

Nature Notes: New recycling guidelines coming for Stonington



Jill Senior with a plastic bucket for food waste scraps. (Photo by Bill Hobbs)



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By **Bill Hobbs**

There's a major change underway in how we dispose of our food scraps, and Stonington is ahead of the movement, as they were 30 years ago with the yellow bag, pay-as-you-throw program.

This new recycling initiative has the potential to help save the community and its residents hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in trash removal expenses.

The "food waste scrap collection program," as it's called, is simple.

Residents are asked to separate their food scraps from household trash and place them in green plastic bags, supplied by the town. These green bags are then placed on the curb for weekly pick-up.

Jill Senior, Stonington's director of solid waste, will be the featured guest, talking about this innovative program, including other successes, like the pink bag textile recycling program, the Transfer Station's multiple capabilities, and new guidelines the Department will publish about what can and cannot be recycled, to name a few, for the first time at the La Grua Center, on Wednesday, May 17, from 5 to 6 pm.

It is a free event, open to the public, hosted by the Stonington Garden Club.

By participating in this food waste scrap collection program, Stonington benefits from hauling less solid waste to incinerators - food scraps represent up to 22 percent of everything we throw out. This means significant savings in transportation fees can be incurred.



into fertilizers, soils, and compost.

So, nothing is wasted, and it's good for the environment.

Stonington is one of 15 communities in the state to receive a Sustainable Materials Management grant from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to conduct this 12-month, town-wide, curbside pilot program, begun Jan. 23.

The other towns are Ansonia, Bethany, Deep River, Guilford, Madison, Meriden, Middletown, Newtown, Seymour, Rocky Hill, West Hartford, West Haven, Woodbridge, and Woodbury.

Astonishingly, in the first three months of the program, Stonington collected over 40 tons of food scrap waste and diverted it to Southington.

When the program started, Senior said the town's hauler, F.E. Crandall Disposal of Ledyard, barely collected 200 green bags per week. Now, they're averaging 1,000 or more per week.

Senior, who has worked in Town Hall for nine years – six in finance and three in solid waste – is encouraged by these numbers, but she's not content.

"We have 7,666 households in the town of Stonington, and I'd like to see at least 5,000 [green] bags a week," she said with a smile, admitting, "Those are lofty goals, but why not?"

Stonington residents, according to Senior, can pick up 50 green, durable bags, a sturdy, well-designed plastic bucket and a brochure about food waste scrap collection, free of charge at the Solid Waste office in the basement of the Town Hall, if they would like to participate in the program.

Finally, Senior said, "If we can plant a seed in the resident's mind that we're making it easy for them to put food waste scraps into a green bag and put it out on the street for pick-up, just by doing that, we'll reduce the amount of tonnage that we're sending to Lisbon.

"I look at it this way: Food waste is no longer considered waste. It's now a resource, meaning we're taking that trash and making renewable energy and compost out of it," Senior added.

Bill Hobbs is a contributing nature writer for The Times and Estuary magazine and lives in Stonington. He can be reached for comments at whobbs246@gmail.com

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READER COMMENTS

KEVIN ROGERS April 18, 2023 at 11:20

[Report](#)

Great article! I had many questions regarding the new initiative, but now I see the importance of this valuable program. 1,000 bags a week so far in Stonington? Bravo! 22% of waste is food waste? That is much more than I imagined. 40 tons of waste already sent to a new location? Amazing! Go Stonington GO! I wonder if restaurants will participate. Talk about food waste.

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