



Public Works Department
(831) 420-5160

www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us/

Spring 2010



Recycling Theft – It's Costing You

The practice of stealing recyclables from City-owned blue recycling carts is called recycle theft, cart theft, or scavenging, but whatever you call it, it's illegal! Once the material is in the blue cart, it becomes the property of the City of Santa Cruz.

When residents roll their blue recycling carts to the curb, they relinquish the material to the City of Santa Cruz. City employees load the recycling into collection vehicles and drive the material to the recycling center, where crews sort the material: paper, plastic, cardboard, metal, and glass.

The sorted material is sold to brokers and ultimately becomes new products. For example, aluminum cans, foil, and pie tins are sold to an aluminum refining center as feedstock for new cans and products. The City of Santa Cruz counts on these sales to keep our programs going and to keep your rates as affordable as possible.



People are talking!

Public Works and Police Departments are receiving more and more calls about recycling theft. Neighborhood associations meet regularly with police and city staff to discuss local issues, and the theft of recycling hits the top of the list as a safety issue in our neighborhoods. If you are concerned about recycling thieves in your neighborhood, go to www.santacruzneighbors.org. Check out the Neighborhoods tab to see if your area is already organized.

Gateway Crime

Once thought to be isolated incidences, recycling theft has taken on a whole new look. According to Paul Soderstrom, Resource Recovery Supervisor of Collection, "There are over 100 different individuals regularly stealing recyclables from curbside carts."

In the past, thieves targeted carts on the curb, but now they are bolder. They

are not afraid to go into yards, side yards, or even garages to raid the blue carts. "There seem to be territories and a competition for who can get to the cart first, even if it means coming into our yard," said one concerned Westside resident. "We feel vulnerable, especially when we aren't at home," he went on to say.

Police call recycle theft a "gateway" crime because people who enter private property to steal recyclables begin to feel comfortable and believe it's OK to take something else. If residents

allow the theft of recyclables in their neighborhood, they shouldn't be surprised when other items are stolen, too.

Scavenging entails large numbers of strangers entering our neighborhoods with the criminal intent of taking recyclables. "The theft of recyclables isn't a harmless crime because it can lead to the deterioration of our neighborhoods, as well as other types of crime, such as trespassing and theft of larger or more valuable items, as well as breaking and entering the home," said Captain Steve Clark of the Santa Cruz Police. "Recyclables are often a funding source for drugs and alcohol. Now you have a culture of drug users funded by your recycling and going into the next neighborhood under the influence," he said.

Captain Clark went on to say, "Awareness is the vital first step toward getting a handle on this problem. The community needs standards by which they will not allow this type of activity to occur. When people are ambivalent or even give permission to take the material, it is giving tacit approval. Not calling us creates a fertile soil for crimes of opportunity."

Public Works personnel and the Police Department are working together to curb the theft of recyclables, but the public needs to be aware and involved. "Residents should place the anti-theft stickers on their carts because that helps us present a better case for prosecution," said Captain Clark.

It is often heard that scavenging is a problem of desperation only tied to

homeless people or transients and that people are "just earning a living." As the value of recycling increases, the theft of the material becomes more lucrative. According to Soderstrom, "Collection drivers once saw only

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Scavenging Facts

- It is illegal to take anything out of a City recycling or refuse container if that container is not assigned to you.
- The City does not charge residents or businesses for recycling as in some other cities—recycling is offered at no extra charge with refuse service.
- The City receives around \$1.4 million each year from the sale of recyclables. City recycling programs cost around \$3.9 million yearly for collection and processing. Your rates make up the rest.
- Traditionally "scavenging" means "to salvage from refuse or discarded materials." Recycling materials left at the curb are not discards.
- If you routinely have more recycling than your cart can hold, call 420-5220 for assistance. The City wants your recyclables!



Do the Math! Recycling staff weighed three large black plastic bags of recycling material: two filled with aluminum cans and one filled with plastic bottles. At current recycling rates, those three bags would yield \$65.70 at a recycling buy-back center! And it sure adds up. If the three bags are worth \$65.70, then an average bag with 2/3 aluminum and 1/3 plastic will yield around \$22. If just 40 people turned in two bags, that would be 80 bags redeemed citywide, or \$1,760 worth of recyclables in one day. At \$8,800 a week, that's a redemption payout of over \$450,000 a year!

So what's wrong with someone taking recyclables?

Plenty! Recyclables are a vital component of the City of Santa Cruz refuse and recycling operations. Thieves find recyclables tempting because they can turn them into easy cash. But every nickel a scavenger makes is a nickel less going into your refuse and recycling programs. If you're thinking a few bags won't make a difference, think again.

What the Law Says about Recycle Theft

6.12.035 Scavenging Prohibited

No person shall scavenge or otherwise salvage or remove any materials whatsoever from solid wastes or recyclables set out for collection in accordance with this chapter. Solid wastes and recyclables set out for collection are the property and responsibility of the City of Santa Cruz or its duly authorized agent. No person shall purchase recycling materials from any other person who has removed such materials from a designated recyclables container or receptacle, in violation of this section, where the prospective purchaser knows or reasonably should know that such materials were illegally obtained.

6.12.120 City of Santa Cruz Warning

The recyclable materials in this container are part of the City of Santa Cruz Curbside Recycling Program. Any person who removes recyclable materials from this container shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be subject to civil penalties of up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

Source: Santa Cruz Municipal Code

Earth Day: A History

You'll hear a lot about Earth Day over the next month because 2010 marks the 40th anniversary of the first Earth Day. On April 22, 1970, about 20 million Americans gathered in their neighborhoods, hometowns, state capitals, and Washington, D.C. Events ranged from litter cleanups and tree plantings to demonstrations and "teach-ins" to increase environmental awareness and knowledge.

That first Earth Day was the culmination of efforts begun a century earlier and inspired by naturalists, such as Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Early in the 20th century, the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service were founded, devoting themselves to protection of our public lands and natural heritage resources. In the 1920s, Marjory Stoneman Douglas began her work to save the Florida Everglades. The storms of the 1930s that caused the Dust Bowl in the Great Plains led to conservation efforts on farm and ranch lands. In 1948, the first piece of legislation that regulated water quality, the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, was passed by Congress. In 1953, Keep America Beautiful was founded, largely to address the eyesore and hazards of roadside litter. In 1962, Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, sounded the alarm about the effects of pesticides on wildlife, as well as humans.

In 1963, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson accompanied President John F. Kennedy on a speaking tour focused on environmental concerns. After President Kennedy's death, Nelson continued to work on the issue, but the next six years were consumed by other priorities.

Then, in 1969, three things occurred that got the nation's attention. In early January, Americans got their first glimpse of the earth as seen from space in photos



Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, exposed the risks associated with certain pesticides, some of which were banned less than a decade later.

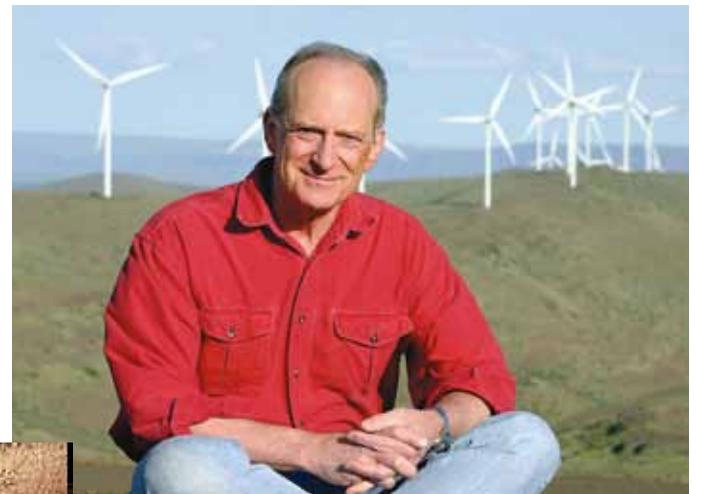
(Photo courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

taken by the Apollo space crew. In late January, an oil spill fouled the California coast near Santa Barbara. In June, a chemical fire on Cleveland's Cuyahoga River received national media coverage. In 1969, the "enough is enough" moment occurred and Americans mobilized.

Senator Nelson realized that the time was right to put the environment at the top of the national agenda. He enlisted the help of graduate student Denis Hayes and planning got under way. When Earth Day rolled around, even the organizers did not anticipate how large the crowds would be or how passionate the voices. Within a year, President Richard Nixon had established the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Congress had passed the Clean Air Act, and that was only the beginning.

The work begun by Earth Day continued in the years that followed. In 1990, on the 20th anniversary of Earth Day, more than 200 million people in over 140 countries took part. In recent years, those numbers have continued to grow, with more than a billion people now taking part in annual celebrations, activities, and initiatives.

The motto of Earth Day is "Make Every Day Earth Day." By continuing our efforts to improve the environment in big and small ways, we are making every day and every year one for the earth and all of its inhabitants.



Denis Hayes was a graduate student when he agreed to work with Senator Gaylord Nelson to organize the first Earth Day. (Photo Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films)



This hillside dump was photographed in 1972 as part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Documerica" project, which was intended to capture images of environmental problems. (Photo by Gene Daniels, courtesy of U.S. EPA)

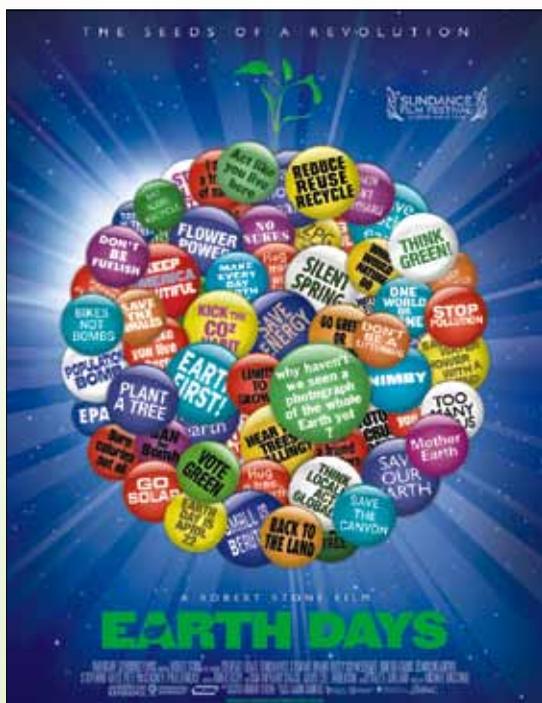
Read more about it!

Earth Day
www.earthday.net

Apollo 8's "Earthrise" Photo
www.nasa.gov/multimedia/imagegallery/image_feature_102.html

Cuyahoga River Fire
www.cleveland.com/science/index.ssf/2009/06/cuyahoga_river_fire_40_years_a.html

Santa Barbara Oil Spill
www.dailynexus.com/article.php?a=16459



Earth Days

Last year, a documentary, "Earth Days: The Seeds of a Revolution," opened at the Sundance Film Festival. The film traces the beginnings of the modern environmental movement through the first Earth Day and the actions that followed. The documentary will air on "American Experience" on PBS on April 19 and will be available on DVD after that.

To learn more, visit www.earthdaysmovie.com or www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/earthdays/.

FAST FACTS

Cook, clean, deodorize

What gives lift to your homemade cookies, creates a soothing paste for a sunburn, deodorizes your fridge, and cleans your bathroom? Baking soda, of course! Baking soda, or sodium bicarbonate, is a leavening agent used in baking, but it is also so much more.

Baking soda mixed with dish soap makes a versatile cleaning scrub. Mixed with white vinegar, baking soda can be used as an all-purpose cleaner. Baking soda can help deodorize trash cans, garbage disposals, laundry, gym bags, tennis shoes, cat litter boxes, hampers, and other smelly items. A paste made from baking soda and a small amount of water can soothe skin irritations caused by sunburn or insect bites.

For more baking soda solutions, go online and search for "baking soda solutions" or check out *Baking Soda Bonanza* by Peter A. Ciullo or *Green Up Your Cleanup* by Jill Potvin Schoff.



Green @ Home

Looking for ways to "green" your home? Whether you want to reduce your energy use, conserve water, choose environmentally friendly materials and products, reduce your waste, or protect your health, you'll find suggestions at www.epa.gov/greenhomes. Find specific ideas for each area of your home with the room by room feature.

Spring reading, naturally

As the temperatures warm, you may be looking forward to more time outdoors. Your plan may be to garden, bike or walk, or simply sit and enjoy the spring breezes and sunshine. Consider a trip to the library (or used bookstore), too. Nothing is finer than reading a good book outdoors on a warm spring day.

If you love nature, consider some classics. *Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* by Annie Dillard will have you ready to do some exploration of your own. Are you itching to travel? Pick up *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail* by Bill Bryson. As two middle-aged men set out to hike the Appalachian Trail, you'll find humor and awe. Maybe it is the desert landscape that fires your imagination. Look for *Desert Solitaire* by Edward Abbey or *The Land of Little Rain* by Mary Austin. More

of a beach person? Track down a copy of *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod* by Henry Beston. You might also look for works by John Muir, John McPhee, Gary Snyder, and Maxine Kumin, among others.

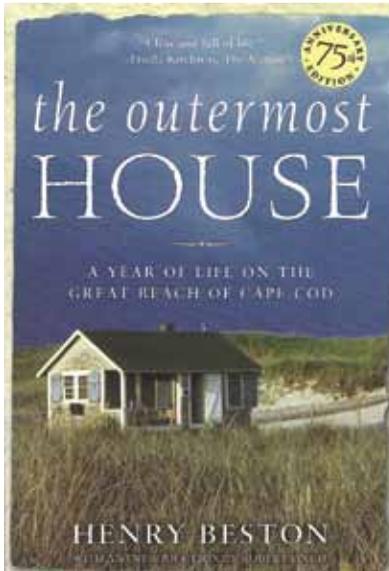
If you prefer your nature closer to the local coffee shop, look for *City Wilds: Essays and Stories About Urban Nature*, edited by Terrell F. Dixon. *City Wilds* celebrates the natural world that

is closest to home for many Americans.

Perhaps you are interested in how we form communities. A National Science Foundation study in 2007 found that as many as one quarter of Americans have no one to confide in or celebrate with. In *Population: 485 – Meeting Your Neighbors*

One Siren at a Time, Michael Perry writes of returning to his hometown and joining the volunteer fire department. One emergency call at a time, he connects with his neighbors and explores the place where he grew up with new eyes. In *Less Is More: Embracing Simplicity for a Healthy Planet, a Caring Economy, and Lasting Happiness*, edited by Cecile Andrews and Wanda Urbanska, the authors ostensibly address how to embrace a simpler lifestyle. However, their real concerns seem to be how we find and maintain more enriching relationships. The reader is challenged to ask the question, "What do I have to offer?"

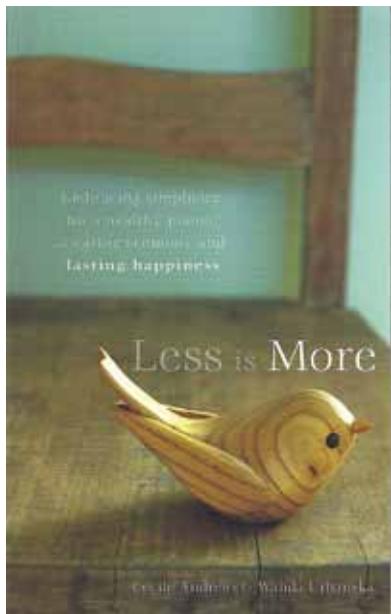
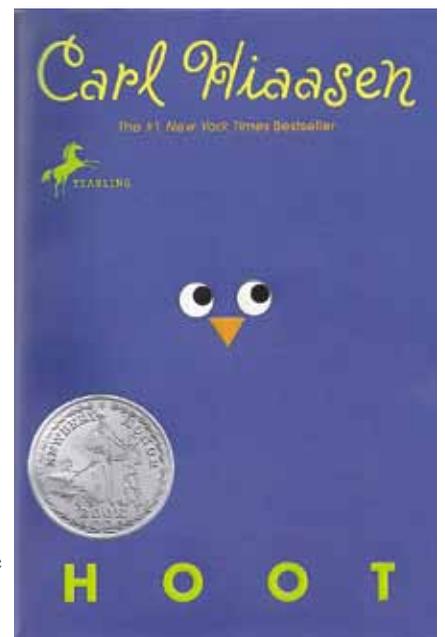
If you have children in your life, check out *Get Out! 150 Easy Ways for Kids & Grown-Ups to Get into Nature and Build a Greener Future* by Judy Molland. This book is full of ideas to get families and groups outside where they will learn about nature as they enjoy it.



Sharing books with young people builds relationships and improves their reading skills. For wonderful books about the natural world, look for Lynne Cherry's books, such as *The Armadillo from Amarillo* or *The Sea, the Storm, and the Mangrove Tangle*; *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky* by Chief Seattle, illustrated by Susan Jeffers; and *Just Us Two: Poems About Animal Dads* by Joyce Sidman. Encourage young gardeners with *The Empty Lot* by Dale H. Fife, *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart, *A Handful of Dirt* by Raymond Bial, and Lorraine Roulston's series on Pee Wee, the worm. For the slightly older crowd, suggest a simple chapter book, such as *Judy Moody Saves the World* by Megan McDonald.

Pre-teens can be a harder group to please. Get them excited about the environment with Carl Hiaasen's eco-thrillers: *Hoot*, *Flush*, and *Scat*. In these books, youth find—and find ways to solve—environmental problems created by adults.

Obviously, there are many more great books for children, teens, and adults. Take advantage of that reuser's paradise—the local library—and enjoy good reading with the good weather!



What a week!

In the week before Earth Day each year, students and teachers are invited to explore the natural world during National Environmental Education Week. Environmental education isn't just for the science classroom, but can include activities in social studies, language arts, math, art, music, and more. Environmental education gets students excited because they get involved in real-world problem solving.

There are many ways for students and teachers to take part in Environmental Education Week, beginning with incorporating environmental themes and topics into daily lessons. But the activities don't end there. Students can be encouraged to write conservation plans for home and school, audit energy and water use or trash disposal, set up a nature walk or scavenger hunt, take part in a litter cleanup, visit a local utility facility (power plant, water treatment plant, wastewater plant, recycling facility, etc.), start or expand a school recycling program, and much more. Get parent organizations and clubs into the act, as well!

Environmental Education Week 2010 is April 11-17. This year's focus will be on conserving water and energy to preserve our planet and save money. For more information, visit www.eeweek.org.



Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life... There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.

Rachel Carson, 1907–1964
from *The Sense of Wonder*
American biologist

One Change

If you were going to make one change this month, what would it be? We have a suggestion! Purchase recycled-content trash bags and trash can liners. When you are at the store to buy trash bags and can liners, read the labels and look for phrases like "made with recycled content" and "made with post-consumer recycled content."

Don't forget reuse. Plastic shopping bags can be used as liners for small wastebaskets.



Recycling Theft

Continued from page 1

people on bicycles with bags taking the recyclables. They still see those folks, but now there are also organized teams in trucks or vans taking the recyclables. They clean out whole areas, including apartment complexes. When City collection vehicles round the corner, they often find just litter left on the ground. Sometimes these organized groups load up the entire blue cart, take what they want, and discard the blue carts somewhere else. This costs the City time and money. In truth, all of these people are stealing and it is illegal. Valuable recycling material attracts opportunists from every level."



Where scavenging has occurred, City collection crews often round the corner to find litter left on the ground surrounding nearly empty carts.

Call 911!

To help the police do their job, call 911 right away. They need travel time to get there. Many people are reluctant to call 911, but the police consider theft a neighborhood security issue, and they

want to know. Police will need the address, a description of the people, and their direction of travel. If a vehicle is involved, note the make, model, color, and license number. Photos will help the police put together a better case. The police have to see the crime taking place; otherwise, a witness must be willing to sign a citation. Often, Public Works refuse and recycling staff sign citations. Sometimes a citizen will be required to go to court to testify.

Recycle theft affects our community

"It's depressing to have the job of driving a recycling truck down a neighborhood street only to find that the whole area has been raided," said one driver. Theft of recyclables affects the morale of City recycling employees and it compromises the safety of our neighborhoods. It takes a big toll on City revenues and, in turn, your pocketbook through higher refuse rates.

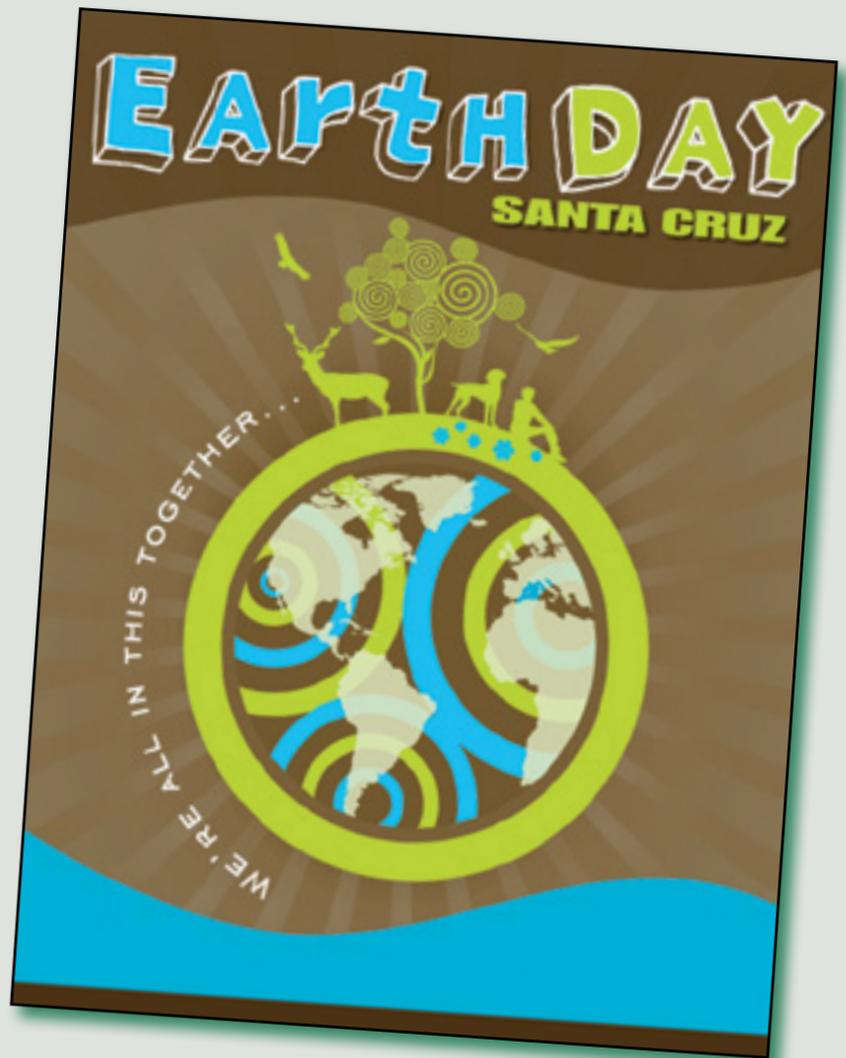
People usually feel good when they recycle. They know it helps our environment and community when they sort out their bottles and cans. But for our recycling program to be successful, the material needs to flow from the resident to the City—without thieves taking a cut. These thieves are taking something from all of us, but this is a problem we can solve together—so make the call!

Use your anti-theft stickers

In April, you will receive an anti-theft sticker to place on your recycling cart. The sticker will arrive in your municipal utilities bill. Please put it onto your blue cart.

Come join the fun on Earth Day! Join the Santa Cruz celebration of Earth Day 2010 on Saturday, April 17, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the San Lorenzo Park Benchlands behind the County building. The party will go on, rain or shine! This is a FREE, family-oriented event featuring activities for kids, live music, sales of green products, food booths, an organic beer garden, and educational information on how to live, work, and play sustainably. Ride your bike to this zero-waste, solar-powered community celebration!

Find more details at www.ecocruz.org.



Why Should Our Community Care About Recycle Theft?

- ❖ Residents may pay higher refuse rates to make up for revenues lost from recycle theft.
- ❖ Theft of recycling is a "gateway crime" leading to other criminal behavior, such as additional theft, trespassing, or breaking and entering.
- ❖ Money from recycling may be used to purchase drugs or alcohol.
- ❖ Many people do not feel safe with scavengers in their neighborhoods and near their parks and schools.
- ❖ Thieves may be prowling or casing neighborhoods as they steal recyclables.
- ❖ Recycle thieves may become abusive or violent if confronted, so call 911.
- ❖ There is the potential for personal or financial information to be obtained and used by a criminal.
- ❖ When scavenging goes unchecked, law enforcement is overburdened with this problem.
- ❖ Scavengers may leave the street, sidewalk, and your lawn a mess.
- ❖ Strangers become comfortable taking things from our neighborhoods.
- ❖ The theft of recyclables affects the morale of City personnel.

US Census 2010 It's in our hands!

The census is conducted every 10 years to count all people residing in the United States. Being counted is important because it affects how our state, city, schools, and other organizations receive future funding. That's something we must all take very seriously, especially in the current economic situation!

Be counted! The census is used to determine the number of each state's congressional representatives and electoral votes, as well as the allocation

of federal tax dollars that directly affect how more than \$200 billion per year in federal and state funding is allocated to local, state, and tribal governments.

It is estimated that every person counted in the census will add \$1,000 per year to federal and state revenues received locally. Don't forget to fill out your census form—every one counts!

Visit www.2010.census.gov to learn more.



IT'S IN OUR HANDS

We want your suggestions, questions and comments!

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