

# MCLEAN COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM 2018 ANNUAL REPORT



THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE SOLID WASTE AND WASTE REDUCTION EDUCATION PROGRAM AGREEMENT OF JANUARY 1, 2017.

## LEADING INDICATORS: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS<sup>1</sup>

**Goal:** Visit **70%** of eligible classrooms in McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal for elementary school recycling and waste reduction education programs. Reaching this target means directly engaging with approximately 1,500 students.

- Year end total: There are 84 Fourth grade classrooms in McLean County, which includes all public and private schools. In 2018, EAC made 53 classroom visits and met 1,153 students. This represents 63% of our goal.<sup>2</sup>

**Goal:** Visit **60%** of public libraries within McLean County, Bloomington and Normal and provide a summer reading program on recycling and waste reduction topics. Reaching this target means directly engaging with approximately 300 library patrons.

- There are 14 public libraries in McLean County. In June and July, EAC made 11 library visits and reached 294 people. This represents 79% of local libraries, which exceeds our annual goal.

**Goal:** Provide recycling and waste reduction presentations for **25** local groups or approximately 750 individuals including civic groups, scouts, preschools, non-target school groups, university classes.<sup>3</sup>

- In 2018, we conducted 45 programs, reaching 960 people, thus exceeding our annual program goal.

**Goal:** Promote recycling and sustainable practices to direct audiences utilizing social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube with a target of **30,000** interactions annually.

- In 2018, our social media posts resulted in 150,489 interactions, which exceeds our annual goal.

**2018 TOTAL REACH:  
894,404 INTERACTIONS**  
**DIRECT** (PROGRAMS, EVENTS, PHONE INQUIRIES): 16,491  
**MEDIA** (NEWSPAPER, RADIO, SOCIAL MEDIA, WEB): 877,934

<sup>1</sup> The totals below represent year-end numbers. Summaries of this year's activities are described on the pages that follow.

<sup>2</sup> Personnel changes in the Education Coordinator position in 2018 resulted in a slight decline from 2017 to 2018; the EAC interprets this decline to be short-term and temporary. There are 7 schools, representing 16 classrooms, that have historically declined program invitations. One school, representing 3 classrooms, opted to schedule their program in Spring 2019. So the true decline is limited to the follow: 2 schools, representing 7 classrooms, stated that they did not have time to schedule a program this year. Two additional schools, representing 5 classrooms visited in 2017, declined EAC program invitations in 2018. In order to help rectify this decline, EAC staff are working on the development of a supplemental classroom program with new content relevant to the fourth grade science curriculum standards to be offered as an additional option beginning in Fall 2019.

<sup>3</sup> In practice, the EAC provides these programs for nearly 100% of those requesting the services.

**Goal:** Provide and promote comprehensive online resources on recycling and waste disposal for Bloomington, Normal, and McLean County with a target of **12,000** visits to these pages annually.

- In 2018, our online waste and recycling resources were visited 82,118 times, which exceeds our annual goal.

## COUNTY WASTE GENERATION & RECYCLING RATE

The main goals of the McLean County Solid Waste Program are to increase both recycling and source reduction. The annual measurement and reporting of these rates by the EAC serve as lagging indicators of the success of outreach efforts. The value of this performance indicator is also limited by other factors affecting recycling and waste generation rates, such as accessibility of recycling programs and macroeconomic forces. While quantifying source reduction of municipal solid waste is difficult, tracking recycling rates is much more reliable. Per the 2012 Five Year Update to the McLean County Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan, the countywide recycling rate goal was until recently set at 40%, which also served as the EAC's target for purposes of this indicator.

Despite an increase in waste generated, McLean County's recycling rate increased for the third year in a row in 2017. The Ecology Action Center's annual calculation of community-wide waste generation and recycling shows that the County reached a recycling rate of nearly 42% with an increase of just over 1% from 2016. As a result, the County maintained progress made in 2016 in breaking the 40% community-wide recycling goal set in 2007 but is still a significant distance from the new community-wide recycling rate goal of 50%. Minor fluctuations across the board in all material streams resulted in a relatively minor but yet positive change to the overall community-wide recycling rate for calendar year 2017. No single category of recyclable materials saw significant fluctuations from the year prior.

	2013	2014	2015*	2016*	2017	2018**
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	73,833	85,196	81,302	83,335	88,459	
Total MSW Landfilled (tons)	121,991	141,068	154,662	120,815	124,364	
Total Municipal Solid Waste Generated (tons)	195,824	226,264	235,964	204,150	211,230	
<i>Percent Change from Previous Year</i>	6.96%	15.54%	4.29%	-13.48%	3.47%	
<b>Recycling Rate</b>	<b>37.70%</b>	<b>37.65%</b>	<b>34.46%</b>	<b>40.82%</b>	<b>41.88%</b>	
<i>Percent Change from Previous Year</i>	3.43%	-0.13%	-8.49%	18.47%	2.59%	

\* Updated numbers due to corrected information from waste/recycling haulers.

\*\*Annual survey of waste haulers, recyclers, local governments, institutions, and other entities underway to determine 2018 waste generation and recycling rates.

As the McLean County Landfill is now closed, the Ecology Action Center is focusing on new waste management priorities as outlined in the recently approved Twenty-Year Materials Recovery and Resource Management Plan for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal, Illinois. Per the new plan, the new county-wide recycling rate goal is 50%.

## SOLID WASTE COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

- After approval of the new 20-Year McLean County Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan by the City of Bloomington, Town of Normal, and McLean County in February and March, the document was submitted to the Illinois EPA for feedback as required by the Illinois Solid Waste Planning Act. No feedback was received by the end of calendar year 2018.
- Worked with local non-profit organizations to phase out e-waste collection services and determine a permanent collection site for the County in response to Illinois' updated Consumer Electronics Recycling Act. The updated Act introduces a Convenience Standard clause requiring manufacturers to cover the costs of transportation for recycling from a number of collection sites in a given county relative to population size. Under the new clause, McLean County is eligible to receive recycling for unlimited covered residential electronics items from one designated local collection site. The Town of Normal's existing Self-Service e-waste collection area was chosen as the designated site.
- Facilitated Solid Waste Technical Committee Meeting including reviewing the current efforts being made regarding waste reduction and increased recycling as part of the recently approved 20-Year Solid Waste Management Plan.
- Facilitated public communications on the closure of the landfill. The McLean County Landfill reached capacity and ceased accepting additional waste at the end of September. Closure processes proceeded immediately, with the "cap" installed and seeded within a few weeks. The landfill end-of-life was anticipated for the last 10 years, making it a significant factor in the new 20-year waste management plan.
  - The McLean County Waste Transfer Station will continue to accept waste to be transported to the Livingston County Landfill for disposal. Disposal costs are not anticipated to increase in the short term due to economies of scale, however, in order to assert greater control over future waste disposal costs, the new waste management plan identifies six priority areas to focus efforts going forward.
- Expanded promotions to encourage usage of the Recycle Coach web and mobile app via increased outreach and promotion on social media. EAC staff updated the current information to reflect recent changes in some of the local, non-traditional recycling programs as well as the curbside, single-stream recycling program. This has been done in an effort to reduce "wishful recycling" behaviors that contaminate the recycling stream.
- Initiated planning and site coordination for fall 2019 Household Hazardous Waste Collection initiated.
- Assisted the Town of Normal staff with developing program for addressing multi-family housing recycling.
- Participated in video campaign marketing simplified recycling guidelines for apartment-dwelling students produced by the Student Environment Action Coalition at Illinois State University.

- Collaborated with Peoria and Tazewell County on future solid waste planning initiatives for Central Illinois.
- Attended the annual Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association Conference to review recycling education efforts and receive updates on the amended Commercial Electronics Recycling Act of Illinois.
- Participated in a state-wide effort to reduce contamination using a new standardized recycling flyer with simplified messaging for Town of Normal and City of Bloomington residents. Distribution has already begun, with plans to utilize the simplified messaging in the updating of all recycling educational materials in the community including new materials for multifamily housing in Normal to assist with the transition to universal recycling availability in August 2019.

## SPECIAL PROJECT-ILLINOIS PRAIRIE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION GRANT

EAC applied for and received full funding from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation- IPCF Green Endowment for a program titled "Reducing Barriers for Sustainable Recycling." The pilot program aims to increase the convenience of recycling and provide extended education on recycling options in the Bloomington-Normal community through two separate programs. A match by both the City of Bloomington and Town of Normal supplemented their respective programs.

In Normal, the program sought to increase participation in single-stream curbside recycling by making 82 curbside 65-gallon recycling carts available at no cost to low-income households. In Bloomington, grant funding allowed for four permanent recycling receptacles to be installed at the corners of the McLean County History Museum block. By providing permanent receptacles in an area of high pedestrian traffic, residents and visitors alike have increased accessibility to recycling options. Late in the year, the EAC staff leveraged the IPCF grant in order to secure four additional permanent recycling receptacles for the downtown Bloomington area through sponsorships by area recycling and waste haulers.

By the end of 2018, over 1,800 pounds of waste had been diverted through the use of the four grant-funded receptacles in Bloomington. In Normal, thirty-nine 65-gallon recycling carts were delivered to qualifying households by the end of 2018. Fifteen households had returned survey responses regarding their recycling behaviors and attitudes by the end of 2018. A majority of respondents stated that they believed awareness is the biggest barrier to recycling.



## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

- **Recycling and Waste Reduction Fourth Grade Presentations:**

- Glen Elementary (2 classes, 36 students)
- Northpoint Elementary (3 classes, 81 students)
- Olympia North Elementary (2 classes, 48 students)
- Calvary Christian Academy (1 class, 12 students)
- Cedar Ridge Elementary (4 classes, 86 students)
- Colene Hoose Elementary (3 classes, 72 students)
- Trinity Lutheran School (2 classes, 34 students)
- St. Mary's Catholic School (1 class, 18 students)
- Benjamin Elementary (3 classes, 78 students)
- Carlock Elementary (1 class, 18 students)
- Fox Creek Elementary (2 classes, 45 students)
- Parkside Elementary (2 classes, 49 students)
- Pepper Ridge Elementary (3 classes, 62 students)
- Tri-Valley Elementary (4 classes, 80 students)
- Sugar Creek Elementary (2 classes, 40 students)
- Oakland Elementary (3 classes, 65 students)
- LeRoy Elementary (3 classes, 75 students)
- Hudson Elementary (2 classes, 47 students)
- Oakdale Elementary (3 classes, 68 students)
- Epiphany Catholic School (1 class, 33 students)
- Ridgeview Elementary (3 classes, 55 students)
- Lexington Elementary (2 classes, 30 students)
- Cornerstone Christian Academy (1 class, 21 students)

**2018: 23 Total schools; Total classrooms 53; people: 1,153**

- **Other K-12 School Activities:**

- Presentation for Central Catholic High School student on EAC programs, mission, and volunteer opportunities related to solid waste initiatives (3 classes, 47 students)
- Presentation for Epiphany Jr. High students on EAC programs, mission, and volunteer opportunities related to solid waste initiatives (1 class, 30 students)

- Presentation for Northpoint Ecology Club on ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle for a zero waste lunch (60 students)
- Presentation for Parkside Jr. High on solid waste, recycling, and composting (1 class, 11 students)
- Presentation at McLean County SWCD Conservation Day on composting (6 classes, 150 students)
- Class on Zero Waste Lunch options for students 6 to 10 years of age (16 students)
- Presentation at Mulberry School students on recycling and composting (58 students)
- Presentation for Pepper Ridge Ecology Club on composting and best practices (22 students)
- Presentation at Sustainability Forum for University High Biology and Environmental Science students and staff (73 students)
- Video call presentation for elementary robotics team on vermicomposting (8 students)
- Presentation for University High Interact Student Organization on EAC programs and volunteer opportunities (14 students)
- Presentation for Hudson Elementary 4th graders on recycling process and remanufacturing of paper goods (24 students)
- **Preschool Presentations:**
  - Presentation for Chesterbrook Academy students on recycling and composting (2 classes, 20 students)
  - Presentation for Heartland Community College Child Development Lab on recycling and composting (19 students)
  - Presentation for Little Jewels students on recycling and composting (75 students)
- **Scout Activities:**
  - Presentation for Boy Scout members and parents on composting (16 attendees)
  - Presentation for Fairview Elementary Girl Scout Group on Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (10 students)
- **University Programs:**
  - Lecture presentation for ISU Environment and Society class (2 classes, 60 students)
  - Lecture presentation for ISU Philosophy class (1 class, 25 students)
  - Presentation for ISU Student Environmental Action Coalition on EAC programs (12 attendees)
- **Community Solid Waste Reduction Programs and Information Booths:**
  - Information table at Heartland Community College Campus Cleanup Event (12 interactions)
  - Information table at HCC Lifelong learning event promoting solid waste programs and recycling initiatives (63 interactions)

- Information table at Green Top Grocery promoting EAC programs and mission (5 interactions)
- Information table at ISU Sustainability Fair promoting EAC programs and mission (55 interactions)
- Information table at Girls World Expo promoting EAC programs and mission (53 interactions)
- Information booth at Advocate Bromenn Earth Day Fair promoting EAC programs including recycling (82 interactions)
- Information booth at Sugar Creek Arts Festival promoting EAC programs and mission (224 interactions)
- Information booth at LeRoy Replex Health Fair promoting EAC programs and mission (32 interactions)
- Information table at Downtown Bloomington Farmer's Market to promote Illinois Prairie Community Foundation funded-program for new downtown recycling bins (47 interactions)
- Information booth and composting promotion at Sweet Corn Blues Festival (871 interactions, 8 carts of composting collected)
- Information booth at Children Discovery Museum's Worldwide Day of Play celebration to promote recycling education (89 interactions)
- Information booth at Bloomington Township Day to promote recycling and composting as part of P.O.T.S. program (23 interactions)
- Information booth for ISU TCH223 Exploring Disciplinary Literacy Playground Night (15 interactions)
- Information booth at Unitarian Universalist Church Social Justice Far promoting EAC programs and recycling message (21 interactions)
- **Library Summer Reading Program at area libraries "Adventures of a Plastic Water Bottle":**
  - Danvers Public Library – 25 attendees
  - Normal Public Library – 60 attendees
  - Chenoa Township Library– 13 attendees
  - McLean Mt. Hope – Funks Grove Library – 50 attendees
  - Bloomington Public Library – 70 attendees
  - Colfax Martin Township Library – 5 attendees
  - Carlock Public Library – 15 attendees
  - Heyworth Public Library – 51 attendees
- **District 87 Summer Feeding Programs - Information table at program locations promoting recycling and vermicomposting:**
  - Irving Elementary (3 visits, 34 interactions)



- Stevenson Elementary (3 visits, 41 interactions)
- Bent Elementary (3 visits, 30 interactions)
- Sheridan Elementary (3 visits, 50 interactions)
- **Other Programs:**
  - Presentation for Homes of Hope Inc. staff on proper composting and constructing of bins (3 classes, 30 participants)
  - In-house composting overview including setup and best practices (3 attendees)
  - Presentation for Homes of Hope Inc. staff and residents on proper composting and best practices (15 attendees)
  - Lunch & Learn presentation on zero waste concepts for GROWMARK Inc. Green Team (8 employees)
  - Presentation at Minonk Filger Library on solid waste and recycling (7 attendees)
  - Presentation for First United Methodist Church Vesper Group on solid waste and recycling (18 attendees)
  - Presentation for McLean County Women's Group on solid waste and recycling (8 attendees)
  - Presentation for AFSCME Retiree group on solid waste and recycling (12 attendees)

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

- EAC staff coordinated a pilot textile pickup program for students living in multi-unit apartment complexes near the Illinois State campus in partnership with Home Sweet Home Ministries (HSHM) and area rental companies. The intent of the program was to increase the convenience of textile recycling for Normal's student population during student move-out, a period when waste generation is typically high.  

The effort was well received initially by apartment managers and students who received information at the ISU Sustainability Fair. Despite some complications limiting the scope of the program, HSHM managed to collect donated textiles at multiple apartment complexes. Awareness of this campaign even then prompted students at inaccessible complexes to voluntarily collect textiles to be dropped off at HSHM.
- Updated compost educational materials for on-site, community compost presentations to increase outreach and technical assistance, and promote increased food waste recycling, all serving as priority strategies of the new 20-Year Plan.
- Surveyed area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and institutions to compile relevant data for calculation of 2017 McLean County Solid Waste generation rate and recycling rate. Final results will be released in second quarter 2018.
- Co-coordinated the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo (ISLWE) at IWU with an estimated 1,500 participants. This event is purposefully designed to model "zero-waste" event planning: much of the literature was presented electronically instead of paper hand-outs, and vendors were encouraged to not distribute extraneous trinkets. Event was



publicized in the Pantagraph, on social media, on WJBC and WGLT, with advertisements and interviews, reaching nearly 50,000 area residents.



- Held Mega Recycling event in conjunction with the Illinois Sustainable Living and Wellness Expo at IWU in April. Seventeen volunteers helped two hundred fifteen households recycle electronics, textiles, Terracycle items, and corrugated plastic signs; participants were given information about recycling these items in our community throughout the year.
- Education Coordinator attended the Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association regional meeting.
- Coordinated annual Constitution Trail and Sugar Creek clean up event in April, removing trash from a 1.6-mile stretch of Sugar Creek from Tipton Park to Audubon Gardens. Eighty-five citizens volunteered with this effort and helped collect 1,000 pounds (1/2 ton) of trash.
- Participated in Bloomington Township Day celebration to promote recycling and composting awareness in conjunction with the revival of the local plastic garden pot recycling program. (23 interactions)
- EAC facilitated composting of corn cobs and other food waste at the Sweet Corn Blues Festival. 416 pounds of compostable materials were diverted from the landfill at the "reduce waste station." (871 interactions)
- Coordinated a social marketing campaign celebrating America Recycles Day on November 15. Alternative programs for nontraditional recycling were highlighted to increase awareness and promote recycling. Over 3,000 interactions, 168 shares, and an approximate reach of over 43,000 viewers were generated from the campaign.
- Collaborated with District 87 employees to develop a composting and recycling training protocol for junior high students at Bloomington Junior High School. The goal of the program was to reduce the amount of wasted food and recyclable products during the lunch period, while providing students with the knowledge to empower them to partake in more sustainable behaviors through adulthood.
- Assisted in the planning for a zero-waste lunch and designed educational materials on local recycling and composting programs to be utilized at the 2019 Home, Lawn & Garden Day held by the local Master Gardeners.
- Coordinated large-scale recycling initiative at the nineteenth annual Brüegala Beer Festival at the Normal Corn Crib in partnership with the Bloomington-Normal Jaycees. Twenty-five volunteers and five EAC staff members worked over the two-day event and diverted 3,962 total pounds of recyclable material from the landfill.



- Conducted survey at Normal recycling recycling drop-offs to determine information about typical users. Survey results demonstrated that 43% of users are residents of Bloomington, and 28% are residents of Normal. 87% of the site users are from McLean County, while 13% are from other counties, including Woodford, DeWitt, Ford, and Livingston. A vast majority of users are recycling residential material (87%) while 13% are from businesses. Over half of users surveyed were only visiting the site (some at schools, some at grocery stores) to recycle, while 42% were also grocery shopping at the same location on the same trip.
- Distributed educational material online and through handouts regarding updates to the community drop-off recycling bin program.
- Awarded the annual McLean County Green Awards at the EAC's Sustainable Gourmet event in November. The McLean County Waste Reduction and Recycling Award recognized Julie McCoy, the School Nutrition Director at District 87 for significant district-wide recycling and food composting efforts.
- Produced four quarterly EAC paper newsletters featuring solid waste issues among other topics. Mailed to approximately 291 households each issue and made available as free download on the EAC website.
- Sent monthly issues of the EAC Action News email newsletters to over 880 email addresses to promote general recycling and waste reduction.
- Promoted waste reduction, recycling, composting and proper disposal of household hazardous wastes through social media. EAC posted messages on its Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube accounts on solid waste topics, with a resulting 150,489 interactions.
- Answered 1,102 phone calls and other inquiries about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling.
- Received 42,995 visits to solid waste, recycling, and hazardous waste related pages within EAC's website.
- Promotion and oversight of Recycle Coach, a web and mobile based app that serves as an educational resource for McLean County residents with questions regarding local recycling programs and waste collection services. 13,146 total users, and over 54,300 interactions.
- Administration and promotion of McFreeecycle, a free listserv on the internet for the free exchange of materials in McLean County to avoid disposal of useable items. 1,939 current members with an average of 21.5 messages exchanged monthly. While membership continues to increase, usage of the service is declining. This is likely due to redundant "free items" services now available as a part of social media platforms like Facebook and Nextdoor.com.
- Radio Outreach:
  - EAC staff were interviewed on WGLT interview about Recycle Coach web-based recycling information application.
  - Recycle Coach promotions on WGLT for two week run
  - Recycle Coach promotions on WGLT for two week run



- EAC staff was interviewed on Cities 92.9 about Earth Day clean-up event and recycling.
- EAC staff was interviewed on WBNQ about Earth Day and clean-up event.
- Traditional Media:
  - December Pantagraph advertisements promoting Holiday Recycling.
  - December Pantagraph advertisements reminding residents of likely 2019 HHW collection.
  - December Pantagraph advertisements promoting new statewide recycling guidelines.
  - October anti-contamination advertisements run twice in Bloomington Pantagraph
  - Placed full-page advertisement in The Pantagraph for Earth Day listing the many resources the EAC provides to our community, including information about solid waste, recycling, and household hazardous waste.
  - Featured story on Household Hazardous Waste results from 2017 in Pantagraph.
  - Extensive media coverage (newspaper, online, and radio) of new 20-year solid waste plan and the approval process through McLean County, City of Bloomington, and the Town of Normal.
  - WJBC coverage of declining e-waste recycling options due to changes in e-waste recycling economics and changes in state e-waste laws.
  - Coverage by WGLT, WJBC, and the Pantagraph of Town of Normal process to consider and eventually approve a multi-family recycling ordinance.
  - Coverage by WGLT, WJBC, and Pantagraph of Illinois Prairie Community Foundation funded EAC projects with Normal and Bloomington to better meet recycling needs in two underserved areas-low income households in Normal and public areas in Downtown Bloomington.
  - EAC and waste issues covered in Pantagraph feature story and WGLT coverage of landfill closure in fall 2018.

