Recycling

Recycling is the process where waste is collected, reprocessed and then used to create new products.

Environmentally sound recycling operations can help to conserve resources and protect the environment. However, if not operated correctly recycling operations can actually be a source of pollution themselves.

Did you know?

- In Australia recyclable material makes up almost 80% of total household waste.
- Every tonne of paper recycled saves 13 trees, 2.5 barrels of oil, 4100 kWh of electricity, 4 cubic metres of landfill and 31,780 litres of water.
- Every glass jar recycled saves enough energy to power a light bulb for 4 hours.
- Every aluminium can recycled 20 times uses the same energy it would take to produce 1 new can.
- Each tonne of glass recycled saves 1.1 tonnes of raw material.
- The recycling of paper uses 60% less energy than the manufacture of paper from virgin timber.
- Paper disposed of into landfill rots down to produce methane, a harmful greenhouse gas.

The Issues

Excess waste is a growing problem around the world, with limited space available for waste disposal.

Materials sent to landfill can produce greenhouse gases and leach toxic chemicals into the ground and waterways.

The use of new materials in production uses a great deal of energy. It takes less energy and natural resources to manufacture goods using recycled materials.

A high proportion of the waste produced from households and industry has the potential to be reused or recycled.

With limited global resources, recycling provides an important avenue to re-route waste back into mainstream usage.

Recycled materials can be turned into a wide variety of alternative products.

Benefits of Recycling

- Minimises the need for mining new raw materials and decreases damage to wilderness areas.
- Saves landfill space and helps solve waste disposal issues.
- Reduces the pollution created through the manufacture of new goods.
- Conserves energy that would normally be used in mining, harvesting, manufacturing and transportation of virgin/new materials.
- Conserves valuable natural and non-renewable resources.
- Creates employment opportunities in the recycling industry.
- Builds more competitive manufacturing industries.

What can be done?

Given the benefits of recycling for the environment and conservation of our natural resources, it is important to consider the ways to broaden these processes in our communities.

Recycling can be considered to have taken place when the resource has been recovered, reprocessed and re-used.

Four Steps to Waste Reduction

1.Avoid
Not using products or finding alternatives should be the first step in the conservation process.

2.Reduce
Don't buy or accept goods with unnecessary packaging or components.

3.Reuse
Many goods can be reused either in their existing form or broken down into components to be reused with just a little imagination.

For example, wood can be used to make furniture and children's toys, tyres can be used as a base in garden beds, and milk cartons with the top and bottom removed can be used as tree guards.

4.Recycle
Rescue resources from landfill by recycling goods and their material components.

Paper recycling and composting are examples of simple accessible recycling. However, recycling more complex materials such as plastics generally require specialised machinery and technology.

What can be Recycled?

Recycling facilities vary greatly depending on local conditions. Contact your local government to see if they run any recycling programs. You could also contact recycling companies directly. Some companies offer payment in return for useful waste materials.

Paper
Save trees! Paper and cardboard can be broken down into pulp with water then dried to produce new sheets of paper.

Plastic
Depending on the type of plastic, many plastics can be reprocessed into products including bottles, fabric, crates and pipe-fittings.

Aluminium
Molten aluminium can be re-moulded into new aluminium cans or made into other products such as saucepans and kitchenware.

Glass
Glass is 100% recyclable and can be recycled an infinite number of times into new bottles and containers.

Organic material
Organic waste is a valuable resource that can be easily turned into compost and used to improve soils and farm production. (see our Organic Waste Information Sheet).

Member Projects

Ireland - Meath Beachcombers have built an entire bike shelter out of plastic bottles.

Indonesia - Resopa run a community program where waste items are used to make saleable items such as papier-mâché containers. The program generates a substantial income for the community.

Argentina - "Escuadra Lago del Desierto" de la Gendarmeria Infantil recycle "Tetrapaks" to produce building bricks.

New Caledonia – 77,000 aluminium tins were collected for recycling in a two-month Clean Up project.

Further Information

Clean Up the World
www.cleanuptheworld.org
Clean Up Australia
www.cleanup.com.au
Grassroots Recycling Network
www.grrn.org
International Solid Waste Association
www.iswa.org/
UNEP - Waste Management
http://www.unep.org/tools/default.asp?ct=waste

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