

THE RECYCLE WRAP



Monterey Regional Waste Management District
Student Eco-Newsletter • Spring 2015
"It's a Small Planet — Recycle"



Students recycle and raise awareness and money

Last year, fifth grader Matthew Edwards, from Monterey's La Mesa Elementary School, led the effort at his school to collect as many plastic water bottles and soda cans as possible in one month's time. The fifth grade class set up a competition between all the classrooms. MRWMD provided enough recycling containers so that each classroom could have one to use during the collection. After 30 days, students had collected 75 pounds of aluminum soda cans and 201 pounds of plastic water bottles. They brought a total of about 6,760 containers to the MRWMD Buy Back Center and received \$337.97 in California Redemption Value (CRV). This was more than enough to send a student to science camp, which had been their goal. They hope to repeat their success this year.

Castroville Elementary students are also recycling with a cause. Students from Mr. Alfaro's sixth grade class are part of the P.R.E.P. Club, which stands for "Plastic Recycling Exchange Program." Their goal is to buy a filtered water bottle filling station (known as a "hydration station") for their school and encourage students to reduce their use of single-use plastic water bottles. To take part, students turn in their empty plastic water or beverage bottles at snack and lunch time in exchange for a ticket. The P.R.E.P. Club recycles the bottles at the Buy Back Center. The tickets are entered into a drawing. Regular drawings are held with the winners receiving a cool, reusable sports bottle.



At Castroville Elementary, students trade single-use plastic bottles for a chance to win a refillable bottle.

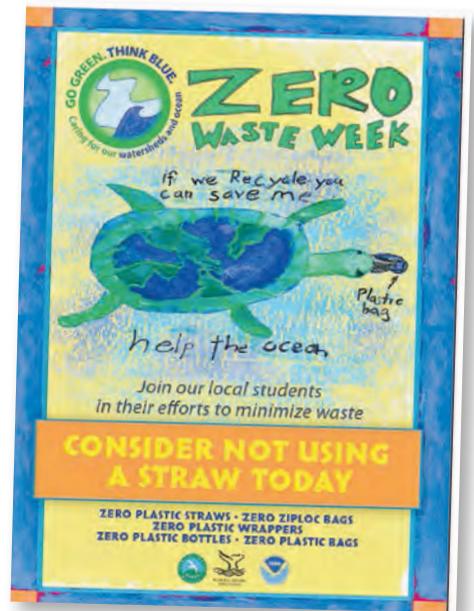
Zero is the goal

Between March 16 and April 24, you can join students from Monterey Peninsula, and even students as far away as Florida in "Students for Zero Waste Week" (ZWW). Schools choose the week, and students conduct a simple waste audit (sorting and tallying trash) and then decide on fun and informative activities to encourage everyone to use less and recycle more.

Some of last year's activities included:

- Students held a "paperless" day.
- Students asked for plastic straw and utensil dispensers to replace "spork packages" and got them!
- Students decorated reusable tote bags to be given to shoppers in exchange for a plastic one.
- Students measured the energy they used in the classroom and had a "no electricity" day.
- Students provided their favorite restaurants with table tents and posters encouraging others to say "no thank you" to single-use plastic, like straws and carryout bags.

Coordinated by the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and supported by the Monterey Regional Waste Management District, ZWW is free. Join other local students in their efforts to reduce waste in the community and help keep our oceans clean. Your teacher can register at www.surveymonkey.com/s/zww2015.



Matthew Edwards led recycling drive at La Mesa last year.

Healthy choices for students and the planet

Located right on the coast, students at Big Sur's Captain Cooper Elementary School have always had a close connection to the ocean and the environment. Because they wanted to protect the beautiful place where they live and all the living things there, from redwood trees to otters, they were inspired to find ways to make less trash.

Teachers, who care about the health of their students and the planet, decided to first look closely at school lunches and snacks. They hoped to find a way to serve healthy food and at the same time reduce waste.

Students got involved by helping with a "waste audit." In a waste audit, trash is sorted to learn how much and what types of trash are being thrown away each day. During the waste audit, they found lots of single-use items like paper trays, plastic wrappers, straws, and bottles.

The waste audit resulted in some changes. School district staff helped the school switch from "throwaway" containers to reusable dishes and silverware. The school added helpful signs with pictures to the recycle and trash containers. Students raised money so that everyone got their own refillable water bottle. With these changes, they reduced their garbage by a HUGE 75%! Captain Cooper Elementary School is now an Ocean Guardian School, recognized by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which helps promote ocean conservation. Learn more at www.sanctuaries.noaa.gov/education/ocean_guardian.



Big Sur students find ways to reduce plastic trash.



It Is a Small Planet,
Recycle!

Students, encourage your parents to attend a Free MRWMD Compost Workshop

They will learn how to make compost from your garden and food waste at home. Compost will help make healthy soil and plants, save water, and prevent weeds.



Student turns compost in the Small Planet Garden during MRWMD Tour.

Seed Balls

This recipe will make enough Seed Balls, sometimes called Seed Bombs, for your class. Mix: 4 cups compost, 16 cups clay soil, and 1 cup wildflower or vegetable seeds. Add water. Roll into balls and let them air dry.

These can be thrown into a place where wildflowers will grow or planted in a garden. When it rains, the ball will germinate.

For more information, visit the "Small Planet Education Program Page" at www.mrwmd.org.

Worms turn peels and cores into compost

Students at Seaside's Ord Terrace Elementary School are turning their fruit scraps into "food" for the soil. With the help of the cafeteria staff and their teachers, the student compost team collects food scraps, like apple cores, banana peels, and grape stems, from their snack time. Instead of "trashing" them, they compost them in their vermicompost bins. ("Vermi" means "worm" in Latin.)

The compost bins contain many earth worms (about 1,000). The worms, along with other "decomposers" like sow bugs, bacteria, and fungi, break down the food scraps and turn them into castings (or worm "manure").

Here's what some of the student team members had to say about the project:

"We put it [the waste] in the boxes for the worms," said Rosario Miguel. "The worms wiggle around and aerate the soil. What a great way to reuse our garbage."

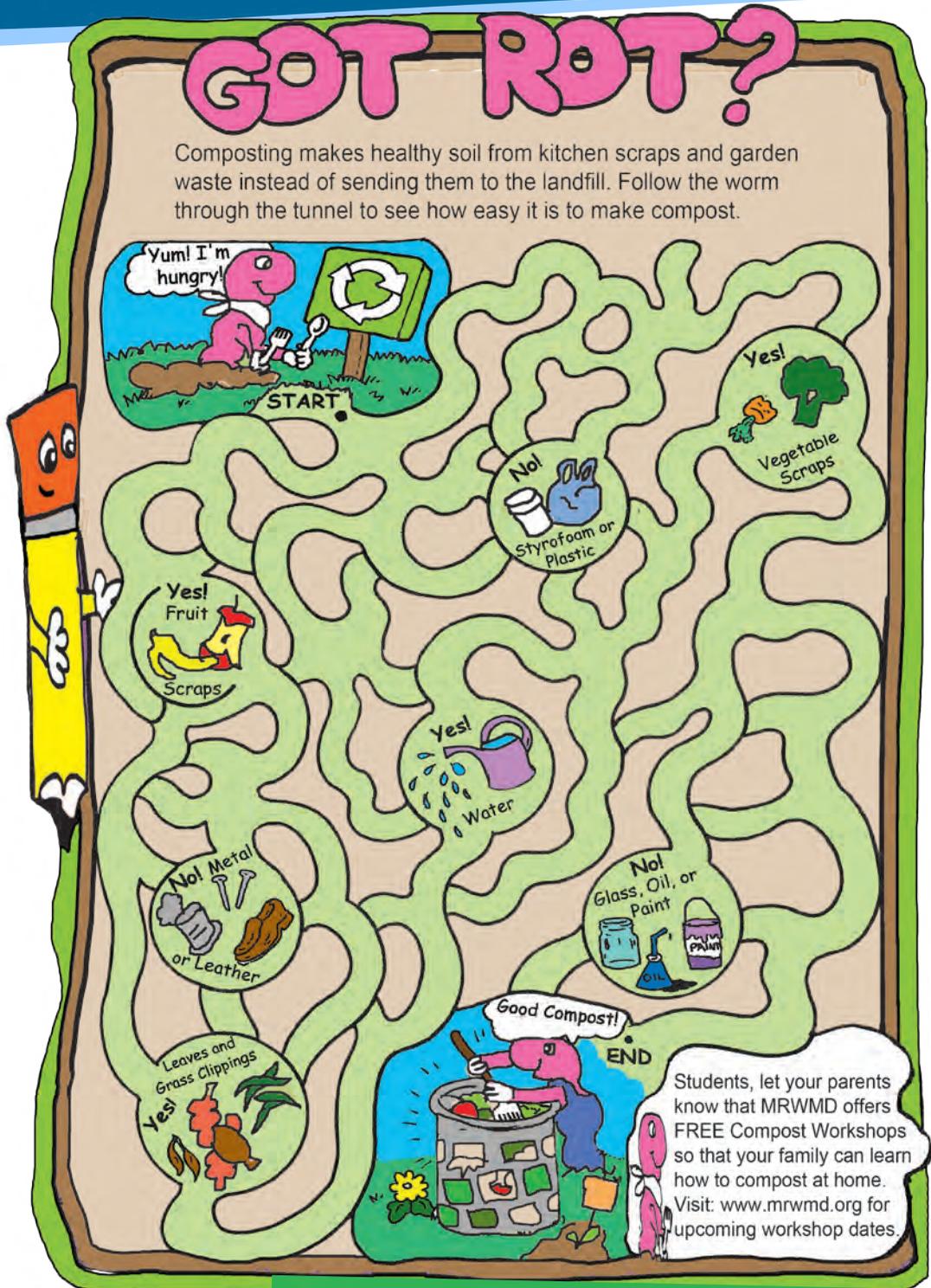
If not for composting, "all the food [scraps] would just be thrown away," said Daisy Valdez-Martinez.

When asked, "Why compost?" Cristopher Garcia replied, "Compost helps the soil and adds nutrients to help plants grow."

With the soil produced in the compost bins, students have been able to grow and harvest vegetables and other plants in their school garden.



Students harvest worm castings for the garden.



Composting makes healthy soil from kitchen scraps and garden waste instead of sending them to the landfill. Follow the worm through the tunnel to see how easy it is to make compost.

Students, let your parents know that MRWMD offers FREE Compost Workshops so that your family can learn how to compost at home. Visit: www.mrwmd.org for upcoming workshop dates.



GOT ROT?

Compost forms naturally as plants decompose. Critters like worms and bugs eat and digest these materials. With the help of bacteria and fungi, materials break down into smaller particles that plants can use.

Let's compost

All we need for compost is organic material, air, water and time. Ingredients should be a balance of "brown" and "green" garden and kitchen waste layered in a pile no smaller than 3'x3'x3'. Keep it moist and soon you will have natural fertilizers: minerals and nutrients that nourish the soil and grow healthy plants.

Nature's way of recycling

When we compost we do two great things. We keep waste material out of the landfill and we create fertilizer for our gardens.

Junk 2 Funk

Turning “trash” into fashion has become an annual tradition at Stevenson School in Carmel. Art teacher Sally Russell inspires students to look at boxes, bottle caps, and plastic bags in a whole new way.

Teams of two and three students take these types of disposable items and turn them into high fashion dresses, suits of armor, super hero costumes, and more. Then, students model them for hundreds of people during their high-energy Junk 2 Funk Fashion Show each year. They have so much fun! You might want to try turning a “throw-away” into something original to wear, too.



Make a T-Bag for the planet!

Turn a T-Shirt you don't use anymore into a free, reusable bag—cool for school, sports, or shopping. Be sure to get the OK from an adult before you cut up an old shirt.

To begin, cut off the sleeves and trim around the neck. Along the bottom, cut fringe (1 inch wide and 3 inches long). Turn the shirt inside out. Knot the fringe across the bottom. Turn the shirt right side out, and decorate your bag if you'd like.

For additional instructions, see: www.instructables.com/id/FASTEST-RECYCLED-T-SHIRT-TOTE-BAG/?ALLSTEPS



Photo courtesy of Sew Margaret Sew, Instructables

Visit the MRWMD Reuse Store and Recycling Facilities

Last Chance Mercantile:

Tuesday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Bottle and Can (CRV) Buy Back Center:

Tuesday–Friday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Household Hazardous Waste Collection:

Tuesday–Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Materials Recovery Facility:

Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–4 p.m.; Saturday, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.



Practice reuse and visit MRWMD's Last Chance Mercantile. You might find a \$10 bike, surf board, 50¢ book, clothes, and more.

RETHINK

Circle the type of shopping bag that you can use over and over again!



Paper bag



Plastic bag



Canvas bag



Students, does your classroom or school need recycling bins? Contact kherring@mrwmd.org to learn how to get free ones for your school.





It Is a Small Planet,
Recycle!

Be part of the solution to pollution



Student collects data during a cleanup event.

More than 80% of garbage that ends up on our beaches and in the ocean comes from litter in neighborhoods, parks, school grounds, and communities. You and other students can be the solution to this type of pollution. You can stop trash in its tracks before it makes its way into the storm drains, creeks, and rivers that flow to our beaches and into the ocean.

Help reduce litter and volunteer with your friends and family for a community or beach cleanup. To find cleanup dates and locations, visit:

- Marine Life Studies Take it to the Streets™ program: www.bit.ly/MLS_TTS
- Save Our Shores: www.saveourshores.org/volunteer
- Surf Riders Foundation: www.surfridermonterey.weebly.com/beach-clean-ups.html

The amazing lives of sea turtles

Did you know that California adopted the Pacific Leatherback Sea Turtle as the state marine reptile in 2012? Sea turtles are amazing creatures. They have been on earth for over 100 million years (they outlived the dinosaurs) and now face the threat of extinction. In the last 25 years, their numbers have declined by about 90%. Every year, hundreds of these Leatherbacks nest in other parts of the world and then swim over 6,000 miles to return to the California coast to eat one of their favorite foods—jelly fish.

Recently, marine biologist Tom Kieckhefer from Save the Whales, along with educators from MRWMD and Waste Management, Inc., were invited to Castroville Elementary School to teach students about sea turtle ecology and human activities that affect their survival. These harmful activities include oil pollution, plastics in the water, balloons, and marine debris. A special appearance by Ruby the Sea Turtle, a recycle challenge for the teachers, prizes, and more made for a fun assembly. Students learned how simple things, like using a reusable shopping bag and recycling more, can improve the chances of survival for these ancient animals.

To learn more about reducing, reusing, and recycling to help sea turtles live a longer, healthier life. Your teacher can request a classroom presentation or school assembly by contacting maris@savethewhales or kherring@mrwmd.org.



A student pledged, "I promise I will keep the streets clean, recycle and reuse. That's how I will protect our oceans."



Student looks through a real sea turtle skull.

What can you do for the planet?

- Take part in the California K-12 Recycling Challenge Competition (March 1-31): www.greencaschools.org.
- Start a carton garden at home or school: www.carton2garden.com.
- Come to Marina Earth Day at Locke-Paddon Park on April 11.
- Tell your family and neighbors about the free household hazardous waste collection event at Monterey Peninsula College on June 27.
- Get out and enjoy and appreciate nature: www.mprpd.org.

MRWMD helps students make every day Earth Day!

- Did you know that MRWMD turns food scraps into electricity and compost?
- Did you know that MRWMD turns the "garbage gas" (methane) into electricity, too? Actually, it's enough to power more than 3,000 homes.
- Did you know that you can find bikes, toys, clothes, furniture, compost bins, and even free paint at the Last Chance Mercantile?
- Did you know that it is against California law to throw batteries, fluorescent bulbs, and electronics into the garbage, but that you can bring them to the Household Hazardous Waste Facility at MRWMD for free.
- Did you know that if you save your empty bottles and cans you can bring them to MRWMD and we will buy them back?

Students, to see and learn more about these award-winning programs and how to help make every day Earth Day, suggest a tour to your teacher. MRWMD tours are designed for students in third grade through college and are free to schools in the MRWMD service area. MRWMD can even help pay for the bus. Teachers can learn more at www.mrwmd.org or by calling 831-375-4454.

On Saturdays, bring your family to MRWMD to drop off your recyclables and your trash or, even more fun, to shop at the Last Chance Mercantile or maybe take a Compost Workshop. For more information, visit www.mrwmd.org and check out the "Small Planet School Education Program" page.



Monterey Regional Waste Management District

14201 Del Monte Blvd., Marina, CA 93933
831-384-5313 | www.mrwmd.org



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