

# Diversion-Conversion

by Janice Fletcher, Sr. Management Analyst for Operations



*Here's what we need: a conversion to a diversion approach to our personal waste handling. That is, we need to convert our ways so as to increase the amount of waste that we divert from the wastestream to the landfills, since the state tells us that we must divert 50% "or else"\*. If we convert our approach, we'll divert our waste, to convert it into products.*

*More specifically, we need to convert our approach to waste to fit our times, not times past -*

DID YOU EVER WATCH THE TV SERIES, LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE? Even though we don't desire to go back to those days, we can learn something about our ways by looking at theirs. They lived off of their land, so trips to the Olesons' Mercantile just yielded grain, which was scooped up from large wooden dispensers, weighed, and placed in Caroline's burlap sack that she brought with her. She didn't come home with cartons of eggs and milk, because their animals produced that. They didn't purchase boxes of cereal, TV dinners, potato spuds, cans of soda, bottles of their favorite beverage or lunch juice boxes for Laura, Mary or Albert. In fact, remember the scenes where Laura and friends went to school? They had their lunches in tin pots, which they reused (except for Nellie Oleson perhaps! Harriet probably provided a gold plated one each day!).

In their day, their trash pretty much consisted of table scraps, and you know who ate those - Bandit! So basically, they didn't have a waste problem. And they certainly didn't have a junk mail and office paper waste problem. The Olesons did not send out sales papers with coupons for their store. They could burn or bury whatever trash there was, and if there were landfills, capacity certainly was not an issue!

I am not advocating adapting to the ways of Charles and Caroline Ingalls and their town of Walnut Grove. I am simply stating that their ways of dealing with trash was commensurate with the amount and types of trash they generated.

Our trash generation is much different now, so we must have a different approach to waste management. Just the fact that we have the term, "waste management" shows that we have a real different scenario. Fact is, most of our trash is really just waste, i.e., packaging and papers.

Most of us depend on our markets for 100% of our food, and thus it needs to be packaged somehow. Thus, a large portion of what we bring home (in our disposable bags) is packaging. Most of the grain products that are modern representations of what Caroline had in her large burlap sack come in lots of one pound cardboard boxes now. The food scraps that were fed to the dogs of Walnut Grove go in the trash now, because we buy dog food now - in cans.

The milk that came from the Ingalls' cow comes to us in plastic jugs or cardboard cartons. The eggs that Caroline sent Albert to get from their chickens come in Styrofoam and cardboard containers now. And we still haven't figured out what to do with all our Styrofoam waste (it virtually does not biodegrade!).

I think drinks at the Ingalls household consisted of well water mixed with squeezed lemons (and a little sugar from that big burlap sack that Caroline hauled from the Olesons' store)! Do we even own pitchers in which to make our own drinks? No one anticipated the disposal problem that would come with the convenience of bottled and canned beverages. The massive volumes of plastic bottles and aluminum cans can fill cities! Then add the other containers and packaging for food!

So the current trash problem isn't just a matter of the accumulation of trash over the years compounded with rising population. The problem is that we have packaging that was not a part of the wastestream when conventional trash collection resulted in burial in landfills. When we began to rely on conveniently packaged foods and beverages, we welcomed packaging into our

wastestream when we should have welcomed waste management - diversion.

It wasn't until the late 60's that managing our wastestream was thrust into our reality due to landfill capacity challenges. That was when we realized that we should have been looking at our waste far differently than we had - we realized that most of our trash is packaging waste and paper, and that we never even prepared for its proper disposal.

As it turns out, its proper disposal is diversion for recycling. So this brings me back to the point that we must have a diversion-conversion of thinking, so that we'll divert from our wastestream all the items that were never supposed to go to our landfills. Let's take our landfills back to simpler times, like those of the Ingalls of Walnut Grove. Let's divert all packaging and papers (see list in ad).

*\*State Assembly Bill 939 requires that each municipality reduce the amount of waste to the landfills by 50%, or else there is a hefty penalty of \$10,000 per day.*

*Helpful hint:*

*Keep a wastebasket in your kitchen for recyclables-diversion in addition to your regular trashcan. You'll be far more likely to divert all recyclables if a wastebasket for such is conveniently placed. You'll notice that your trashcan volume will reduce tremendously. That is the proportion by which our landfill volumes will reduce too, if we all experience a diversion-conversion.*

*Please join me getting helpful hints out to the public. Email me your hints on the diversion of recyclables, to be printed in the future: [jfletcher@ci.upland.ca.us](mailto:jfletcher@ci.upland.ca.us)*

## HELP THE CITY OF UPLAND REACH ITS DIVERSION GOAL

by placing the following items in your blue recycling barrel on trash day:



Soda Cans & Bottles • Food Jars & Bottles • Cardboard • Catalogs • Cereal Boxes • Computer Paper • Condiment Jars • Envelopes • Food Boxes • Fruit & Vegetable Cans • Jelly Jars • Juice Boxes, Bottles & Cans • Junk Mail • Metal Coat Hangers • Magazines • Milk Cartons • Newspaper • Plastic Laundry Jugs • Shampoo & Lotion Bottles • Telephone Books • Wrapping Paper and More

### NON-ACCEPTABLE RECYCLABLES

Used Diapers • Used Tissue Products • Soiled Pizza Boxes • Wax Paper • Used Paper Plates • Styrofoam Cups, Plates and Packaging • Styrofoam Egg Cartons • Clothing • Furniture, Carpet & other products containing fabric • Light Bulbs • Mirrors • Windows • Safety Glass • Drinking Glasses • Ceramic Dishes and Cups • Plastics #3 - #7 • Plastic Grocery Bags • Plastic Margarine Tubs • Garden Hoses • Plastic or Metal Lawn Furniture • Plastic Pools and Toys • Computer Monitors • Stereos and TVs • Bicycles • Auto Parts • Used Aluminum Foil

