

# 2015 Earth Fair Trash Audit Report

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## General Summary

The Earth Fair sustainability subcommittee was established to learn how we can reduce our event's environmental footprint. As a part of this effort, we have been performing trash audits and related activities for the last two years to reduce the amount of waste we send to landfill from the event. In 2014 we kicked off our efforts with a trash audit that helped to determine the quantities, types and conditions of materials we could expect. Based on what we learned, in 2015 we added clearly marked and strategically positioned recycling bins, included a compostables stream, and involved more vendors and volunteers in the reduce-reuse-recycle and trash management processes. This helped to realize improvement over last year's trash audit results. We had less trash this year, with more people attending. In 2016 we'll apply some of what we learned in hopes of seeing further reductions in the amount of trash.

## Collection Results

### Trash

As expected, most trash bags contained food/beverage waste and food/beverage packaging and most contamination of materials was related to this. Friday's trash weighed 183lbs and Saturday's trash weighed 258lbs; this higher weight is proportional to Saturday's higher attendance. Planning for waste reduction efforts included using a large pump-style recyclable container of coffee cream vs. the individual plastic cream containers in the hospitality area and selling/promoting the use of reusable travel mugs.

#### Trash collected:

Single-serve mylar beverage bags & straws

Juice boxes and milk cartons

Funnel cake wrappers, fry boats, chip bags, granola bar and candy wrappers

Paper cups--non-compostable types, coated, or not labeled as compostable

Red plastic drinking cups

Yogurt cups

Plastic bags & film

Foam cups, plates, and carry out containers

### Recycling

The total weight diverted was 199 pounds between paper, cardboard, mixed recyclables and compostables. With better sorting and less contamination between trash and recycling bins we estimate that this number could have been at least 30% higher.

Recyclables collected: Metal cans, plastic bottles, cardboard and paper

### Compostable

Collecting compostables was new to the event this year. Approximately 12 compostable buckets were placed throughout next to each trash and recycling bin and were nearly perfectly sorted. But many compostable items were found in the trash. The materials were taken offsite for composting. We could have collected more compostable materials from the tree sale area had we provided more, larger bins and education earlier in the event. The total volume collected was about three cubic feet.

#### Compostables collected:

Fruit & veggie scraps

Compostable paper cups

Paper napkins & towels, and wet paper

## The Trash Audit Process

Last year's process taught many lessons about the quantity and position of bins needed, and the types and quantities of wastes to expect. This year vendors were engaged sooner in our education efforts,

volunteers were sent around to check trash cans and recover recyclables, compostable receptacles were set out, and the planning committee invested in 12 commercial recycling bins.

This year's results show that having more recycling bins with better signage helped in making the process easier for visitors, staff and volunteers. It was also apparent that each recycling station needs all four components: Recycling, Cardboard, Compostables, and Trash. Where all four receptacles were provided, the sorting was better. Black liners are used in the green trash bins and clear liners are used in the blue recycling bins. The clear liners work well for pre-screening items and sorting.

Several teams of volunteers and staff were integral to the success of this process.

- Goodells County Park staff...The staff was friendly, helpful and cooperative.
- MDEQ Program had a vendor booth staffed by our region's representative, Elizabeth Garver. She provided suggestions for how to track waste and what's important to measure. Elizabeth acted as our note-taker for the trash audit and a copy of this report will be sent to the MDEQ.
- Earth Fair volunteers, specifically the Port Huron Northern Baseball team and National Honors Society students were very enthused and energetic about helping with the Trash Audit.

## **Recommendations**

### #1 Develop an Earth Fair Volunteer Green Team

There were many volunteers to help, but more are needed to conduct a full scale trash audit. This team could be comprised of high school students with one or two experienced Earth Fair volunteers to supervise. Trash audit volunteers need training on how to recycle and compost items so they can show visitors. A brief orientation could be provided before the start of each shift.

Green Team volunteers should be positioned at some of the critical recycling stations, especially in the food service area, by helping visitors sort their materials into the appropriate bins. The Green Team can also assist with the Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon trash audits.

Continue to work with the Governor's Residential Recycling waste program... and how we can continue/expand relationship.

### #2 Position Staffed & Complete Recycling Stations

Recycling stations should be positioned in the critical areas with receptacles for all streams and should be staffed with knowledgeable Green Team volunteers. This will result in better sorting and higher diversion rates. Recycling station locations should be indicated in the Program Guide.

### #3: Feature the Trash Audit as Entertainment

The Trash Fairy character could be further developed. The character needs advance marketing and time on the stage. The program would discuss the three R's, the importance to measure waste and reduce over time, and showing examples from the actual waste stream.

### #4: Work in advance with the Tree Sale, Park Staff & Food Vendors

Non-food vendors, other than tree sale, did not generate much waste during setup or during the event. If planned in advance, the SCCD could sort out their wastes a bit more so that it could be recovered. Waiting until setup was too late to get participation from food vendors. We should contact them well before the event to discuss how to help reduce the wastes from food & food packaging. During setup, they were too busy and distracted to listen to recycling procedures. Obviously, during the event itself it was impossible to discuss anything. Any food vendors that will likely be asked back should be targeted for waste reduction assistance during the next few months. Perhaps if we share some of our findings with them, they'll have valuable feedback on how we can all do better to reduce waste.

Since there is so much staff working at different times, it is a good idea to share our process prior to Earth Fair so they know what to expect, how to set up, and how to handle waste. ... Provide a summary for next year about goals, where things are located, which liners for which bins, where to stage full liners, what happens when, etc.

**Trash audit data records for 2015**

Description of contents-Friday		Location**	Weight*	Description of contents-Saturday		Location**	Weight*
1	Plastic sheeting	tree sale	16	1	Mulch, twine, wet paper	tree sale	28
2	Food waste & packaging		11	2	Mulch, twine, wet paper	tree sale	30
3	Food waste & packaging		3	3	Food waste & packaging	fry wagon	30
4	Food waste & packaging, styrofoam		13	4	Food waste & packaging		6
5	Food waste & packaging, styrofoam, shoes		3	5	Food waste & packaging		6
6	Cardboard		11	6	Food waste & packaging		5
7	Food waste & packaging		6	7	Food waste & packaging		5
8	Food waste & packaging		6	8	Food waste & packaging		5
9	Food waste & packaging, styrofoam, fruit		15	9	Food waste & packaging		5
10	Food waste & packaging		10	10	Food waste & packaging		9
11	Food waste & packaging		1	11	Food waste & packaging		9
12	Food waste & packaging		12	12	Food waste & packaging		10
13	Food waste & packaging		7	13	Food waste & packaging		11
14	Food waste & packaging		2	14	Food waste & packaging		8
15	Food waste & packaging		9	15	Food waste & packaging		7
16	Food waste & packaging		12	16	Food waste & packaging		5
17	Food waste & packaging		3	17	Food waste & packaging		5
18	Food waste & packaging		1	18	Food waste & packaging		3
19	Food waste & packaging		7	19	Food waste & packaging		4
20	Food waste & packaging		1	20	Food waste & packaging		6
21	Food waste & packaging		1	21	Food waste & packaging		6
22	<del>Bathroom-do not audit</del>		0	22	Food waste & packaging		6
23	Food waste & packaging		6	23	Food waste & packaging		6
24	Food waste & packaging, styrofoam, cardboard		2	24	Food waste & packaging		8
25	Food waste & packaging		4	25	Food waste & packaging		7
26	Food waste & packaging		2	26	Food waste & packaging		8
27	Food waste & packaging		11	27	Food waste & packaging		7
28	Food waste & packaging		3	28	Food waste & packaging		3
29	Food waste & packaging		4	29	Food waste & packaging		4
30	<del>Bathroom-do not audit</del>		0	30	Food waste & packaging		6
31	<del>Bathroom-do not audit</del>		0				
32	Food waste & packaging		1				
33	Food waste & packaging		0				
<b>441 Pounds, grand total both days</b>		Sutotal Friday:	<b>183</b>	Subtotal Saturday:			<b>258</b>