

The Goal Is Zero Land-filling!

Be Vigilant in Recycling

For recycling programs to be successful, you also need to successfully recycle.

The only things that should be put in recycling containers are recyclable items. Don't pollute your recycle bin with non-recyclables.

If you are not sure what you can recycle, contact your waste hauler and ask. Especially check on shredded paper and plastic bags. There may be other ways to recycle some of the items that your waste hauler will not pick up.

If in doubt, throw it out.

Wash or rinse containers before you put them into the recycling bin.

Reduce. Reuse. Recycle and buy recycled products. Repair what can be repaired. Compost yard waste and food waste. Refuse plastic bags.

By pursuing zero waste and increasing the rate of recycling, less pollution is created, there is less waste and therefore less need for landfills. Recycling means less need for new materials, and thus less environmentally destructive mining and extracting new raw materials.

Once things are thrown into the garbage, they are out-of-sight and out-of-mind for most people. However tossing garbage away is just the beginning of numerous environmental concerns.

Landfills require a large footprint - acres of land. That land could be put to better uses.



Photo by Warren Gretz, National Renewable Energy Laboratory



The landfill, north of Marion, Iowa, towers over a neighboring home. Photo by Pam Mackey Taylor

Under landfill conditions, organic material forms methane. Small landfills flare the methane, which adds carbon dioxide to the air. Carbon dioxide contributes to climate change. Larger landfills capture the methane and can use it like natural gas. If methane escapes from a landfill, it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, although it is shorter-lived.

Material tossed into landfills can be recycled and used in other products. Yard waste, food waste, and other organic materials can be composted.

Landfill Policies

The Iowa Chapter supports policies that transition to zero land-filling:

- Expanding curbside recycling to additional communities. In some communities, residents must haul their recyclables to a central collection point. Because of the extra effort, people simply don't recycle.
- Expanding curbside recycling to apartment complexes.
- Including food waste as part of the curbside collection of recyclables and yard waste.
- Expanding the bottle bill to include all beverages except dairy products and unprocessed cider. This would include fruit juices, tea and bottled water. Currently the bottle bill covers beer, carbonated soft drinks and mineral water, wine coolers, wine and liquor in any sealed glass, plastic, or metal bottle, can, jar or carton.
- Informing the public so that they are aware of the items that go into the recycle bins.
- Banning single-use plastic bags, in favor of reusable bags.
- Given that the Chinese market for recycled items has fallen due to the contamination found in single-stream recycled materials, waste collection agencies should move away from single-stream recycling, instead implementing pre-sorted dual-stream recycling.



The landfill in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, rises prominently in the center of this photo. Photo by Pam Mackey Taylor



Photo by David Parsons, National Renewable Energy Laboratory

In conclusion, the Iowa Chapter supports a culture of recovery and recycling, rather than waste and disposal. We should no longer consider a throw-away society to be the norm, nor facilitate that ethic.