# KCB MONTHLY

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KEEP CHEROKEE Beautiful

## Letter from the KCB Board

Why is recycling so important? The world has changed a lot in the past century. From individually packaged food servings to disposable diapers, more garbage is generated now than ever before. The average American discards seven-and-a-half pounds of garbage every day. This garbage, the solid waste stream, goes mostly to landfills, where it's compacted and buried. As the waste stream continues to grow, so will the pressures on our landfills, our resources, and our environment. A look backwards in time will tell the tale.The nation's composting and recycling rate rose from 7.7 percent of the waste stream in 1960 to 17 percent in 1990. It's currently up to around 30 percent in 2021. The more we recycle, the less garbage winds up in our landfills and incineration plants. By reusing aluminum, paper, glass, plastics, and other materials, we can save production and energy costs, and reduce the negative impacts that the extraction and processing of virgin materials has on the environment.

Another thought about why to recycle: look to the future! What will the landfill situation look like when our kids are grown, or our grandchildren? No one knows for sure, but the current fill rate of all landfills is growing by the day. If we reduce the amount going into landfills now, our kids will not run the risk of full landfills and the need to ship garbage offshore, as many countries in Asia are currently doing.

If future costs are on your mind, consider the garbage haulers in every community are charging more and more for trash pickup. Fuel and labor are certainly a factor, but landfill costs are a very large part of your monthly bill. Reducing trash, by increasing recycling can save you REAL MONEY down the line!

Seattle economist Jeffrey Morris estimated that manufacturing one ton of office and computer paper with recycled paper stock can save nearly 3,000 kilowatt hours over the same ton of paper made with virgin wood products. A ton of soda cans made with recycled aluminum saves an amazing 21,000 kilowatt hours by reducing the virgin bauxite ore that would have to be mined, shipped, and refined. That's a 95 percent energy savings. A ton of PET plastic containers made with recycled plastic conserves about 7,200 kilowatt hours.

Just something to think about next time you toss that milk jug in the garbage instead of the recycling bin!

Mark Preetorius
Chief Executive Officer
Keep Cherokee Beautiful

# Top Recycling Statistics of 2022

The widely circulated statistic that 9 percent of plastic waste is recycled in the U.S. has now been deemed an overestimate. Here are some stats that show how recycling has changed in recent years:

1. Of the 40 million tons of plastic waste generated in the U.S. in 2021, only 5 to 6 percent — or about 2 million tons — was recycled.

2. Between 2019 and 2020, there was a 5.7 percent overall decrease in plastics recovered for recycling in the U.S. That is the equivalent of 290 million pounds.

3. Approximately 36 percent of all plastic produced is used to create packaging, 85 percent of which ends up in landfills.

4. About 98 percent of single-use plastic products are made from fossil fuels.

5. Globally, we produce about 400 million tons of plastic waste yearly.

6. Until recently, the U.S. outsourced a significant portion of its plastic, but import bans in countries like China and Turkey have fueled a decline in recycling.

### Plastic recycling facts and statistics

Plastic recycling has long posed challenges. Unlike glass and metal, plastic cannot be repeatedly recycled without quickly degrading in quality.

7. The total bottle recycling rate for 2020 was 27.2 percent, down from 28.7 percent in 2019.

8. Every hour, 2.5 million plastic bottles are thrown away in the U.S.

9. Between 75 and 199 million tons of plastic are currently in our oceans.

10. Plastic bottles take upwards of 450 years to degrade.

### Paper recycling facts and statistics

Paper is one of the most-often recycled materials, accounting for half of the materials collected for recycling by weight.

11. More than 50 million tons of paper were recovered for recycling in 2021, achieving a 68 percent recycling rate.

12. In 2021, 91.4 percent of corrugated cardboard was recycled.

13. Almost half of the paper recycled in 2021 was used to make cardboard boxes.

### Aluminum recycling facts and statistics

Due to high recycling rates, aluminum only accounts for 1 percent of the waste stream in the U.S. Aluminum, like glass, can be endlessly recycled with far less energy needed versus creating a product out of raw materials.

14. Consumption of aluminum in the U.S. was 4.3 million metric tons in 2021, up from 3.98 million metric tons in 2020.

15. Global demand for aluminum is expected to grow by more than 80 percent by 2050.

16. Although aluminum can be infinitely recycled, 7 million tons of aluminum are still not recycled each year.

### Glass recycling facts and statistics

Glass is made of common materials like sand and limestone, and it is one of the cheapest and most efficient materials to recycle.

17. About 110 million glass bottles are thrown away every day in the U.S., of which only one-third get recycled.

18. It is cheaper to make glass products out of recycled materials than virgin raw materials.

19. Unlike plastic, glass bottles and jars are fully recyclable and can be recycled endlessly without degradation of quality or purity.

### E-Waste recycling facts and statistics

Electronic waste, or e-waste, is the fastest-growing source of waste globally. Most e-waste does not get disposed of properly and releases harmful pollutants into the environment.

20. Globally, e-waste volumes grew to 53.6 million metric tons in 2019, an increase of 21 percent since 2014.

21. Only 17.4 percent of e-waste discarded in 2019 was recycled.

22. Of the 6.92 million tons of e-waste discarded by Americans in 2019, only 15 percent was recycled.

### Food waste recycling facts and statistics

Chronic food misallocation and inefficiency have caused food waste to be the largest category of waste.

**23.** Globally, 40 percent of the food produced is wasted. The food lost on farms alone could feed every undernourished person in the world four times over.

**24.** Food waste generates around 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

**25.** Each year, home composting could divert 330 pounds of food waste per household from landfills.

## Cleanup Recap


We would like to thank the volunteers from Atlanta Gas Light for their roadside cleanup of Willbanks Road on April 1.

Volunteers were able to collect eight bags of garbage weighing in at 100 pounds!

## Upcoming Events

**August 13** - Sharp Mountain community roadside cleanup event. Check the KCB Facebook page for future details.

## Why Should We Recycle?

- Helps in keeping the environment clean
- Reduces the amount of waste produced
- Helps in the conservation of many non-renewable resources
- Saves energy and thus helps in avoiding energy crisis
- Prevents landfills and incinerators from getting extremely overloaded
- Saves and protects the economy of a household
- Helps in creating new job opportunities
- Restrains the hunt for raw materials

## A Few Extra Recycling Rules

Whether you're recycling to save the ocean, recycling to reduce your carbon footprint, or just generally, recycling to help the environment, here's what to do.

- Clean your materials. One contaminated item can contaminate

a whole batch, forcing the facility to throw the batch into a landfill.

- Make your process easy. For example, placing an extra recycling bin in your bathroom will remind you not to throw toiletries like shampoo containers, toilet rolls, and pill bottles into the trash to go into the landfill.

- Forego buying what can't be recycled. Plastic straws and styrofoam are all too available, and all too harmful to our environment because they can't be recycled. Invest in metal reusable straws and reusable food containers instead.

Keep recycling!

Without recycling, we wouldn't be able to conserve our natural resources. This is why recycling should be mandatory. We need to actively ensure a sustainable future on this earth, and today is the day we stop our accumulating landfills. So to answer the question, "Is recycling a waste of time?" A resounding no. We have to start recycling to save the planet. That's what's at stake.