

A GUIDE TO

RETHINKING WASTE AT LODGING DESTINATIONS

TIPS AND RESOURCES TO REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE AND COMPOST



Community Innovation Fund

Need some support implementing one or more of these practices? Apply for the Rethink Waste Community Innovation Fund!

The Environmental Center's Rethink Waste Project provides individuals, businesses, and community organizations up to \$5,000 per project to implement reduce, reuse, recycle, compost efforts across Deschutes County.

Learn more at <https://envirocenter.org/community-innovation-fund/>

Have you heard that Deschutes County has over 4.3 million visitors annually?

That's a lot of extra people who produce waste and practice a wide variety of different recycling habits while enjoying their vacations. As lodging property owners and managers of hotels, resorts, Airbnbs and other rental property, you have a unique opportunity to help visitors prevent waste and divert as much as possible from the landfill to compost or recycling. This is especially important for us here in Deschutes County because our local Knott Landfill is projected to be full by 2029.



The Environmental Center's mission is to embed sustainability into daily life in Central Oregon. We are a hub of environmental education, engagement and action, driving local change that makes a world of difference.

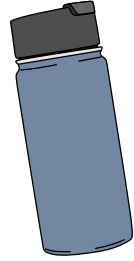
This guide was developed based on focus group discussions with tourism industry professionals and findings from the Rethink Waste Tourism Pilot Project in 2021-2023 in partnership with Deschutes County Solid Waste, Visit Central Oregon and participating lodging sites. The guide is intended to help property managers and owners set visitors up for success to reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost.

REDUCE

Let's try reducing first so there won't be waste to begin with. Think of the impact these tips and tricks can make!

Rethink swag and giveaways! Instead of welcome bags filled with cheap promo items that often get thrown away, consider this:

- Gift experiences like a free welcome drink/dessert, wilderness/park pass, tour, etc.
- Gift something that can be used over and over again like a high-quality tote, travel mug, etc.



Swap out non-essential printed materials for digital versions or informational videos accessible via QR codes or simple URLs. Have limited printed versions on hand as needed.

Offer coffee mugs instead of disposable cups.

Dishware, cups, and utensils labeled “compostable,” “biodegradable,” or “biobased” are not accepted for composting in Deschutes County. These products take much longer to break down and can lead to contamination of otherwise nutrient rich soil.

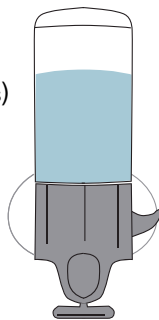
Opt for reusables instead!

REUSE

It's easy! Swap out single use or one-time use items for reusables so that stuff has a longer life.

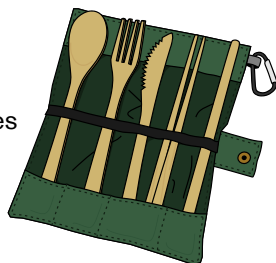
BATHROOM:

- Use refillable hand soap (wall mount dispensers)
- Use refillable shower/bath soaps (wall mount dispensers)
- Offer cloth makeup wipes
- Offer single use toiletries available by request



KITCHEN:

- Stock cloth hand / dish towels
- Use refillable dish/hand soap (wall mount dispensers)
- Offer cloth produce and grocery bags
- Stock reusable K-cup pods (if you can't make the switch to a coffee pot)
- Stock cups / mugs / dishware / utensils
- Provide a reusable On-The-Go kit in a tote bag for guests including:
 - Water bottle
 - Coffee /tea travel mug
 - Utensil kit
 - Stainless steel lunch boxes / silicone food pouches
 - Cloth napkins / hand towels



Tips for BORROWING or RENTING:

- **The Library of Things** – borrow all kinds of goods and tools
dpl.bibliocommons.com
- **The Gear Fix** – rent or buy second hand adventure gear / equipment
gearfix.com
- **The Environmental Center** – Borrow dishware kits
envirocenter.org
- **DIY Cave** – Rent tools
diycave.com

If possible, consider offering reusables in your lobby or in each unit/room/suite. Make note that items are available for purchase if guests would like to take something home.

RECYCLE

Once you've made efforts to reduce or reuse first, consider effective recycling.

Educating visitors on how to recycle right is extremely important as recycling infrastructures are different across the state and the country. Even what is collected for recycling in Deschutes County is different from what is collected in our neighboring Jefferson and Crook Counties. Although guests may be sustainability minded, they might be doing more harm than good if they are not practicing our local recycling practices.

As you know, guests on vacation mode may not be inclined to think critically about what goes in which bin, so let's make recycling as easy as possible. To start with, try to first purchasing items that are reusable, then purchase materials that are truly recyclable in our communities.

Did you know that
mixed recycling
and glass recycling
is free with paid
garbage service?



RECYCLING WASTE AUDIT

How to know if you're successfully diverting waste!

STEP 1:

Conduct a pre-waste audit for sample period of time prior to establishing recycling collection to determine:

- What materials you are currently sending to landfill that could be recycled (typically bottles, cans, glass, some cardboard). This will help you determine the type of materials to aim for collections.
- What quantity of material you are currently sending to landfill + the frequency of your garbage pick-up service. This will help you see if you are able to reduce waste sent to landfill and potentially decrease your collection frequency / costs. (You can calculate the total amount of landfill waste by weight or volume, but you can also refer to cart counts.)

STEP 2:

Contact your local collector (Republic Services or Cascade Disposal) to determine service logistics.

STEP 3:

It's a team effort! Provide onsite recycling education that aligns with the collection services you have available.

- Organize an all-staff training to roll out your recycling program. (Learn more about training through the Environmental Center's Rethink Waste Project at envirocenter.org)
- Add signage to all bins, carts, and enclosures. (You can download and customize a variety of signage at envirocenter.org)
 - Include specific wording about materials that are accepted or not (e.g., "clean plastic bottles, tubs, and jugs only" as opposed to "plastics"). Phrases like "mixed recycling" are too vague and will lead to contamination without examples.
 - Include Spanish translation, or other commonly used languages among staff and visitors.
 - Include recycling information on your website and check-in materials. You can even link to our Recycle Like a Local Page from your website. <https://envirocenter.org/programs/rethink-waste-project/aboutrw/on-vacation/>



STEP 4:

If you don't already have an established recycling collection area, set one up, typically near your garbage dumpsters.

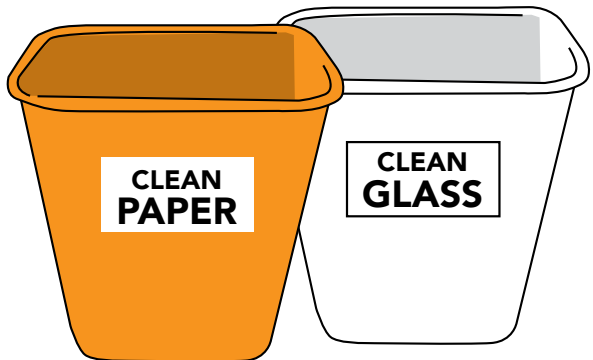
- This area is ideally used only by staff who bring materials from bins throughout the property and check for contamination.
- Based on the information from your local collector, you may want to include mixed recycling, glass recycling, redeemable (Bottle-Drop), and or cardboard recycling containers.



STEP 5:

Set up recycling bins in several areas as a “pilot.” (Include clear labeling and signage.)

- Start with recycling bins that are staff-facing only located in a kitchen or office spaces on the property, allowing your team to become familiar with the processes before rolling it out to guests. Remember, these bins should align with the needs you determined in Step 2.
- When you are ready to roll out recycling to guests, start in a few units/rooms or in common areas like the lobby to test out guest sorting savvy.



PRO TIPS

- 1** Instead of trying to collect and recycle everything, start with easily identifiable items like bottles and cans, then work to add more items like paper/cardboard.
- 2** Consider using bins with lids that correspond to the type of material you are collecting, like a circle for bottles and cans, or a rectangle for cardboard.
- 3** If you have multiple bins in a collection area, consider color coding, like black for garbage, blue for mixed recycling, or white for glass.
- 4** Redeemable (BottleDrop) collections can be donated to local nonprofit organizations through the Blue Bag Program (obrc.com). Contact your favorite local nonprofit to see if they are registered for this program and see if they have the bags needed for donations. If you choose this route, consider including a note about the nonprofit to encourage guests to only put redeemable bottles and cans in the bags/bins



FOOD WASTE & COMPOSTING

There are social, environmental, and financial impacts of all that wasted food.

For instance, 1 in 6 people in Oregon experience food insecurity. Wasted food also accounts for 8% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions globally. This is because food waste in a landfill experiences low light and low oxygen conditions and lacks the good bugs that break the food into nutrient rich soil. Instead, as food breaks down in a landfill, it produces methane gas, a much more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. And finally, all that wasted food means wasted money, by some estimates as much as \$57 billion annually for U.S. businesses.

**Did you know
that about a
quarter of the
waste disposed
of at Knott
Landfill is
food?**



FOOD WASTE AND COMPOSTING AUDIT

How to identify your primary sources of organic waste!

Conduct a waste audit to identify your primary sources and quantities of organic waste to help you determine how and where to reduce food waste – and measure your success.

Preventing food waste if you have a restaurant or eatery on site.

- **Is a primary source of your organic waste inedible food scraps like eggs shells, bones, banana peels?** This is good news! This means you're already doing a good job reducing edible food waste and can focus on composting food scraps.
- **Is a primary source of your organic waste uneaten food?** If yes, you can try consider adjusting portion sizes, eliminating unpopular menu items, or swapping to optional side dishes.
- **Is a primary source of your organic waste good food that has spoiled?** If yes, consider updating purchasing and food storage practices.

- **Is a primary source of the organic waste good food that was not purchased or used?** Consider adjusting purchasing practices and donating to a local food distribution center.

Consider composting if the food waste is not originating on site.

- Is a primary source of your organic waste leftovers that guests are bringing onsite from other restaurants or other foods that are not served on your site? Provide guests with an option to compost food waste.

For more information, check out our Rethink Food Waste Challenge, a four-week newsletter series designed to help you track food waste and take steps to reduce. While it's designed for households, it may provide some inspiration for your property's waste audit. <https://envirocenter.org/programs/rethink-waste-project/what-we-offer/rethink-food-waste-home-challenge/>

COMPOST OFF-SITE

STEP 1:

Consider off-site composting options and choose one that best fits your property.

- Contact your local collector (Republic Services or Cascade Disposal) to coordinate yard waste / food waste pick up service. The commercial compost facility at Knott Landfill accepts all vegetative food waste, meats, dairy, bread – essentially all food waste coming from Bend and Redmond. Within Sisters, only vegetative food waste (raw/uncooked fruits and vegetables) is accepted. There is a fee associated with collection service.



- Contact a local farm to coordinate a system for food waste collection. Local farms may have a limited collection list depending on whether food waste is fed to livestock or composted. Additional relationship building and coordination may be required, but there may be more flexibility and it may be more cost effective than the commercial route. Search local farms and ranches here at <https://getataste.org/>.

STEP 2:

It's a team effort! Provide composting education that aligns with the collection services you have available onsite.

- Organize an all-staff training to roll out your composting program. (Learn more about training through the Environmental Center's Rethink Waste Project at envirocenter.org)
- Add signage to all bins, carts, and enclosures. (You can download and customize a variety of signage at envirocenter.org)
- Include specific wording about which materials are accepted (e.g., "raw fruits and vegetables only" as opposed to "compost bin"). Phrases that are too vague will lead to contamination.
- Include Spanish translation, or other commonly used languages among staff and visitors.
- Include images if possible.

STEP 3:

If you don't already have an established compost collection area, set one up, typically near the garbage dumpsters / recycling carts.

- This area is ideally used only by staff who bring materials from compost bins throughout the property and check for contamination.

STEP 4:

Set up compost bins in several areas as a "pilot. (Include clear labeling and signage.)

- Start with composting bins that are staff-facing only located in a kitchen or office spaces on the property, allowing your team to become familiar with the processes before rolling it out to guests.
- When you are ready to roll out composting to guests, start in a common area like outside the lobby, or in a restaurant or picnic area to test out guest usage.

PRO TIP

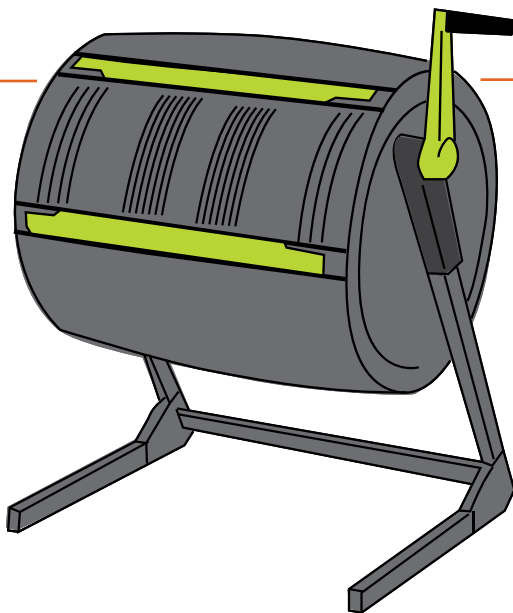
Property managers have expressed concerns that guests may complain about smells from compost bins, but it's important to keep in mind that if you're finding food waste in your waste audits, that food is already being collected in garbage bins throughout the property and not receiving complaints. In fact, streamlining the food waste collection to specific bins on the property is a great way to reduce the frequency of emptying other garbage bins throughout the property.



COMPOST ON-SITE

Some resources to get you started:

- Attend one of our Spring Food Waste Reduction and Composting Workshops
- Visit our website for more information <https://envirocenter.org/programs/rethink-waste-project/why-rethink-waste/composting-at-home/>



MEASURE YOUR SUCCESS!

Conduct a post waste audit to see how far you've come after implementing your waste reduction & recovery activities!

- A: Calculate the **total amount of waste going to landfill** (usually a weight or volume, but you can also refer to cart counts).

Use the unit of measurement you used in Step 1 of your pre-waste audit

- B: Calculate the **amount of waste that is diverted to recycling**.

- C: Calculate the **amount of waste that is diverted to composting**.

- D: Add these numbers up to give you an **amount of total waste**.

A+B+C

- E: Divide the amount of waste diverted to recycling by the total waste. Multiply by 100 to get your **percentage of diversion to recycling**.

$$\frac{B}{D} \times 100$$

- F: Divide the amount of waste diverted to composting by the total waste. Multiply by 100 to get your **percentage of diversion to composting**.

$$\frac{C}{D} \times 100$$

- G: Divide the amount of waste diverted to recycling + diverted to composting by the total waste and multiply by 100 to get your **total percentage of diversion**.

$$\frac{B+C}{D} \times 100$$

How to measure your change in waste sent to the landfill.

- H: Subtract the total waste going to landfill in your pre-waste audit by the total waste going to landfill in your post-waste audit.

RESULT FROM
PRE-WASTE AUDIT
IN STEP 1-A

NOTES

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RETHINKWASTE

an environmental center program 