



# White River Solid Waste Management District

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On the World Wide Web: [www.whiteriverrecycles.org](http://www.whiteriverrecycles.org) e-mail: [recycle@wrpdd.org](mailto:recycle@wrpdd.org)

Serving Cleburne, Fulton, Independence, Izard, Jackson, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White and Woodruff Counties

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News You Can Use

## The shopping season is upon us already?!?!?

Wow! One day after Halloween the stores are trimmed in red and green and holiday music is in the air! While many are already making their gift lists, people in the waste management and recycling business look at this season a little differently. Here are a couple of examples.

**First**, almost every gift list has electronics on it, and in most cases each electronic item replaces a broken or obsolete one. From big screen TVs to hand held games, the life expectancy of most of these is 3-5 years – and that doesn't include cell phones which have an even shorter life. To make matters even worse, with most of these items it is either impossible or financially impractical to repair them, so we go buy more. "Planned obsolescence" has been a good strategy for our capitalistic economy but is a bad concept if waste reduction is important to you – and it should be!

There is a good YouTube video called *"The Story of Stuff"* with Annie Leonard. It is a discussion provoking video that would be appropriate for middle school through high school. It has been out there a while and is worth taking a look at. It is a good reminder that we should buy things that are as durable as possible and can be repaired, keep them as long as we can, and pass them along or donate them if they are still usable – keeping them out of the landfill as long as possible.

The good news is that for electronics that are no longer usable, Arkansas has provided funding to make community drop-off electronics recycling accessible and affordable – in most cases at no cost to individuals. In our ten-county (see counties above) service area we have permanent collection centers in nine of our ten counties, and community drop-off programs throughout the year at several more locations. One or two charge a small handling fee but most do not charge any fee. Find one near you at our web site link: <http://www.whiteriverswmd.org/electronic-waste-disposal>. Please encourage those around you to recycle old TVs, computers, phones and other electronics and not send them to the landfill – lead, nickel, bromine and cadmium are four good reasons not to bury them in the ground for future generations to deal with.

**Second**, we create a lot more waste that cannot be recycled during the holiday season. Massive amounts of paper and plastic plates, cups, forks and spoons are disposed of. As for wrapping paper, gift boxes, ribbons and bows – recycling centers cannot use them because recycled material buyers will not take them. Reusing last year's gift bags and bows is a good way of reducing waste. Sticking to washable dishes and cutlery whenever possible is another positive choice.

Some of the best gifts do not always come from big retail stores or in throw-away packaging. I know you can think of a few!

### **Does your EAST lab need a community project?**

One of our area EAST programs is working with a local radio station to record some public service announcements about electronic waste recycling. The timing is perfect. It is a good fit for students who are the big users of electronics, and it is the right time of year to remind folks about recycling electronics since they are buying them by the ton for Christmas. Radio stations will normally work with school programs and will run public service announcements as listening time permits. Please share this thought with your EAST lab sponsor.

### **Food waste in a food insecure state.**

If you are a public school educator you do not need me to tell you food insecurity in our state is a big problem, particularly where children are concerned, and you see that problem every day. A three year (2012-2014) study by the USDA shows Arkansas being second only to Mississippi for the percentage of households with low food security at 19.9% and having the highest percentage of households with very low food security (8.1%) of all fifty states. Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx> .

As we enter the holiday season, let's remember to feed people, not landfills. Prevent waste by being smart about what you buy, how you prepare, and how you store food. Donate extra food to an area food bank, school or church food program, or a local shelter. And if somehow you still end up with scraps, compost them. Composting is a great earth science classroom project. Two good resources on these subjects are:

<http://www.whiteriverswmd.org/Composting> and <http://www2.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-wasted-food-basics>.

If you have a computer to read this electronic newsletter, chances are very good that you know where your next meals are coming from. I know how fortunate I am. Let's donate to food programs this holiday season instead of buying stuff we don't really need.

### **Leftover pumpkins or jack-o-lanterns?**

Compost them! They are perfect for a winter compost pile and preparation is easy: 1) remove lights, candles, etc.; 2) remove seeds (bake the seeds for snacks); 3) smash pumpkins into smaller parts (fun for kids!); and

4) mix into your compost pile. No compost pile? Dig a hole in the garden, cover pieces with soil and leave them for the winter. Less waste and soil improvement – a win-win for sure!

### **America Recycles Day is almost here!**

Even though November 15<sup>th</sup> is on Sunday this year, you can still plan a class activity or event to make your students aware of ARD and why recycling is important. With grades K-2, just helping them recognize things that are recyclable is a good way to recognize the day. In middle to upper elementary you can teach about the history of paper and why recycling paper is good for the environment. You can even make recycled paper in the classroom. We have classroom paper making kits ready for you to use! If you are interested, e-mail me at [recycle@wrpdd.org](mailto:recycle@wrpdd.org) or call 870-793-5233. I will be glad to visit your classroom and help your students make recycled paper, schedule allowing. This activity is very hands-on and is very suitable for grades 2-6. Younger students can also do this but will need more adult assistance.

### **Project Learning Tree Videos and Online Professional Development**

The Fall 2015 issue of Project Learning Tree's (PLT) *Branch* newsletter announced that they are now offering professional development and curriculum online, including their GreenSchools curriculum. Arkansas is one of the states that offer PLT classes customized for our state. Free on-site classes are available across the state throughout the year, but you now have the option to take the 6-hour professional development course "GreenSchools" online at your convenience (\$25 dollar fee applies to online course).

A new PLT tool for teachers is "how-to" videos that PLT has created covering trees and their ecosystems, GreenSchools, and how to use PLT to engage students in learning. Several videos are available on PLT's channel on YouTube. To learn more about Project Learning Tree, take a look at their excellent newsletter at <https://www.plt.org/newsletter-fall-2015>.

***Have a safe, happy, memory rich holiday season!***

*Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents.*

*It was loaned to you by your children.*

*Ancient Indian Proverb*

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Sources for the above information include: AmericaRecyclesDay.com, Project Learning Tree, USDA.gov, USEPA.gov and the White River Regional Solid Waste Management District.

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