

A Quarterly Newsletter Of



Spokane Regional
**SOLID
WASTE
SYSTEM**

(509) 625-6580

www.solidwaste.org

Summer 2008



Reducing phosphorus in the Spokane River

Spokane will lead the state this summer, banning high-phosphorus dishwasher detergents to improve water quality, particularly in the Spokane River and Lake Spokane.

As of July 1, 2008, it is illegal to sell residential dishwasher detergent containing 0.5% or more phosphorus by weight in Spokane County. The rest of the state will follow, with the same standard applied in July 2010.

"We're taking a significant step as a community to protect the Spokane River, which is an asset we all enjoy," said Spokane Mayor Mary Verner.

A couple of years ago, local government, some businesses, and other partners from Spokane lobbied the state Legislature to consider this action to help solve problems caused by too much phosphorus in the Spokane River and, subsequently, downstream in Lake Spokane.

When a body of water contains too much phosphorus, algae and other water plants thrive. The phosphorus is essentially a plant nutrient, or fertilizer, for these plants. Later, the plants die, and their decomposition uses up oxygen in the water, robbing fish of the oxygen they need to

live. Around the state of Washington, some 260 bodies of water have problems because of too much phosphorus.

Some experts estimate that phosphorus from dishwasher detergents amounts to between 10 and 12% of the phosphorus that enters municipal wastewater treatment plants. The ban on these high-phosphorus detergents is just one way that local government and industry are working to reduce phosphorus in our lakes and rivers.

The City of Spokane is spending millions of dollars to improve technology that will reduce the amount of phosphorus being discharged into the Spokane River. The City also has launched projects to irrigate portions of our golf courses with treated wastewater, reducing discharges to the river.

A list of dishwasher detergents that meet the new guidelines has been gathered by the Washington State Department of Ecology and is available online at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/nonpoint/phosphorus/PAlternatives.html. Many liquid dishwasher detergents come in plastic bottles. Check the code on the bottom of the bottle—most are colored Code 2 plastic and can be recycled at System recycling centers.



Spokane Regional Solid Waste System named Quicksilver Champion

The Spokane Regional Solid Waste System was named a "Quicksilver Champion" for collecting 300 pounds of mercury in 2006—which is helping the Washington State Department of Ecology reduce toxic mercury in the environment.

During an Earth Day 2008 press conference, Department of Ecology Director Jay Manning recognized the System and other organizations that are participating in mercury reduction programs throughout the state. The combined efforts of businesses, schools, trade associations, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and volunteers have prevented more than 12,000 pounds of mercury from entering the environment in Washington State during the past five years.

Manning also addressed how to safely dispose of burnt-out compact fluorescent light bulbs and lamps. Because they contain small amounts of mercury, it is important that these items are recycled and not thrown in the garbage.

Fluorescent lights use one-quarter of the energy required by standard light bulbs, and sales of these bulbs are booming. However, a recent Ecology study revealed that only 20 percent of fluorescent bulbs and lamps are properly recycled. Ecology's next step is to develop a statewide campaign to prevent mercury releases.

When mercury evaporates into the air, it contaminates water and soil. Fish accumulate mercury in their bodies. This, in turn, can be a source of mercury exposure

to people who consume the fish. Children and fetuses are the most vulnerable to the effects of mercury. Exposure can affect learning and behavior later in life.

Ecology has been tracking mercury reductions as part of the Mercury Chemical Action Plan and under the state Mercury Education and Reduction Act (MERA), which was passed in 2003. Washington State has taken a leadership role through MERA to control mercury-containing products and reduce risks to communities. Mercury-containing products can lead to contamination when thrown in the trash, where they might be crushed or incinerated.

Remember—fluorescent bulbs should not be placed in garbage cans or in curbside recycling bins. In Spokane County, fluorescent bulbs and other household items containing mercury (thermometers, thermostats, barometers, etc.) can be disposed, free of charge, in the Household Hazardous Waste section of the North County Recycling Center & Transfer Station, the Valley Recycling Center & Transfer Station, and the Waste to Energy Facility Recycling Center.

For more information on mercury disposal, call the Recycling Hotline at 625-6800 or visit www.ecy.wa.gov/mercury/.



Area schools earn cash awards

Five Spokane County public schools received cash awards from the Washington Department of Ecology for their outstanding environmental programs.

The Terry Husseman School Awards program recognizes schools annually for developing and implementing innovative curricula, sustaining ongoing waste reduction efforts, or starting new environmental programs. Award amounts ranged from \$100 to \$5,000.

Spokane County winners included:

- West Valley High School — A \$1,500 award to expand the school's current recycling program to include more materials and to educate students about the benefits of recycling. West Valley hopes to create a school atmosphere wherein students and faculty support, and are involved in, ongoing sustainability practices.
- Seth Woodard Elementary School — A \$1,000 award to increase their recycling program and to expand their organic greenhouse. Funds will also be used to purchase recycling containers and native and perennial plants and seeds.
- Central Valley Kindergarten Center and Liberty Lake Elementary — A \$250 award to support mixed-paper recycling efforts.
- Adams Elementary School — A \$100 award to support steps to prevent global warming.
- West Valley City School — A \$275 award to help students run their recycling program and conduct food waste data reports daily.

Spokane County residents spring into home composting

Spokane Master Composters hosted their Spring Compost Fair at the John A. Finch Arboretum on Saturday, April 26. Just in time for spring yard cleanup, participants learned how to turn yard and garden debris into valuable soil amendments and reduce garbage.

A variety of hands-on demonstrations were highlighted—including a "hot" compost pile and a worm bin. Participants learned

about the materials used in composting, how to build and turn a compost pile, and how to choose the appropriate compost bin.

The fair was free and open to the public and was held in conjunction with the Arboretum's Arbor Day festivities. Approximately 475 Spokane County attendees received a free compost bin after completing the various activities. The bins were provided by the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System and the Washington State Department of Ecology.

Mark your calendars now—the next Compost Fair will be held Saturday, October 18 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Arboretum. For additional information on composting or to schedule a presentation, call the Recycling Hotline at 625-6800.

The Master Composters are volunteers of the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System.



WHAT'S UP?

Ann Murphy named Employee of the Month

Ann Murphy, Education Coordinator for the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System, was named the June 2008 Employee of the Month for the City of Spokane.

Murphy was recognized for her efforts to promote sustainability throughout Spokane County. She is a familiar face in the community and a strong advocate for waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. She serves as the System's education liaison with area schools, develops and trains Master Composters, and manages the Waste to Energy Facility tour program. She has been with the System for approximately 17 years.

Congratulations, Ann!



Thank You, Master Composters!



We appreciate your time, effort, and dedication to the following spring events:

- Home & Garden Show
- North County Chipping & Composting Day
- Earth Day in Riverfront Park
- Earth Day in Airway Heights
- Earth Day at St. Aloysius Church
- Pile Building for the Compost Fair
- Compost Fair at the Finch Arboretum

We want your suggestions, questions and comments!

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 70% POST-CONSUMER NEWS
 CONTENT, USING SOY INKS

Got an old TV? Keep it!

In recent months, citizens have been hearing about a big switch, requiring TV stations to switch their broadcasting from analog to digital signals by February 17, 2009.

Lots of citizens have been concerned that the change to digital TV means they have to throw away their old TV sets, but that's simply not the case.

Here's the skinny:

- Television sets connected to cable or satellite television service won't be affected; you'll continue to receive service as you always have.
- Analog television sets that receive their signal from an antenna will need a DTV converter box to continue to receive a signal after the switch date. (Don't forget about the TV in the garage or the bedroom that isn't hooked to cable service.)

Until March 31, 2009, consumers can

request up to two \$40 coupons toward digital converter boxes as part of the TV Converter Box Coupon Program set up by Congress. To request a coupon, call 1-888-DTV-2009 or visit www.DTV2009.gov.

The change to digital television should improve picture and sound quality and provide more programming choices for consumers. It also will free up parts of the broadcast spectrum for other uses, such as public safety or advanced wireless services.

However, should a resident choose to buy a new TV and want to get rid of the old one, it can just go in the trash. Alternately, there are some area recyclers that will take old TVs for a fee. Call the Recycling Hotline at 625-6800.

Citizens can also check out www.dtv.gov, a site run by the Federal Communications Commission, for more information.



Where do you recycle?

Curbside: The City of Spokane Solid Waste Management Department, Sunshine Recycling and Disposal, and Waste Management provide residential curbside recycling.

Outside the city limits of Spokane, curbside collections of garbage and recycling are voluntary subscription services. Recycling may not be provided in some areas where the population density does not yet justify the cost of a curbside recycling service.

Residents served by Empire Disposal, Inc. and Newman Lake Garbage Service do not currently have curbside recycling.

Drop-Off: Residents who do not have curbside service may utilize any free, public, drop-off recycling facilities, private recycling buy-back centers, or the three System facilities:

- North County Recycling Center/Transfer Station**
N. 22123 Elk-Chattaroy Road
- Valley Recycling Center/Transfer Station**
3941 N. Sullivan Road
- Waste to Energy Facility Recycling Center/Disposal Site**
2900 S. Geiger Boulevard

Chipping and Composting Events

The fourth annual North Spokane County Chipping & Composting Day was held on Saturday, April 12 at Fire District 4, Station #49. The event was co-sponsored by the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, the Spokane Regional Solid Waste System, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and Spokane County Fire District #4.

The primary purpose of the event was to introduce and promote alternatives to burning natural yard and garden debris. The event featured compost training by the Spokane Master Composters, free collection of natural debris, and burn barrel "trade-ins" for compost bins. Partner agencies provided educational materials, such as preventing wildfires, preparing for the upcoming fire season, and outdoor burning programs.

During the 5-hour event, approximately 100 cubic yards of natural yard debris (tree limbs, pine needles, etc.) were collected. Master Composters provided training to 36 residents.

Other yard and garden debris collection events included: April 26 in Fairfield; May 3 in Latah; May 17 in Rockford; May 31 in Waverly; and June 21 in Spangle.

Remember: Outdoor burning in all urban growth areas in Washington was banned in January 2007. Burning natural vegetation produces toxic air pollutants.



This local resident attended last year's event and learned how to compost. He brought in a sample of his compost to this year's event, saying he didn't know why people "insist on burning, when they can compost!"

When inhaled, these pollutants can damage the lungs. Those at greatest risk are children, the elderly, and those suffering from chronic respiratory illnesses.

For information on alternatives to burning, contact Lisa Woodard, Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, at 477-4727, extension 115.

WASTE TO ENERGY REPORT CARD

Working Together!

January - March 2008

<p>Garbage In 62,850.38 tons disposed</p> <p>61,160.91 tons processed at WTE</p> <p>2,208.18 tons of ferrous metal recovered from ash</p> <p>16,120.87 tons of ash disposed at Rabanco</p>	<p>Electricity Generation 37,768 MWh produced</p> <p>6,293 MWh used to run facility</p> <p>31,475 MWh sold to Puget Sound Energy</p> <p>Notice of Violation None</p> <p>Revenues after Electricity Transmission Expenses \$3,254,743.03</p>
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Acceptable Curbside Materials

- Batteries**
Household: Put in plastic bag
Put bag on top of bin
Vehicle batteries: Place next to bin
- Cans: Aluminum & Tin**
Labels OK
Rinse well
No foil, foil trays or scrap metal
- Cardboard & Brown Paper Bags**
Corrugated cardboard only.
Flatten & bundle (Max. 2' x 2')
No cereal or pizza boxes
- Cell Phones**
Put in plastic bag with household batteries
OK to include chargers
- Glass Bottles & Jars**
Brown, green or clear only
Rinse, labels OK
No lids
- Magazines & Catalogs**
Bundle or bag
Staples OK
No junk mail
- Newspapers & Phone Books**
Bundle or bag
No plastic bags
- Plastics**
Code 1 (PETE) Bottles & Jars
No lids, rinse, labels OK
Only plastic bottles with necks smaller than their bases are accepted.
- Code 2 (HDPE) Uncolored Bottles & Jugs**
No lids, rinse, labels OK
No tubs or dishes
No colored code 2 or other codes
No plastic bags
Only uncolored plastic bottles with necks smaller than their bases are accepted.

NOTE: Colored Code 2 plastic bottles and jugs can be recycled at the three System facilities.