

MCLEAN COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM

2021 FOURTH QUARTER

REPORT



THE ECOLOGY ACTION CENTER HAS COMPLETED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN FULFILLMENT OF THE SOLID WASTE AND WASTE REDUCTION EDUCATION PROGRAM AGREEMENT OF JANUARY 1, 2020.

LEADING INDICATORS: SUMMARY OF PROGRESS¹

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.

- In 2021 EAC delivered our 4th grade recycling program in 59 in-person and virtual classroom visits, meeting live/face-to-face, in-person or virtually, with 1,135 students. This represents 71.9% of classrooms, meeting the annual goal.²

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.

- In 2021 EAC delivered one program with 13 participants³

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.⁴

- In 2021 EAC delivered 47 programs to 1,881 people, representing 188% of our goal by programs or 251% of our goal by individuals.

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 2021, total interactions from social media were 194,765, surpassing our annual goal by 650%.

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 2021 EAC totaled 43,733 visits to our online resources, which exceeds our annual goal by 364%.

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

²There are 82 Fourth grade classrooms in McLean County, which includes all public and private schools. Nine schools, representing 21 classrooms, have historically declined program invitations.

³As this program's target audience remained ineligible for COVID-19 vaccination, we developed a program that could be delivered in person or online for this year's Library Summer Reading Program. At least one library cut their program to half its usual duration, and we received very few responses to our offer of the program.

⁴In practice, the EAC provides these programs for nearly 100% of those requesting the services.

SOLID WASTE COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

- Surveyed area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and institutions to compile relevant data for calculation of 2020 McLean County Solid Waste generation rate and recycling rate.
- Ongoing efforts with partners to plan for future Household Hazardous Waste collection including funding, location, and other needs.
- Continued to coordinate site approval request process for proposed solid waste transfer station.
- Ongoing updates to Recycle Coach recycling directory application.
- Facilitated a meeting of the Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee.
- Completed collection of data from area waste haulers, recyclers, municipalities, and institutions and compiled relevant data for calculation of 2020 McLean County Solid Waste generation rate and recycling rate.
- Ongoing efforts with partners to plan for fall, 2021 Household Hazardous Waste collection including funding, location, and other needs.
- Continued to coordinate site approval request process for proposed solid waste transfer station, until application was withdrawn.
- Ongoing updates to Recycle Coach recycling directory application.
- Provided County Board with information as requested regarding the availability and extent of recycling services available to residents.
- Attended IRA/IRF Materials Management Advisory Meeting.
- Ongoing updates to the recycling and waste listings within the online RecycleCoach application. EAC staff also repaired the RecycleCoach database, and performed troubleshooting for the new interface implementation.
- Developed an advanced classroom recycling and waste reduction program for groups that do not require the more basic standard program.
- Attended the Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management conference.
- Revamped content of existing EAC composting workshops to address imminent invasive species risk.
- Updated composting content on EAC website, and updated the business recycling webpages with more local options for commercial use.
- Completed report for 2020 community-wide waste generation and recycling rate.
- Facilitated the 2021 Household Hazardous Waste collection event, collecting hazardous waste from 1,353 households.
- Completed implementation and troubleshooting of a new RecycleCoach interface.
- Conducted a survey of local recycling drop off locations usage.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Fourth grade recycling and waste reduction education programs (59 programs, 1,135 students)

- Fox Creek Elementary (2 classes, 31 students)
- Colene Hoose Elementary (2 classes, 35 students)
- Washington Elementary (1 class, 23 students)
- Epiphany Catholic School (2 classes, 29 students)
- Pepper Ridge Elementary (2 classes, 28 students)
- Grove Elementary (1 class, 32 students)
- Glenn Elementary (1 class, 22 students)
- Grove Elementary (1 class, 26 students)
- Olympia North (2 classes, 46 students)
- Sugar Creek Elementary School (2 classes, 40 students)
- Glenn Elementary (1 class, 18 students)
- St. Mary's Catholic School (1 class, 17 students)
- Grove Elementary (1 class, 20 students)
- Colfax Elementary (1 class, 14 students)
- Mulberry School (1 class, 22 students)
- Mulberry School (1 class, 24 students)
- Colfax Elementary (1 class, 17 students)
- Colfax Elementary (1 class, 16 students)
- Oakdale Elementary (1 class, 26 students)
- Washington Elementary (1 class, 23 students)
- Washington Elementary (1 class, 23 students)
- Fairview Elementary (1 class, 16 students)
- Oakdale Elementary (1 class, 16 students)
- Cedar Ridge Elementary (1 class, 15 students)
- Fairview Elementary (1 class, 23 students)
- Trinity Lutheran School (2 classes, 38 students)
- Cedar Ridge Elementary (1 class, 17 students)
- Cedar Ridge Elementary (1 class, 19 students)
- Oakland Elementary (1 class, 24 students)
- Grove Elementary (1 class, 24 students)
- Cedar Ridge Elementary (1 class, 21 students)
- Oakland Elementary (1 class, 24 students)
- Oakland Elementary (1 class, 23 students)
- Trinity Elementary (2 classes, 41 students)
- LeRoy Elementary (2 classes, 46 students)
- Glenn Elementary (2 classes, 39 students)
- Washington Elementary (2 classes, 42 students)
- Sheridan Elementary (3 classes, 52 students)
- Prairieland Elementary (1 class, 18 students)
- Prairieland Elementary (1 class, 21 students)
- Cornerstone Elementary (2 classes, 27 students)
- Hudson Elementary (2 classes, 43 students)
- Colene Hoose Elementary (3 classes, 55 students)

Other community educational programs & presentations

- EAC Earth Day Live event promoting all EAC programs including waste reduction and recycling with 662 viewers.

- Delivered the Library Summer Reading Program at Chenoa Public Library, in which we read and discussed “Not for me please, I choose to act green” story (13 attendees).
- Seventeen one-hour “Nature Walk” sessions, a collaboration with the Children's Discovery Museum. Walked to Hidden Creek Nature Sanctuary, discussed direct impacts of trash, recycling, and clean water behaviors
 - 16 January, 2021 (3 sessions, 40 participants)
 - 20 February, 2021 (3 sessions, 33 participants)
 - 13 March, 2021 (3 sessions, 31 participants)
 - April 10, 2021 (4 sessions, 28 participants)
 - May 16, 2021 (4 sessions, 36 participants)
- Presented five Compost Workshops, with 16 total attendees.
- Presentation for Mulberry School Pre-K on litter and recycling (1 class, 21 students).
- Presentation for ISU class of future K-12 educators - overview of EAC solid waste and other elementary programs (24 attendees).
- Presentation for Moses Montefiore Temple (21 attendees)
- Presentation for the Youth Conservation Conference on EAC programming and volunteer opportunities (13 attendees).
- Presentation for the Young Men's Club on waste issues (45 attendees).
- Provided education for the Illinois Art Station and Boys' and Girls' Club summer camp, on waste and recycling (13 participants).
- Presented our new advanced recycling education program for the University High School Earth Club (10 participants).
- Presented a compost program at the McLean County Museum of History for “Futures in History” youth camp (16 attendees).
- Presented at BCAI a program about solid waste and recycling at Summer Arts Youth Camp (15 attendees).
- Presented fifteen EAQs Facebook Live chat episodes.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on February 19 focused on recycling contamination and what can and cannot be recycled, with 11 viewers.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on March 5 talked about curbing leaves, and DeTerra prescription disposal, with 8 viewers.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on March 19 covered composting and answered recycling questions.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on April 2 focused on hazardous waste disposal options, with 13 viewers.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on April 16 focused on pharmaceuticals disposal, with 14 viewers.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on May 14 focused on waste reduction for picnics, with 20 viewers.
 - EAQs Facebook Live chat on May 28 focused on a variety of topics including community composting, with 11 viewers.

- EAQs Facebook Live chat on June 11 focused on hazardous waste and local disposal options.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on July 9 focused on composting.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on August 6 focused on hazardous household waste.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on August 13 discussed composting.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on August 20 focused on compost and hazardous waste.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on September 17 discussed composting.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on October 15 focused on on waste generation, recycling rate and recycling trends during COVID.
- EAQs Facebook Live chat on October 22 focused on pharmaceutical take-back/drop-off.
- Continued to update and maintain the Recycle Coach database (ongoing).
- Attended Illinois Counties Solid Waste Management Association webinars.
- Attended IRA/IRF webinar on polystyrene foam recycling.
- Offered an informational booth at the Glorious Garden Festival and provided information about BN Community Composting (114 attendees).
- Held an informational booth at the Bloomington Cultural Festival and gave out information about Household Hazardous Waste (23 individuals reached).
- At Sweet Corn Festival, provided food waste composting service, filling 6 95-gallon carts with corncobs and other compostable waste. Educated attendees about composting (456 individuals reached).
- Provided an informational booth at the Autumnal Festival at the ISU Horticulture Center, gave out information about Household Hazardous Waste and composting (23 attendees).
- Provided a take-home "Sorting Boss Toss-Across" game activity for Atlanta Ag 4H Club, about how to sort recycling properly (14 participants)
- "Compost It" video promoted on Facebook (total reach 5,948 individuals).

MARKETING & OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Radio Promotions:
 - Radio advertisement on WJBC, WBNQ and WBWN promoting use of the Recycle Coach app.
 - Interviewed with Marc Strauss of WJBC on hazardous waste, reaching approximately 1,000 listeners.
 - Interviewed with WGLT regarding county-wide recycling rate.
 - Interviewed with WGLT to a total of 25,000 listeners.

- Social Media:
 - Promoted waste reduction, recycling, composting and proper disposal of household hazardous wastes through social media. EAC posted messages on solid waste topics to Facebook and Twitter accounts, with a resulting 163,045 views of these posts.

- Newsletters:
 - Produced quarterly EAC paper newsletters featuring solid waste issues including options for non-traditional recycling in McLean County Mailed to an average of 112 households.
 - Sent monthly issues of the EAC Action News email newsletters to an average of 1,334 email addresses to promote general recycling and waste reduction.
 - Sent a holiday guide email newsletter to 1,531 email addresses to promote holiday season specific waste reduction.
 - Sent a Household Hazardous Waste Collection email announcement to 1,069 email addresses, promoting the HHW Collection event.

- Recycling & Waste website interactions:
 - Received 53,733 visits to solid waste, recycling, and hazardous waste related pages within EAC's website.
 - Recycle Coach recycling information application had 362,014 interactions.

- Answered 756 phone calls and other inquiries about the disposal of household hazardous waste and recycling.

- Administration and promotion of McFreecycle, a free listserv on the internet for the free exchange of materials in McLean County to avoid disposal of usable items. There are 1,786 current members with an average of 24 posts per month in quarter four. The usage of the service appears to be declining. This is likely due to redundant "free items" services now available as a part of social media platforms like Facebook and Nextdoor.com.

2020 COUNTY WIDE WASTE GENERATION AND RECYCLING RATE

As the community's solid waste agency, the EAC annually collects waste and recycling data to calculate the amount of municipal solid waste generated and recycled for all of McLean County. The information gathered serves as a lagging performance indicator of the success of outreach programs on waste generation and recycling. While the performance indicator is limited, it does help guide the EAC's efforts to improve the county's recycling rate and increase source reduction.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought unprecedented impacts in waste management and recycling. As much of the global population stayed home, commercial and industrial waste generation decreased. However, even as many municipalities limited collection and sorting in order to safely and efficiently operate despite a reduced workforce, residential waste generation skyrocketed. In many cities around the globe, this combination overwhelmed collection efforts and severely curtailed recycling. Worldwide, some locations saw three-fold increases in illegal

waste disposal, with others reported a more than 400% rise in plastic waste alone. With strains on the manufacturing workforce and record demand for online shopping, the market value of cardboard increased so much that some locations worldwide are reporting piracy of sorts, as cardboard intended for recycling is stolen and illegally sold to recyclers.

In McLean County, as elsewhere, single-use plastics dominated trash bins as residents turned to carry-out and disposable PPE. Intensified cleaning routines likely drove a rise in the generation of hazardous waste and use of other disposable items such as cleaning wipes. Although commercial/industrial waste streams tended to decrease, use of cardboard and plastic rose sharply as residents opted for delivery and online purchasing rather than excursions to the store. Residents across the USA cooked more and spent time on yard work while at home, and nationwide food and yard waste trended up. At the same time, McLean County restaurant business plummeted, and so did recycling of restaurant food waste. Reduced collection schedules and an increased focus on backyard composting (home composting is not included in recycle rate calculations) may also have contributed to the 27% decrease in measured recovery of food and yard waste.

While some municipalities worldwide diverted recyclables to landfills in early stages of the pandemic, haulers servicing McLean County continued to pick up recycling throughout 2020. The Ecology Action Center's annual calculation of community-wide waste generation and recycling shows that the County realized a recycling rate of 36% in 2020. The decrease of 22% compared to 2019 is consistent with national and global deviations that resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic. Categories of notable change included paper/cardboard, restaurant waste, automotive fluids, and non-traditional recyclables. Recycling of restaurant waste declined significantly, likely due to the closure of many businesses including restaurants. The decrease in recycling of automotive fluids probably also followed business closures and a resultant reduction in driving. Many recycling drop-off programs were suspended, so recycling of non-traditional recyclables such as batteries also declined. One category of recyclables was significantly increased compared to 2019. Reflecting global trends, recycling of paper and cardboard rose 127%, probably due to online shopping.

Even with the decrease in overall recycling rate, McLean County remains ahead of reported national averages. Although landfilling of disposable PPE, convenience and cleaning items likely increased, the total amount of municipal solid waste decreased 16%, and the amount sent to the landfill in 2020 remained nearly identical to the amount landfilled in 2019. While the proportion of waste recycled countywide is on par with our 2015 recycling rate, this 16% decrease in overall solid waste production from 2019 to 2020 bodes well for ongoing progress towards the new community-wide recycling rate goal of 50% set in 2017 under the new 20-year solid waste management plan.

With the closure of the McLean County Landfill in late 2018, the Ecology Action Center continues to focus on waste management priorities as outlined in the Twenty-Year Materials Recovery and Resource Management Plan for McLean County, Bloomington, and Normal, Illinois. This includes diversion strategies for waste that would otherwise require landfill disposal further away from the source of origin.

McLean County Waste Generation and Recycling Rates: 2015-2020

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total MSW Recycled (tons)	81,302	83,335	88,459	94,804	88,330	58,193

Total MSW Landfilled (tons)	154,662	120,815	124,364	109,467	104,772	104,919
Total Municipal Solid Waste Generated (tons)	235,964	204,150	211,230	204,271	193,102	163,113
Recycling Rate	34.5%	40.8%	41.9%	46.4%	45.7%	35.68%