



ECOLOGY NEWS

ACTION CENTER

Volume 16, Issue 4

Winter 2019

BN Green Events

2019 Tentative Calendar

January

Community Solar program launch

January 19

Sugar Creek Stewards Workday (repeats monthly on the third Saturday)

April

Rain barrel workshops begin and continue through fall

April 20

Earth Day Trail & Creek Clean Up

August

Normal multi-family recycling goes into effect

September

McLean County Household Hazardous Waste Collection

October

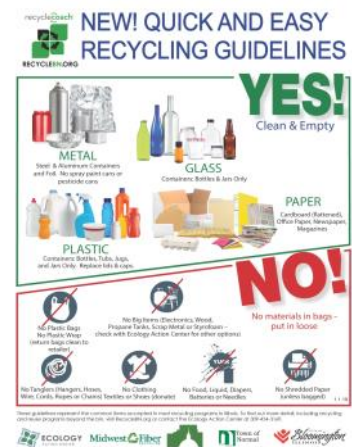
Sustainable Gourmet

Recycle Right in 2019 with New Simplified Guidelines

At some point, most of us have thrown something in the recycling bin hoping it can be recycled. This is “wishful recycling.” Despite the good intentions, wishful recycling often leads to contamination. Contamination has become increasingly problematic for the recycling industry over the past year. One in four items being placed in recycling carts is not recyclable, and facilities in Illinois have reported from 25% to over 35% contamination in some recycling streams. Contamination slows down the sorting process, and affects commodity prices and re-manufacturing markets.

In an effort to reduce contamination and simplify the recycling process, a streamlined recycling flyer was developed that is virtually universal across Illinois. The state-wide task force of industry professionals identified the most common non-recyclables ending up in the recycling stream; these include plastic bags, tangles (i.e. garden hoses, wire, cords, clothing), food waste, medical waste including syringes, and batteries, all of which are outlined on the new flyer. Plastics are also often improperly disposed of due to confusion about resin identification codes—just because a plastic has a 1-5 or 7 code does not guarantee it is recyclable. To help clear up this confusion, the new flyer provides a simple guide to identify which plastic objects are recyclable in curbside carts. Residents are directed to stick to the four universally-accepted plastic items: “bottles, tubs, jugs and jars.”

If unsure about certain items, follow the simple rule of “when in doubt, throw it out” to avoid contamination. For additional information, residents are encouraged to call the Ecology Action Center at 309-454-3169 for detailed answers on what is and is not recyclable locally. Alternately, you can download the easy-to-use Recycle Coach app or the new simplified recycling information flyer at RecycleBN.org.



2018 in Brief

February 2018: After two and half years of hard work by over 100 stakeholders, the new 20-year *Materials Recovery and Resource Management Plan for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal*, was approved by all three local governments.

July 2, 2018: The Normal Town Council approves a new ordinance requiring rental companies to offer recycling services to their tenants. This ordinance goes fully into effect for the fall 2019 school year.

September 30, 2018: The McLean County Landfill reached capacity and was closed. While landfill capacity in neighboring counties remains abundant, this long-anticipated closure helps reinforce the need for increased waste reduction and recycling in order to assert a great degree of control over our waste disposal costs.

Editor's Note: You will be able to find many more details on the EAC's efforts and successes in the last year in the EAC's 2018 Annual Report, now in development. The report will be available online in PDF format as soon as it is finished.

Solar Bloomington-Normal Gets Results!

Over 250 people attended Solar Bloomington-Normal 2.0 informational Power Hour presentations in 2018. Of these, a total of 30 homes and businesses signed on, resulting in 430.12kW of new solar installations throughout McLean County! Over the first year of energy production, these installations will produce approximately 540,407kWh of energy, will save participants a total of \$47,800 in energy costs, and will offset around 870,000 pounds of CO₂. Combined with our 2016 solar group buy effort, we have helped 60 different homes and businesses install almost 900kW of new solar in our county alone.

StraightUp Solar, the solar contractor selected through the bid process for the Solar Bloomington-Normal program, is also offering Community Solar Array sign-ups through the program. Community Solar is a great option for people who cannot afford the initial investment in solar, who live in shaded neighborhoods where solar is not a viable option, or for renters. Anyone in Ameren territory is eligible to participate in the Community Solar Array. We will be sharing more details about this very soon, but in the meantime if you have any questions or are interested in knowing more about this option for you, please contact Larissa Armstrong at larmstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org or 309-454-3169 x15.

Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo on break in 2019

Most, if not all, EAC supporters have likely attended, volunteered at, or even hosted an exhibitor booth at the annual Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo hosted by the EAC in partnership with IWU Wellness. Due to declining event attendance and declining exhibitor registration, the ISLWE is taking a year off so that we might better assess community needs and explore ways to reinvigorate the ISLWE to make it new and relevant again.

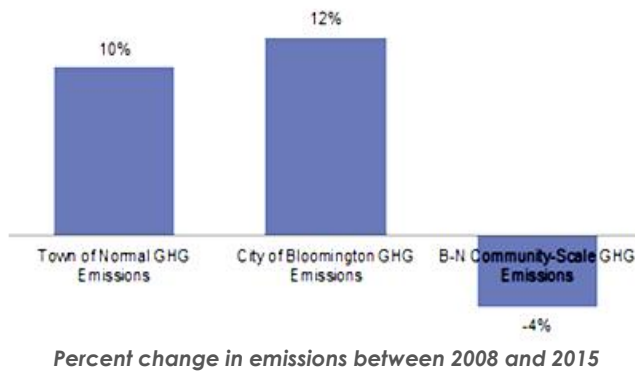


If you would like to provide any feedback or suggestions for innovative new wellness and environmental sustainability related topics or elements please contact Larissa Armstrong at larmstrong@ecologyactioncenter.org. We will provide an update regarding the status of the 2020 ISLWE by this time next year.

Thank you for all of your past support of the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo. We could not have done it without you.

Bloomington-Normal Greenhouse Gas Emissions Update

In 2014, the Ecology Action Center conducted a greenhouse gas emissions inventory using Bloomington and Normal data from 2008; this inventory established our local baseline. A new emissions inventory, using data from 2015, is nearing completion. This update will allow us to identify any changes in local carbon emissions in 2015 compared to the baseline data. The data provided in the greenhouse gas inventory can help identify specific areas in need of improved efficiency, which can provide cost-saving opportunities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emission inventories also help prepare our community for the eventual carbon-constrained future due to climate-related policy changes.



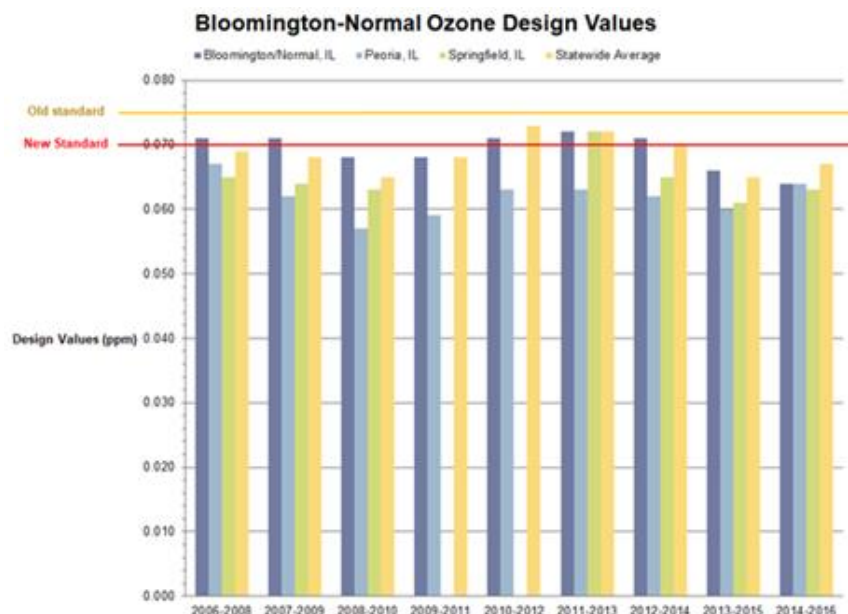
Our preliminary results from the updated greenhouse gas emissions inventory shows that between 2008 and 2015, Town of Normal and City of Bloomington's local government operations (LGO) emissions increased by 10% and 12% respectively, while community-scale emissions fell by 4%. Stationary energy use was the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in Bloomington-Normal in 2015, which includes electricity and natural gas used for cooling, heating, and other needs in homes, businesses, industry, and local government. On-road

vehicular transportation, the next leading source of greenhouse gas emissions, includes all gasoline and diesel usage in local transportation.

Bloomington-Normal ozone levels are monitored and are subject to federal regulations. Currently, McLean County is classified as an attainment area for the concentration of pollutants falling below the levels established by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. However, since 2006 McLean County has exceeded this standard five times and risks doing so again. The financial cost of nonattainment is significant and can include loss of federal transportation funding and mandatory vehicle emissions testing among other ramifications. The environmental and health-related complications of nonattainment are also detrimental.

This year the EAC will use the data collected from the 2015 Greenhouse Gas Inventory Update to develop a collaborative Community Energy Strategic Plan to help Bloomington-Normal set targets for air quality and carbon emissions reduction and develop strategies that will help our community reach those targets.

Watch for additional news on this exciting project in the coming months!





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