



## **WHAT'S GOING ON WITH**

## **RECYCLING?**



- Over the years new types of items were put into recycling bins.
- Many of these cannot be sorted or recycled when mixed in with other materials.
- China (biggest recycler) wanted our “good stuff” so much that they said nothing about the non-recyclables mixed in and even paid us for it.
- Finally, China saw how much “trash” was in the recycling that we ship and lowered the acceptable amount from 5% to .03%.
- This number is impossible for our sorting infrastructure to achieve.
- It effectively shut down 1/3 of the recycling market in the U.S.
- Other places that still took recycling cannot handle a surge like that.
- It will take time for markets to emerge where we can ship the excess.
- Companies that made money on our recycling, now pay to get rid of it.
- These costs are passed on to the customer (Town of Wellfleet).
- To keep costs down and find vendors to accept our materials, we must keep as much contamination as possible out of our recycling.

## **WHY CAN'T I RECYCLE THIS ANYMORE?**

- You may hear our staff ask you to put some items that you normally recycled into your Purple PAYT bag for disposal.
- It is not that these items are no longer recyclable. It is that they were never recyclable in the first place. They were sorted out at the end and thrown away as contamination (a slow and costly process).
- This has only come to our attention recently as China (hungry for the “good stuff”) had remained silent until now.
- For example, not all plastics are alike. Plastic bags are made of recyclable plastic, but they cannot be sorted out through our collection methods and do damage to machinery.
- It is sometimes the case that a recyclable material cannot go into our recycling because of what size, shape or product it has been turned into. Waxed Cardboard cannot go into the cardboard recycling.
- Yes, this is very confusing, but our staff will do our best to answer questions so please ask. Also, visit [recyclesmartma.org](http://recyclesmartma.org) for more info.

- **WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT! (Into the Trash)**

## **WE SHOULD JUST PUT RECYCLABLES IN THE TRASH, ISN'T IT CHEAPER?**

- We can't put them in the trash. There are specific regulations against it.
- Recycling has turned into a commodity and prices will fluctuate.
- Our Trash is currently being brought to SEMASS to be burned and used to make electric power. The price is fixed for the term of our contract. They will reject a load if it has too many recyclables in it.

## **IS IT EVEN WORTH IT TO RECYCLE?**

- The short answer is yes. The system does need improvement however we currently make so much recyclable packaging that putting it all in the trash would exceed the capacity that those facilities can handle.
- Again, there are specific regulations that dictate what goes where.

## **ARE THEY PUTTING RECYCLING IN LANDFILLS?**

- The recycling market collapsed in one sweeping Chinese law.
- Recycling companies were generally not built to store large quantities on site.
- In order for you to be able to dispose of your materials somewhere, drastic things had to be done.
- In some cases, the state provided waivers to landfill recycling in order to make room.
- These waivers are not common and very difficult to get.
- As recycling infrastructure changes and markets open up, this is even less common.

## **IF I CAN'T RECYCLE IT, WON'T I HAVE TO BUY MORE PURPLE BAGS?**

- Maybe. However, we have implemented programs like Food Waste Composting which will help reduce the need for PAYT bags.

- Other programs are being looked at to find markets for hard to dispose of materials.

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR WELLFLEET?**

- We need to be more careful about what goes into our recycling.
- This is so we do not have trouble shipping our materials and avoid extra costs because of contamination.
- The MassDEP has talked to the recycling companies and come up with resources that can tell you what is ok and not ok to recycle.
- Ask any one of our staff or check out [www.recyclesmartma.org](http://www.recyclesmartma.org).
- The website has a search engine where you can find out if your item is recyclable or trash. It has hundreds of items and is being constantly updated.
- We are actively looking for better ways to get rid of all the material that comes through the Transfer Station but creating a good product will be the most helpful.
- This means cleaning or washing the remaining food out of containers.
- Being careful about dumping a bucket of recyclables before checking to make sure what's in it.
- Make sure it's actually recyclable. Just because you put it in the bin, doesn't mean it will be recycled. You may be doing more harm than good.
- Until the market stabilizes and a more universal system is created, Recycling vendors and MassDEP have advised us to keep our current collection system (Dual-Stream Compactors) in place.
- Still, we are looking into cheaper and easier options.

## **THE GOOD NEWS**

- Wellfleet is in better shape than other communities because we do not have single stream recycling.
- The sorting that you do at home is saving you money and allowing materials to move through the Transfer Station consistently.
- Recycling companies are creating new technologies for collection and separation and markets are opening up in other places. With your help, Wellfleet will be in a good spot to take advantage of these.

**THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART FOR**  
**WELLFLEET. IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**