Setting Standards of Sustainability in Rural California

Keeping Rural California Beautiful

Find out how to recycle:

Fishing Line 4

Paint 6

Mattresses 7

A Special Advertising Supplement

WHERE TO RECYCLE IN MONO COUNTY

All of the County's Solid Waste Facilities offer collection of recyclable items, such as:

- Glass
- Plastic
- Aluminum
- Cardboard

Mono County Non-Recyclables Include:

- Plastic bags or film packaging
- Food service items like cups or plates
- Napkins, paper towels
- Tissue or gift wrap
- Pet food bags
- Styrofoam
- Packing peanuts
- Books, photographic paper, tapes, CDs

*For complete list of recyclables and non-recyclables, visit ***recyclesierra.com/recycling/***

1. Walker Transfer Station 780-932-5440
2. Ted's Automotive 530-495-1688
3. Walker Thrift Store 530-495-1200
4. Bridgeport Transfer Station 760-932-5440
5. Bridgeport Elementary School 760-932-7441
7. Channel Union 76 760-647-6303
8. Pumice Valley Landfill 760-932-5440
9. Mammoth Disposal Transfer Station 760-934-2201
10. Benton Crossing Landfill 760-932-5440
11. Benton Transfer Station 760-932-5440
13. Paradise Transfer Station 760-932-5440
14. Chalfant Transfer Station 760-932-5440

MONO COUNTY MAP

Making Strides To Uplift Rural Recycling

Diversifying waste management strategies for rural California communities

BY ZOE MANZANETTI

From sprawling metropolitan areas like Los Angeles or the Bay Area to tiny rural communities like Ukiah and Mammoth Lakes, California boasts a broad and diverse range of communities. Yet sometimes policies and regulations don't reflect the vast range of difference in California counties. Waste management and recycling is one such issue.

Justin Nalder, the Solid Waste Superintendent and Environmental Manager for Mono County's Public Works Solid Waste, explains that, "Often times, [regulations are] drafted from the perspective of folks who are familiar with big city California. The guidelines and regulations don't always fit well with rural communities."

When California lawmakers wanted to implement a mandatory three-bin curbside pickup, rural community members like Nalder had to speak up and say, "It sounds really nice, but what if we don't have any curbs?" Rural communities rely on officials and residents to raise concerns like these, "otherwise it would be unattainable for the economies of scale that exist out here."

Recycling in rural communities, according to Nalder, looks very different when compared with urban communities. One of the biggest differences, Nalder explains, is that "when you live kind of far from a lot of services, you have to do a lot more for yourself." Without curbside pick-up, many residents have to haul their own waste to transfer centers or dumps, which can be hours away. The resources aren't available for some rural counties to recycle as many different kinds of items, "We don't have the manpower or infrastructure to have a whole crew walk through a waste pile and separate commingled waste." That means residents have to diligently sort their trash and recycling before hauling it.

Or, says Nalder, "it might be a matter of teaching folks how to compost in their own backyard" to reduce waste but it depends on the community. Mono County is nearly 3,000 square miles, so officials must "cater community by community as to what services you try to offer more of or less," to best fit the varying needs.

"However, with those challenges also come opportunities," Nalder says. He's optimistic about the future of rural recycling and opportunity for innovation: "I hope that the doors may be open to these new technologies. Some of them are very, very creative." Regardless of the technologies, Nalder hopes "that we are not limited in any form or fashion from approaching things collaboratively, or on a regional effort."

> **"When you live kind of far from a lot of services, you have to do a lot more for yourself."**
>
> **Justin Nalder**
> ***Solid Waste Superintendent and Environmental Manager, Mono County's Public Works Solid Waste***

To help keep Mammoth and other rural communities clean and beautiful, here are some useful recycling tips:

Indoors

- **Reuse and reduce paper:** Try to reuse envelopes and boxes that you receive in the mail. Save junk mail or other papers for note-taking or personal printing. When printing, choose double-sided.

- **Be mindful of your sink:** Most residential drains connect to the natural waterways. Don't dispose of cooking oils, fats or grease down the drain; store them until they can be taken to proper disposal. Put food waste in the trash instead of down the garbage disposal.

Outdoors

- **Carry your trash:** Resources are limited in rural communities when it comes to waste management so be prepared to carry your trash with you on your hike until you find an appropriate receptacle. Pack it in, pack it out.

- **Remember the wildlife:** Humans aren't the only local residents. If there is a trash can that's full or overflowing, it will be an attractant for birds, bears or bugs. Try to avoid leaving food waste or other trash within easy access to animals.

- **Be mindful of ashes:** Used coals and ashes take a long time to cool down and should sit in your ash bin for at least three days before you dispose of them.

A Refresher Course For Recycling Basics

Learn about how you can implement easy recycling practices

BY ZOE MANZANETTI

The phrase "reduce, reuse and recycle" has become nearly second nature to Californians. But for many California communities, recycling is more detailed than just mindlessly throwing all paper into a recycling bin. In rural communities, mindfulness becomes especially important so that a community's limited resources can be used most efficiently.

In rural areas, the community often bears a bigger responsibility when it comes to waste management. Sometimes the infrastructure doesn't support as many garbage trucks or the rules and services are limited when it comes to what can and cannot be recycled. But recycling also helps preserve the natural beauty of rural communities like Mammoth, a small town nestled in Mono County.

Lara Kaylor, the Director of Communications for Mammoth Lakes Tourism, explains that recycling is a small gesture that has a big impact. The beauty of Mammoth is tainted when there are plastic bottles littering the sides of hiking trails or floating in the lakes. Officials hope that residents and visitors will be more mindful of their recycling habits. "We live in a very beautiful place and we are very fortunate, so it's very sad to see [plastic on trails or in lakes]," says Taylor.

> **"These places are beautiful and we want to keep them beautiful for generations to come..."**
>
> **Lara Kaylor**
> ***Director of Communications, Mammoth Lakes Tourism***

Luckily, reducing the amount of plastic litter is an easy fix. One way Mammoth visitors and residents can be mindful of reducing their plastic, non-recyclable consumption is reusing.

Mammoth Lakes residents are developing a single-use-plastic-ban initiative that would stop the sale of "single-use plastic water bottles, that [are] 24 ounces or less," says Taylor.

She emphasizes that bringing reusable materials is "a very easy thing to do on your part;" simply carry a reusable water bottle or coffee mug to eliminate plastic cup use.

Even if reusable items are used, making sure that trash and recycling are being properly disposed of is also important. Taylor explains that "we are kind of unique in that we can only recycle 1s and 2s," which is narrower than other more urban communities. But Taylor is encouraged by the large impact recycling can make: "These places are beautiful and we want to keep them beautiful for generations to come and recycling is the easiest thing you can do to help that cause."

Rural Recycling: Shifting the Mindset

Finding the opportunity in every challenge is a vital first step

BY ZOE MANZANETTI

Rural communities face many challenges that urban communities don't when it comes to recycling and regulations: the budget is smaller, the infrastructure is sometimes non-existent, and the staffs are limited. But that just means they must be a little more creative.

Pam Bold, the Executive Director of the High Sierra Energy Foundation (HSEF), a group located in Mammoth that focuses on energy sustainability in the Eastern Sierra, has seen these challenges first-hand and is also hopeful for the future.

The HSEF has partnered with Mono County to create the Eastern Sierra Green Business Program, which encourages businesses to become more sustainable. The program helps businesses learn how to implement more environmentally friendly practices, from eliminating single serve utensils or plastic water bottles to using more local vendors and products.

While other more urban communities have a broad range of what can and cannot be recycled and disposed of, "that's not really an option for us." Bold explains that one of the best ways to reduce recycling waste is to increase recycling education: "You can't be an environmental foundation without focusing on youth, in my personal opinion." The HSEF works a lot with local schools to implement a recycling curriculum that discusses things like waste management and composting. Bold also thinks "it's likely that we will work with the county on a project for vermiculture, for schools, or maybe even jails, or other public facilities."

> **"You can't be an environmental foundation without focusing on youth..."**
>
> **Pam Bold**
> ***Executive Director, High Sierra Energy Foundation***

Mono County is also extremely large, which can present a unique set of problems and opportunities. "Our county size is like 3,000 square miles," she says, so it's not feasible for residents to rely on garbage or recycling trucks. But it does give the county the opportunity to host a geothermal power plant that generates enough electricity for 22,000 homes, all from the natural heat of the planet.

Mono County also hopes to have another renewable energy project, one that turns biomass into energy. The Eastside Biomass Project Team is a countywide partnership that would use forest management waste for economic use to support the region.

While rural communities have different challenges than urban communities when it comes to recycling and waste management, recycling in rural communities is not impossible and is worth investing the effort. "If litter and recycling aren't properly taken care of, then all of those things [impact the environment]," says Bold.

KEEPING WATERS TANGLE FREE

Rural communities, like Mammoth Lakes, are the perfect backdrop for a quiet afternoon of fishing. They're made less perfect, however, when fishing line is left behind to disrupt wildlife and damage watercraft.

Many visitors don't think about the environmental impact that fishing line can have and, therefore, don't think much about its proper disposal. A Project Manager for California Trout, Lia Webb explains that "fishing line is a real problem because if you get it caught in trees or rocks, it entangles amphibians and creates hazards for fish." But disposing of it isn't easy, because most recycling centers cannot process monofilament fishing line, and even if it makes its way to a landfill, it can be blown around and still end up in rivers and trees despite angler's best intentions.

To combat the problem, local nonprofit Mammoth Lakes Recreation has partnered with Mono County Fish and Wildlife Commission, the town of Mammoth Lakes, and the U.S. Forest Service to implement Tangle Free Waters. **The Tangle Free Waters program provides fishing line collection tubes at several popular lakes and streams throughout Mono County to keep litter-line out of the natural environment.** According to the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Coordinator and Tangle Free Water Program Director Matt Paruolo, "Anglers should discard their monofilament line into Tangle Free Waters stations where it is collected by volunteers and sent to recycling centers by MLR. The collected line is then recycled to create artificial reefs and keep our waters tangle free."

"That way," adds Webb, "it goes back into supporting the fish habitat."

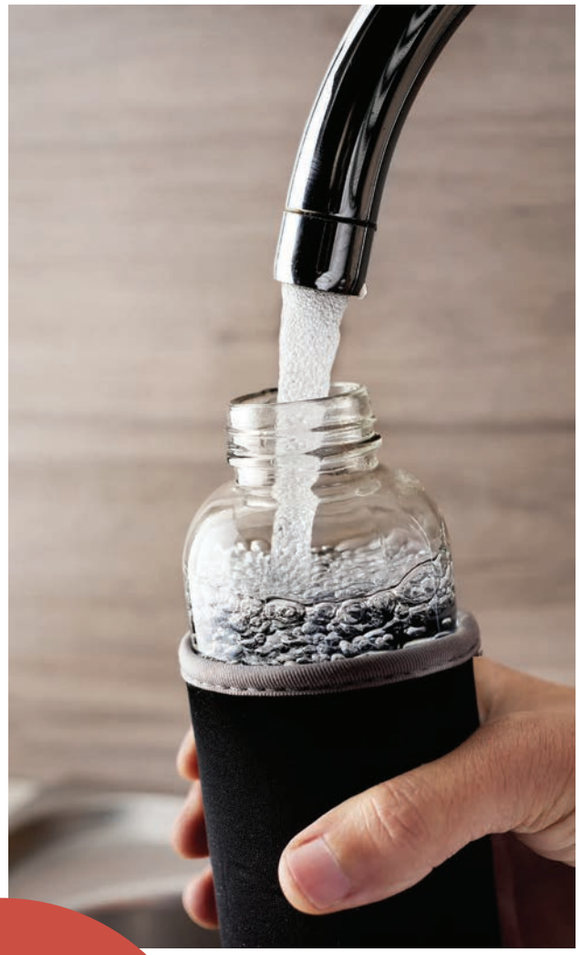
MLR is currently enlisting donors, volunteers and local retailers to help install and service more stations and collection centers throughout the Eastern Sierra.

* For more information visit: ***MammothLakesRecreation.org/TangleFree***
* Email Lia at: ***lwebb@caltrout.org***

Take It From The Tap

Eastern California is home to some of the best drinking water in the country—so grab your reusable water bottle and fill up!

BY KRYSTA SCRIPTER



In 2017, Forbes reported that people buy nearly a million plastic water bottles a minute, and 91% of them aren't recycled. That's a lot of single-use plastic out in the world, and all the more reason to grab a reusable water bottle.

"Plastics are causing their own set of issues in our environment, from microplastics being found in water sources to the crisis in recycling. It's just better to skip the single-serve habit when possible," says Pam Bold, director of High Sierra Energy.

Thankfully, Eastern California's water is actually pretty good. Betty Hylton, Senior Administrative Analyst at Mammoth Community Water District, says Mammoth is at the top of the watershed, which means they're the first to use the water as it comes from lakes and wells.

"If you look at Los Angeles, for example," she says, "they're getting water from faraway places and so that water sometimes gets used before it reaches L.A. We just have fresh snowmelt. The water comes out of the atmosphere, lands on the surface of the Earth and then we get to use it."

If you're concerned about tap water's safety, Hylton says you don't need to be. "I would argue to say that the tap water in Mammoth is better than what you'd get out of a water bottle."

> **"I would argue to say that the tap water in Mammoth is better than what you'd get out of a water bottle."**
>
> **Betty Hylton**
> ***Senior Administrative Analyst, Mammoth Community Water District***

Water quality aside, both experts stress the importance of reusable water bottles as opposed to buying bottled water.

"For a minute, just think of all of the resources that go into bottled water—from the petroleum products used for the manufacturing of the plastic bottle to the pumping, bottling and distribution of this very heavy material," Bold says.

"I just think that we're kind of in a global plastic crisis," Hylton says. "It pains me to see how much plastic we're generating on a daily basis…I think you have a high quality product coming out of the tap. And so why would you expend additional resources on buying something that we know is bad for the planet?"

If you're looking for places to fill up, Bold says to check out Tap App, a phone app that shows you nearby locations to fill your water bottle. "Many local businesses, schools and municipalities are putting in bottle-filling stations to encourage refilling reusable vessels," she says.

So save the planet, and some money, and grab your reusable water bottle. You'll be glad you did.

SMALL CLASS, BIG RECYCLING DREAMS

One Bridgeport school won first place in a statewide competition for their recycling efforts

Brianna Brown teaches seventh- and eighth-graders in a multi-grade classroom at Bridgeport Elementary. For the past several years, Brown's class has participated in the California K-12 Schools Recycling Challenge.

This year, Brown's class consisted of 15 students. Brown says it can be harder to recycle in rural areas like Bridgeport compared to bigger cities.

"This is where I felt that students could be a driving factor in helping," Brown says. "When kids are interested and find the importance [in recycling] they help encourage their parents too."

The California K-12 School Recycling Challenge is part of Keep California Beautiful, a nonprofit organization specializing in waste management and beautification. Brown and her students competed with other schools to collect recyclable materials throughout the month of February.

Their hard work paid off: Bridgeport Elementary won first place this year for beverage container recycling per capita. Brown says the students love seeing how much money they can bring in from their work: "They also feel how important it is to recycle. When they see how much recycling we have in just our small school, they can only imagine how much larger schools have. And without recycling programs like ours, this waste goes into landfills and takes forever to break down—instead of being recycled and used for other items, like clothing."

Brown drives over 50 miles to deliver recycled materials her students collect because she believes that they are making a worthy difference.

"Students are the driving force behind educating our student population, families and developing information sheets for community members on recyclable materials and the importance of recycling," she says.

KEEPING LEFTOVER PAINT OUT OF RURAL CALIFORNIA

A California paint recycling program provides drop-off locations where local residents can recycle unwanted paint and other hazardous materials

Tim Keller, a Solid Waste Maintenance Worker who helps to oversee the paint recycling program at Benton Crossing Landfill, says residents appreciate having a place to recycle hazardous items such as paint.

"We get so many people saying, 'thank you for taking it, it's great to see.' Everything about it—they just love it," Keller says.

As a California native, Keller has worked at Benton Crossing Landfill for 13 years. Keller is also enrolled in the Benton Paiute Reservation as a Paiute tribe member. He welcomes anyone with leftover paint to recycle it at the landfill. On some days, a local resident might drop off just one bucket after repainting a dining room. On others, a group of workers might drive in multiple vats after a large-scale construction job.

Before PaintCare, a program that creates drop-off locations for paint recycling, helped implement the program at the landfill, Keller says workers would consolidate paints and stains into 55-gallon drums, where they would then be shipped out to another facility. The process has become much more streamlined since PaintCare became involved.

"They simplified the whole thing and we just now separate our latex and oils and put them in boxes and then they get shipped out," Keller explains.

Keller says that having a safe place to process old paint and other materials is important because it keeps it out of the surrounding environment.

"To have the facility here, you're protecting everything about the area," he says. "I mean, you don't want to contaminate the grounds. You don't want to kill off trees or anything like that if you dump it out in the forest."

Paint Recycling Made Easy

PaintCare is a nonprofit created by paint manufacturers to manage leftover paint, something especially important in rural California

BY KRYSTA SCRIPTER

Disposing of leftover paint can be difficult in rural areas where access to proper facilities is limited. That's where PaintCare's paint recycling program comes in.

Daria Kent, Northern California Regional Coordinator at PaintCare, says having a paint recycling program ensures its recycled properly.

"In some cases, paint has been found stockpiled in storage units, barns and garages, as well as thrown in ditches and abandoned lots," she says. "Rural areas are sometimes served only by public household hazardous waste facilities or transfer stations, sometimes located remotely and with limited days and hours of operation."

PaintCare teams up with as many waste management facilities, paint stores, hardware retailers and lumber yards as they can to make sure everyone has access to recycling.

"The good news is that PaintCare is always striving to provide services to these areas," Kent says. "For example, for businesses and residents with 200 gallons or more of paint, measured by container size not volume, PaintCare can provide direct pickup at no cost."

In 2019, PaintCare had 560 large volume pickups in California, and 71% of the latex paint they collected was recycled back into paint again. On top of that, they also provided 766 year-round drop-off sites across the state.

This program is funded by a fee tacked on to new paint sales, meaning residents don't have to pay to recycle their paint later. According to PaintCare's latest annual report, 98.5% of residents live within a drop-off site.

Ultimately, PaintCare established a convenience standard for drop-off locations to ensure paint is as easy to drop off as it was to purchase.

With that many locations, it's never been easier to recycle unwanted paint.

> **"PaintCare established a convenience standard for drop-off locations to ensure paint is as easy to drop off as it was to purchase."**
>
> **Daria Kent**
> ***Northern California Regional Coordinator at PaintCare***

You can find a location near you by checking out paintcare.org.

Making Recycling Mattresses As Easy As Pie

The Mattress Recycling Council has been working with local facilities to simplify recycling large items like mattresses

BY KRYSTA SCRIPTER

Mattresses, which are 80-90% recyclable, often end up dumped illegally or filling landfills. Local organizations are trying to make it easier than ever to recycle these bulky items so they can be repurposed.

Liz Wagner, Special Projects Coordinator at the Mattress Recycling Council, has been working hard to make mattress recycling easily accessible.

"So we are a statewide program to collect and recycle mattresses and we were created by a law that basically put mattress manufacturers in charge of designing and implementing a collection recycling program for their own product," Wagner says.

The program is funded by a new mattress purchase fee of $10.50, which funds the recycling program. This upfront fee means consumers don't have to pay to recycle their mattress later. The council works with retailers, landfills and other recycling centers to make mattress recycling convenient.

"We want as many collections sites and make it as convenient as we can to California residents," she says. "I think right now we're at something like 93% of the population has access...to a collection site within 15 miles."

> **"We want as many collections sites and make it as convenient as we can to California residents."**
>
> **Liz Wagner**
> ***Special Projects Coordinator at the Mattress Recycling Council***

Rural mattress recycling has its own challenges, Wagner says, and most of it depends on whether a solid waste facility in the area agrees to participate.

The council works with the Environmental Services Joint Powers Authority, or ESJPA, a local government agency comprised of 22 rural member counties that discuss local issues and ensure access to recycling and hazardous waste programs.

Wagner says that rural residents are often used to driving further out for necessary errands and other tasks, meaning having collection centers 15 miles out may not be feasible, but having one further out is.

"If you go to a 25-mile drive distance in rural California, 93% of the population has access," she says. "And so we've worked a lot with them to try to make sure that we're targeting rural California and we've done a pretty darn good job."

Find The Recycling Site for You

Discover the useful recycling resources in your community

- **Browse an extensive list of facilities to locate where to recycle everything from carpet to cardboard in Inyo County at** *inyocountysolidwaste.com/recycle_inyo.html#5*
- **Determine which of the several disposal sites or transfer stations can meet your recycling needs in Mono County at** *monocounty.ca.gov/solid-waste*
- **Identify disposal locations and collection services available in Madera County at** *www.maderacounty.com/government/public-works/quick-links/solid-waste-management*

Recycling FAQ: *recyclesierra.com/faq/*

Water saving tips: *wateruseitwisely.com/100-ways-to-conserve/*

The following facilities provide recycling services within Mono County:

1. **Sierra Conservation Project**
   Recyclesierra.com
   760-914-0115
2. **Mono County Solid Waste, Recycling**
   monocounty.ca.gov/solid-waste
   monocounty.ca.gov/solid-waste/page/recycling
3. **Mammoth Disposal**
   mammothdisposal.com
   760-934-2201
4. **Mammoth Community Water District**
   mcwd.dst.ca.us/
   760-934-2596
5. **D&S Waste Removal**
   775-463-3090

RECYCLING THE RIGHT WAY

Recycling in rural regions tends to require more consideration than other areas. Items—such as carpets, mattresses and e-waste—that take more effort/resources than the standard paper, plastic and aluminum items can make a rural resident's recycling attempt a bit trickier. However, it doesn't have to be! **Learn tips to seamlessly remove household items no longer in use and reduce waste in landfills:**

Carpet

- Seek out a company that will take the old carpet when installing new carpet.
- Instead of dumping a bulky roll of old or excess carpet, reuse it in your home: in garages, pet play areas, or workshops and sheds.
- Donate carpet in good condition to thrift stores or organizations focused on housing access.
- Drop off carpet to recycling centers or transfer sites. Remove metal nails and any debris prior to drop-off.

Construction Materials

- Construction sites produce various materials that can be recycled including wood, metals, cardboard and concrete.
- Contact local recycling and transfer sites to determine what items they take and if they require that the items are sorted before they're dropped off at the facility.

E-waste

- Separate batteries, cell phones, chargers and other electronic items from other recyclables.
- Locate a local site that takes Household Hazard Waste items to dispose of e-waste in a safe and environmentally friendly manner.

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