

WASTE ZERO Challenge  
Conservation Corner – January 2015

It's hard to believe that another new year is upon us. This offers each of us an opportunity for pause to reflect upon some habits we may want to modify in the coming year. It could be to exercise more, be kinder to one another, eat less processed food, support more local businesses and one of my personal favorites, trash avoidance. Here are some ideas to support your efforts to have a smaller impact on the planet. Maybe you will be inspired to add these choices to 2015.

Since I have a strong aversion to items we use one time and then toss into the landfill forever, I am hoping these ideas are practical and useful as you create some new habits for the new year ahead. Please be willing to constantly tweak these modifications until they fit just right for you and your family.

I hope these tips will be helpful and even inspiring. My personal experience with waste generation is that it boils down to (2) things, the first is awareness and the 2<sup>nd</sup> is getting organized. Let's start with awareness. Begin to NOTICE (in a non judgmental way) what you are purchasing or accumulating daily and ask yourself: 1. How many times will I use this product before I am done with it? 2. Where will it end up when I am finished using it. 3. Might there be another product that will work longer/better/cheaper? 4. Can I avoid this product by making a different choice? 5. Is this product made with renewable resources and/or recycled content and be easily recycled in the Rogue Valley?

So, I think you have a better idea what I mean by "awareness".

The next step is to **get organized**. I'll admit it does take some planning and organization or re-organization to be prepared and have more of what you need to accomplish greater "trash avoidance"

If you spend time on your bike or in your car, consider stashing these items IF they are things you use/need often. The point here is **to have what you need** when you want it.

**A worthy goal for waste prevention is to strive to reduce or eliminate disposables** (these are items you use only once)

**HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO HELP:**

- Drink local tap water in re-usable containers
- Bring your own mug for coffee or tea.
- When shopping, bring your own bags & choose products minimally packaged.
- Choose recycled-content products. Look for products with recycled content- paper, clothes, shoes, metal & plastics.
- Choose re-usable cloth napkins, silverware, glasses/cups & plates.
- Use both sides of a sheet of paper.
- Buy or make birthday, anniversary & get well cards from recycled paper. Re-use cards & re-send as post cards or send electronic good wishes.
- Recycle **ONLY** approved items in commingle with glass separate (no clamshells or plastic bags for example)
- Compost yard debris at home or subscribe to yard debris service.
- Compost food scraps at home in a critter proof compost bin.
- Never pour anything hazardous down our storm drain. **ONLY** rain down the storm drain.

- Choose the least toxic product available
- Ride a bike, walk, take the bus or carpool whenever possible
- Use it up, Wear it out, Pass it on, or Do without!

This is not a complete list but hopefully will provide some ideas for you to get started. Team up with your household, neighbors, school classroom, church, business, athletic team, organization, meditation group or book club to strive toward these achievable changes. I look forward to helping you trouble shoot the challenges and celebrate the accomplishments. We can do this and we can learn from each other.

May this New Year move you a little closer toward all that you aspire to be!

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