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February 2025

NEWAYGO COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION

NCEC NEWS

The Environmental Resource Hub for Newaygo County

Supporting the beauty and sustainability of the Newaygo County environment through Information, Education, and Advocacy".

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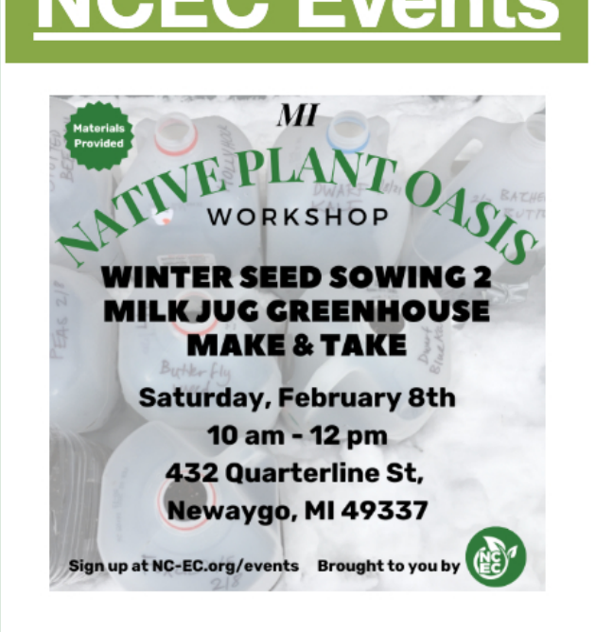
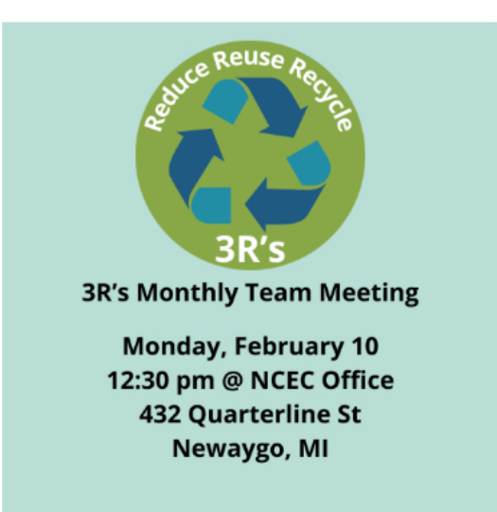


Materials Provided
MI NATIVE PLANT OASIS WORKSHOP
WINTER SEED SOWING 2
MILK JUG GREENHOUSE
MAKE & TAKE
Saturday, February 8th
10 am - 12 pm
432 Quarterline St,
Newaygo, MI 49337
Sign up at NC-EC.org/events Brought to you by

Winter Seed Sowing 2: Milk Jug Greenhouses
Saturday, February 8th
10 am - 12 pm
432 Quarterline St,
Newaygo, MI 49337



Reduce Reuse Recycle
3R's
3R's Monthly Team Meeting
Monday, February 10
12:30 pm @ NCEC Office
432 Quarterline St
Newaygo, MI

3R's Team Meeting
Monday, February 10th
12:30 pm
432 Quarterline St,
Newaygo, MI 49337

Environmental Ally Events

Newaygo Prairie TLC Workdays
3250 E 56th St,
Newaygo, MI 49337

- Tuesday, 2/4 9:30 am - 12 pm
- Tuesday, 2/18 9:30 am - 12 pm
- Sunday, 2/23 10 am - 1 pm

Post Workday Social
Newaygo Brewing Co
19 State Rd,
Newaygo, MI 49337

- Sunday, 2/23 1:30 pm

Coolbough Natural Areas TLC Workdays
approx address
5800 S Hazelwood Ave,
Newaygo, MI 49337

- Saturday, 2/15 10 am - 1 pm

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BYOC: Bring Your Own Container

Written by Mary Morgan

Do you collect Styrofoam for recycling in your home? We do. Have for years. And by far the biggest contribution to the collection is from restaurants. We rarely finish the large portions served at most restaurants. So we ask for to-go containers (usually Styrofoam) that we dutifully rinse out after eating the leftovers at home. Then add the container to our growing Styrofoam collection. Sometimes the pile takes over the storage closet where it is kept. Then what? Where to take it? There's one recycling facility that accepts food use Styrofoam south of Grand Rapids (Atlas EPS, 8240 Byron Center Ave., Byron Center, MI 49315, 616-878-1568). We go up to Big Rapids and dump the Styrofoam at Recycle Mecosta for a small donation. (They are open on Saturdays and Mondays). But what a pain.

So, why can't the restaurants stop using Styrofoam containers? And what's the big deal about Styrofoam, anyway? Styrofoam is cheap, lightweight, and easy to resource. It won't seep grease or fluids and somewhat keeps your food insulated. But Styrofoam is also trash that won't go away. Most of the 3 million tons of Styrofoam produced each year goes to landfills where it takes roughly 500 years to break down. The production and use of Styrofoam releases toxic chemicals like benzene and styrene. As waste, it produces methane gas. The Recycle, Reuse and Reduce committee of NCEC has initiated a campaign to discuss the possibility of reducing Styrofoam use in local restaurants. We are starting with a survey of restaurant owners regarding their willingness to change from Styrofoam. The hope is to offer other products that could be used and perhaps even purchased in bulk to reduce additional costs to the restaurants. A worthy effort, no doubt.

Keep reading

> ***"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."*** -Albert Einstein

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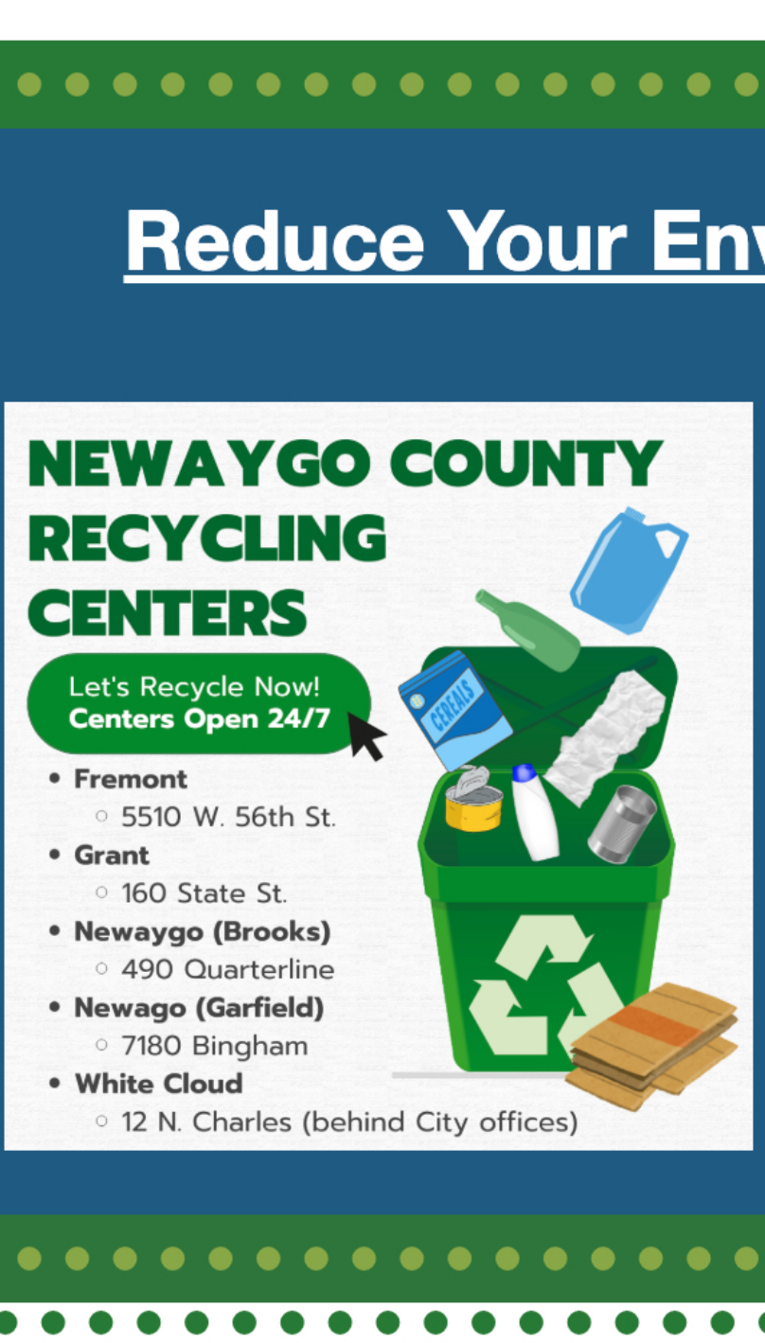
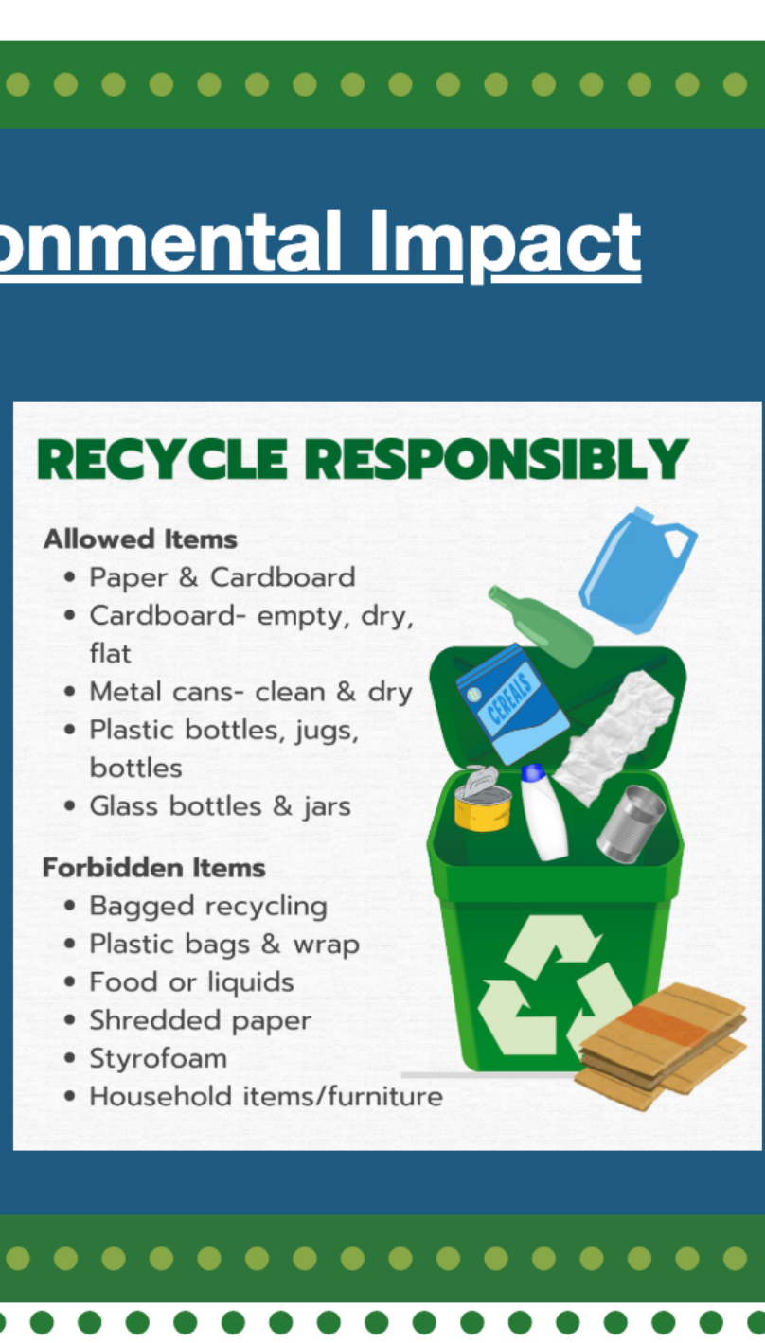
Reduce Your Environmental Impact



NEWAYGO COUNTY RECYCLING CENTERS
Let's Recycle Now!
Centers Open 24/7

- **Fremont**
  - 5510 W. 56th St.
- **Grant**
  - 160 State St.
- **Newaygo (Brooks)**
  - 490 Quarterline
- **Newago (Garfield)**
  - 7180 Bingham
- **White Cloud**
  - 12 N. Charles (behind City offices)



RECYCLE RESPONSIBLY

Allowed Items
- Paper & Cardboard
- Cardboard- empty, dry, flat
- Metal cans- clean & dry
- Plastic bottles, jugs, bottles
- Glass bottles & jars

Forbidden Items
- Bagged recycling
- Plastic bags & wrap
- Food or liquids
- Shredded paper
- Styrofoam
- Household items/furniture

What's With the 3R's

NC-EC has many moving parts. From a myriad of allies in our county, to our board, promotional committee and focus teams within our own organization. Today we begin to look at our four focus teams:

- Youth & Young Adult Environmental Allies, including our Michigan Green Schools
- 3R: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- LOBO: Love Our Beautiful Outdoors
- Healthy Habitats: Learn or teach about invasive species, native landscapes, and restoration opportunities

In particular, I want to share a bit about 3R: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.

After participating in a number of events hosted or shared by NCEC over this past year, I decided to get more involved. 3R sounded like a good place for me to start. I've been recycling glass since childhood when my dad, who worked for Owens-Illinois (a glass manufacturer) brought home a bumper sticker that said, "Get it in glass for goodness sake" as part of O-I's promotional materials. It seems cryptic now, but at the time it was meant to be a dig at plastics and cans that were not recyclable. This was the 70s and recycling was just coming into the public awareness. Glass was the way to go if you wanted to be cool and recycle. My dad never put bumper stickers on his cars, until that day. It was monumental!

Now, 50 years later, I'm still involved with recycling and the other 2 Rs: reducing and reusing. I recently read a history about the 3R team and was deeply impressed by the monumental task of county-wide recycling that this team made possible.

The first iteration of this group was Recycling for Newaygo County (RNC), founded in 2004. They connected with the Michigan State University Extension Office and the Fremont Area Community Foundation. Together they formed a board of directors and hired Robert Pinder as the first Executive Director. RNC's activities started in a warehouse in Fremont, known as the former Recycall facility. It quickly grew with placement of collection trailers at 8 sites throughout the region. These trailers were collected and processed at the Fremont location for recycling.

Shortly after starting, they found that glass was recyclable but not "saleable". (gasp!) In response, the RNC decided to transport the collected glass to Chicago. Later RNC collaborated the Newaygo County Regional Educational Service Agency and created Enterprise. Enterprise developed as a glass crushing and sales business, staffed by adult special needs students. Problem solved. Other early RNC initiatives included cardboard pickup service for county businesses, educational outreach to local students, and tours of the recycling center in Fremont.

Since 2008 the recycling business has been plagued by volatility. Relying on marketability of recycled materials, increasing transportation costs, variable public participation, all contribute to the difficulty of maintaining a self-supporting service. Plastics is a perfect example. Early on recycled plastics were enthusiastically adopted as a viable product for which we now struggle to find buyers. Pivoting to address the changing world of recycling takes a combination of analysis, creativity, philanthropy, and long hours.

In 2014, RNC came under the leadership of Linda Ritz White, as Executive Director. The director, board, an advisory committee and donors helped keep the RNC afloat duirng that difficult time and eventually grew to a more financially positive endeavor. Under their guidance the RNC converted to Single Stream Recycling (ie everything mixed together) in order to reduce costs. Collected materials were then delivered to the Kent county recycling facility in Grand Rapids for processing.

From 2014 to 2018 other changes came to RNC. The main facility was moved from Fremont to Brooks Township. They began to provide free cardboard drop off at the new facility and paper shredding services. RNC's educational outreach also grew, offering programs to local schools and camps and hosting Earth Day competitions.

Fundraising and outreach to the community grew to include membership drives, surveys of the local population regarding service improvements and broadening of materials accepted for processing, including free electronics recycling. In appreciation of the community and volunteer support for RNC the "Earth Alive" awards were started in 2015.

From 2016 to 2017 a couple problems impacted the function of the recycling centers. Kent county was no longer able to accept our recyclables for free and had increasing delivery fees. RNC sites also experienced more trouble with illegal dumping, resulting in the closure of a sites in Hesperia and Fremont.

After discussing the recycling service with Newaygo County, the responsibility for supporting this service was transferred to county oversight. Following that shift, RNC restructured to focus on educational outreach. The organization was renamed 3R Education. By 2018 the 3R Education group evolved further to become a local environmental action group and became the Citizen's Environmental Watch and Action Coalition (CEWAC). That mouthful is now known to us today as Newaygo County Environmental Coalition (NCEC)

When I heard about the accomplishments, creative problem solving and growth of that initial recycling group I was amazed. It's such an inspiring history and raises my hopes for our current endeavors within the 3R team. Those include an initiative to get local restaurants to halt use of Styrofoam for takeout and "doggy bag" containers. To facilitate that change we hope to form a purchasing co-op for alternative packaging that will reduce the cost of this transition. As some of our local restaurants make that transition we hope to spur further acceptance to more environmentally friendly packaging at our local restaurants.

Of course we have more dreams. Suggestions from our team include: a tour to a local vermicompost facility to educate others regarding this great option for reducing food waste and creating nutrient rich compost in our own county. One of our local restaurants already participates in this and it has reduced their food waste drastically.

Another suggestion came from a member of our team that travels frequently and noticed that many locales use wood table ware (you know forks and knives). That may seem small to you, but a transition from plastic to wood table ware has so many benefits. This could be a good fit with the future packaging co-op.

But one of my favorite initiatives involves further endorsement of Newaygo county as a beautiful, natural haven that draws many visitors and new residents. We hope to see community members and businesses fully invested in the preservation of this great asset. A mindset focused on preserving the Newaygo environment will naturally lead to more recycling, reducing and reusing endeavors. If you would like to participate in this our mission please feel free to join us either by partcipating on our 3R team or sharing your thoughts with us. You can contact us through the NCEC website or at susie.h@nc-ec.org.

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What's Your Passion?

NCEC is fueled by the talents and passions of our members. Under the umbrellas of our main focus areas- youth engagement, enjoying nature, reducing our environmental impacts, and conserving habitats- there are so many opportunities to connect with others. To join or learn more, click any of the icons below or visit the NCEC teams page.

Youth & Young Adult Environmental Allies
Love Our Beautiful Outdoors
Reduce Reuse Recycle
Healthy Habitats on Public & Private Land
Newaygo Area Local Growers
Prescribed Burn Development Team
Vernal Pool Patrol
Foraging & Wildcrafting Community
WILD ONES
Communications Team

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What Else Can I Do?

This is our home. Help us protect our shared environment.

1. Share our website, posts, E-news with Newaygo Community members and Organizations.

2. Join a Team! about invasive species, native landscapes, and restoration opportunities.

3. Get involved with Environmental Advocacy.

4. Bring your skills and knowledge to NCEC.

5. Donate!

Contact NCEC

Environmental Allies are people, organizations, and departments who are actively doing the work of environmental education, promotion, protection, and recreation in the Newaygo County region.

Your organization can join the list of Environmental Allies by clicking here: **Environmental Ally Application.**

NCEC will promote your organization, events, activities and volunteer needs! Click the button below to submit your event

Ally Event Form

Your Support Makes A Difference

NCEC is a small but mighty 501c3 non-profit organization! We depend on your tax deductible donations to continue our work, and to help us grow with our Newaygo County Environment needs.

Donate

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