



# RECYCLING & ZERO WASTE PLAN





**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction.....2

Objectives .....2

Environmental Sustainability Policy .....2

Recycling .....2

    Recycling Guidelines and Procedures .....3

    Estimating Recycling Numbers .....5

Re-using Materials .....6

Special Waste Materials .....6

    Scrap Metal .....6

    Used Oil and Filters .....7

Environmentally Preferred Purchasing.....7

    employee purchases .....7

Internal and External Education .....7

    External Education.....7

    Internal Education.....8

Challenges .....8

    Waste estimates .....8

    Public and Employee Participation in Sustainability Efforts .....8

Next Steps .....9

    Expand Geaux Green Recycling Program .....9

    Expand Special Waste Materials Disposal Procedures .....9

    Encourage Staff to Identify Ways to Reduce Waste at Their Facility .....9

    Expand Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Requirements.....9



## INTRODUCTION

The Recreation and Park Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) has always been, and continues to be, committed to environmental sustainability as part of our mission to provide parks and recreational opportunities for all citizens of East Baton Rouge Parish. Conservation of resources and sustainable practices are important to ensure future generations can enjoy recreation in the parish but also because the cost of resources continues to rise and their availability becoming scarcer. To prevent this reality from adversely impacting the user experience, it is important that BREC operations implement preventative practices and become more efficient both in resource use and waste produced. The purpose of this plan is to specifically outline how BREC, as an agency, can reduce the amount of waste that we produce through reducing the amount of materials we use, reusing materials when feasible and recycling as much as possible.

## OBJECTIVES

- To reduce the amount of waste that is produced through sustainable purchasing practices and operational guidelines which eliminate waste production.
- To identify materials which can be consistently re-used to prevent their entering the waste stream.
- To provide recycling opportunities to both staff and the public wherever feasible.
- Increase the amount of environmentally friendly materials and substances used to not only reduce the amount of toxins that enter the environment but also reduce the impact their production has on the environment.

## ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

The following are outlined in BREC's Environmental Sustainability Policy and should serve as a guide for sustainable practices throughout the agency.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
2. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION
3. RECYCLING
4. ENERGY CONSERVATION
5. WATER CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PROTECTION
6. SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF FACILITIES
7. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE PURCHASING
8. MONITORING AND TRACKING

## RECYCLING

Diverting waste from landfills to recycling centers is a relatively simple and efficient way to reduce waste output within the BREC system. East Baton Rouge Parish is fortunate enough to have a multi-stream recycling program which simplifies collection procedures and makes for more efficient waste handling in the parks. In 2014 BREC implemented its Geaux Green Recycling Program which expanded existing recycling efforts to include a multi-stream system at administrative offices and a public recycling



program in the parks. An education campaign was launched at the same time to inform the public on what they could and could not recycle in the parks and the system has proven successful and continues to grow.

### **RECYCLING GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES**

BREC currently offers multi-stream recycling at administrative offices, Community Parks and Sports Complexes. BREC purchases recycling receptacles and installs them into our parks and park operations staff are responsible for emptying receptacles and depositing materials in designated recycling dumpsters. Dumpsters are emptied and taken to a recycling center by a contracted company. All material sorting takes place at the recycling center and BREC is allowed a certain portion of contamination in each dumpster load of recyclable material that is taken off-site. To maintain efficiency in our park operations and to ensure the program is successful several guidelines were put into place.

#### **Design and Placement Guidelines**

- All outdoor recycling receptacles should incorporate the color blue and a boldly placed white recycling symbol to allow for easy patron recognition. Although the standard bin should be used whenever possible, if a park has certain aesthetic requirements, a special bin can be used as long as it is the correct color and incorporates recycling symbol standards.
- All outdoor recycling receptacles must have a restricted opening of 7 inches diameter or less to reduce contamination. It has been found that the public recognizes the bin as a recycling receptacle better when the opening is restricted and it prevents common contamination items such as pizza boxes, extra-large polystyrene cups, etc. from making their way into the receptacle.
- When placing recycling bins in parks, efforts should be made to always place recycling receptacles next to landfill waste receptacles. This provides the best opportunity for the correct waste disposal method to be chosen and reduces cross contamination in either receptacle. It has been found that solitary recycling bins receive more non-recyclable materials than those placed next to landfill waste receptacles and landfill receptacles that are in high traffic areas without a recycling receptacle adjacent are often filled with recyclable materials even if there is a recycling receptacle in the near vicinity.
- When adding exterior recycling receptacles to parks, factors such as common activities, high traffic flow areas, concessions and restroom locations should all be considered when deciding how many receptacles should be added and where they should be placed. Community Parks and Sports Complexes should have forty percent or more of landfill waste receptacles paired with recycling receptacles. Although placement next to restrooms should be avoided, every effort should be made to offer recycling in high traffic areas where a lot of recyclable materials are produced such as sports fields, concessions and picnic areas.

#### **Park Operations Guidelines**

- Large parks that have staff that remain on-site to oversee operations and maintenance receive their own recycling dumpster to ensure staff do not need to travel off-site to remove recyclable materials from the park. Additionally, smaller parks that are serviced by traveling crews share



dumpsters with larger neighboring parks to reduce overhead costs associated with the recycling program.

- The number of times the contracted waste service empties the recycling dumpsters is tailored to each specific park based on season, athletic field use and public involvement in the recycling program at that park. This ensures there is adequate space in the dumpster for staff to fit recyclable material that is generated while keeping costs down for parks that may not produce as much waste as others.
- Because food waste is not accepted in recycling containers these receptacles can hold waste longer without odor or pests becoming a problem. This allows staff to wait to empty the receptacles until they are  $\frac{3}{4}$  full or more, reducing time wasted on emptying every bin which contains material as they must do with trash.
- To prevent staff from having to do a separate round of recycling waste collection from landfill trash collection, a colored bag system is used. This allows staff to place both bags in their cart while making waste removal rounds and the bags can be sorted at the dumpster.

#### **Multi-stream Recycling Guidelines**

- Material must be clean and free of food waste. Paper products saturated with food should not be recycled.
- Using a plastic bag to hold recyclable waste is acceptable. However, said plastic bags are not recyclable and should not be accepted.
- Recyclable materials do not need to be sorted. All acceptable items can be co-mingled when placed in recycling dumpster.
- Bottle caps do not need to be removed and are considered an acceptable item.
- All cardboard should be broken down to the smallest reasonable size to reduce the amount of space used in dumpsters.

#### **Non-acceptable Items**

- Food waste or materials saturated with food waste that cannot be rinsed.
- Styrofoam and polystyrene (#6) in the form of Styrofoam packaging, packaging peanuts, etc.
- Wood
- Plastic grocery bags, Ziploc bags and aluminum snack/chip bags
- Electronics
- Restroom waste
- Coated paper products such as wax cups
- Glass
- Plastic toys
- Hazardous waste or containers which may have hazardous waste residue on them such as paint cans, empty aerosols, automobile liquid containers, etc.
- Metal hangers

#### **Acceptable Items**





- Copy paper of all weights
- Newspapers and insets
- Magazines and junk mail
- Gift wrapping paper
- Brown paper and paper grocery bags
- Cereal and cracker boxes
- Corrugated Cardboard
- Telephone books
- Plastics #1-7 except for #6 when in the form of Styrofoam.
- Aluminum
- Tin
- Steel
- Plastic bottle caps and lids

### Special Event Recycling Guidelines

- To provide equitable services at all major community events it is important that patrons are given the opportunity to recycle even if the park or facility does not have installed recycling bins.
- If a park or facility does not have installed recycling bins pop-up special events bins should be used and placed strategically around the event high traffic flow areas next to landfill waste receptacles.
- Event coordinators should make every effort to inform patrons that the event offers recycling and if possible tell them how to properly use the bins. Volunteers can be used to assist these efforts along with announcements, signs posted near waste receptacles, etc.
- All materials collected in pop-up special event bins should be recorded. This can be done simply by consolidating all the bags collected from the bins and counting them. Numbers should be recorded in the Special Event Recycling Tracking Spreadsheet and provided to the Community Event Coordinator in the Recreation Department.
- Collected materials must be dropped at a BREC Recycling Dumpster at one of the parks or sports complexes nearest to the event location or at the administrative offices.

### ESTIMATING RECYCLING NUMBERS

With the help of the local recycling center, BREC can estimate the average of materials collected by weight using the recycling companies estimates. The comingled weighted average of 150 lbs. per cubic yard is used to determine how many cubic yards of recyclable material is collected which is then converted to pounds annually. BREC currently has eight, eight-yard dumpsters stationed in our parks. Five of the eight parks are emptied once a week, while the other three are emptied twice a week during sports seasons and once a week during other times of the year. Below is an example of the equation used to calculate waste from one eight-yard dumpster emptied once a week at the administrative offices.

$$150 \text{ pounds/cubic yard} \times 8 \text{ cubic yards} = 1200 \text{ pounds/week}$$



**1,200 pounds/week X 52 weeks/year = ~ 62,400 pounds/year = 31.2 tons/year**

Using this equation for all eight parks with dumpsters, nearly 600,000 pounds or 300 tons of recyclable material from BREC parks is diverted from the landfill every year.

## RE-USING MATERIALS

BREC makes every effort to divert materials and supplies from the waste stream by re-using materials where possible. Employees should be aware of following guidelines and supervisors should encourage employees to find new ways to up-cycle used materials and pro-long the life of supplies or equipment through re-use or re-purposing.

- Programming supplies purchased for specific programs should be saved and used year after year when possible. If a department or program no longer has a use for an item and it is still in working condition, it should be offered to other BREC departments and/or programs to be used at their facilities. This option should always be used before throwing an item out.
- Large equipment in working or repairable condition such as playground equipment, benches, picnic tables, etc. should be saved when removed from a park to be re-assigned to a different park when possible. Capitol Improvements crews, contractors and park operations staff must receive approval from the Planning and Engineering department prior to disposing of these materials unless they are no longer salvageable.
- Natural materials that are usually taken to the landfill can also be re-used when possible such as logs cut from invasive trees to make pollinator garden borders, or for fire wood, fallen trees chipped to make mulch, etc. Staff should take into consideration storage space, equipment availability and need for such materials when deciding to re-use them in this manner.
- Although BREC is trying to eliminate ink-jet printer use due to cost and waste generated, employees who still have these printers are encouraged to recycle ink-jet cartridges using an outside company which will refill the cartridge and allow it to be used repeatedly.

## SPECIAL WASTE MATERIALS

Even though our multi-stream recycling program does not accept all materials, BREC strives to eliminate waste even when it cannot be picked up in our recycling dumpsters.

### SCRAP METAL

Park Operations staff has developed a relationship with a local scrap metal yard which has resulted in them leaving a roll-off dumpster at one of our park operations shops for BREC to fill with scrap metal from our parks and then the local company picks it up and pays BREC for the material by weight. Accepted material can include a variety of un-usable or damaged and irreparable equipment such as HVAC units, playground equipment etc. Having the dumpster on BREC property increases staff efficiency and saves on fuel costs from having to take each individual item to the scrap yard each time.



### **USED OIL AND FILTERS**

Hazardous waste can be costly and difficult to dispose of properly so BREC takes special care to ensure these materials are removed as sustainably as possible. BREC's Park Operations staff saves used oil generated by vehicles and equipment and it is removed and recycled by a local oil recycling company. In addition, oil filters are drained, crushed and recycled.

## **ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED PURCHASING**

### **EMPLOYEE PURCHASES**

When not receiving supplies through the BREC warehouse, employees should use every opportunity to purchase environmentally friendly and recyclable materials when possible and as Louisiana State Law allows. Employees can use the following guidelines to aid in choosing the best products.

- Styrofoam should be avoided.
- Preference should be given to products made from recycled materials.
- Preference should be given to products made of recyclable materials, particularly plastics #1-7 over Styrofoam or compostable materials which will break down quickly in a landfill.
- Employees should attempt to purchase supplies in bulk to reduce packaging required and resources used for traveling to pick-up supplies or to have them shipped.
- Emphasis should be given to Energy star products or which use less electricity or water.
- Preference should be given to products produced locally to reduce environmental impact associated with shipping materials long distances.
- Preference should be given to products which do not contain harsh chemicals which might harm the environment if not disposed correctly. When purchasing janitorial and cleaning supplies, products carrying the Green Seal GS-37 certification should be given preference over others which do not.

## **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EDUCATION**

As outline in the Environmental Sustainability Policy, BREC is dedicated to ensuring both staff and the public understand the benefits of our sustainability practices and how to best utilize recycling services provided in our parks. Below are methods used and guidelines to follow but more can be found in the policy and examples in the Appendix.

### **EXTERNAL EDUCATION**

- Utilize social media and email to inform the public on new parks receiving recycling bins and how to properly use them.
- Place signage including poster and yard signs at parks which inform the public how to properly use the bins and where the bins are located.
- Receive buy-in from partners and donors to ensure they are educating their members on recycling guidelines in parks which they utilize and may have an MOU or CEA.





- Incorporate interpretive signage focused on why recycling, reducing waste and disposing of waste properly is important into park signage plans.

### INTERNAL EDUCATION

- Park operations staff is met with prior to their park being installed with bins to receive their assistance on where bins should be placed and to train them on recycling collection procedures so they can assist with educating the public as well.
- Recreation and special event staff are met with prior to their park receiving recycling bins or prior to holding an event so that they understand recycling guidelines and so they can assist with educating the public as well.
- BREC's sustainability initiatives have been incorporated into New Employee Training so that every new employee which enters the BREC system can see how recycling ties into BREC Environmental Sustainability Policy and how they can initiate sustainable practices in their workplace.

## CHALLENGES

### WASTE ESTIMATES

Determining the amount of overall landfill trash that BREC produces each year is difficult due to the size of our park system and differing sizes in dumpsters, pick-ups and public use. Although dumpster loads are used to estimate both trash and recycling numbers, the amount that the dumpster is actually filled is variable which could cause a lot of variation in actual numbers. Averages and estimates are used because our recycling center and dumpster contractor do not weigh dumpster loads which would ultimately provide a more accurate number if records were provided.

### PUBLIC AND EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

BREC is lucky enough to be in a parish which started a public recycling program in 1989. Although it took some time for the program to become established, a large majority of households within the parish now have recycling containers which are picked up weekly at their homes. Limitations include apartment dwellers which do not have recycling bins and lower income areas in which recycling is not a priority. BREC chose to start recycling at parks which were thought to have the best success rate so that as patrons began to see the bins and know how to use them. However, some communities which do not place a strong priority on recycling at home are being introduced to recycling for the first time when they enter a BREC park. Although contamination rates continue to decrease, if bins are placed correctly, most often patrons will choose convenience over sustainability.

BREC staff is a diverse representation of the residents of East Baton Rouge Parish and therefore some of the same issues faced with getting the public to recycle in our parks, we also have with BREC staff. Cultural understanding of the impacts that litter and landfill waste have on the parishes natural resources and the environment on a global scale is often lacking. Additionally, pressure to reduce overhead costs and maintain budget often supersedes choosing sustainable products due to



higher upfront and overhead costs. We hope to overcome these challenges with continued education and establishing firmer guidelines for sustainable practices within BREC in the future.

## NEXT STEPS

### EXPAND GEAUX GREEN RECYCLING PROGRAM

- It is our goal to offer public recycling at a majority Community Parks and Sports Complexes by 2020. In 2019, six additional parks will receive interior and exterior recycling receptacles and five additional recycling dumpsters will be added to the contract. This will allow us to increase the amount of material diverted from the landfill to 50% of current numbers.
- By 2025, BREC hopes to offer public recycling programs at all Community Parks and Sports Complexes, Nature Centers and Satellite Conservation Areas. This should allow us to divert over one million pounds of recyclable materials from local landfills.

### EXPAND SPECIAL WASTE MATERIALS DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

BREC should research potential local recycling avenues for fluorescent lights and batteries to remove these materials from the waste stream as well.

### ENCOURAGE STAFF TO IDENTIFY WAYS TO REDUCE WASTE AT THEIR FACILITY

- Recycling and Sustainability training should be incorporated into Supervisor and Compliance Training to reiterate its importance to long-term employees.
- Additionally, supervisors should be encouraged to develop incentive programs which reward employees for sustainable practices and innovative ways to reduce waste in their work area or field.
- A Recycling or Environmental Sustainability Award should also be incorporated into the Employee Recognition Day Award so that employees have the opportunity to be rewarded for their efforts and employees are reminded that BREC is dedicated to its Environmental Sustainability Policy.

### EXPAND ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED PURCHASING REQUIREMENTS

- Expanding the purchasing requirements to include the BREC warehouse which stocks janitorial supplies among a variety of other things for recreation centers and park operations staff, should be included in the above-mentioned purchasing requirements in the future.
- An allowable percentage above the lowest quoted price for preference in purchasing environmentally friendly products using the above listed guidelines should be researched and established to provide a better guide for employees in allowable price increases.
- Purchasing requirements should be expanded to include both BREC and external vendors and concessioners which service the public in parks including beverage vending machines. Emphasis should be placed on serving food and beverages in recyclable containers and ensuring concession staff is recycling packaging materials appropriately.