

Sound Off response (09/18/07)

In response to a September 12, 2007 Sound Off, which said: ""In response to the Isabella County Recycling specialist: After reading your article saying you rode your bike to work to save gas money and carbon emissions, and that you could spend the extra money as you chose. Well, I can think of other things I'd rather spend my money on than curbside recycling. And what about the gas and emissions your truck uses as it goes up and down the roads picking up things for recycling? **Deerfield Township**"

Dear "Deerfield Township," thank you for the feedback on my article. I have contemplated your comments and the fascinating angle you took on the value of curbside recycling.

A point of interest is that all three Isabella County Recycling trucks run on B20 fuel. B20 is a special high-performing mixture of 20% bio-diesel and 80% standard diesel. Bio-diesel is a fuel produced from crops grown by local farmers, which increases the longevity of vehicles. The B20 bio-diesel burns cleaner and hotter than conventional diesel fuels, therefore spewing fewer emissions in our community. It is estimated the bio-diesel fuel can reduce emissions by 47% over standard diesel.

As for recycling truck usage in Deerfield Township, many Deerfield Township residents are active curbside recyclers. During the first five months of curbside recycling, from March 22nd through August 22nd, in Deerfield Township there were 5,429 stops made by the curbside recycling truck. This is an average of 1,089 stops per month resulting in 59.7 tons or 119,000 pounds of recyclables. According to the latest census figure this would mean over 35 pounds per Deerfield Township resident.

The energy savings realized by recycling are astounding. Recycling aluminum takes only 5% of the energy needed to manufacture it from raw material. Aluminum is 100% recyclable for infinity. When you return aluminum cans to the store for deposit, they are back on the shelf within 6 weeks. Recycled aluminum, as a marketplace commodity, has a \$1 billion annual market value. Aluminum also takes 500 years to break down in the environment. When recycling one glass bottle, you save the energy needed to light a 100-watt bulb for 4 hours. Glass is also 100% recyclable for infinity. Not to mention it takes glass 1 million years to break down. A 1994 summary of recycling jobs in the northeast showed that glass recycling results in 8,816 jobs. I know I have a job because of recycling!

Recycling also mitigates pollution by decreasing the need to extract and process raw materials. Mineral extraction and processing frequently pollutes water, land and air with toxics. Also, mining and processing requires energy through the burning of fuels, which releases pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide.

Back to Deerfield Township, according to my calculations, from the center of the township (Deerfield Center) to the Isabella County Recycling Center is 9.1 miles, 18.2 miles roundtrip. It is estimated that a minivan would hold approximately 200 pounds of recycling on a good day. To bring 119,000 pounds of recycling from the center of Deerfield Township to the Recycling Center would require 595 trips, or 10,829 miles. Over 12 months, using the same vehicle for the sole purpose of recycling would put approximately 26,000 miles on the vehicle.

Deerfield Township, as well as all the other townships with curbside recycling service in Isabella County, has been provided with curbside recycling service out of the township's general fund. Therefore, you are not assessed or taxed any extra for the service. I am a resident of the City of Mt Pleasant, which means I pay for my recycling services with my monthly water and sewer billing, and again with my property taxes. I just looked up what I pay for curbside service, and in 2006 I paid a total of \$47.46 for recycling. In my opinion, it is worth every penny!

Have you heard my recycling podcast? To listen, please visit www.wcfx.com. On the left side of the page, click "CFX Morning Sun 24 Hr. Newsroom." Then, click "Recycling 7/29/07" to download and listen! If you have questions about recycling, please contact me at 989-773-9631 or recycling@isabellacounty.org. Happy Recycling!

[Marnie Basney is the Isabella County Recycling Center's Environmental Education Specialist]