
Annual Report of the Recycling Public Advisory Council

Twentieth Edition

Presented to the Honorable John Carney, Governor of Delaware and
the 151st Delaware General Assembly

November 2021

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Edited and prepared by:

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Executive Summary

The General Assembly enacted Delaware’s Universal Recycling Law (UR Law) on June 8, 2010 and established ambitious recycling goals for the state. The goals were to recycle 50% of the municipal solid waste (MSW) disposed of by CY2015 and 60% by CY2020. These goals included recyclables diverted from both residential and commercial waste and utilized EPA’s guidelines for calculating the recycling percentage. The following report reflects what was accomplished during calendar year 2020.

The CY2020 recycling rate for Delaware was 36.4%

The State has been successful at diverting recyclable materials from the landfill, but the goals set forth in the UR Law have not been achieved. The State recycled 36.4% of its municipal solid waste in CY2020. Even though Delaware has interim goals established in the legislation, a comprehensive statewide system has been developed to reduce the burden on our landfills and provide raw materials to the market through our diversion activities.

CY2020 Recycling Rate Summary in Tons

Diverted Recyclables		MSW Disposed		Total Municipal Solid Waste	Percent Diverted Recyclables
435,875	+	762,893	=	1,198,769	36.4%

For the full report visit:

[State of Delaware – Assessment of Municipal Solid Waste Recycling, Calendar Year 2020](#)

As illustrated in the chart below, Delaware has made significant strides in the diversion of waste to new uses and in the reduction in the amount of waste sent to Delaware’s landfills since 2006. Not surprisingly, due to COVID, there was a decrease in the recycling rate for 2020. This is largely due to a drop in the commercial recycling sector, due to so many people working from home. There were also a few issues with haulers not having enough staff to collect yard waste. The amount of material sent to the landfills also increased for the ninth year in a row.

Figure 1 - Recycling Rates in Delaware: CY2006 – 2020

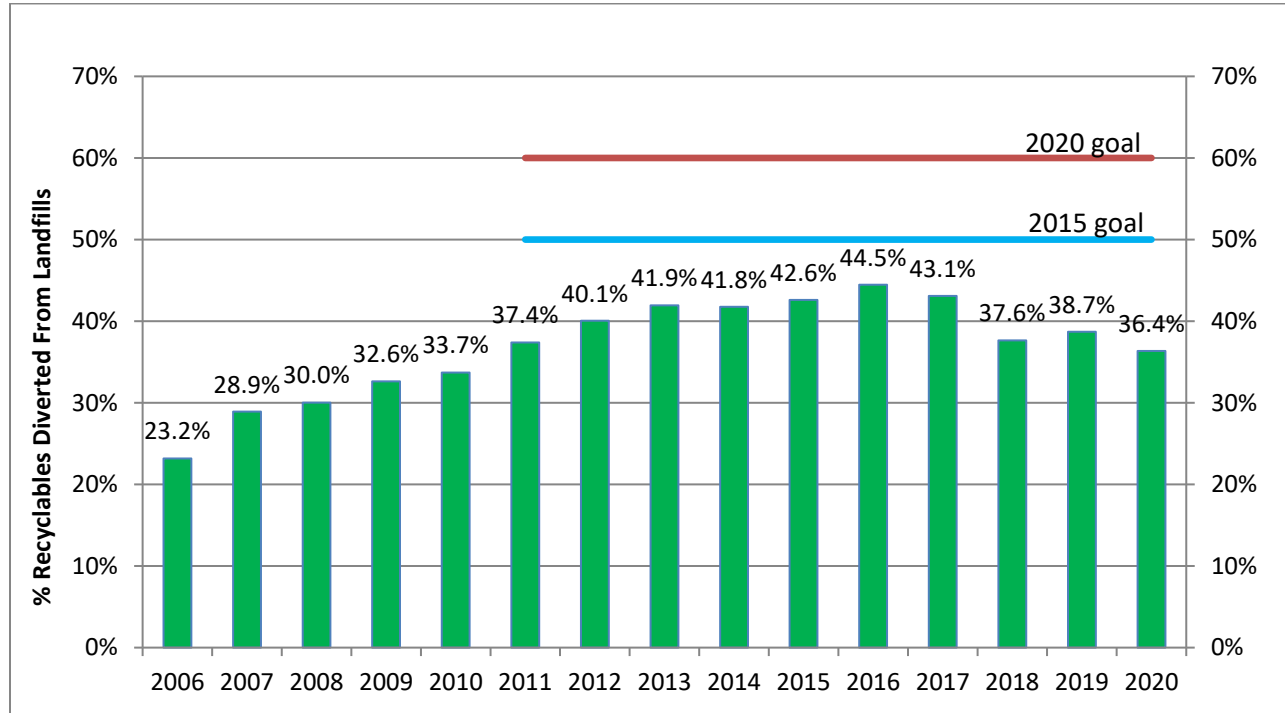
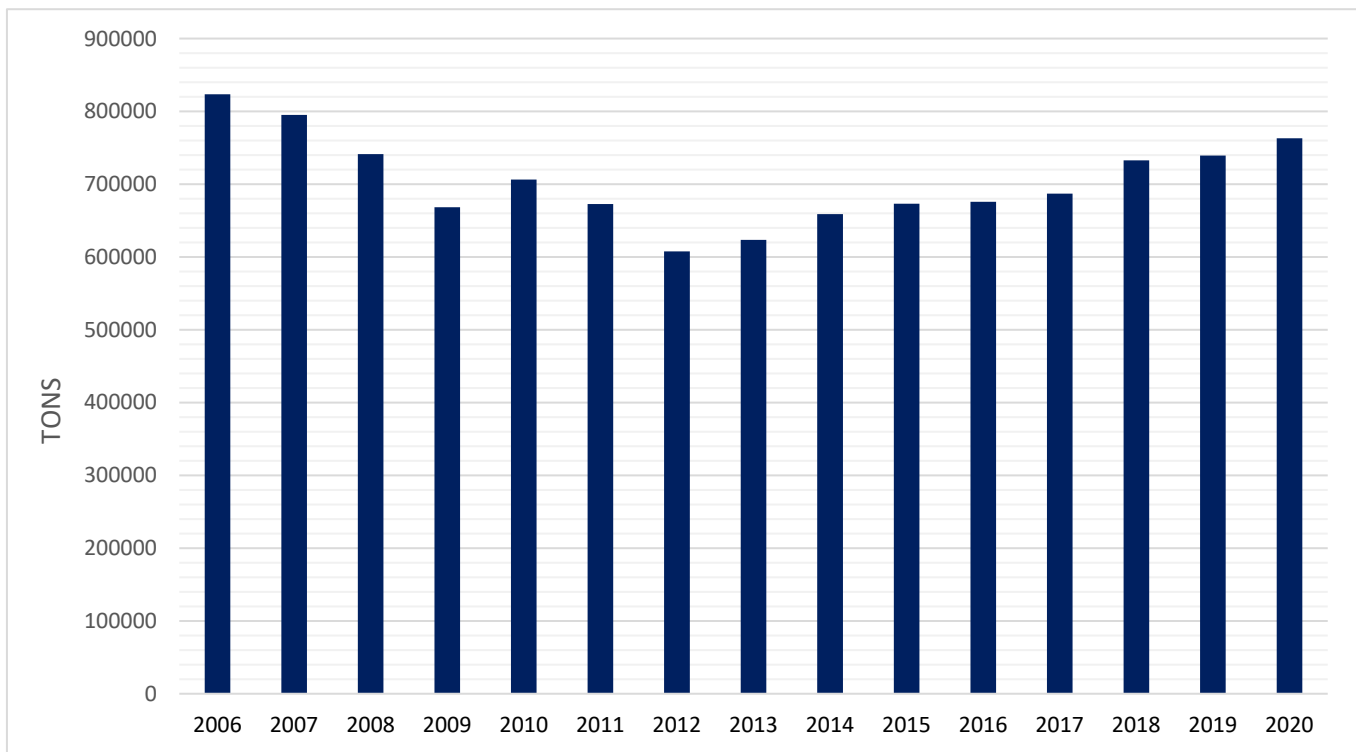
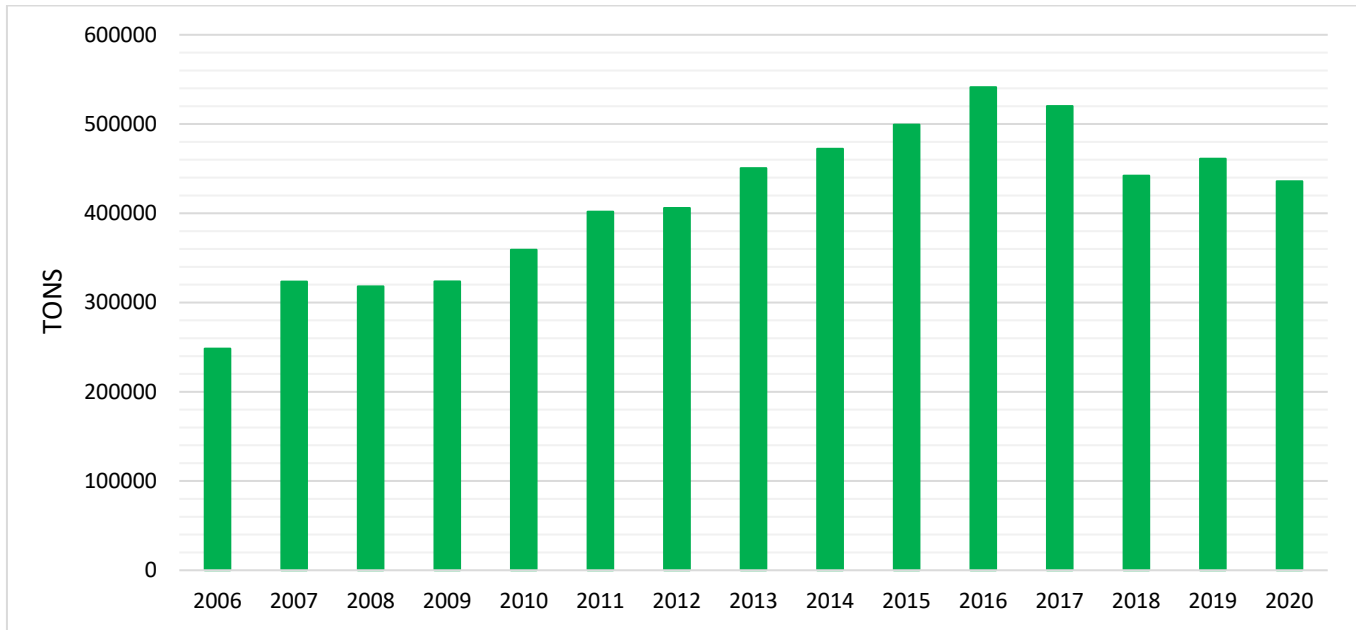


Figure 2 – Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Landfilled in Delaware



10,567,308 tons of material have been landfilled since 2006.

Figure 3 – Recyclables Diverted from Landfills in Delaware



6,203,250 tons of recyclables have been diverted from landfills since 2006.

Delaware has three landfills. One in each County. Delaware also has one Material Recovery Facility (MRF) where the majority of the residential recyclables go to be sorted and sold to manufacturers to be made into new items. This facility processes 121,866 tons of recyclables per year. It is very important that only acceptable recyclable materials end up at the facility. However, there are often large amounts of trash sent to the MRF that contaminates the recyclable materials and makes them less marketable and also less valuable. Outreach and education still need to continue so that all Delaware residents and businesses know what is acceptable to put in their recycling cart whether they are at home, work, or school.

Recommendations of the Recycling Public Advisory Council (RPAC) to the Governor and General Assembly

- 1. Support DNREC’s General Fund Appropriation Request for the Recycling Program.**
DNREC does not have any specific funding currently allocated to help support education and outreach as well as research to expand recycling efforts within the State. RPAC encourages the Legislature to support an annual budget appropriation to allow consistent and targeted messaging for diversion throughout the State. This will allow

Delaware to move closer to achieving the diversion goals outlined in the Universal Recycling Law.

- 2. Support DNREC accessing federal funds to reinstate the Universal Recycling Grant & Low Interest Loan Program.** RPAC believes grants and loans to support recycling activities and businesses in our State is one of the most important steps in reaching the recycling goals set in the Universal Recycling law. The Recycling Fund, which provided monies to support the Universal Recycling Grant and Low Interest Loan program, has been exhausted. The EPA will be announcing two different grant opportunities that DNREC can apply for to work on infrastructure needs for recycling in DE. These grants and loans will help expand diversion and recycling efforts which can generate good paying local jobs, economic stimulation, and support climate change reduction efforts, leaving Delaware better for future generations.
- 3. Support appropriation of annual funding to send students from one grade level in each school district in Delaware to DSWA's Environmental Education Building at the Delaware Recycling Center in New Castle each year.** DSWA currently operates an Education Building within the Delaware Recycling Center in New Castle. A second Education Center in Kent County will be open in June of 2022. The Education Center provides a hands-on opportunity for students to see and understand the recycling process. Providing students access to this program reinforces why recycling and diversion are important and supports education efforts on behavior change.
- 4. Request OMB work with DNREC to review recycling practices in State buildings.** State office buildings are not exempt from the Universal Recycling law and there needs to be an annual review and assessment of State office building participation in the program. This is to ensure containers and service contracts are optimized to maximize diversion from State office buildings. It will also help to identify and correct contamination issues which might be occurring due to incorrect recycling practices. This could potentially save the state money and increase the recycling rate
- 5. Promote legislation that reinforces waste reduction and increased recycling in Delaware so that the goals of the UR Law can be achieved.** Support businesses in Delaware that utilize reuse and repair services that help lessen the amount of waste being sent to our landfills.
- 6. Expand your own recycling knowledge and inform your constituency.** Follow Delaware Recycles on social media and share valuable content with constituents. Encourage all

State employees to take the training module about Recycling in Delaware on the Delaware Learning Center website.

- 7. Continue to explore new technologies and outreach strategies that promotes recycling in Delaware.** This includes working collaboratively with DNREC, DSWA, RPAC and the government.

Background

In September of 2000, former Governor Thomas Carper established the Delaware Recycling Public Advisory Council (RPAC) with Executive Order No. 82. On June 8, 2010, the General Assembly formally recognized RPAC when Delaware's Universal Recycling Law (UR Law) was enacted. Members of the Council are volunteers appointed by the Governor. The Council's main tasks include offering advice to the DNREC (Department) and the DSWA (Authority) on all aspects of recycling, setting funding categories/priorities for the Recycling Grants Program, providing guidance on projects that are eligible to receive funding and providing recommendations on recycling outreach by the Department and Authority. The Council plays a key role in reporting to the Governor and General Assembly on the annual status of recycling in Delaware. RPAC holds periodic meetings throughout the year to discuss opportunities to engage the public. An additional responsibility of the Council is to maintain an approved, sound and current methodology to measure recycling rates that is both scientific and comparable to other state and federal measures.

The 2010 UR Law created the single-stream curbside recycling program we have today and also implemented a short-term beverage container fee that initially funded the Universal Recycling Grant and Low Interest Loan Program. The program awarded over 100 grants, totaling more than \$8.4 million to increase recycling activity and decrease waste production in the State. The funding ended in December 2014 and unfortunately the remaining funds were reallocated in 2016 by the legislature. The remaining interest and unawarded funds are all the Grant Program has used the last 5 years.

Figure 4 – Grant and Low Interest Loan Program Expenditures

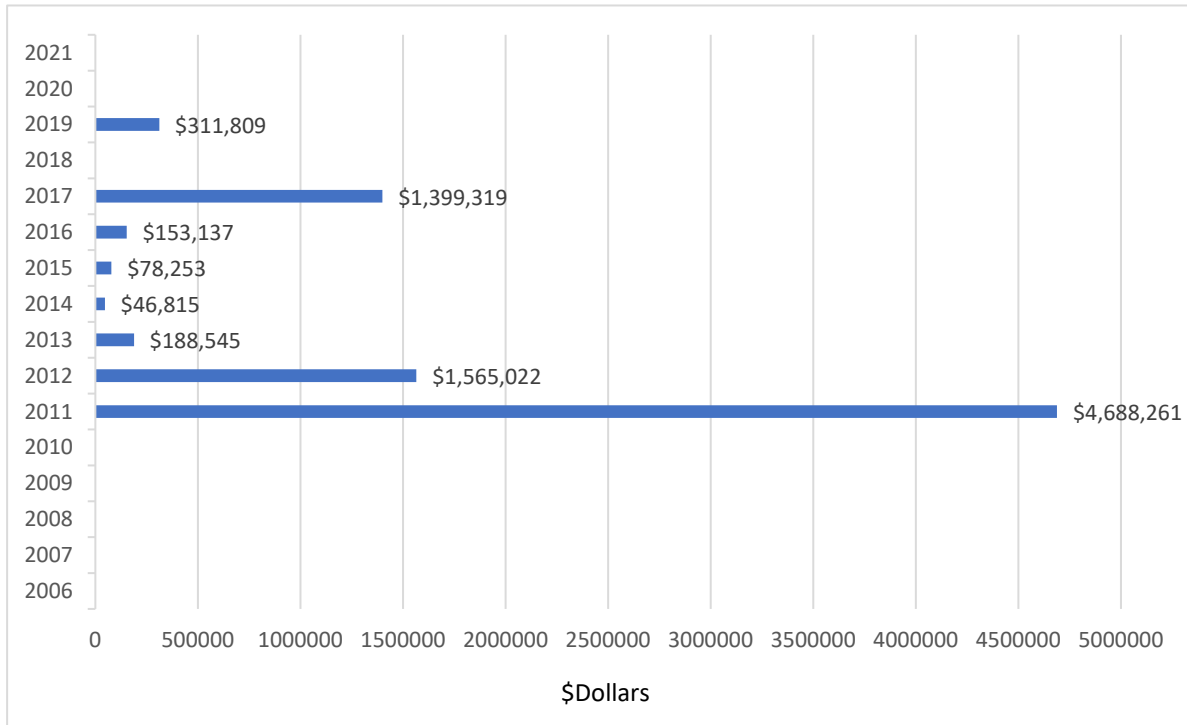
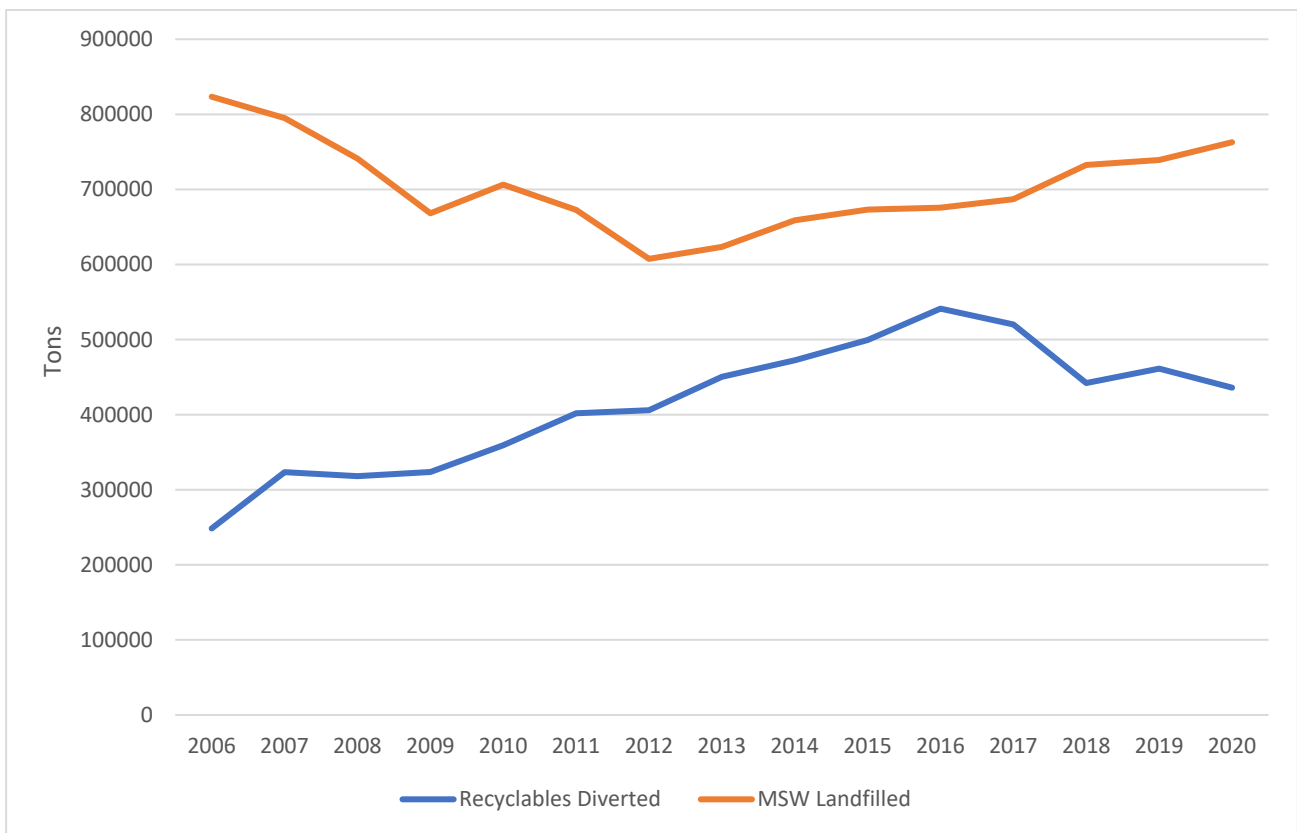


Figure 5 – Trend of MSW landfilled vs. Recyclables diverted from the landfills



Recent Recycling Efforts in Delaware

Department Activities

Recycling Grants Program – The remaining balance of the Universal Recycling Grant and Low Interest Loan Program funding has been spent. The program is no longer available unless a new funding source is found. No funding was appropriated in the FY2022 budget, so the program will remain suspended until June 2022, unless funding is allocated in the FY 2023 budget (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) per the recommendation above. The Department monitored and administered the remaining grant projects that extended their performance period into CY2020.

Plastic carryout bag ban and at-store recycling program – The single-use plastic bag ban went into effect on January 1, 2021. At the time of implementation, the ban only applied to certain stores within the State. The ban also required stores to have an at-store drop off bin for plastic bags and plastic film wrap. This is the only way residents can recycle this type of material since it is not accepted by the single stream recycling program. When plastic bags and film get to the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) it wraps around and jams the equipment at the sorting facility, causing significant issues.

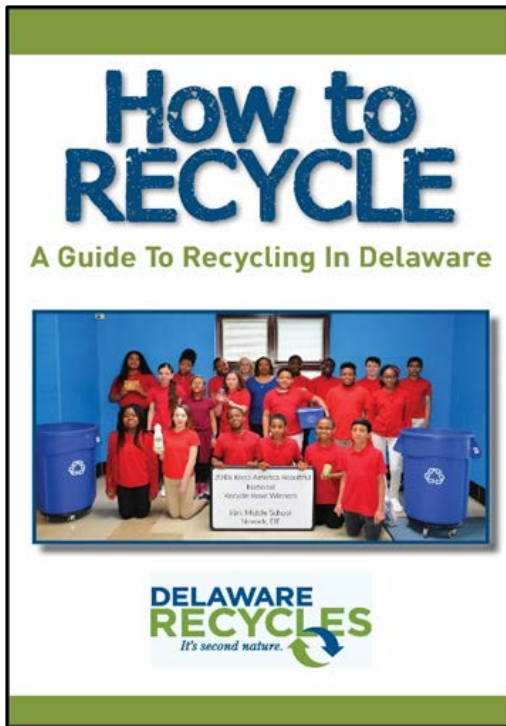
Organics diversion – The Department's Division of Waste & Hazardous Substances conducted a pre-order Compost Bin and Rain Barrel sale in the fall of 2020. Distribution, with assistance from DNREC's Watershed Stewardship Branch, occurred in all three counties. Four Hundred and sixty-three (463) individuals ordered items from this event; 325 Compost Bins were purchased along with 375 Rain Barrels and 522 Compost Accessories. Backyard composting reduces the amount of food waste that needlessly ends up in Delaware's landfills. Food waste is one of the largest waste streams that end up in our landfills. Combining food waste with yard waste in a compost bin produces nutrient rich soil that can be used as a natural soil amendment on gardens, flower beds, or lawns.

Public Education and Outreach

Covid-19 greatly restricted the number of in-person events that were conducted in 2020. DNREC successfully utilized social media and virtual presentations to spread the recycling and waste reduction message to residents.

Here are some of the examples of the current outreach material and marketing campaigns that should be the only resources Delaware residents use when determining what to put in their curbside recycling.

[How to Recycle Guidebook](#)



[Recycling in Delaware poster](#)

RECYCLING IN DELAWARE

ACCEPTABLE
Place only these materials loose, empty, clean and dry in your recycling cart or dumpster:

- PAPER**
Magazines, junk mail, paper bags, office paper, newspaper, etc.
- PLASTIC CONTAINERS**
Leave lids on.
- CANS, BOTTLES, JARS**
Remove jar lids and recycle separately.
- CARTONS, PAPERBOARD, CORRUGATED CARDBOARD**

KEEP YOUR RECYCLING OUT OF BAGS. PLACE ITEMS LOOSE IN THE CART.

NOT ACCEPTABLE
Keep these items out of your recycling cart or dumpster:

- SHREDDED PAPER
- FROZEN FOOD PACKAGING
- FOOD WASTE
- COFFEE CUPS
- GARBAGE
- MIRRORS AND WINDOW GLASS
- TANGLERS
Garden hoses, string, laces, nylon rope, etc.
- SCRAP METAL
- PLASTIC BAGS
Return to retail store.
- BATTERIES
- STYROFOAM
- ELECTRONICS
Return to retail store.
- YARD WASTE

Visit our website to learn how to recycle these items:

DELAWARE RECYCLES www.de.gov/recycling

2020 Marketing campaign graphic

IS YOUR CART ON EMPTY?
Filling Your Recycling Cart is Easy.

Only fill with:
Paper • Plastic Containers • Metal Cans
Glass Bottles & Jars • Cardboard • Cartons

No Plastic Bags

Visit Recycling.Delaware.gov

DELAWARE RECYCLES

[BYOBag campaign](#)

BRING YOUR OWN BAG #BYOBagDE

Single-use plastic carryout bags will no longer be available at checkout starting **January 1**. Stores will have reusable bags available at checkout, and DNREC encourages customers to choose to reuse and bring back their own bags too.

DELAWARE RECYCLES www.de.gov/recycling

Resource Recycling Systems (RRS) conducted research in 2020-2021 on over 3,200 recycling programs in the U.S. It found that only 9% of programs are using either an app or search tool. Delaware is part of that 9%. In 2020, DNREC formed a partnership and developed all the content for its new search tool – Recyclopedia. This search tool is located on [Delaware Recycles website](#). The tool allows residents of Delaware to know exactly where and how to dispose of over 250 items that they may no longer have a use for.



Delaware Solid Waste Authority (DSWA) Activities

Recycling Drop off Centers - The Authority's recycling drop-off centers are staffed centers designed to reduce contamination of recyclables and assist Delaware residents while dropping off material. Residents can drop off single-stream recycling as well as used motor oil, oil filters, household batteries, and corrugated cardboard at every center in the State.

Electronics Recycling Program - The Authority offers electronics recycling 6 days a week at its 4 staffed Recycling Drop-Off Centers. 2,236,219 pounds of electronic goods were collected and recycled.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program - 16 Saturday Events were held statewide in addition to the weekly collections held at DSWA Recycling Drop-Off Centers year-round. At these events, Delaware residents dropped off 1,018,993 pounds of household hazardous waste (HHW).

Oil Filter and Waste Oil Recycling Program - 407 tons of used motor oil were recycled and 19 tons of used oil filters were collected and recycled.

Polystyrene Foam Recycling Program - Collected and recycled 7 tons of polystyrene (#6 foam).

Household Battery Recycling - Collected and recycled 39 tons of household batteries.

Document Shredding Program - Through monthly Document Shredding events, the Authority collected 603,460 pounds of personal documents to be securely shredded.

Public Education and Outreach

The Authority's Education Program quickly adapted during the 2020-2021 school year in order to provide virtual field trips and resources for teachers while schools were meeting virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers were able to access worksheets and videos as well as request a virtual field trip.

The Authority's Education Coordinator provided virtual presentations to 954 students in grades K-12.

The Authority encourages citizens of Delaware to contact them if they are in need of environmental information concerning any DSWA program or facility. DSWA provides a Citizens' Response Line (800-404-7080). In addition, the Authority's website, www.dswa.com, provides even more information for Delaware residents. These resources provide valuable information and keep the personal touch that has helped to establish the Authority as a leader in the environmental community.

DSWA RECYCLING

FISCAL YEAR 2021

122K

TONS OF RECYCLING COLLECTED
STATEWIDE AND PROCESSED THROUGH
DSWA'S DELAWARE RECYCLING CENTER



2 MILLION POUNDS OF ELECTRONICS RECYCLED

9,291 Computers

1,446 Monitors

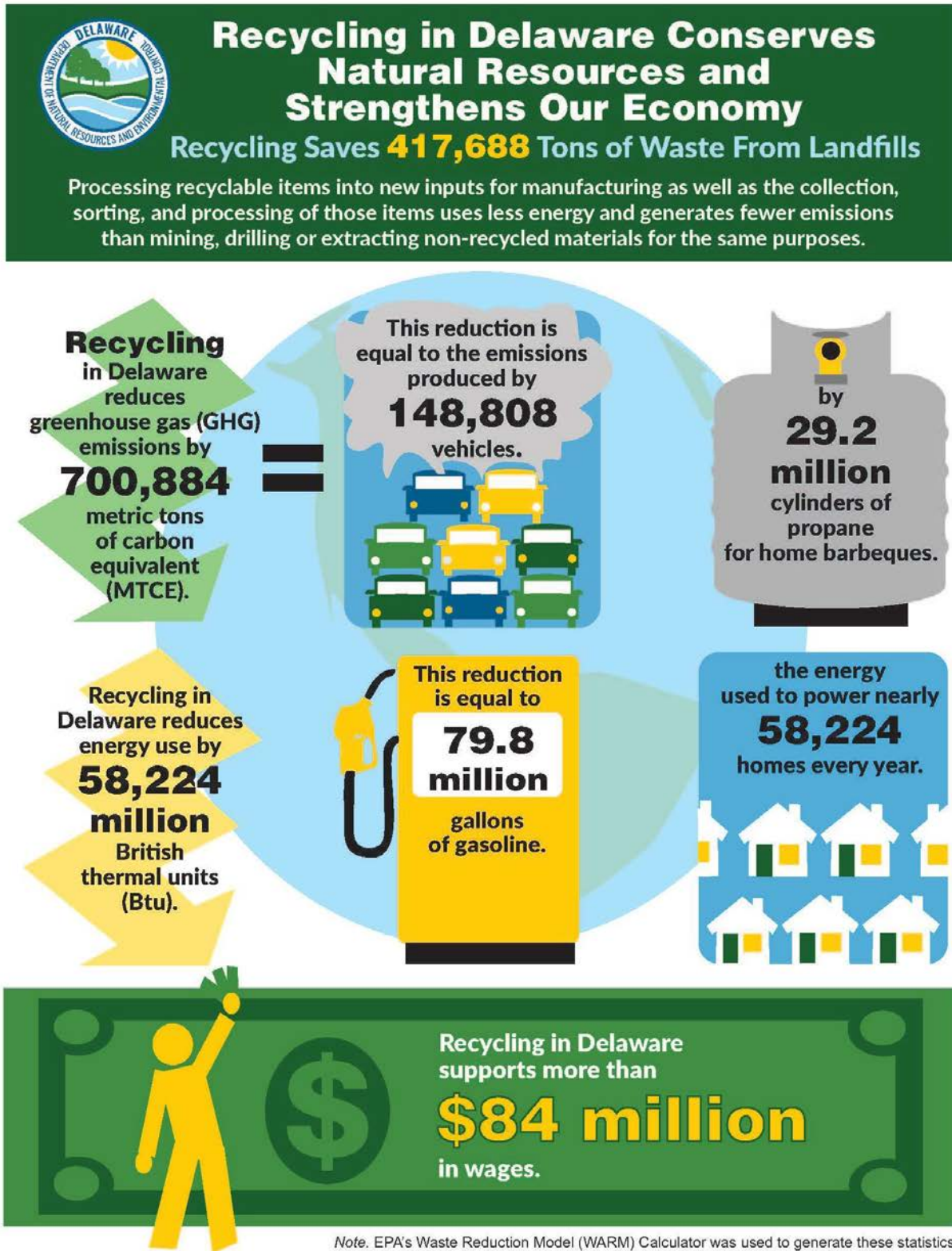
32,775 Televisions

603,460 POUNDS OF DOCUMENTS SHREDDED



1 MILLION POUNDS OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTED

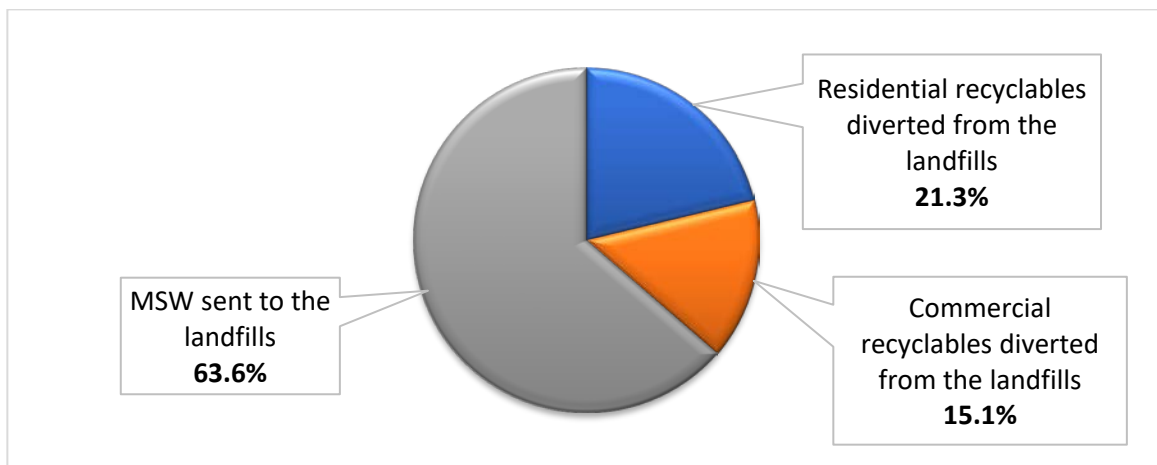
Environmental Value of Delaware's Recycling and Diversion Activities for 2020



Measurement and Reporting

The Council utilizes statistically acceptable and comparable methodology for measuring recycling diversion rates based upon EPA guidelines. This methodology provides an objective and auditable approach to recycling measurement which is relevant and repeatable. The Council and the Department have developed guidelines for the recycling industry to report information as directed by the Universal Recycling Law ([7 Del. C., §6056](#)). To help protect proprietary business information, this process continues to use a consultant, DSM Environmental Services, Inc., to collect recycling data, which has allowed us to achieve better and more accurate results since 2011, with 2020 being the tenth year of industry reporting. This data includes residential and commercial recycling information including yard waste. In CY2020 the residential recycling rate decreased by 0.9% while the commercial recycling rate dropped 2.2% from the 2019 rates. For the full report visit: [Assessment of Municipal Solid Waste Recycling for Calendar Year 2020](#). EPA's calculation for a national average recycling rate was 32.1% in 2018. In November of 2020, they also announced a national recycling goal to increase the U.S. recycling rate to 50% by 2030.

Figure 6 – CY2020 Total Municipal Solid Waste Breakdown



Breakdown of diverted recyclables into residential and commercial.

Closing Statement

We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to manage our State's waste efficiently and responsibly. With several competing uses for land and the desire to maintain Delaware's natural beauty, recycling is an attractive, logical, and responsible alternative to landfilling recyclable materials made from a finite supply of natural resources. We have a responsibility to future generations to conserve non-renewable natural resources. The Recycling Public Advisory Council requests that our recommendations are seriously considered. Successful implementation of the necessary changes will require the leadership, support, and active participation of the Governor's Office and the General Assembly.

RPAC Members in CY2020

- Julie Miro Wenger, Acting RPAC Chairperson - Representing the Delaware Food Industry Council.
- Michael D. Parkowski - representing the Delaware Solid Waste Authority (DSWA).
- Timothy Ratsep - representing the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC).
- Steve Tigani - representing the alcohol beverage industry.
- Rustyn Stoops – representing the Delaware Chamber of Commerce.
- Dee Durham - representing the Delaware Association of Counties.
- Sewell McCabe - representing the soft drink industry.
- Adam Webster – representing the Delaware restaurant industry. *Resigned 11/2021.
- Gerald Morris – representing the Delaware League of Local Governments.
- Paul Beane - representing the waste hauling industry.
- Todd Klawinski – representing a community-based or public-interest group.
- Vikram Krishnamurthy - representing a community-based or public-interest group.
- Brigid Gregory - representing a community-based or public-interest group.
- Babita Jagnaman – representing a community-based or public-interest group.
- Brian Loy – representing a community-based or public interest group.
- Vacant- one recycling industry seat.