

RECYCLE?

by Susette DeCoster-Weisheit

Do you recycle? Do you recycle while on the river? Does your river office recycle? Is recycling the answer? These are questions to contemplate as we enjoy the winter. Recycling has become fashionable, has become the law in some places, and has even been preached as duty. However, we must go beyond fashion, law, or duty to understand the responsibility of recycling.

Convenience has taught our parents generation, and our generation, to be wasteful; such habits have been established into our very lifestyles. Ever heard of preventative medicine? We can limit much of the process and responsibility of recycling by non-use. Non-use is going one step back and changing wasteful habits. Asking yourself if the products you are using are a necessity for the home, office, or river (paper plates, plastic forks, drinks sold in plastic, etc.). Are they really just convenient? On the river, and even in our homes, it is often because of convenience we use products that either cannot or must be recycled. But, at what expense to our convenience? This brings us back to the understanding of responsibility. If you help to create the problem don't you think it is your responsibility to help reduce its growth?

Did you know...

- * The lifetime garbage of the typical American will equal at least 600 times his or her adult weight.
- * Throwing away an aluminum beverage container wastes as much energy as dumping a soda can half-filled with gasoline.
- * The energy saved from recycling a glass bottle will light a 100 watt bulb for hours.
- * The energy saved from each recycled aluminum can will operate a television set for 3 hours.
- * Two weeks of daily newspapers equals one full grown tree.
- * Glass produced from recycled glass instead of raw material reduces related air pollution by 20 percent and water pollution by 50 percent.
- * In the U.S. almost one ton of solid waste per person is collected annually from residential, commercial and institutional sources. At the present rate of disposal, about 500 new dumping locations must be found each year.
- * Americans use 50 million tons of paper each year, consuming over 850 million trees.
- * Recycling half of the paper used throughout the world today would free 20 million acres of forest land from paper production.
- * One person uses and discards 2 pine trees in paper products each year.
- * Americans comprise about 5 percent of the world's population, and annually produce between 15 and 38 percent of the world's garbage.

With these facts digested, we can considered the problems created. In our generation of plastic wrappers and multiple packaging, it is often difficult not to be wasteful. Can you change the whole system? Probably not.

However, each individual can help the evolution of such a change by altering their own habits, thus limiting industry demands. Most of us want to aid in reducing environmental deterioration -- and want to contribute to a changing lifestyle -- so we recycle. There are three steps to change habits: non-use, re-use, and recycle.

There are different types of recyclable materials: aluminum cans, glass, tin, paper, cardboard, and plastic. Grand County Recycling (GCR), will not take plastic at this time; however, they will soon be taking plastic milk jugs on an experimental basis. There are some guidelines for recycling both tin and paper, but both can be dealt with easily. Tin needs to be rinsed and smashed flat, of course if you're on the river, you would probably do this anyhow to cut down on smell and trash size. Paper needs to be separated into newsprint and white paper (currently glossy paper is not excepted for recycling and must be thrown in the trash). Cardboard boxes need to be flattened for easy transportation and storage.

In your home, it is easy to recycle with cardboard boxes, paper grocery bags, or trash barrels depending on available space. If you live in a small neighborhood, trailer court, or apartment complex it may be easier to establish a group recycling area. More often than not, even those of us who do recycle faithfully in the home, find it difficult in the office or on the river. To recycle in the office there are several people that have to be taught separation and have to be encouraged regularly. This may seem bothersome unless we explain the effectiveness of recycling, and further encourage these people to recycle in their homes as well. On the river, burlap sacks or rice bags provide an excellent recycling system. The bags provide a compact system for transportation, and are easy to set on the beach at camp for use by all. By encouraging trip participants to separate their trash, an education on environmental ethics is established that will hopefully be carried back to the participants home.

One of the complaints often heard at the river office and warehouse is: that recyclable materials pile-up and are not transported to the recycling center. If the river company does not have a person that can be assigned to the duty, GCR will provide a pick-up service. The cost of each pick-up is \$2.30 and \$.10 per minute while on the premises. Pick-ups can be arranged bi-weekly, or monthly, by calling GCR at 259-8640. Not only is recycling easy, but doing so helps counteract a part of your contribution to a growing problem. We don't need to save the world, we need to save ourselves from the problems we create.

