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October 2017 Newsletter



## Free Webinar on Best Management Practices for Achieving Zero Waste in the Hospitality Sector

On Thursday, October 26th from 11:30 am -12:30 pm, NRC will host a free webinar about best practices for waste reduction and recycling in the hospitality sector, featuring St. Julien Hotel and Spa in Boulder, Colorado. Hosted by sustainability coordinator Josh Rheingold, you will learn about their environmental commitment, waste diversion practices, and "green handed" programs. Find out how they are achieving their zero waste goals.



Josh is from southern California and studied evolutionary biology and environmental justice at CU Boulder. He spent the summer of 2013 traveling the US Southwest learning about energy infrastructure and its relationship to the environment. Josh visited fracking sites, hydroelectric dams, and coal power plants during that trip. It was the first major experience in his life that started him thinking about going into a career in sustainability. Since graduating college in 2014, he spent a year in Vietnam teaching English, and another year traveling around SE Asia and New Zealand. Since returning to the states, he has worked at the St Julien Hotel and Spa as the sustainability coordinator.

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## The China Syndrome

Did you know that China is the world's largest importer of waste?

Last year, according to a recent article in "Resource Recycling", "Chinese manufacturers and recyclers imported 7.3 million metric tons of waste plastics (valued at \$3.7 billion), accounting for 56 percent of world imports in that category. It also took in more than half of the world's exports of waste paper."



This is about to change, and it will likely have a notable impact on recycling in Nebraska. On July 18, China notified the World Trade Organization that it would place an outright ban on imports of

24 categories of solid waste by the end of 2017, including several plastic resins (including PET, PE, PVC, PS, and "other" plastics), textiles, "unsorted" mixed paper, and other materials. They recently clarified that this will only ban "post-consumer" sources, but this doesn't bode well for residential recycling programs.

Previous restrictions imposed by China, "Operation Green Fence" and the recent "National Sword", caused a great deal of disruption in the global recycling industry. The new ban may have a bigger impact yet.

### **Will it affect recycling in Nebraska?**

The Nebraska Recycling Council is working to improve efficiencies in the collection, transport, and processing of recyclables in Nebraska. Recycling systems in rural Nebraska generally differ from those in larger metropolitan areas. The source-separation that rural Nebraskans are accustomed to may be one of the best safeguards against the effects of the ban, as contamination in single-stream programs is higher. Processors, however, may have to limit the materials they accept (e.g. excluding plastics #3-7) until markets improve. Materials recovery facilities (MRFs) may need to invest in better sorting infrastructure, or risk exceeding contamination tolerances that devalue their commodities.

Some see this ban as an opportunity to strengthen the domestic recycling industry. Closed Loop Fund has been investing in recycling infrastructure in the U.S. through below-market loans since 2014. A bill called the Zero Waste Development and Expansion Act was recently introduced in the U.S. Congress by Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., that would invest \$100 million in recycling facilities.

### **Here are some tips for weathering the ban from The Recycling Partnership:**

Maintain a level head. Focus on the fundamentals in good times and bad, and your program will be stronger and more resilient.

Keep your friends close. Clear, frequent communication with your MRF will help you anticipate market challenges and ensure you're on the same page regarding [material mix](#), quality, and resident communication.

Quality counts. No matter the market situation, you're better off with a clean recycling stream. Low contamination rates keep processing costs down and heighten marketability of materials. Use [these 6 steps](#) to keep contamination in check.

Stay the course. Recycling is a highly appreciated public service that delivers powerful environmental benefits and reduces dependence on costly disposal. Keep your residents recycling and maximize the capacity of your program. [Click here](#) for free graphics to engage your public.

As with any market-based industry, cycles come and go. Stay tuned for more tips and tools to weather the lows and stretch out the highs.

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## **NDEQ Seeking Public Input on LB1101**

Two meetings have been scheduled in mid-October to discuss solid waste issues in Nebraska and seek public input as the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) develops a report to present to the Nebraska Legislature. Meetings will be held Oct. 17 in Bridgeport and Oct. 19 in Lincoln.



An overview of work completed to-date will be presented by Engineering Solutions and Design, Inc., the consultant contracted to assist NDEQ in development of the study. This will be followed by

an open discussion in which the public may comment and ask questions.

Times and locations of the public meetings are:

Oct. 17 - 6:00 p.m. at the Prairie Winds Community Center, 428 Main Street, Bridgeport

Oct. 19 - 6:00 p.m. at the Lancaster Event Center, 4100 N. 84th St., Lincoln.

Comments may also be submitted online at <https://ecmp.nebraska.gov/DEQ-SWMS/>. For more information about the study, the advisory committee, and documents that have been developed related to this study, visit the LB1101 Solid Waste Management Study web page at <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/SWMS>.

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## Webinars & Events

### [National Sword - What Is It and How Will It Impact MY Program?](#)

Webinar | Thursday, October 19, 2017 | 12-1:30pm

*This interactive webinar will communicate critical information from brokers, MRFs, and other industry experts.* [REGISTER](#)



### [China's Green Sword: Impacts to State and Local Governments](#)

Webinar | Thursday, October 26, 2017 | 12-1:30pm

*Join industry experts from the Solid Waste Association of America (SWANA), the National Waste and Recycling Association (NWRA) and CalRecycle to discuss the impacts and upcoming deadline.* [REGISTER](#)

### [A New Garden Ethic: Cultivating Defiant Compassion for an Uncertain Future with Benjamin Vogt](#)

Webinar | Thursday, November 2, 2017 | 3:30-4:30pm

*Dr. Benjamin Vogt addresses why we need a new garden ethic, and why we urgently need wildness in our daily lives.* [REGISTER](#)

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## Articles of Interest

### [Plastic-degrading fungus found in Pakistan trash dump](#)

*A group of scientists sought a solution to our plastic problem in nature - and they actually found one: a plastic-devouring soil fungus.*



### [What does our trash say about us?](#)

*Archaeologists are taking a closer look at contemporary junk to understand our culture.*

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## Become a Member!

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Nebraska Recycling Council is a statewide 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, whose mission is to maximize the economic and environmental benefits of resource recovery in Nebraska. Visit our website at [www.NRCNE.org](http://www.NRCNE.org) and become a member or make a donation today.



**Nebraska Recycling Council**

402-436-2384

[www.NRCNE.org](http://www.NRCNE.org)



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