwhile, these plastics were entering the food chain and endangering the local community.

To stem this pollution at the source, the county instituted a sustainable packaging ordinance. Under the ordinance, which went into effect Jan. 1, 2017, all to-go containers must now be recyclable or certified compostable. This prohibits plastic straws and stir sticks, non-certified compostable cups and cutlery, styrofoam, #6 polystyrene (such as hot cup lids), and non-certified compostable or recyclable containers.

For most Santa Cruz restaurants like The Windmill Cafe, the shift was easy. Owner Mary Apra has used sustainable practices since the business opened and says finding products to meet this new sustainable standard has been easy.

"Before it was hard to find great [sustainable packaging], now there's just so many choices," Apra says. "You just have to look for it."

Apra uses compostable fiber clamshells made out of wheat stalks, StalkMarket plastic corn cups and EcoCraft bio-paper

"Every piece [of plastic] that's ever been made is still in our environment."

JACKIE NUNEZ
FOUNDER, THE LAST PLASTIC STRAW



bags, among other things. All of these items can break down in compost systems.

Even corporate brands are on board with the ordinance. Starbucks switched its classic green plastic straws to paper — now all of its plastic to-go cups are compostable ones.

"When I talked to one of the [Starbucks] managers here who was involved in the changeover ... he said it was painless," Nunez says. "Nobody complained."

Not only does the ordinance help retain Santa Cruz County's renowned beauty, but Apra says it saves her restaurant money — businesses that limit packaging have less to purchase.

The effect is invaluable. The ordinance, together with dedicated business owners and residents, has decreased the number of straws on Santa Cruz County's beaches. One important step in the ongoing battle for our planet.

"Think about our kids and what we're leaving them," Apra says. "We're the ones who have to make a stand."

RECYCLING:

How and where to
recycle your waste!

A TO Z

BY ANNE STOKES



A IS FOR AEROSOL

Empty cans should be placed in your **blue recycling container**. Cans with product still inside (including paint, lubricants and medications such as inhalers) need to be disposed of at Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) facilities located at the **landfill or transfer station**.



B IS FOR BATTERIES

Whether they power toys or electronics, batteries are toxic waste that can't go into garbage. They can either be bagged and placed on top of your **blue recycling container**, taken to the HHW facilities at the **landfill or transfer station**, or they can be disposed of for FREE at many **hardware stores and county libraries**.



C IS FOR CARPET

Over 400 million pounds of carpet and padding end up in California landfills every year. In 2010, AB 2398 enacted extended producer responsibility measures to divert waste and encourage recycling efforts, including requiring installers to remove and recycle old carpet and padding before installing new product. If you need to recycle your own, **contact GreenWaste Recovery** to schedule a bulky-item pickup, or drop it off at any local landfill.



D IS FOR DRUGS

Instead of flushing prescription drugs down the toilet and into the watershed, return unused and expired prescriptions to the **pharmacy** where they can be safely disposed of.



E IS FOR ELECTRONIC WASTE

E-waste — including small appliances, cameras, cell phones and TVs — is *hazardous* waste! Dispose of yours at the **landfill or transfer station**. **Grey Bears** also accepts and refurbishes e-waste, including computers.



F IS FOR FLUORESCENT LIGHT BULBS

Fluorescent light bulbs and LEDs can be taken to **lighting and hardware store retailers** for FREE recycling.



G IS FOR GLASS

Glass, including cookware, dishware and mirrors, can be recycled and left curbside in your **blue recycling container**.



H IS FOR HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW)

Household hazardous waste — including pesticides, household cleansers, paint, sharps, grease and cooking oil — *shouldn't* be thrown in the trash or recycling bin. Dispose of them at HHW facilities at the **landfill or transfer station**. Some products can even be returned to where they were purchased for FREE disposal.



I IS FOR INKJET CARTRIDGES

Expensive inkjet cartridges can be refilled and reused, or **mailed back to producers** for recycling — that's what those envelopes that come in the packaging are for!



J IS FOR JUNK MAIL

You can recycle junk mail in your **blue recycling container** curbside or you can avoid getting it in the first place by calling 1-888-5-OPT-OUT or visit www.optoutprescreen.com.



K IS FOR KITCHEN WASTE

Learn how to turn your kitchen and other organic waste into landscaping gold at **monthly compost workshops**, where you can get a FREE compost bin. Call the county's composting workshop program at 831-824-6484 or visit goo.gl/Fw6BaK to reserve a spot at the next event.



L IS FOR LUMBER

Don't let lumber and other construction materials languish in the landfill! Recycle them at the **landfill or transfer station**. Working on your own home improvement project? Look into using salvaged items like doors, windows, cabinets or flooring.



M IS FOR MATTRESSES

It's FREE to drop off mattresses at the **landfill or transfer station**. Many GreenWaste Recovery customers can also schedule a bulky-item pickup curbside.



N IS FOR NEEDLES

Don't leave needles (or medical sharps) in with regular recycling. Return them back to the **pharmacy** for safe and FREE disposal.



O IS FOR OIL

Used motor oil and filters can be recycled **curbside** or taken into **select auto parts stores** and service stations. GreenWaste Recovery offers FREE jugs designed to resist leaking, which can be left curbside alongside other trash containers.



P IS FOR PAINT

Unused paint can be returned to **paint stores** for recycling (visit www.paintcare.org for locations) or taken to HHW facilities at the **landfill or transfer station**. If you're looking for a few gallons to use in your own project, take a peek at the ever-changing inventory at the HHW's Second Chance Stores and see what's available for FREE.



Q IS FOR QUILTS

Quilts, and other textiles like clothing, make up a large portion of landfill material and are a source of greenhouse gas emissions, according to the EPA. Instead of throwing out your old quilt, take it to the **Grey Bears Thrift Store** where it can keep a new owner warm, not contribute to global warming!



R IS FOR RETAIL TAKE-BACK PROGRAMS

Many **retail establishments** offer take-back programs where customers can return items such as batteries, paint, pharmaceuticals and more at the same places they were purchased, which is a convenient and **FREE** way to recycle.



S IS FOR SECOND CHANCE STORE

Looking for aerosols, garden products, wood stains, household cleaners and more on a budget? The Santa Cruz County HHW Collection Program may have what you're looking for at just the right price — **FREE!** Quality items that have been brought in for recycling but that can still be used are available free to the general public at the **transfer station, landfill and city resource recovery facility**.



T IS FOR TIRES

Too often, tires are illegally dumped by the roadside. **FREE** tire recycling is available at **local landfills for one week** in the spring and fall most years. Call 831-454-2160 for more dates and information.



U IS FOR UTENSILS

As of January 2017, Santa Cruz County's **environmentally acceptable packaging materials ordinance** has banned the use of single-use, to-go food packaging, including any plastic straws, cups and eating utensils that are not certified compostable.



V IS FOR VIDEO

Has your life gone digital? Get rid of all the video tapes, games, cassettes and floppy disks (remember those?) that are cluttering up your home and which aren't accepted in general recycling. Visit www.GreenDisk.com or call 1-800-305-DISK for more information.



W IS FOR WAX CARTONS

Half paper, half plastic, wax cartons keep your favorite foods and drinks contained — milk, juice, soup, even wine. While the name implies otherwise, there is no wax to be recycled, instead cartons are made of paper, plastic and sometimes aluminum, all three of which can be recycled **curbside**.



X IS FOR X-MAS LIGHTS

During the holidays, many people pull a tangled mess of lights and wires out of storage only to find that they no longer work. Bundle up carefully to avoid loose ends and place in your **blue recycling cart**.



Y IS FOR YARD WASTE

Grass clippings, wood chips, soil, food scraps and other organic waste can be recycled curbside and left in your **yard waste cart**. Large amounts can be taken to the **landfill or transfer station** (which can handle any quantity) or call GreenWaste Recovery customer service at 831-426-2711 to schedule a bulky-item pickup.



Z IS FOR ZERO WASTE!

Santa Cruz County's Department of Public Works' **Zero Waste** strategy approaches waste management with the goal of avoiding the creation of — rather than mitigating the existence of — waste. Plans encompass reducing the volume of waste, reusing materials and products, and recycling or composting remaining materials.

Can't find your item? Visit www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org or call 831-454-2160 for more information on where and how to recycle.

WHERE TO GO:

1. Ben Lomond Transfer Station

9835 Newell Creek Road
Ben Lomond
831-454-2430
Hours: Monday-Saturday, 7:30-3:30 p.m.
www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org
Accepts: Solid waste, recyclable materials and household hazardous waste (HHW)

2. Grey Bears

2710 Chanticleer Ave., Santa Cruz
(first entrance at the blue buildings)
831-479-1055
www.greybears.org
Hours: Everyday, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Accepts: E-waste, household goods, clothing and furniture

3. Buena Vista Landfill

1231 Buena Vista Drive, Watsonville
831-454-2430
Hours: Monday-Saturday, 7:30-3:30 p.m.
www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org
Accepts: Solid waste, recyclable materials and household hazardous waste (HHW)

4. City of Santa Cruz Resource Recovery Facility

605 Dimeo Lane, Santa Cruz
Hours: Monday-Saturday, 7:30-3:30 p.m.
www.cityofsantacruz.com
Accepts: Solid waste, recyclable materials and household hazardous waste (HHW) — city residents only

5. Valley Women's Club

201-A Hihn St., Felton
Hours: Thursday-Tuesday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
12890 Hwy 9, Boulder Creek
Hours: Tuesday-Sunday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Accepts: Recyclable materials

GreenWaste Recovery

Customer service: 831-426-2711
www.greenwaste.com



SANTA CRUZ NEEDS YOU

Combat overflowing landfills and climate change with help from the County of Santa Cruz Department of Public Works

AT THE FOREFRONT OF CHANGE

Santa Cruz County doesn't just settle for doing what's required when it comes to waste, the county is always searching for what else can be done. Often the very first to tackle a new environmental initiative, or not far behind, Santa Cruz County has been awarded for the research, consultation and implementation of its programs.

- 2011** ▶ **Green California Leadership Award** for Waste Management
- 2012** ▶ **Governor's Environmental and Economic Leadership Award** for Waste Reduction
- 2014** ▶ National Association of Counties **Achievement Award for Zero Waste Program**
- 2016** ▶ California Resource Recovery Association **Outstanding Recycling Program Award**
CalRecycle **Outstanding Policy/Legislative Achievement Award** for Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Ordinance
California Product Stewardship Council **Arrow Award** for Safe Drug and Sharps Disposal Program
- 2017** ▶ California Resource Recovery Association **"Closing the Loop" Award** for Recyclable and Compostable Food Service Ware Ordinance

Got a question?
Don't know where to start?

Contact County of Santa Cruz Department of Public Works

 **831-454-2160**

 **www.santacruzcountyrecycles.org**

 **www.facebook.com/SantaCruzCountyDPW/**



VOLUNTEER

Contact these organizations for volunteer opportunities.

California Product Stewardship Council
www.calpsc.org

California Resource Recovery Association
www.crra.com

City of Santa Cruz
www.cityofsantacruz.com

City of Capitola
www.cityofcapitola.org

City of Scotts Valley
www.scottsvally.org

City of Watsonville
www.cityofwatsonville.org

Coastal Watershed Council
www.coastal-watershed.org

Ecology Action
www.ecoact.org

Hope Services
www.hopeservices.org

O'Neill Sea Odyssey
www.oneillseaodyssey.org

Santa Cruz Grey Bears
www.greybears.org

Save Our Shores
www.saveourshores.org

Save The Waves
www.savethewaves.org

Surfrider Foundation
www.surfrider.org

The Valley Women's Club of the San Lorenzo Valley
www.valleywomensclub.com

Volunteer Center of Santa Cruz County
www.scvolunteercenter.org