



# GLOSSARY

**aerobic** *adjective*: living, active, or occurring only in the presence of oxygen; example: aerobic respiration

**aluminum** *noun*: a light, silver-grey metal used to make things like drink cans and foil

**anaerobic** *adjective*: living, active, or occurring in the absence of free oxygen; example: anaerobic respiration

**bauxite ore** *noun*: a rock that is used to make aluminum

**bioplastics** *noun*: plastics made from plant material, often in the form of Polylactic Acid (PLA)

**bulk buying** *verb*: buying products in large quantities

**castings** *noun*: nutrient-rich material that looks like soil and is the end-product after earth worms have consumed food waste (see **worm composting**, **vermicompost**)

**closing the loop** *verb*: production process in which post-consumer waste is collected and remanufactured to make new products for purchase; refers to the “chasing arrows” recycling symbol, with the three arrows representing the three critical stages of successful recycling: collection, remanufacture, and purchase of the new items to be recycled again after use

**compost** *noun*: a soil amendment made from collected organic waste products that underwent decomposition; a soil amendment that adds nutrients to the soil

**composting** *verb*: the process of collecting and mixing organic waste such as lawn clippings, leaves, kitchen scraps, nonrecyclable paper, and manure to promote decomposition of the material into humus, a natural soil fertilizer

**conservation** *noun*: planned management of a natural resource to prevent wasteful use; example: the water-saving methods used in homes, farms, and businesses to ensure there is enough water to share with others and that a water supply is not depleted

**consumer** *noun*: a person who buys goods or services for their own needs

**contaminant** *noun*: a polluting substance that makes something impure; something that doesn't belong where it is

**cycle** *noun*: a continuous process

**decompose** *verb*: make or become rotten; decay or cause to decay

**disposable** *adjective*: made to be used once and then thrown away

**diversion** *noun*: act of keeping waste out of the landfill through reuse, recycling, and/or composting

**diversion rate** *noun*: a measure of the amount of waste being diverted from the landfill through reuse, recycling, and/or composting

**dump** *noun*: a location where trash is thrown into a pile without the monitoring and infrastructure needed to protect the surrounding soil, water, air, and/or habitat, and no measures are taken to collect and/or reduce the pollution generated on-site

**durable** *adjective*: able to be used many times before breaking or being discarded

**embodied energy** *noun*: the sum of all the energy required to make a product or provide a service; considered as if that energy was incorporated or 'embodied' in the product itself

**end market** *noun*: the purchaser of a recyclable material that then turns the material into a new, salable product; considered the end of the production process

**energy** *noun*: power made from using natural resources; examples: digesting food to move your body; using wind power to generate electricity

**environment** *noun*: the natural world; the world around us

**fibers** *noun*: long, thin structures; thick-walled cells that give strength and support to plant tissue; example: fibers of wood or cloth used in making paper

**finite** *adjective*: limited in number or amount

**groundwater** *noun*: water beneath the earth's surface that supplies wells and springs, and is often used for drinking water

**habitat** *noun*: the natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism

**hazardous waste** *noun*: waste material that may pose a threat to human health or the environment, the disposal and handling of which is regulated by federal law

**incineration** *verb*: process of burning waste which produces air emissions and leftover ash and other solids that must be buried in a landfill

**incinerator** *noun*: an apparatus for burning waste material at high temperatures until it is reduced to ash and non-burnable solids

**inorganic** *adjective*: anything that is not alive or recently alive; example: rocks and sand, items made from rocks or sand such as metal and glass

**landfill** *noun*: a large hole dug into the Earth for disposing of trash by burying and covering with soil, usually engineered to protect the groundwater and air from pollutants generated in the landfill

**leachate** *noun*: water that has passed through solid waste and may have harmful materials in it; contaminant of ground or surface water

**life-cycle analysis** *noun*: a method used to evaluate the environmental impact of a product using the sum of the collective impacts from extracting the raw materials, manufacturing the item, transporting the raw materials and finished product, and disposal of the item

**litter** *noun*: a waste object left where it does not belong, such as in a public space or body of water

**materials recovery facility (MRF)** *noun*: an industrial facility that sorts, separates, and prepares recyclable materials, which are then sold to individual end buyers or markets for use in manufacturing

**methane** *noun*: a colorless, odorless, flammable gas which is a main component of natural gas and byproduct of anaerobic decomposition

**mulch** *noun*: a protective layer used around plants to prevent evaporation

**natural resources** *noun*: materials such as minerals, air, water, and trees that occur in nature and can be used by humans for survival and/or to make the things they need and want

**NIMBY** *noun*: acronym for "Not In My Back Yard"; expression of opposition to any development near a neighborhood

**organic** *adjective*: anything that is alive or was recently alive; example: plants and animals, something made from plants or animals like paper and food

**organic waste** *noun*: discarded material that came from something that was once alive, such as yard trimmings or food scraps

**packaging** *noun*: materials used to wrap or protect goods

**pollution** *noun*: something added to the environment that is harmful or poisonous to living things

**post-consumer waste** *noun*: waste products that have been generated by consumers

**pre-consumer waste** *noun*: waste products from a manufacturer that may be put back as feedstock into the manufacturing process

**pre-cycle** *verb*: the act of reducing potential waste before you make it; shopping with the environment in mind; examples: buying in bulk, buying items in recyclable packaging, using durable and reusable items instead of disposable, buying fewer toxic products

**pulp** *noun*: a soft, wet mass of fibers derived from rags or wood, used in papermaking

**recyclable** *adjective*: an item that can be recycled

**recycle** *verb*: the act of remanufacturing an already-used material or item into a new and usable item

**recycled** *adjective*: an item that has been remanufactured with used materials as part or all of the feedstock

**recycling** *noun*: waste products or used objects that are collected to be remanufactured into new items rather than being sent to the landfill

**reduce** *verb*: make smaller or less in amount, degree, or size

**reuse** *verb*: to use again or more than once

**reusable** *noun*: product or object that is designed to be used more than once

**single-stream recycling (commingled recycling)** *noun*: a recycling system that allows users to place all acceptable materials in the same bin, where the materials will be later sorted and separated at a MRF for shipping to individual manufacturers

**solid waste** *noun*: materials that are no longer needed or wanted and are disposed of as trash, recyclables, or compostables

**source reduction** *verb*: the design, manufacture, and use of products to reduce their amount and toxicity; includes minimizing the amount of a product used, extending the useful life of a product, and reducing excessive product packaging

**source separation** *verb*: the separation of materials at the place where waste is created, such as at home or at school; includes separating recyclable from non-recyclable materials and the separation of organic materials out of the waste stream for composting

**sustainable** *adjective*: conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources; method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged

**toxic** *adjective*: containing poison which can cause death or other harm to living things

**trash** *noun*: material to be thrown away; garbage

**upcycle** *verb*: reuse discarded objects or materials in such a way as to create a product of higher quality or value than the original

**virgin materials** *noun*: any basic material for industrial processes that has not been previously used; refers to raw natural resources such as trees or metal ore

**waste** *noun*: leftover materials that we no longer need or want

**waste audit** *noun*: an inventory of the amount and types of solid waste generated at a specific location to determine how much is landfilled and how much is diverted from the landfill as compost or recycling; inventory of waste conducted for different parts of a facility, the facility overall, or for an entire institution

**waste stream** *noun*: a term describing the total flow of solid waste from homes, institutions, and/or businesses that must be recycled, composted, incinerated, or disposed of in a landfill

**worm composting (vermicomposting)** *noun*: the use of earthworms to convert organic waste into fertilizer

**yard waste** *noun*: leaves, grass clippings, and other organic materials collected from yards and landscaping

**zero waste** *noun*: a set of principles that focuses on changing the economy from linear (where extracted natural resources are used once and thrown away) to circular (where extracted resources are reused and recycled) through policy, education, and infrastructure adjustments, changing how materials, water, and energy are used when products are made, and by diverting waste from landfills and incinerators through reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting

