

Water at Risk: Talking Trash

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CAPTION: Glass can be recycled almost forever. Don't let it end up in the trash!

Let's agree you're a pretty responsible person. You know that one person can't fix the world's problems, but still, you try to do the right thing.

When it comes to separating trash and recycling, though, it can be hard to know what the right thing IS. And in our watershed, where you live makes all the difference. If your township or borough does regular trash and recycling pickups,

you can stop reading right here. Just follow those rules about rinsing out containers, not breaking glass bottles, and sorting the plastic, and you're doing your part.

But for most of us who live among the creeks of the Brodhead watershed, we're on our own. Most approved waste haulers also take away your single-stream recycling that you put in its own special bin. So it can be infuriating when you see that your carefully collected "single-stream" recycling gets dumped right into the trash truck. AGAIN.

You have options. The best, most authoritative option is the Monroe County Municipal Waste Management Authority, aka The Waste Authority (<https://thewasteauthority.com/>). Call them at 570-643-6100 when you see recycling treated like trash. Enforcement is a big part of their work, and they take complaints from the public seriously.

Maybe you've heard that "single-stream" recycling isn't really the best option, anyway. "Single-stream" is convenient — but it's easy for materials to get contaminated. Paper, glass, and metal get mashed together, and it becomes impossible to reuse a lot of it.

If you really want to be sure your recycling gets the best chance of actually being recycled, here's how.

Get a recycling registration tag at <https://thewasteauthority.com/>. The Waste Authority mails it to you (to be sure you actually live here!). Then set aside glass, #1 and #2 plastic, metal, mixed paper including magazines, and corrugated cardboard, the five categories of recyclables that The Waste Authority accepts at their recycling facilities, listed on the website. When you're ready, take a trip to the recycling center (don't forget your recycling tag!).

Why does a water protection group like Brodhead Watershed Association care about recycling correctly? That's easy. Manufacturing brand new stuff — glass, plastic, paper and cardboard — uses and pollutes absolutely staggering amounts of water (and adds to air pollution, too) compared to recycling.

Glass, for instance, can be recycled basically forever. And compared to making new glass, using recycled glass reduces air pollution by 20 percent and cuts water pollution by 50 percent. Yet in America, we recycle only about 30 percent of the glass we use — compared to some European countries where the rate is 90 percent.

So, Responsible Person, why not make the switch to REAL recycling if you can? It's the sure way to never see your carefully-separated recyclables get dumped in the trash again.

For more about everything from how to dispose of difficult items to getting road-killed deer carcasses picked up, rely on the Monroe Municipal Waste Waste Management Authority <https://thewasteauthority.com/> 570-643-6100.

Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member! www.brodheadwatershed.org