

November 22, 2005

ENVIRO MATTERS

Maryland's Recycling Program One of Nation's Best

Our nation celebrated America Recycles Day on November 15. We are proud that Maryland is the third state to recognize the benefits of source reduction and award jurisdictions credit for reducing waste at the source, before it enters the waste stream. The source reduction credit (up to 5 percent per county) along with the mandated recycling rate comprises Maryland's voluntary annual waste diversion rate. This program boasted impressive numbers in 2004, with several counties exceeding the 40 percent diversion goal a year early. These counties include: Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Garrett, Harford, Howard, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot. Only two other states (Minnesota, Oregon) are known to award source reduction credits.

A Growing Trend

While this state's recycling rate is in line with the national trend toward stabilizing recycling rates, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) actively encourages recycling in a variety of programs. MDE also participates in several national workgroups to devise new ways to increase recycling.

America Recycles Day

MDE celebrated America Recycles Day (ARD) by hosting the 4th Annual "Rethink Recycling" Sculpture Contest and judging ceremony. ARD is a national event that promotes recycling, source reduction, reuse, and the purchase of recycled content. High school students across Maryland create sculptures made of recycled and used materials, such as cardboard, scrap metal, soda cans, crushed compact disks, electronics and this year, even cigarette butts and plastic dry cleaning bags. The ultimate goal is to promote recycling, increase the purchase of recycled content products, and show alternative uses for items that would have otherwise gone in the trash. Congratulations to this year's sculpture contest winners from Broadneck High School (Anne Arundel County), Patuxent High School (Calvert County), Century High School (Carroll County), and Kent County High School.

Electronics Recycling

Another prominent state program is electronics recycling, or eCycling. Only Maine and California currently have eCycling laws. Maryland is piloting the use of a registration fee paid by manufacturers who sell computer products in this state. The Statewide Computer Recycling Pilot Program law, effective July 1, creates grant funding for counties and municipalities for computer recycling activities beginning January 1. Even without this law, Marylanders have recycled nearly 4,000 tons of electronics through voluntary efforts.

The energy and natural resources savings from recycling are enormous. In an average year, the recycling of paper, aluminum, glass, and plastic in Maryland saves the energy equivalent of 86.4 million gallons of gasoline, reduces greenhouse gases equivalent to removing more than 600,000 cars from the road, and saves almost 23 million trees.

MDE forges forward in actively promoting the use of recycled products. Whether we require recycling for manufacturing or instill it in our students to assure its future, remember, when it comes to recycling, it all comes back to you.



Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor
Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor



Kend P. Philbrick, Secretary
Jonas A. Jacobson, Deputy Secretary

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