



Diversions

Winter 2002

A Publication of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority

How big are your feet?

Measure Your Ecological Footprint



We all consume natural resources in order to live. However, people consume at different levels depending on their lifestyle. Visit www.earthday.net/goals/footprint.stm and take a short quiz to estimate your "ecological footprint". Developed by Redefining Progress, a public policy non-profit organization, the footprint system is a simple way to view complex sustainability issues. Each "footprint" represents the amount of land and water needed to produce resources and dispose waste for various ways of living.

How does your footprint compare to the average American's 24-acre footprint? If the worldwide average equaled the American average, it would take over four Earths to support the human population! Since most consumption produces waste, use one of your New Year's resolutions to commit to ways you can prevent waste.

Happy holidays and thank you for participating in our waste reduction programs!

The CCCSWA Plans Ahead

As the new year approaches, the CCCSWA is preparing for the end of its current collection service contracts, due to expire in 2006.

To be ready for this once-per-decade occasion, the CCCSWA is exploring all options, such as whether to renew existing contracts or request new proposals. The CCCSWA will consider customer satisfaction, rates, landfill diversion levels and potential service enhancements to determine the best course of action.

The new contract term could include residential food scrap collection (See the Ask the Authority column for more information on this) and "commingled" recycling service.

Commingled recycling eliminates the need for residents to separate paper from their containers and should help those who don't have room for all their paper and cardboard when using the current split container.

Shorter-term goals aim to bring all cities up to the 50% state-mandated recycling goal. To do this, CCCSWA is focusing its energy on construction and demolition debris ("C&D") recycling. As electronic waste continues to accumulate, the CCCSWA will coordinate additional "e-waste" collection events while looking for a sustainable long-term solution.

If you'd like to comment on the future of your garbage or recycling services, write to the CCCSWA at 1280 Civic Drive, #210, Walnut Creek, CA 94596, or email us at authority@wastediversion.org.

Thanks for your help reducing waste in your community. Please join us in making 2003 even more waste-free!

• The Other 50% •

Garbage Dump or Archaeological Dig?

Lettuce Entertain You

Question: How long does it take for a head of lettuce to break down in a landfill?

- a) two weeks
- b) three months
- c) one year
- d) none of the above

The answer is "none of the above," according to "garbologist," William Rathje, a professor at the Archaeology Center at Stanford University, has been studying landfills for fifteen years and, along with his students, has made some surprising discoveries about what we throw away and what happens to those materials when we do. They have learned, for example, that things don't break down or "biodegrade" the way we assumed they would.

Remember that head of lettuce? By extracting a soil core from twenty-one typical US and Canadian landfills (including some right here in the Bay Area), Rathje's team found an intact and easily identifiable head of lettuce that had been in a landfill for 10 years, a whole steak that had been buried for 20 years, and hot dogs that had been thrown away twenty-seven years before. Rathje's research team was able to date these items by the dozens of newspapers found around them. (The oldest newspapers dated to the late 1940s!) The reason so little biodegrades in landfills? Landfills are so well-engineered to reduce odor and water pollution that little or no water or air reaches our buried trash. These conditions make it extremely difficult for the bacteria that would otherwise love to "eat" our organic wastes to thrive and break them down.

So what does this mean to you and me? For many of us, it means re-thinking our assumptions about organic wastes, like food scraps, plant trimmings and even paper. In short, Rathje's research underscores the adage that there really is no "away" when we toss things into the trash. The landfills of today may become the archaeological sites of tomorrow. Think about creating your own compost or worm bin environment where materials will truly biodegrade.

To learn more about Rathje's work, read *Rubbish! The Archaeology of Garbage* (co-authored by Cullen Murphy) or *Use Less Stuff* (co-authored by Robert Liebenfeld), or visit the Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology's (BARA) web site at bara.arizona.edu/gs.htm or write to: The Garbage Project, University of Arizona, Anthropology Building, Room 316, Tucson, AZ 85721-0030. To learn more about **composting**, call the CCCSWA composting hotline at 906-1806.



This head of lettuce was pulled out of a landfill approximately 10 years after it was disposed. The lettuce remains intact because air and water, necessary for biodegradation, can't reach organic matter when it is buried in a landfill.

Holiday Collection Schedule

MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
DEC 23 Regular service	DEC 24 Regular service	DEC 25 NO PICKUP	DEC 26 Pickup for Wed. customers	DEC 27 Pickup for Thurs. customers	DEC 28 Pickup for Fri. customers
DEC 30 Regular service	DEC 31 Regular service	JAN 1 NO PICKUP	JAN 2 Pickup for Wed. customers	JAN 3 Pickup for Thurs. customers	JAN 4 Pickup for Fri. customers

Normal collection will resume the week of January 6.

Curbside Christmas Tree Recycling

Remove decorations and stands, then place clean unflocked trees at the curb on your collection day according to the schedule below.

January 6-10 Customers in Danville and Walnut Creek, plus Alamo, Diablo, Blackhawk and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

January 13-17 Customers in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda and the surrounding unincorporated areas.

If you miss your scheduled week, place your tree at the curb on your collection day the week of January 20-24.

After January 27, cut your tree and place it in your yard clippings cart or request an on-call recycling cleanup from Valley Waste Management by calling 935-8900. **NO FLOCKED OR ARTIFICIAL TREES.**



Celebrate While Saving Resources

Most of us enjoy holidays as a time of abundance, with plenty of friends and family. Here are ways to share this bounty while contributing to a sustainable future.

Give the gift of experience.

- Treat loved ones to a live performance, a movie, or a class. Give a gift certificate for a massage, makeover, or session with a personal trainer.
- Provide a caring service such as a home-cooked meal, yard work, or baby sitting.

A reusable gift keeps on giving.

- Stylish refillable pens, travel mugs, or personal digital assistants (PDAs), are useful and reduce waste.

Recycling is an art.

- Resource Revival of Portland, Oregon, has recycled over 100,000 pounds of used bicycle, car, and building materials into nicely designed gifts such as picture frames, CD racks and more. Call 1-800-866-8823 or visit www.resourcerevival.com.
- Recycled Glassworks in Oakland specializes in handmade glass dishes and bowls made from old window glass. Call 510-533-0573 or visit www.recycledglassworks.com.
- Try an Internet search for more reused and recycled gift ideas.

Consider the packaging. Use recyclable or reusable gift wrap and recycled-content cards.

- Send greetings via email, or choose cards made from paper with high recycled content.
- Make your own gift wrap using decorated recyclable paper bags or tin foil.
- Gift bags are an easy and reusable way to package gifts.



The "Street Chic" exhibit held in October, showed how reuse and recycling can be high art. This holiday, why not make decorations or gifts from reused materials? Visit the East Bay Depot for Creative Reuse (6713 San Pablo Ave., Oakland, 510-547-6470) for materials and inspirations.

Entertain with reusable products.

- Replace disposable paper goods with cloth napkins and tablecloths.
- Instead of paper plates and plastic utensils, buy an extra set of flatware and reusable dishes from a thrift or discount store. You'll save money in the long run.
- Make decorations from last year's greeting cards or with compostable cranberries and popcorn. Or invest in a set of cherished decorations that become part of a holiday tradition for many years to come.

Don't let food go to waste

- Food scraps make up a high percentage of landfilled waste, so buy and prepare just enough for your guests plus one or two days of leftovers.
- Keep portions moderate when you serve. It's better to hand out seconds or thirds, than to throw away uneaten food.
- If you're a guest where you expect they'll have leftovers, bring your own yogurt and cottage cheese containers to tote the treats home.
- Put vegetable and fruit trimmings in the compost or worm bin. For more information on composting call 906-1806.

Last but not least, recycle.

- After it's all over, don't forget to recycle bottles, cans and paper (include gift wrap that is NOT plastic coated or metallic), and of course, your unflocked holiday tree!

Happy Holidays!



In Case You Missed It...

Executive Director Interviewed on CNN

A loyal *Diversions* reader passed our Fall 2002 story on AOL CDs to CNN. CNN reporter Rusty Dornan (center) interviewed Janet Schneider, CCCSWA Executive Director (left) about the problem of unsolicited plastic junk mail. Filming at the Keller Canyon Landfill, the cameras captured Janet actually finding AOL CDs in the trash mound. The reporter asked if she was surprised. Janet replied "Not at all. They generally go from the mailbox to the garbage cart and wind up here." The reporter also interviewed the founders of www.nomoreaoLCDs.com, who have now collected 70,000 AOL CDs. The piece aired on CNN headline news on October 16.

Ask the Authority

Dear Authority:

I have a friend in San Francisco who tells me she places her food scraps in her yard waste container. I compost, but there are some food wastes I can't put in my bin. Will we be getting this kind of service soon?

Wishful in Walnut Creek

Dear Wishful:

Food scrap collection is becoming a popular component in Bay Area recycling programs. A number of Alameda County cities started food scrap collection programs in the last few years. These programs have the potential to reduce one of the largest parts of our overall waste, and one that can be easily taken out of the landfill. Many programs accept all food scrap items, including meat and bones, which are placed into yard trimmings carts for collection. (And you're right; these items don't belong in your home compost bin.) The food is then composted along with large amounts of plant material to produce a useful soil amendment.

As the CCCSWA collection contracts come up for renewal in 2006, the CCCSWA will consider the feasibility of food scrap collection in our area. If you have an opinion, please write to us at the address below. In the meantime, you can compost your vegetarian food scraps by worm composting. For more information on how to start worm composting, visit www.wastediversion.org or call 925-906-1806.

Send questions to authority@wastediversion.org or 1280 Civic Dr., Suite 210, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

Prepare for Guests with Less-Toxic Paint

Paint in a Pinch

Want to give your guest room a quick makeover before the holidays? Try a few coats of low- or no-VOC (volatile organic compound) paint — a fume-reduced way to redecorate, just days before your guests are due to arrive. These high quality paints are less harmful to the environment than standard latex paints. The product lines listed below are no-VOC paint bases to which your paint dealer will add color, if desired. The color pigment will add some VOCs, but the total content will still be much lower than that of standard paints. These paint cans, when completely empty, can be safely thrown in the garbage. Call the numbers listed below for additional product information and dealer locations.

Enviro-Cote, Kelly-Moore Paints, Walnut Creek, 925-939-4100

Enviro-Kote, Frazee Paints, Pleasant Hill, 925-682-6799

AFM Safecoat, Berkeley Ecology Center, 510-548-3402

E-Waste Bills Vetoed by Davis

On September 30 Governor Davis vetoed Senate Bills 1523 (Sher) and 1619 (Romero), both pieces of legislation aimed at creating a recycling infrastructure for California's growing electronic waste. However, the Governor stated later that he would support a bill that challenges industry to provide greater producer responsibility.

In his memo to the State Legislature, Davis expressed interest in a new landmark law passed by the European Union in October that requires electronics manufacturers to pay for recycling. He wrote to the state legislature, "I am encouraged by the product stewardship approach and believe this model ... is worth pursuing."

To follow this and other waste-related legislation, visit the Californians Against Waste website at www.cawrecycles.org.

Contact information

CCCSWA 906-1801
fax: 906-1805 web: www.wastediversion.org
email: authority@wastediversion.org

PLEASANT HILL BAYSHORE DISPOSAL 603-1144
fax: 685-8153

For questions concerning billing, special cleanups, vacation hold requests, new service or your blue garbage cart.

VALLEY WASTE MANAGEMENT 935-8900
fax: 935-1617 web: www.valleywaste.com

For questions concerning the service of your burgundy recycling or green yard clippings carts, to request motor oil disposal containers, for recycling cleanups or info on the Walnut Creek Recycling Center.

CONTRA COSTA RECYCLING HOTLINE ..1-800-750-4096

HOME COMPOSTING/GRASSCYCLING 906-1806

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE ... 1-800-646-1431