



*Making a Difference for the Environment  
Locally and Globally Since 1970*

*Serving Kent, Portage County and Beyond*

## **News From the Kent Environmental Council RECYCLING SPECIAL ISSUE - MAY 2019**

### **Recycling: What's Contamination Got to Do with It?**

Resolution of the issue of contamination is vital to improving recycling today, according to Bill Steiner, director of Portage County Solid Waste Management District.

Although China is no longer taking U.S. recycling materials (because of high contamination rates), we are in a good position in the Midwest because we have facilities in Ohio or nearby states to take our materials, which cuts down on transportation costs. The eastern and western United States were much more reliant on China and are struggling.



Although we have had to cut back on the types of plastic we can accept, all is not doom and gloom. China's refusal to take our materials has prompted many U.S. companies to develop a domestic recycling infrastructure and more products that use recycled materials. For example:

- Mills that had been shuttered are being put back into production, which means that the outlook for fiber is much better. Both Waste Management and Republic are developing their own mills to process paper, including a mill in western Ohio, a facility for mixed paper in Terra Haute, Indiana, and an outlet for cardboard containers in Kentucky.
- All nearby materials recovery facilities are full of materials. Midwest Fiber Recycling in Normal, Illinois, is investing \$5 million in upgrades to increase its processing capacity by 33% and to decrease contamination. Nashville/Davidson County, Tennessee, received a \$2.8 million grant to double its recycling collection.
- A company in Pennsylvania is using glass to manufacture reflective road paint.
- Plastic is being recycled to make carpeting, drain pipes, window blinds.

To sustain this progress locally, Portage County needs to find a way to decrease contamination in the recyclables it collects.



A recycling sorting facility

Contamination is costly because it slows down the sorting process, and it can jam the equipment and cause companies that receive materials to refuse the bales if they see too much contaminated material. The overall average contamination level in Portage County's recycling is 19.05%, with the drop-off sites as high as 38%. The rate for the city of Kent lower than the average. The county is mounting an education campaign (in person and through social media) to tell people

about the problem and how they can help solve it. The county also will continue to monitor recycling collections for contamination and enforce compliance with recycling regulations.



A bale of recycled materials

Contamination often occurs because people throw inappropriate items into their recycling bins rather than donate the items to a charity or thrown the items into a trash bin. **Do not throw the following items into recycling bins:**

Styrofoam, electronics, ceramics or dishes, food waste, plastic grocery bags, motor-oil containers, household hazardous waste, light bulbs, window glass or mirrors, dirty pizza boxes, yard debris, wood, construction debris. Do not be a "wish recycler" by putting out items such as bowling balls, Christmas lights, rubber hoses and furniture. These items do not belong in recycling bins.

### So, what can be recycled?



Items that are okay to recycle

Here is what you **can** toss into your recycling bin:

- Paper, newsprint, printed receipts and paper bags. Place shredded paper into a paper bag, and label the bag "shredded."
- Magazines, catalogs, phone books and paperback books.
- Flattened cardboard boxes and food boxes.
- Milk, juice and food cartons.
- Aluminum, steel and tin cans, aerosol bottles and clean tin foil

- Glass bottles (no window glass)
- Plastic beverage and laundry containers marked #1 and #2 but no clam shells and containers from salads and leftovers--even though the containers are labeled #1. They could be contaminated by food residue, which can cause the entire bale of recycled items to be rejected.

**Remember: All items should be dry, clean and loose.**

Recycling is here to stay. It can provide green jobs and is still a very large part of our future.

--Lorraine McCarty

## Like Cartoons?

Then go to-----

<https://thenib.com/it-s-time-to-rethink-how-recycling-is-done> for an informative cartoon about recycling. Here are two of the many panels in the story:



## Recycling in the News

Plastic bans, polo shirts and more:

- New York passed a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags. (*Akron Beacon Journal*, April 1, 2019)
- The European Union has banned plastic plates, cutlery and straws as of



2021 to help clean up the oceans; 80% of marine litter is made of plastic. (*Akron Beacon Journal*, March 28, 2019)

- Ralph Lauren will begin making an "Earth Polo" shirt entirely from recycled plastic bottles and then dyed in a process that uses no water. Each shirt requires about 12 plastic bottles. The company said it is committed to removing 170 million bottles from landfills and oceans by 2025. Smaller brands also are using repurposed and recycled materials. (*Akron Beacon Journal*, April 19, 2019)
- The zero-waste legislation under consideration in Pennsylvania includes 13 bills that tackle single-use plastics, Styrofoam waste, e-waste and waste reduction through improved recycling and composting. To learn more, click [here](#).
- If you want more news about waste and recycling, Bill Steiner recommends <https://www.wastedive.com/>. He says its an excellent website that has a daily newsletter.



--Summarized by Lorraine McCarty

## Some Ideas for Cutting the Use of Plastic

### Earth Day Ideas for Cutting the use of Plastic

We won't get rid of all of the plastic in our lives, but here are a few ideas from *Parade Magazine* (April 21, 2019):

- Instead of a plastic toothbrush, use a Moso bamboo toothbrush with a 100% biodegradable handle. Available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).
- Instead of plastic wrap, use Bee's Wrap, which is made by infusing cotton with beeswax, jojoba oil and tree resin. The warmth of your hands softens the wrap to create a seal. The wrap will retain its seal and shape when it cools. Get it at [beeswrap.com](https://www.beeswrap.com).
- Follow blogger Beth Terry who writes a bloc called [myplasticfreelife.com](https://www.myplasticfreelife.com).



### Local efforts to Cut Single-Use Plastic

- Bamboo utensils and plant-based straws and utensils are great for work and travel and are available at Kent Natural Foods. Paper straws also have been seen at Target.
- Many restaurants have stopped giving out straws automatically. Remember to refuse them if they are brought to your table and you don't want one. Metal and glass straws are available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).



- Little City Grill and Ray's Place have pledged to use paper straws and boxes after their supply of plastic straws and boxes runs out. Lock 15 Brew Pub in Akron also began using paper straws.
- Do you know of other local establishments that are changing their ways? Let us know, and we will publicize their efforts.

--Lorraine McCarty

## KEC Membership

We welcome anyone who wants to join the Kent Environmental Council and support our efforts. If you are already a member, you will be receiving a reminder of renewal by mail the month before the expiration date for your dues. Remember, dues are the main source of income for KEC.

Basic memberships help us maintain communication among our members for many of our activities. Sustaining, Organizational and Lifetime memberships enhance our ability to implement our education and advocacy responsibilities and to have a grant program to encourage innovative environmental projects.

Membership levels are **Student: \$5; Golden Buckeye: \$15; First-Year Member Special: \$25; Individual: \$35; Household: \$50; Sustaining:\$100; Organization: \$100; Lifetime: \$500**

To join or renew, send your name, address, phone number, email address and check made payable to Kent Environmental Council, P.O. Box 395, Kent, OH 44240.

To join or renew online with **PayPal**, go to <http://kentenvironment.org/membership>

KEC dues are **not** tax deductible because the organization has a 501(c)(4) status.