

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 (America Recycles Day)
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Loveland, Boulder, Louisville Have Best CO Residential Recycling Rates

Statewide Recycling Rate 12%, Far Behind 34% National Average

DENVER, COLORADO—CoPIRG and Eco-Cycle marked America Recycles Day on Wednesday by releasing sobering numbers on Colorado’s statewide and local recycling rates. According to their new first-of-its-kind report, *The State of Recycling in Colorado*, the City of Loveland has the best residential recycling rate in the state at 61 percent followed by Boulder at 53 percent and Louisville at 48 percent.

Unfortunately, poor recycling rates in large Front Range cities including Denver (20 percent) and Arvada (13 percent), combined with the fact that curbside residential recycling is not available in 40 percent of Colorado’s counties, add up to a trashy statewide recycling rate of 12 percent, far below the national average of 34 percent.

“It’s America Recycles Day but unfortunately, Colorado is downright trashy,” said Danny Katz, Director of the advocacy group CoPIRG. “We might think of ourselves as a green state but on average, each Coloradan is putting seven pounds of trash a day in landfills. This is not surprising when you consider 25 Colorado counties don’t offer curbside recycling services and seven counties don’t even have drop-off centers. Our policies in Colorado are pushing us to do the wrong thing – throw everything in the trash can.”

That’s a problem. Colorado produces more than 35 million pounds of trash every day or enough trash to fill one garbage truck every minute of every day for a year. Much of that so-called “trash” is actually recyclable or compostable yet it is going straight to landfills. In fact, an estimated \$267 million worth of valuable materials, such as aluminum cans and cardboard, is buried in Colorado’s landfills annually.

Most Colorado municipalities do not consistently track data on recycling and waste, which is itself a concern. However, Eco-Cycle staff were able to track down information for 18 Front Range cities, the only ones with publicly available data, which was used to rank them based on their residential recycling rates in the chart included here.

Additional research by Eco-Cycle revealed that:

- Only four cities in Colorado track both residential and commercial recycling rates. Those communities and their combined residential and commercial recycling rates are Boulder (40 percent), Lyons (33 percent), Fort Collins (32 percent), and Aspen (17 percent).

FRONT RANGE CITY	RESIDENTIAL RECYCLING RATE
Loveland	61 %
Boulder	53 %
Louisville	48 %
Lafayette	38 %
Longmont	35 %
Golden	34 %
Lyons	33 %
Fort Collins	30 %
Greenwood Village	28 %
Superior	22 %
Denver	20 %
Sheridan	18 %
Thornton	18 %
Lone Tree	17 %
Commerce City	16 %
Arvada	13 %*
Northglenn	11 %
Westminster	11 %*

- Only one in four residents has convenient curbside recycling automatically included in their trash service. This includes residents of these 15 cities: Boulder, Denver, Lafayette, Louisville, Longmont, Golden, Montrose, Loveland, Sheridan, Thornton, Northglenn, Frederick, Dacono, Commerce City, and Superior.
- Within the last five years, 30 counties and six cities in rural and mountain areas have made one-time estimates of their recycling and waste diversion rates. Based on this data, Pitkin County, the City of Aspen, Larimer County, the City of Durango, and the Town of Vail top the list. (See full report for details at www.ecocycle.org/zerowastecolorado)

“The good news is that most people know that recycling and reducing waste benefits our environment, by reducing pollution and saving natural resources, and benefits our communities, by creating jobs,” said Kate Bailey, Eco-Cycle Policy and Research Director and lead report author.

“Until recently, Colorado was one of only 12 states that did not have statewide recycling goals,” Bailey said. “That changed in August when the state adopted recycling goals that aim to bring the state up to the national average of 34 percent by 2026,” she added. “But getting there means that municipalities must make it a lot easier for people to recycle, especially residents of Front Range cities where everyone should have a curbside recycling cart.”

“The single biggest thing we can do to improve stop filling our landfills with recyclable material is to ensure every Coloradan who lives in the densely populated Front Range has a recycling cart for the cans, bottles, and paper. This would immediately increase our recycling rates,” said Katz.

CALL TO ACTION

The two groups called on municipalities to improve recycling by:

- Tracking their recycling, composting, and trash rates consistently moving forward so each community can reduce waste and help the state meet its new recycling goals.
- Expanding curbside programs for recycling, including separate bins for compost, which makes up 80 percent of the average city’s waste stream.
- Working to ensure that people are not discouraged from doing the right thing by having to pay additional fees to recycle and compost or have carts picked up less often.
- Ensuring that apartments and businesses have the same easy access to recycling as single-family homes.

More info at www.ecocycle.org/zerowastecolorado.

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Eco-Cycle is one of the nation’s oldest and largest nonprofit recyclers. Eco-Cycle works to identify, explore, and demonstrate the emerging frontiers of sustainable resource management through the concepts and practices of Zero Waste. For more information: www.ecocycle.org.

CoPIRG – the Colorado Public Interest Research Group is a non-profit, non-partisan, public interest advocacy group with thousands of dues paying members across the state. For more information: www.copirg.org.