

Key Topic Intro: Sustainable Materials Management

In Connecticut...

This year's current issue is Waste to Resources. Connecticut residents throw away approximately 2.4 million tons of trash every year – that's over a thousand pounds of trash per person per year. How do we manage our waste in a manner that protects our environment, creates jobs and maintains quality of life? How do we turn our waste into resources? Teams will learn about the impacts – and possibilities – of the stream of materials that pass through our homes every day.

In the [2016 Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy](#), CT DEEP reported that Connecticut disposes over 2 million tons of trash and nearly 1 million tons of Construction and Demolition waste each year. Connecticut has a robust recycling program for food and beverage containers, cardboard boxes and other types of paper, due to mandatory recycling and all residents having access to recycling either curbside or at their transfer station. The RecycleCT Foundation has also assisted by providing promotion, outreach and educational materials available to municipalities, haulers, Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs), schools and businesses through the [What's IN, What's OUT](#) initiative. Other items that are actively collected for reuse or recycling in Connecticut include paint, electronics, textiles, mattresses, plastic bags and film and mercury thermostats.

Sustainable Materials Management in Connecticut

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) is an approach that looks at the entire life cycle of materials – how they are manufactured, consumed or used and disposed of – taking a more systems approach to managing *materials*, not waste.

The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) states that an SMM approach to examining materials and how they are used throughout their life cycle seeks to:

- Use materials in the most productive way with an emphasis on using less.
- Reduce toxic chemicals and environmental impacts throughout the material life cycle.
- Assure we have sufficient resources to meet today's needs and those of the future.

Referring to items as “materials” intrinsically shows they have value; they are not waste. This value and how we view these materials is closely aligned with our economic and environmental future. As we compete globally for more finite resources, we need to consume differently and expand our ability to collect and recover materials and ensure they can be manufactured into new goods.

Recycling of certain food and beverage containers have been mandatory since a law passed in 1987. Over time, containers and paper products have been added to the list. The full list of items that are mandatory as well as banned from disposal can be seen on CT DEEP's webpage [Recycling... It's the Law](#). Because recycling of certain items are required by law, recycling activities happen in all types of places including home, businesses, faith-based organizations, sports venues, public spaces like parks and [schools](#).

Connecticut also has a [bottle bill](#). Connecticut's container deposit program was enacted in early 1978 through legislation and started January 1, 1979, putting a 5c deposit on carbonated beverages like soda and beer. The effort was to reduce litter on our roadways, but today, the materials are recovered for recycling markets at a premium because they are source separated (materials are segregated where they are generated or collected and not mixed with other materials).

In the 2021 legislative session, the Connecticut bottle bill was modernized in many ways that are still being implemented, but after January 2023 we'll see more beverage containers added to the deposit system, including more non-carbonated items (water was added in 2009) such as juice and sports drinks and on January 1, 2024 we'll see the deposit increase from 5c to 10c to increase the incentive to return containers for recycling. Miniature liquor bottles, while not part of the deposit system, will have a 5c surcharge fee added to every purchase, with funds collected and returned to the municipality where these items were purchased to be used for recycling education or litter abatement. History and details of Connecticut's bottle bill changes can be viewed [here](#).

Recovery of food for consumption, animal feed or processing for food recovery and/or soil amendments have been increasing since Connecticut passed the first law mandating large organics waste generators (food manufacturers) to collect source separated organics for composting or anaerobic digestion in 2011. [CT Commercial Organics Recycling Law here](#).

[Food recovery](#) is actively coordinated by Food Rescue, Havens Harvest and many local grassroots initiatives have in the past and continue to recover edible food from grocers, caterers and universities that are redistributed to the food insecure and other programs to feed people. Feeding animals food scraps directly, specifically pig farms or piggeries, has been in place in Connecticut for generations. Recently some food scraps started being sent to facilities that make animal feed.

Collecting food scraps and other organics (leaves, compostable paper) for composting and anaerobic digestion at municipal transfer stations, local businesses, large organic waste generators (think food manufacturers) and universities. In addition, there are many communities starting community-composting efforts and composting at K-12 schools. More information about composting and anaerobic digestion in Connecticut [here](#).

Other types of sustainable materials management efforts include [textile recycling](#), [repair clinics](#), [building deconstruction](#) and waste prevention efforts such as banning [plastic bags](#) or requiring customers to ask for straws or other single-use items instead of receiving it automatically.

CT Essential Resources

- Quick Highlights of 2016 Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/waste_management_and_disposal/Solid_Waste_Management_Plan/CMMSQuickHighlightsFinalpdf.pdf
- Download the RecycleCT Wizard APP - #WhatsINWhatsOUT (Apple or Google Play). Or visit www.Recyclect.com and use the RecycleCT Wizard search tool
- What is a bottle bill and how does it work?
<https://www.bottlebill.org/index.php/about-bottle-bills/what-is-a-bottle-bill>

CT Good Resources to Know

- What Do I Do With...?
<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Waste-Management-and-Disposal/What-Do-I-Do-With>
- Glossary of Solid Waste Terms
<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Reduce-Reuse-Recycle/Municipal-Recycling-Resource-Center/Glossary-of-Recycling--Solid-Waste-Terms>

CT Resources if you want to know more/dig deeper

- Full 2016 Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy report
<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Waste-Management-and-Disposal/Solid-Waste-Management-Plan/Comprehensive-Materials-Management-Strategy>