



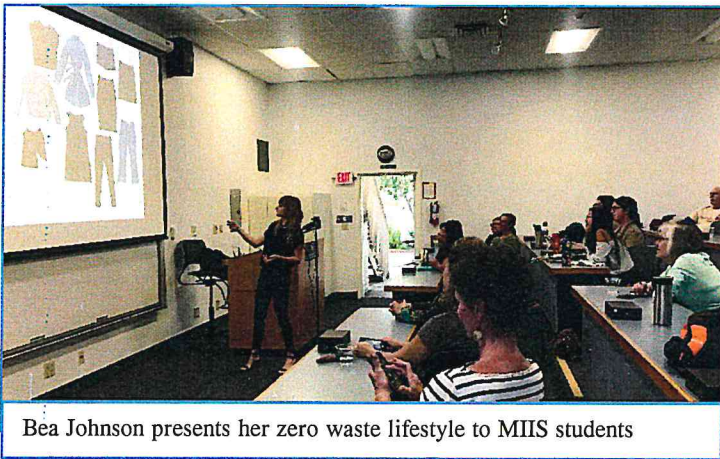
# Memorandum

## MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

Reviewed by:  Date: 5/17/19  
General Manager

DATE: May 17, 2019  
TO: General Manager  
FROM: Director of Communications and Sustainability  
SUBJECT: Public Education and Recycling Report

### Earth Day Zero Waste Event



Bea Johnson presents her zero waste lifestyle to MIIS students

In partnership with the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the District sponsored an evening with zero waste expert Bea Johnson on April 22. District staff also coordinated a presentation by Bea earlier in the day at MIIS. In her entertaining one-hour presentation, Bea described her families' journey to live a zero-waste lifestyle while producing a quart of trash per year. Her engaging story illuminated the reality that achieving a waste free lifestyle is not about recycling more, it's about consuming less and making purchasing decisions that minimize waste. One example she provided is patronizing stores that sell products in bulk and bringing your own container to purchase products ranging from shampoo to cereal.

She has truly elevated zero waste living to an art form. To learn more about her work and to locate stores that sell bulk products, visit her website at [www.zerowastehome.com](http://www.zerowastehome.com). Following Bea's presentation, five local "zero waste heroes" presented their own zero waste practices which was followed by a question and answer session, a reception and book signing. We heard from several people that attended the event that they came away inspired to put more zero waste practice into their own lives. Given the turnout and interest in zero waste, the District will be scheduling more educational events in the future. Local media covering this event included the Monterey County Weekly and KSBW television.

### MEarth Day at the Hilton Bialek Habitat

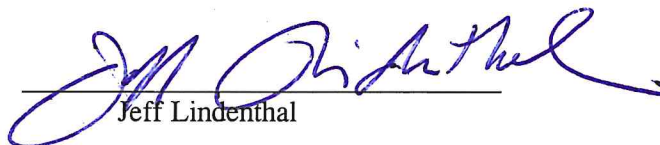
District staff sponsored and attended the MEarth Earth Day observance on April 27<sup>th</sup>. This annual event included a plant sale, informative exhibits, and food straight from their organic garden prepared by local chefs. The District booth featured a new What Goes Where game developed by Kimberle Herring and staff received many questions about recycling, sustainability, and heard from several people that attended the Bea Johnson Earth Day event and are motivated to put zero waste into practice.



Kimberle Herring at MEarth Earth Day

### The Origin of Recycling on the Monterey Peninsula

A chance encounter with a former Carmel-by-the-Sea councilmember and MRWMD Board member (1978-1982) has shed new light on how the first recycling program on the Peninsula was created. With the recent observance of Earth Day, which began in 1970 as a day of citizen action, it seems especially appropriate to recognize Mike Brown and his initiative and perseverance which led to the establishment of the first glass recycling drop-off program in Carmel in 1975. The Carmel program quickly expanded to Seaside, then Monterey and Pacific Grove, and finally Marina. Within months, the District, known at the time as the Monterey Peninsula Garbage and Refuse Disposal District, took over the hauling and program expansion to include newspaper and metal. It is also notable that citizen groups such as the "Coop Recycling Project" in Pacific Grove got involved to encourage participation. Contamination was one of the early problems that education and outreach was focused on. It has been said that history repeats itself. This is true of recycling and where we are at this moment in time. We have a number of citizen groups and students locally that have taken on the challenge of reducing plastic consumption while promoting zero waste lifestyles. We also continue to be challenged by contamination in the recycling stream. The attached history of the glass recycling project was compiled from Mike Brown's recollections and his archive of newspaper clippings and correspondence.



Jeff Lindenthal

## **The Origin of Recycling on the Monterey Peninsula**

MRWMD staff provided a recycling update to the Carmel-by-the-Sea city council in February of 2019. In the presentation, staff included a photo of the first curbside recycling truck which began collecting materials in Carmel in 1982. Following the meeting, MRWMD staff were greeted by a member of the audience who introduced himself as Mike Brown, former Carmel Councilman and former MRWMD Board Member. In the course of the conversation, Mr. Brown described how he helped establish the first glass recycling drop-off program in Carmel, a project that predated curbside recycling by 7 years, and that quickly spread to other cities on the Peninsula.

Staff subsequently met with Mr. Brown and he shared his file of Council correspondence and news clippings related to the glass recycling program. Reviewing these materials, Mr. Brown emerges as an early champion for waste reduction and recycling and his efforts quickly drew widespread support, along with some trepidation for the proposed Sunset Center location of the dumpster, for the drop-off collection of glass. He also mentioned that he brought the glass recycling proposal to the Council several times before it was approved by majority vote.

Reviewing the history of this program highlights several themes that are still relevant today.

Mr. Brown may have been inspired by the fact that Salinas opened its first recycling center which accepted glass and paper in July 1971 and collected 72 tons of glass in the first 6 months of operation. By 1975, the Salinas recycling center had collected 391 tons of glass. Mr. Brown was also fortunate to make the acquaintance of Paul Smucker, the Chairman/President of the J.M. Smucker Company with a jam making plant in Salinas. The Salinas Smucker facility routinely crushed glass from imperfect or damaged glass jars to be sent to a recycling facility. The company agreed to accept the glass collected in the proposed Carmel glass recycling program. With a market for the glass to be collected, Mr. Brown set out to gain community support and council approval.

An editorial in the Carmel Pine Cone dated February 13, 1975 stated: "Our hearty congratulations go to the City Council for establishing, even on a trial basis, a glass recycling program. Carmel has taken the lead in what could become a Peninsula-wide program. Glass recycling, for all those ecologically minded, is an important venture. Perhaps trash and rubble, energy and beauty can be conserved somewhat through the efforts of such a program."

An editorial titled "Recycling Rewards" from the Monterey Peninsula Herald on February 25, 1975 stated: "There may be valid differences of opinion over the location of Carmel's glass recycling center, but there can be no disagreement about the potential for using fewer product materials and recovering more of them through recycling. Glass is only the beginning. Industry in this county simply has not shown the same enthusiasm for reduction and recovery of wastes that it has for finding and developing them from the earth... The reusable or refillable package, the returnable beverage container, can accomplish wonders of conservation at both ends of the materials cycle... For example, consider the case of the brown paper grocery sack, made from one of our most costly, disappearing resources. Yet it normally has a useful life of only minutes between the checkout counter and the time it is discarded, empty but still crisp and new, into a waste container. This is wanton misuse of our resources."

The first load of Carmel glass was delivered in late March 1975 and quickly overwhelmed the capacity of the glass crusher at the Smucker plant. Rather than tell the community the plant could not accept their volume of glass, the plant manager agreed to install a larger crushing machine so the Carmel program could continue.

As the program grew and participation increased, so did operational challenges not unlike what we encounter today. A letter to the editor published in the Carmel Pine Cone August 28, 1975 stated: Recently I worked on the glass recycling which is held each Saturday at Smuckers in Salinas. The truck of glass from Carmel arrived at 12:45... However, I wish your residents could see the glass crushing machine which the men at Smuckers designed and had built. The machine got jammed several times because of items like rags, a large juice can, some small cans, and a pressurized hair spray can and cardboard drink cartons being in with the glass. The machine is designed to shatter glass only. If your residents would be more careful about putting only glass in the containers, I'm sure it would be greatly appreciated by all who work on the glass recycling."

Within a matter of months, probably due to rapid increases in glass recycling tonnage, the Monterey Peninsula Garbage and Refuse Disposal District, now the MRWMD, had assumed responsibility for managing the glass recycling bin and hauling it back to the District when full. The District's first general manager, Bill Parsons, was instrumental in supporting the expansion of local recycling efforts.

On September 26, 1975 the Monterey Peninsula Herald reported that the cities of Monterey and Pacific Grove established bins for glass recycling drop-off, joining the cities of Carmel and Seaside. The collected glass was "taken to the dump in Marina for crushing, storage and pickup by the Circo Glass Co. of Fresno." Marina would add their own glass recycling bin a short time later.

In December of 1975, due to concerns about noise and unsightliness of the glass dumpster at the Sunset Center, the location was moved to the Carmel Rancho Shopping Center behind Brinton's. In the 1976-77 Annual Report, the District stated that glass tonnage had increased to 486 tons from 300 tons the prior year and noted that "the glass recycling program continues to be plagued by contaminants such as mirrors, ceramics and rocks in the bins. A clean load of glass brings \$17 a ton, contamination lowers that price to \$10 per ton." the glass was now received by the Italian Swiss Colony bottle manufacturing plant in Madera to be recycled into new wine bottles.

As time went on a citizens group in Pacific Grove operating "The Co-op" stepped up education and outreach efforts and added additional materials to the collection program including aluminum cans. In 1982, Carmel again took a leadership role in recycling by hosting the first curbside collection program for recyclables. Materials were collected in a truck purchased with State grant funds and delivered to the District so they could be aggregated, baled and sold to a recycler. The rest, as the saying goes, is history.

Attachment

## Editorials

# Glass recycling

Our hearty congratulations go to the City Council for establishing, even on a trial basis, a glass recycling program. The program has been funded for a period of six months and is estimated to cost \$65 per month. A site for the dumpster has yet to be determined, but

the Sunset Center parking lot and Junipero Street near the police station have been mentioned.

Carmel has taken the lead in what could become a Peninsula-wide program. Glass recycling, for all those ecologically minded, is an important venture. Perhaps trash and rubble, energy and beauty can be conserved somewhat through the efforts of such a program.

One important decision remains, however. The site of the dumpster must be carefully determined. Potentially the dumpster is an eyesore and all care should be taken that the dumpster location is out of the mainstream of traffic. Provisions should be made for the care and upkeep as well, or we may face an area with glass and assorted litter strewn around the dumpster.

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## Monterey Peninsula Herald

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Monterey, California, Tuesday, February 25, 1975.

# Recycling Rewards

THERE MAY BE valid differences of opinion over the location of Carmel's glass recycling center, but there can be no disagreement about the potential for using fewer product materials and recovering more of them through recycling. Glass is only the beginning.

Industry in this country simply has not shown the same enthusiasm for reduction and recovery of wastes that it has for finding and developing them from the earth. Yet there are rich opportunities for saving through making materials go further in the first place and using them more than once.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the recycling of all mixed wastes in the nation's larger urban areas could generate the equivalent of 400,000 barrels of oil daily, or nearly one-third of the Alaskan pipeline's projected flow.

To get some idea of the potential in Carmel's glass recycling endeavor, consider that in 1971 packaging alone accounted for 75 per cent of all glass output. It also accounted for nearly 47 per cent of all paper production, 14 per cent of aluminum production, 8 per cent of all steel and 29 per cent of plastics.

Such a heavy dedication of our resources

to throwaway products, which in turn creates a heavy burden of wastes to be disposed of, is difficult to justify. In the national effort to conserve energy and reduce pollution, this profligacy should have highest priority.

The reusable or refillable package, the returnable beverage container, can accomplish wonders of conservation at both ends of the materials cycle, in both reduced usage and lower trash volumes. The corollary benefits from reduced pollution of both air and water in having fewer wastes to burn or dump are by no means incidental.

For example, consider the case of the brown paper grocery sack, made from one of our most costly, disappearing resources. Yet it normally has a useful service life of only minutes between the checkout counter and the time it is discarded, empty but still crisp and new, into a waste container. This is wanton misuse of our resources.

Carmel's fledgling program for recycling glass cannot alone produce results on the necessary scale, of course. But a much broader commitment by both industry and individuals to conservation thinking can. It should not have to wait until acute shortages make such action mandatory.

michael w. brown

carmel-by-the-sea city councilman

RECYCLING OF GLASS

One of our current pressing problems is the disposal of huge quantities of refuse produced by each American family. Probably little can be done on the federal or state level to alleviate much of this problem. Considering this, I wish to propose that the City of Pacific Grove join Carmel in our glass recycling program.

After speaking with representatives of the Smuckers Company in Salinas, where glass is crushed for recycling, and representatives of Salinas' recycling program, I believe a very successful addition could be made with the City of Pacific Grove joining this program.

Hopefully, I will be able to present my ideas in fuller detail at a Pacific Grove City Council meeting in the near future.



Mike Brown