



# Russian River Watershed Association

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707)833-2553 • [www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)

## RRWA December Environmental Column Holiday Season Recycling in the Russian River Watershed

The holiday season is a time for gifts, decorations, and lots and lots of food. As a result, between Thanksgiving and New Year's, an extra million tons of waste is generated nationwide each week.

There is a lot you can do to reduce the amount of waste you are left with during and after the holiday season. Be aware of your consumption. Over the holidays thousands of paper and plastic shopping bags end up in landfills every year. Reduce the number of bags thrown out by bringing reusable cloth bags for holiday gift shopping. Tell store clerks you don't need a bag for small or oversized purchases.

When buying gifts, check product labels to determine an item's recyclability and whether the product and the packaging are made from recycled materials. Buying recycled encourages manufacturers to make more recycled-content products available.

Be sure to recycle packaging, wrapping paper, cards, all those holiday-themed catalogs and advertisements – and anything else that is recyclable. Food waste, household hazardous waste (such as batteries), and electronics should be properly disposed of as well.

Thanks to Sonoma and Mendocino Counties, there are many opportunities available to properly and easily dispose of your wastes in both counties.

**Wrapping paper and ribbon**--- Recyclable paper makes up a large portion, about 27 percent, of what's going into our garbage. Holiday paper, cards, envelopes, and cardboard packaging can be recycled, along with other year-round paper items, such as catalogs and magazines, in your single-stream curbside recycling cart. Only foil-backed and plastic wrapping paper cannot be recycled. Save ribbon to reuse on next year's packages.

**Packaging**---If you accumulate packing peanuts and bubble wrap over the holidays, many local packaging stores and mail centers are glad to accept these items for reuse.

**Veggie food scraps**--Compost your veggies! Fruits, vegetables, peels and seeds can be composted at home. In fact about 35 percent of residential garbage is food waste, a resource that could be used instead of sent to the landfill. In Sonoma County, veggie food scraps can be put in the curbside yard debris cart for the municipal composting program. In Mendocino County, visit [www.mendorecycle.org](http://www.mendorecycle.org) or call the Recycling Hotline at 468-9704 for veggie food scrap recycling options.

**Christmas trees**--- Christmas trees can be recycled into compost and mulch! Before recycling, your tree must be free of flocking, tinsel, decorations and its stand. For pick-up, and drop-off



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options, in Sonoma County call the Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit <http://www.recyclenow.org/recycling/tree.asp>. In Mendocino County, contact the Recycling Hotline or web site listed above.

**Electronics**---Under a state mandate, electronics cannot be put in the garbage. An electronic device is anything with a circuit board. Look for devices with digital displays or programmable features. Examples include computers, TVs, laptops, printers, answering machines, CD and DVD players, stereos and cell phones. Your options for proper disposal of electronics depend on your waste hauler and other county services. In some areas, small electronic devices can be disposed of in curbside recycling. For a complete list of services for your area, in Sonoma County call the Eco-Desk at 565-3375 or visit <http://www.recyclenow.org/toxics/electronics.asp> and in Mendocino County, call the Recycling Hotline at 468-9704 or visit [www.mendorecycle.org](http://www.mendorecycle.org).

**Batteries**---About 40 percent of all battery sales occur during the holiday season. Batteries should **not** be placed in the trash. Buy rechargeable batteries to accompany your electronic gifts, and consider giving a battery charger as well. Rechargeable batteries reduce the amount of potentially harmful materials thrown away, and can save money in the long run.

By law, retailers selling rechargeable batteries are required to take back used rechargeable batteries from their customers. For a list of these retailers, visit the Call2Recycle web site at <http://www.call2recycle.org/>.

Some stores offer take-back for alkaline batteries, in addition to rechargeables. All kinds of household batteries can also be disposed of through Sonoma County's Household Toxics Program and the Mendocino County HazMobile Program. For a complete list of options, contact the Sonoma County Eco-Desk or the Mendocino County Recycling Hotline.

**More Recycling Information**---For any questions about recycling and year-round disposal options:

- In Sonoma County, visit [www.recyclenow.org](http://www.recyclenow.org), call the Sonoma County Eco-Desk at 565-DESK(3375), or look for your Sonoma County Recycling Guide printed in the AT&T phone book Yellow Pages under Recycling.
- In Mendocino County, call the Recycling Hotline at 468- 9704, visit [www.mendorecycle.org](http://www.mendorecycle.org) or see the Mendocino County Recycling Guide available through your waste hauler or from most cities.

*This article was authored on behalf of RRWA by Lisa Steinman of the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency, with contributions from the Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority. RRWA ([www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)) is an association of local public agencies in the Russian River Watershed that have come together to coordinate regional programs for clean water, fisheries restoration, and watershed enhancement.*