

Sustainability and Recycling

E-Newsletter

September 2023

The Problem with Plastics

At the City of Helena Transfer Station, and in the Helena Curbside Recycling program only #1 and #2 plastics are accepted. It can be frustrating, and disheartening to see such a large amount of recyclables being sent to the landfill every year. You may even be asking yourself why the City doesn't accept more types of plastic through its recycling program, however, the answer isn't as simple as you may think. Since plastic is made up of several different chemicals and compounds, it can't all be recycled, and here is why:



There are several different types of plastics, but only two types of plastics can be recycled in the Helena community. These include #1: PET or PETE Polyethylene Terephthalate AND #2: HDPE High-Density Polyethylene.

These types of plastic are easier to recycle as their chemical makeup and internal structure break down more easily. Additionally, they are more cost-effective to recycle, as the demand for them is higher. These kinds of

plastic can be remade into things such as carpets, clothes, textiles, and durable plastic products such as plastic lumber and benches.

Other plastics such as #3: PVC Polyvinyl Chloride, #4: LDPE Low Density Polyethylene AND, #6: PS Polystyrene cannot be recycled in the Helena Community, as these types of plastics are harder or even impossible to reuse. Their chemical makeup doesn't allow for the chemical bonds to break down as easily, making them harder to melt, or re-mold.

Lastly, we have #5: PP Polypropylene. This plastic also cannot be recycled in the City of Helena but is recycled in other areas around the country. In the US only about 3% of #5 plastics are recycled each year. The reason is that it is a difficult and expensive plastic to reuse, and the capabilities of what it can be remade into, are very limited. Below we have an example, that even though the product says it can be recycled, we still cannot accept it through the City of Helena Recycling program, or with the Curbside Recycling program.



Citizen Conservation Board Vacancies

The City of Helena has several established advisory boards and committees. The Citizen Conservation Board was created to recommend, report on, and monitor sustainability measures undertaken by the City of Helena. Currently, there are two “Citizen-at-large” vacancies, each will serve a three-year term. If you or someone you know is interested in serving on the Citizens Conservation Board, follow the link below to apply! You must be a City resident to participate, and the deadline to apply is September 12th at 4 pm.

[View the City Website for more information, or to Apply!](#)

Montana Department of Agriculture Pesticide & Waste Disposal Program



Do you have old pesticides in your barn, quonset, garage, basement, or under the sink? How about empty pesticide metal drums or metal containers you would like to get rid of? On September 21st, the Montana Department of Agriculture will be holding a Pesticide Waste Disposal Event for the Helena area community. This event allows pesticide users the opportunity to dispose of unwanted and unusable pesticides in a safe and environmentally friendly way. For each participant, the first 200 lbs. are free, with \$1 per pound, for amounts over 200 lbs.

Registration is required, so please visit the [Dept. Of Agriculture Website](#) for more information, and to register. Deadline to register is September 14th.

“Wish-Cycling”

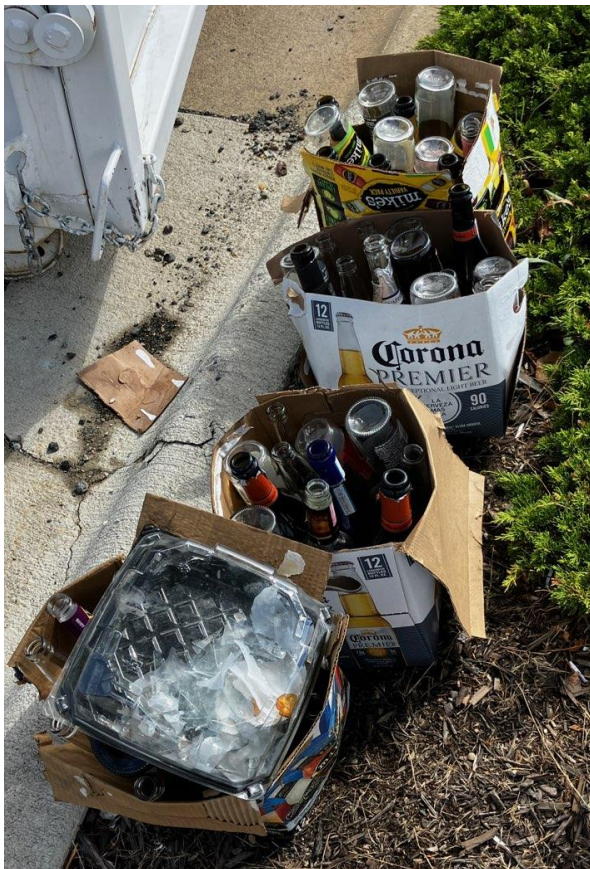
Consider this. You spend weeks collecting your recyclables, they are cleaned out, sorted, and ready to be dropped off. You've done everything right, right? You feel good that you have done your part, however, you missed one critical step. You never looked into what items your local recycler can or cannot accept. Because of this you just place your recyclables in the bin with the hopes that they will be recycled. This is called wish-cycling, and despite the best of intentions, this causes tremendous harm to the recycling program. Wish-cycling wastes time, and money, and creates more waste. When you wish-cycle, the possibility that whole loads of recyclables end up in the landfill is increased, nullifying the



work of other citizens and yourself.

The picture to the left shows several boxes of glass, recently left outside of a drop-off location in the Helena Community. For the safety of our community and staff, these locations do not accept glass.

To keep solid waste fees low, reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill, keep our community clean and safe, and drop-off locations available, please recycle correctly!





City of Helena

316 N. Park Ave.