



Who We Are

Who is GRRN?

The GrassRoots Recycling Network

GRRN has a vision of the world where waste is not waste ? it is a resource. We are the voice of all those who recycle and want to waste less and do more. GRRN is the leading voice calling for Zero Waste (ZW) in the United States by promoting the message that we must go ?beyond recycling? and go upstream to the headwaters of the waste stream which is the industrial designer?s desk. ZW means not only 100% recovery of society?s discards, but also a redesign of the products and packaging of our lives such that everything produced for our consumer economy is non-toxic and designed to be recovered for re-use, recycling or composting.

GRRN is a national network of waste reduction activists and recycling professionals. We set ambitious standards for Zero Waste goals and policies. We provide opportunities for on-going meaningful participation in campaigns and build coalitions to achieve zero waste policies, businesses and communities. We have a valuable website and an active email listserve (called GreenYes) of many hundreds of knowledgeable experts in both downstream recovery and upstream clean production issues.

What is Zero Waste?

GRRN developed the core message of Zero Waste in the mid-1990?s as the new vision of the grassroots recycling movement, and has been successful in using that theme to connect recyclers, innovative corporate leaders, activists, and others both nationally and globally. Our Zero Waste message combines visionary thinking with real-world practice to go *beyond recycling*, and in the process have described some simple, important solutions to many pressing issues, such as corporate accountability, local economic development, air and water pollution and resource depletion.

Zero Waste is a philosophy and a design principle for the 21st Century. It includes recycling but goes beyond recycling by taking a 'whole system' approach to the vast flow of natural resources and waste through human society. Zero Waste is both a 'back end' solution that maximizes recycling, minimizes waste, and reduces consumption as well as an upfront industrial design principle that requires all products be made with no toxic elements and are designed to be reused, repaired, recycled or composted back into the economy or the environment.

Zero Waste does advocate Zero Landfilling and Zero Burning. These are important end-of-the-pipe goals, and Zero Waste does differ from ?integrated waste management? as a philosophy because GRRN says that a total commitment to the pursuit of ?zero? will render the bury and burn options to such a minor role in the future that further research and investment in those obsolete resource-destroying techniques are a waste of time and money. For now, it is adequate to say that any discard that does not get recovered through a ZW facility will be required, as they do in Germany, to be stabilized through a processing system that will capture the gas and liquids and then this inert material can be landfilled in a dry-tomb landfill.

Zero Waste Community Planning

Local governments will benefit greatly from Zero Waste programs. Municipal budgets are being pushed to the limit of what they can recycle, and we are all learning that recycling alone is not the solution to the "waste" problem since it does not reduce consumption or disposal. As ever expanding and expensive recycling programs eat up local budgets, local communities are warming to the idea of pursuing Zero Waste policies as an alternative which offers the visions of industry paying for the community impact which their products are having, and of a way to get off the treadmill of ever-increasing landfill/incinerator costs, increasingly difficult landfill/incinerator siting challenges, and the ever-increasing financial liabilities to taxpayers that are emerging from pollution and public health challenges.

Local government also provides the greatest opportunity for change. While progress may be slow at the federal or state level, there are many examples of innovative Zero Waste programs on a municipal scale. Numerous municipalities have already adopted some form of ZW policies and practices, and may more have begun to explore these solutions.

In addition, the community advocates of the world are coming to find the Zero Waste vision is a positive option for social evolution that can be offered at the same time they are trying to stop the many environmentally destruction practices spreading across the planet. GRRN is playing an important role in many dialogues at high levels of public decision-making. New Zealand, as a nation, has set a goal of Zero Waste by 2020. In the U.S., communities from California to Colorado to Vermont have similarly set such goals. As the official US representative in the Zero Waste International Alliance, an updated list of communities across the world that have voted for ZW as a public policy can be found at www.zwia.org.

GRRN is committed to developing concrete actions that communities can do to implement Zero Waste in their home town, documenting those practices, and spreading those tools to other communities across the county.

High Profile Education

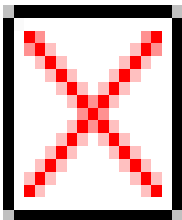
Over its ten year history, GRRN's work has led to significant changes in Coke's usage of recycled PET in making their new bottles, which then influenced the practices of other bottlers and changed the national economics for recycling PET plastic scrap.

GRRN co-coordinated the national Computer TakeBack Campaign, we successfully changed the national practices around using prison labor to break down old equipment, as well as getting industry leaders to agree to producer responsibility principles and create awareness and interest in "take back" responsibilities for all consumer electronics companies and products.

GRRN launched a consumer campaign and renewed market push against polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic. GRRN prepared two reports debunking the myth of PVC recycling: "Message in a Bottle: The Impacts of PVC on Plastics Recycling" providing evidence surrounding the myth of PVC bottle recycling; namely that it does not exist, cannot exist, and is not wanted. Successes: In 2004 Microsoft and Johnson & Johnson, agreed to phase out PVC packaging. Following these successes, the PVC Consumer Campaign has evolved into a broad coalition of environmental, social justice, and health organizations led by the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice. Continued successes include Crabtree & Evelyn agreed to eliminate PVC packaging and Wal-Mart is eliminating PVC from its private label packaging.

From Zero Hits in 1996 To Today - since GRRN's inception the movement towards Zero Waste has expanded rapidly across the country and the world. While almost unheard of a fifteen years ago, the term "Zero Waste" garnered almost 650,000 results on a Google search and almost 2.5 million on a Yahoo search today (March 2008).

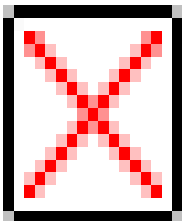
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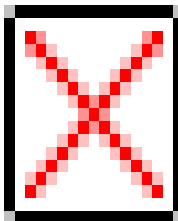
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