



“All Bottle” Best Management Practice: Orange County Solid Waste

All plastic bottles recycling since: 1999

Message used: print media, mailings, radio, Web site, decals

Description

In 1999, Orange Co. Solid Waste Management Department converted from a #1 and #2 plastic bottle collection program to an “all plastic bottles” collection program. The switch to all plastic bottles stemmed from both the community’s desire to switch as well as changes in the market that made it profitable to do so. OCSWMD also saw that it would be easier to educate and communicate to the public with an “all plastic bottles” message.

Implementation

OCSWMD advertised the switch to “all plastic bottles” primarily in print media, but also used mass mailings, radio ads and a news release (and later, its new Web site). OCSWMD’s current contractor for curbside pick-up wants it to maintain the message of “plastic bottles only.” However, the contractor picks up all plastics put in the bin by residents, which sends contradictory messages to the public. This is compounded by some residents who wonder if an item has a #1 or #2 on the bottom, why it can’t be placed in the bin with the bottles. To try and curb this, OCSWMD uses labels that say “Recycle All Bottles” (as opposed to “Recycle Plastics”) and has a picture of a bottle.

Results

Six months after the switch to all bottles OCSWMD saw a 14 percent increase in plastic bottle

weight. Less than 2 percent of all bottles were not HDPE or PETE and at present that percentage is lower. Since the “all plastic bottles” move in 1999, Orange Co. switched to a commingled collection, so it’s hard to specify what fraction is bottles or how many tons of bottles are recovered. However, in 2005 a hand-sorted waste load showed that 2.4 percent of residential waste was still plastic bottles, as well as 3.1 percent and 3.4 percent of multi-family and commercial waste respectfully. This translates into one bottle per Orange Co. resident thrown away every day. OCSWMD has also seen much more non-bottle plastic in bins despite pushing the bottles only (“neck smaller than the base”) message. However, OCSWMD feels that its message is strong and simple, so it will continue to push it to the public.



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