



Preserving Resources,
Preventing Waste

The New Jersey WasteWise Bulletin

Newsletter of the New Jersey WasteWise Business Network – Autumn 2024
WasteWise ... improving your bottom line and the environment
through waste reduction, recycling, and recycled product procurement.

DEP Recycling Award Winners Honored at Annual Symposium

There were many impressive achievements in the field of recycling and waste reduction in New Jersey this past year. The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recognizes these accomplishments through its annual Recycling Awards program. The 2024 DEP recycling award winners are as follows:

Business – Public Service Electric & Gas

Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G), located in South Plainfield, recycled or reused more than 96% of the waste that it generated. In 2023, PSE&G reused more than 2,500 tons of timber wetland mats, which historically would have been sent to a landfill.

Government - Old Bridge Township

Thanks to the efforts of the township's recycling staff, residents have access to recycling collection programs for a wide variety of non-traditional recyclable materials. Consequently, Old Bridge has seen significant increases in its recycling tonnage over the last five years.

Leadership – Sustainable Maple Shade

Sustainable Maple Shade has implemented several recycling and reuse programs that go beyond traditional recycling. For example, Maple Shade implemented a Halloween Costume Swap program, a Trash to Treasure Halloween candy wrapper collection, a recycling program for broken holiday lights and a NexTrex plastic film recycling program.

Leadership – Gary Sondermeyer

Gary Sondermeyer has taken on leadership roles in initiatives and organizations that work to advance recycling, including serving as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Sustainable Jersey Program, Co-Chair of the NJ Climate Change Alliance, Vice Chair of the State Plastics Advisory Council, Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Association of New Jersey Recyclers, and on state and county waste advisory councils.

Rising Star – Share My Meals

Share My Meals is a nonprofit organization that fights food insecurity and the environmental impacts of food waste by recovering and delivering healthy meals in local communities. Surplus complete meals are recovered from corporate cafeterias and other food service providers and distributed to local families in need. In 2023, Share My Meals recovered 62,000 meals that would otherwise have been disposed of as trash.

Outstanding Educator/Educational Program – Riverside Middle School

Riverside Middle School not only participated in the Trex plastic film recycling challenge, but thanks to a comprehensive educational campaign, came in 3rd place overall and 1st place in the Mid-Atlantic region. The school collected an impressive 2,375 pounds of plastic film and now helps other schools get started with their own programs.

Recycling Industry – Helpsy

Helpsy is a textile reuse and recycling company that collected more than 12.3 million pounds of old clothing and textiles in 2023, an 18% increase over the previous year. Helpsy is actively involved in educating the public on this issue.

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Source Reduction, Resource Management/Sustainability – BookSmiles

Booksmiles is a nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping used books, with no resale value, out of the waste stream and into the hands of teachers, as well as students in need. Booksmiles now recovers 94 tons of used books per month. The organization provides the recovered books for free to all and even sends books overseas to impoverished countries.

Source Reduction, Resource Management/Sustainability – Morris and Sussex Counties’ Boat Shrink Wrap Recycling Program

Morris and Sussex Counties’ Boat Shrink Wrap Recycling Program diverted many tons of contaminant-free recyclable plastic material from landfills. The program was well received by the local boating community and continues to grow. The Lake Hopatcong Foundation, Roxbury Clean Communities, and the recycler, UltraPoly Corporation, are key partners in the program. A dedicated educational campaign was developed to promote the program.

Volunteer Citizen – Linda Weih

In 2023, Linda Weih took on the Trex Community Challenge collection program for plastic bags and film in her hometown of Delanco. Weih volunteers with multiple community groups in town and registered each of them with the program. She collects plastics from each group and delivers the material to the county recycling center. Weih made more than 50 trips to the recycling center in 2023, recycling over 2,600 pounds of bags and film.

Recycle Right NJ Business Sector

The DEP has developed a new, one-page educational resource on recycling contamination for the business sector called *Recycle Right NJ Businesses* – see www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/RecycleRightNJ_Businessess.0826.pdf. As noted in the 2022 Recycling Market Development Council report, recycling contamination in the

commercial sector is a real concern. The DEP believes that its *Recycle Right NJ Businesses* educational resource will help businesses better understand the importance of cleaning up their recycling stream. The DEP will continue to provide additional resources to the commercial sector on the importance of recycling and the need to reduce recycling contamination.

Did You Know...

- Thanks to a grant from DEP, the Borough of Bay Head was able to purchase a fully electric street sweeper. The sweeper is not only a zero-emission vehicle, but also effective and quiet.
- New Jersey businesses and institutions are required to provide annual recycling tonnage reports to their host municipality, as per state recycling rules and municipal recycling ordinances.
- Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) restarted its appliance recycling program for old, working appliances. PSE&G will arrange for free pickup of refrigerators, freezers, room air conditioners and dehumidifiers, and will provide a rebate to customers for these recyclable items. For additional information, visit <https://homeenergy.pseg.com/recycling>.
- The Jersey City governing council approved an ordinance that calls for the removal of plastic straws and stirrers from restaurant self-service stands. The ordinance only allows these items to be provided upon request. The ordinance also requires customers to request plastic utensils for delivery and pickup orders, or they will not be provided.
- New Jersey has many recycling centers for source separated concrete, brick, block and asphalt debris, wood scraps, tree stumps and more. For detailed information on these facilities, referred to as Class B recycling centers, visit <https://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/lrm/classb.htm>.



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<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/wastewise/brbn03.htm>