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Winnebago County

Solid Waste Management Board

The Wave of the Future

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DATE: May 14, 2014

TO: Mayor Don Merkes and City of Menasha Common Council

FROM: Jennifer Semrau, Recycling Specialist JS.

RE: Recent Reader Question/*Post Crescent* Article on Plastics Recycling

The purpose of this correspondence is to clarify the recent reader question/*Post Crescent* article related to plastics recycling (copy enclosed). As you know, the Tri-County Single Stream Recycling Facility (jointly owned/operated by Brown, Outagamie and Winnebago Counties) is currently expanding its processing capabilities to add new materials. This expansion is made possible by the regional growth of the facility, from accepting approximately 52,000 tons of recyclables in 2011 to over 82,000 tons in 2013. With that growth has come more efficient use of the original capital investment and greater economies of scale necessary to invest in additional sorting and baling equipment for added materials. The project should be completed by late summer, with an educational campaign this fall to inform residents of the new materials they can recycle. The educational campaign on the new materials will include:

- Cartons (Milk, juice, soup, wine, etc.)
- Dairy Containers (Yogurt, sour cream, margarine, cottage cheese, etc.)
- Produce, Bakery and Deli Containers (Berry, donut, potato salad, etc.)
- Lids from Above Containers

However, on May 7th I was contacted by Duke Behnke, Watchdog Q&A Reporter for the *Post Crescent* with a reader question: *"I've been saving those thin plastic strawberry and blueberry containers. Any chance they will be recyclable in the near future?"* Most of the new materials identified above require new equipment (yet to be installed) in order to accept and process them. However, one exception to that is #1 PETE plastic clamshell containers (berry containers). The current optical sorter at the Facility is designed to identify and sort #1 PETE plastics, and recently our #1 PETE market has begun accepting clamshells with the bottles. This market shift essentially enables the Facility to recycle the berry containers now. As a result, in consultation with the staff at the Tri-County Recycling Facility, we decided to publically accept berry containers now, in advance of the other materials.

We hope this deviation from the plan does not create public confusion, and Mr. Behnke's article does a good job of explaining that other new materials cannot be recycled yet. The Tri-County Recycling Facility still plans to do full educational campaign in the fall with ALL the new materials, and I hope the City will aid us with your existing channels to get the word out. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (920) 232-1853 or jsemrau@co.winnebago.wi.us. I also invite you to follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCountySolidWaste.

Residents now can recycle all No. 1 plastics

Written by Duke Behnke Post-Crescent Media
May. 12

postcrescent.com

Q I've been saving those plastic strawberry and blueberry containers with the holes in them. Any chance they will be recyclable in the near future

?

A Though it hasn't been publicized, the clear-plastic, clamshell produce containers can be recycled now and should be placed with other recyclable containers for curbside collection in Outagamie, Winnebago and Brown counties.

That hasn't always been the case.

The three counties long have accepted No. 1 and No. 2 plastic narrow-neck containers, but until recently they didn't accept other No. 1 plastics like the produce containers.

"Our technology

has changed and our markets have changed so we actually are able to capture berry containers," said Jennifer Semrau, recycling specialist for Winnebago County.

More good news is on the way. The Tri-County Recycling Facility in Appleton is adding equipment to process No. 4 and No. 5 plastics in the near future. No. 4 and No. 5 plastics typically are dairy and deli tubs and lids — margarine or sour cream containers, yogurt cups and ice cream pails.

The No. 4 and No. 5 plastics cannot be recycled yet, so don't put them with your recyclables until further notice. Semrau said the counties will launch an informational campaign later this summer to tell residents exactly when they can begin to recycle No. 4 and No. 5 plastics.

The recent acceptance of all No. 1 plastics into the recycling stream will be part of the informational campaign. It wasn't announced earlier, Semrau said, because the counties plan to do only one media campaign, not two.