

Exciting times ahead for Recycling for Newaygo County

Thank you to supporters and recyclers

Newaygo, MI—March 15, 2017

Many local recyclers are aware by now that the recycling of household materials has been assured as RNC single stream collection sites are being taken over this spring by the County of Newaygo.

Recycling for Newaygo County (RNC) was thrilled when, at its March 8 bi-monthly meeting, the Newaygo County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to take over six of the seven remaining sites operated by RNC.

Unfortunately, the Holton Township site was outside the county's jurisdiction, and was closed March 15. The county of Newaygo will be developing a long-term sustainable solution to recycling needs in the county. In the meantime, the Fremont, Newaygo, White Cloud, Grant, Croton, and Garfield Township sites remain in operation.

RNC, a small nonprofit established in 2004 to provide recycling services at a time when none existed, will continue as a recycling educator, which has always been half of our mission.

We would like to express our gratitude on behalf of all local recyclers to the many entities and individuals who dedicated many hours and funds over the years to RNC's efforts, which began with a small group of devoted recycling enthusiasts. The MSU Extension Office provided considerable help in the early years, and the Fremont Area Community Foundation (FACF) was a strong advocate and funder.

Retired teacher Bob Pinder, RNC's first executive director, developed eight collection sites in the lower two thirds of the county, and a fully functioning materials recovery center in Fremont.

Unfortunately, recycling is not a profitable business. RNC maintained services in the early years through the sale of materials, heavy FACF funding assistance, contributions by some municipalities on behalf of their residents, and membership contributions by some users. The market crash in 2008 was a hard blow, and recyclable commodity values have never fully recovered while costs continued to rise. Despite operational changes to reduce costs and increased user and municipal buy-in, we were never going to be fully self-sustaining.

I want to also take this opportunity on behalf of myself and our Board of Directors to thank all municipalities that have been strong supporters on behalf of their residents. Buy-in has been steadily increasing in recent years, from about \$10,000 total in fiscal 2013 to almost \$30,000 this fiscal year. Detailed accounts are available on the Members page of RNC's website, www.recyclingfornewaygocounty.org.

We want to especially thank the many users/members who have supported local recycling efforts by RNC over the years, many from Day One. Membership numbers and generosity have also tripled in recent years, from less than \$16,000 in fiscal 2013 to almost \$47,000 this year.

So what happens now?

In a state that ranks far below the national recycling average, the local recycling mindset is progressing well. Maintaining recycling services is of course paramount, but ongoing educational efforts are equally important.

RNC's mission has always been twofold, providing recycling services, and educating the public about the importance of recycling. Going forward, we will be re-filing with the State of Michigan as an educator, and plan to build on our efforts to teach people of all ages through talks and trade shows, visits to schools and summer camps, the development of literature, an annual recycling festival, and our annual Earth Day Competition among the young writers, artists, and video makers in our local schools.

In that vein, RNC will be shutting down The Recycling Center in Newaygo effective May 31. After that date, we will no longer accept lead-heavy cathode ray tube TVs, fluorescent light bulbs, and batteries. We will also cease all cardboard and paper pickup services to customers and corporate sponsors.

We encourage you to bring in the last of your items and sensitive documents for shredding as early as you can to assist us in a smooth transition. Public hours are Wednesdays Noon to 7 pm at The Recycling Center, 490 Quarterline Street in Newaygo.

Note that Newaygo County will hold its annual hazardous waste collection of these and other items June 3 between 8 am and 2 pm at the Newaygo County Road Commission on M-20 just

west of M-37. Please check with the county for more details.

As we move forward as an educator, we will be writing grants and re-imagining our Friends of Recycling program for this purpose, while exploring standard and potential new educational programming. New membership incentives reflective of our operational changes will also be explored. We will keep members informed.

We are proud of what we have achieved, in contrast with the dismal or nonexistent availability of recycling services in many parts of our beautiful state. Michigan's overall recycling rate of 15% is far below the national average of 35%, which in turn is far below that of more progressive countries, where the rate is often in excess of 60%.

Change is never easy, but we hope all recyclers will celebrate with us as we all enter a new chapter in recycling availability in Newaygo County. We look forward to delivering exciting and fun old and new programs in support of expanding recycling awareness.

Happy recycling!

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Recycling for Newaygo County

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