

# ZERO WASTE - OR DARN CLOSE

Prepared by Portia Sinnott, MS+/LITE Initiatives, 2008

This document is designed to stimulate your interest and demonstrate the depth and breadth of current zero waste and waste related climate recovery efforts. Please be sure to visit some, if not all, of the web sites listed on the last page – they could save you a great deal of time, trouble and research.

## In Nature, Biodegradability Is The Norm And There Is No Waste.

**Zero Waste, the application of this fact, ensures that products are made to be reused, repaired or recycled into the marketplace or nature.** In other words if it can't be recycled – it shouldn't be made! Some people vehemently object to the term "zero waste" because reaching zero discards is impossible. **We suggest they compare it to Zero Accidents or Zero Emissions – obviously programs well worth the effort.**

If it can't be recycled –  
It shouldn't be made!

**Zero Waste is a philosophy and a design principle for the 21st Century.** It is not simply an end-of-the-pipe solution; it is a primary strategy to work upstream to eliminate waste, instead of managing it. In other words, Zero Waste is not simply about putting an end to landfilling and end-of-pipe solutions - it heralds a fundamental change.

It is a path or direction that can be used by communities, businesses, institutions, events and even households to guide our decisions and actions. In the US, the State of California is leading the way: "Now, with recycling and conservation programs in every city, we are able to embrace the zero waste concept as our guiding principal and goal for the future." [www.zerowaste.ca.gov](http://www.zerowaste.ca.gov). This challenge is also being collaboratively worked on all over the world by thousands of people and agencies. [www.grrn.org/zerowaste](http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste), [www.zwia.org/links.html](http://www.zwia.org/links.html).

## Zero Waste Fundamentals

### Recycling Is Not Enough!

Recycling alone will not end our dependency on landfilling and incinerators, nor reverse the rapid depletion of our natural resources. As world population and consumption continue to rise, it is clear that our one-way system of extracting virgin resources to make products that will later be buried or burned or even recycled is not sustainable.

### Additional Definitions

Aiming for zero waste means designing products and packaging with perpetual reuse and recycling in mind. It means ending subsidies for wasting. It means closing the gap between landfill prices and their true costs. It means making manufacturers take responsibility for the entire lifecycle of their products. Zero waste efforts, just like recycling efforts before, will change the face of industrial design and personal consumption in the future. Instead of managing wastes, we will manage resources and eliminate waste. -- **Institute for Local Self-Reliance, [www.ilsr.org](http://www.ilsr.org)**

Zero Waste is a goal that is both pragmatic and visionary, to guide people to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are resources for others to use. Zero Waste means designing and managing products and processes to reduce the volume and toxicity of waste and materials, conserve and recover all resources, and not burn or bury them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that may be a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health. -- **Zero Waste International Alliance, [www.ziwa.org](http://www.ziwa.org)**

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## **All Organics Out of Landfill**

In many municipalities organics are still a major component of the waste stream. The 2004 California Statewide Waste Characterization Study reported that Organics - yard waste, food and compostable paper, averaged 20% of what is still being landfilled. As these materials degrade they create methane, a green house gas at least 23 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Many of these emissions could be reduced or prevented by rigorous organics recycling programs. [www.cool2012.com](http://www.cool2012.com).

## **Repair and Reuse – The Unsung Heroes**

A very important part of every waste management system, reuse and repair businesses do not receive the attention they deserve. The popularity of Craigslist, E-Bay and FreeCycle, well as Goodwill and Salvation Army demonstrates the public's interest, yet most recycling program staff are unfamiliar with local reuse and repair businesses and the materials they handle. For example, few curbside and drop-off programs accept textiles - items made of thread, yarn, fabric, or cloth, yet these goods are easily reused or recycled by businesses that have been around since the advent of urban centers.

## **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

In the ZW worldview, the long-term responsibility for a product is on the producer of the item, not you the consumer nor the local government agency that oversees the waste stream. The ultimate goal of EPR is clean, safe materials and production and the elimination of waste at each stage of the product's life cycle. [www.caproductstewardship.org](http://www.caproductstewardship.org), [www.eprworkinggroup.org](http://www.eprworkinggroup.org), [www.productpolicy.org](http://www.productpolicy.org)

## **Precautionary Principle – Do No Harm**

If an action, policy or product might cause severe harm, the burden of proof should fall on those who are producing it. In other words, it must be proved to be safe before it is implemented - versus proving it is not unsafe. [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org), [www.safecosmetics.org](http://www.safecosmetics.org)

## **True Cost Accounting**

The price of a product should reflect the full costs of the environmental degradation and public health impacts associated with the virgin resource extraction, processing, manufacture, transportation, and disposal of that product. When the market prices begin to include such costs, the more environmentally-friendly product will also be the less expensive. [www.epa.gov/oppt/library/pubs/archive/acct-archive/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/oppt/library/pubs/archive/acct-archive/index.htm)

**Zero Waste Also Advocates For:**  
**Ending Tax Payer Subsidies For Wasteful And Polluting Industries**  
**Redesigning Products And Packaging For Durability**  
**Creating Jobs From Discards**

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## California ZW Resources

California Integrated Waste Management Board  Statewide Waste Characterization Study, December 2004 <a href="http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/LocalAsst/34004005.pdf">www.ciwmb.ca.gov/Publications/LocalAsst/34004005.pdf</a>	<a href="http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov">www.ciwmb.ca.gov</a> and <a href="http://www.zerowaste.ca.gov">www.zerowaste.ca.gov</a> , “The Board promotes a Zero Waste California in partnership with local government, industry, and the public. This means ... reducing waste whenever possible, promoting the management of all materials to their highest and best use, regulating the handling, processing and disposal of solid waste, and protecting public health and safety and the environment.”
Zero Waste San Diego	<a href="http://www.zerowastesandiego.org">www.zerowastesandiego.org</a>
San Francisco	<a href="http://www.sfenvironment.org/our_programs">www.sfenvironment.org/our_programs</a>
Oakland	<a href="http://www.zerowasteoakland.com">www.zerowasteoakland.com</a>
Palo Alto	<a href="http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pwd/recycle/zero_waste_program.asp">www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pwd/recycle/zero_waste_program.asp</a>
San Jose	<a href="http://www.sjrecycles.org/zerowaste.asp">www.sjrecycles.org/zerowaste.asp</a>
<p>Plus Apple Valley, Berkeley, Culver City, El Cajon, Fairfax, Fresno, Novato, Ocean Beach, Rancho Cucamonga and the following counties: Del Norte, Marin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Sonoma  <u>Other USA:</u> Boulder County, CO; City of Boulder, CO; Central Vermont Waste Management District; Seattle, WA; Summit County, CO; Matanuska-Susitna Borough, AK; Logan County, OH  <u>Elsewhere in the World:</u> Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Europe, Africa and Asia:  <a href="http://grn.org/zerowaste/zw_world.html">http://grn.org/zerowaste/zw_world.html</a> or <a href="http://www.zwia.org/links.html">www.zwia.org/links.html</a></p>	

## Other Resources:

Grassroots Recycling Network/GRRN	<a href="http://www.grrn.org/zerowaste">www.grrn.org/zerowaste</a>
The Story of Stuff	<a href="http://www.storyofstuff.com">www.storyofstuff.com</a> ( 20 minutes)
Eco-Cycle, Boulder Colorado	<a href="http://www.ecocycle.org/zerowastevideo">www.ecocycle.org/zerowastevideo</a> (3 minutes) and <a href="http://www.ecocycle.org/zerowaste/zwsystem">www.ecocycle.org/zerowaste/zwsystem</a>
Stop Trashing The Environment	<a href="http://www.stoptrashingtheclimate.org">www.stoptrashingtheclimate.org</a>
California Product Stewardship Council	<a href="http://www.caproductstewardship.org">www.caproductstewardship.org</a>
The Berkeley Ecology Center	<a href="http://www.ecologycenter.org/zerowaste">www.ecologycenter.org/zerowaste</a>
Product Policy Institute	<a href="http://www.productpolicy.org">www.productpolicy.org</a>
EPR Working Group	<a href="http://www.eprworkinggroup.org">www.eprworkinggroup.org</a>
Container Recycling Institute	<a href="http://container-recycling.org/zbcwaste">http://container-recycling.org/zbcwaste</a>
Getting To Zero Waste by Paul Palmer	<a href="http://gettingtozerowaste.com">http://gettingtozerowaste.com</a>
Zero Waste Alliance	<a href="http://www.zerowaste.org">www.zerowaste.org</a>
Zero Emissions Research & Initiatives (ZERI)	<a href="http://www.zeri.org">www.zeri.org</a>
Zero Waste International	<a href="http://www.zwia.org">www.zwia.org</a>
Compostable Organics Out of Landfills by 2012	<a href="http://www.cool2012.com">www.cool2012.com</a>
Computer TakeBack Campaign	<a href="http://www.computertakeback.com">www.computertakeback.com</a>