

Let's Talk Trash - December 2021 – How do we Track our Waste?

How do regions in BC plan to reduce their waste? And, once they have plans in place, how do they ensure they are staying on track? These are important questions to keeping communities heading towards responsible and time-efficient waste management.

In BC, the Province has mandated that each regional district submit a ~~ten~~ year-~~ten~~-year Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Once approved, regions have a list of goals and a timeline to support its progress towards Zero Waste. Conducting a Waste Composition Study (WCS) is one of the practical tools to assess waste reduction efforts. Much like a financial audit, a WCS gets into the minutia and records what is actually happening, not what we might wish is. The methodology used for the qRD study was based on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME)'s *Recommended Waste Characterization Methodology for Direct Waste Analysis Studies in Canada* (1999) and the sorting categories were tailored to accommodate the data needs of the region.

WCSs are done in order to establish a baseline of what residents and businesses are sending to landfill. The information gathered helps to inform future programs, like community composting and policies, like potential bylaws banning single use items.

In the Spring of 2021, approximately half way through the region's SWMP, the Let's Talk Trash team (dressed in full hazmat gear) sorted through approximately 3500 kg of waste over a five day period. This job was done by hand as this is the only way to effectively separate materials from each other and get hard data. An impressive 84 sorting categories were used for analysis of the solid waste stream, including the less palatable ones like pet waste and food waste as well as unexpected categories like items that could have been donated rather than disposed.

Here were some of the composition results for the qRD's waste stream (including residential and commercial waste). The four largest categories included: 27% organics, 24% wood and wood products, 10% plastic, and 8% construction and demolition waste. Because the study tracked categories by weight, it became important to also count lighter-weight items like refundable beverage containers and household hazardous waste, like batteries. Though these accounted for a small percentage of the qRD's waste, they are a target for further reduction because of how damaging (to sea life, for instance) and toxic they can be.

This November, the Let's Talk Trash qRD team is conducting the second WCS of 2021 and a sample of Lasqueti's garbage from the November 18th collection will

be included. Waste Manager Mark Bottomley is going to Powell River to help with the audit but will not be involved in the sorting of Lasqueti's garbage.

In response to concerns about opening garbage bags, the public can be assured that nothing of a personal nature is reported and once a load of garbage has been sorted, it goes back into the waste stream for disposal. It is good to remember that our trash shouldn't contain sensitive documents or medication with labels. Papers should be shredded and medicine bottles should have names blacked out with a marker before recycling at depots (please remove all unused pills and deliver to a pharmacy rather than flushing into our oceans).

Interestingly, in order to reduce putting recyclables, compostables and other divertible materials from the trash, some municipalities are turning to the policy of using clear garbage bags for curb side service. This has the effect of making users take more responsibility for what they throw out and send to landfill. Remember, once recyclables, reusables and compostables are mixed with either each other or garbage, they become wasted resources. Since the closest receiving landfill is located in Washington State, this should be extra motivation to check what you are throwing away.

If you want to be more conscious of the waste that moves through your home, you could trace your waste with an informal 'audit'. One way to do this could be to make four categories for materials and keep them separate. Mark 4 totes: landfill, recyclable, compostable, and donations (for Free Store or other thrift stores). At the end of your chosen time period (a week is good), take note of what you've collected. Once you have a better awareness of what is moving through your home, it's easier to pinpoint effective lifestyle changes that could help your household reduce its waste.

If you have any questions about what you can recycle, go to RecycleBC.ca or ask Mark for a pamphlet that outlines the current guidelines. We are lucky in BC to have over twenty producer paid recycling programs including food packaging, car tires, batteries, electronics, appliances, engine oil and paint. Please educate yourself before sending a used product to landfill. Go to LetsTalkTrash.ca for more information.

Let's Talk Trash is the qathet Regional District's waste reduction program.

Trash Removal System: December 8th, the second Wednesday of the month, 10 am until the barge is full, at the False Bay barge ramp. Any changes due to weather will be posted on the email list, FB Lasqueti Hotwire, and the Lasqueti website. No construction materials, renovation or demolition waste, prohibited

waste, organics, recyclable material or stewardship materials. \$5 per bag, \$25 per average truckload. Mattresses and boxsprings \$15 each. Please call Mark if you have any questions about what constitutes acceptable garbage.

Recycling Depot: Fall/Winter Hours October 1st - March 31st

Mondays 10 am - 2 pm, Thursdays 1 - 5 pm

Closed on Statutory Holidays. All recycling is monitored. Please bring it CLEAN and DRY and SORTED.

Free Store: Fall/Winter Hours October 1st to March 31st

Thursday 1 - 5 pm with occasional Mondays

Please wear your mask indoors and respect social distancing. Drop donations during open hours. Useful items only i.e. clean, usable clothing and household items. NO food, garbage, recycling, TV's, soft foam, mattresses or hazardous materials ie: chemicals, fluorescent light tubes, prescription/non-prescription drugs, or pills in general.

Recycle BC Website: www.recyclebc.ca/what-can-i-recycle

Return-It Beverage Depot open 24/7

Front left of Free Store. Until Waste Manager Mark can move the build up of refundable glass, he is not accepting any glass bottles (beer, wine, hard liquor).

Please take them over yourself. Accepted refundable beverage containers: aluminum beer, cider, pop, cans, coconut water cans, boxed wine cartons (leave them intact), water jugs and tetra juice packs. No milk or mylk substitute containers or any kind of glass containers (eg: glass pickle jar, glass face cream jar) - please take these to the recycling depot.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions for me and the qRD Let's Talk Trash team please get in touch! jennyv@lasqueti.ca or 8601