

Dear Parents,

Great news! We've started a compost collection program for all six of Summit County's elementary schools. Thanks to funding from Vail Resorts ECHO; the work of Summit County Recycling, High Country Compost, the High Country Conservation Center; and the participation of teachers and students, we'll be able to recycle even more!

Composting is a natural process of transforming food waste, paper products, and organics (things that were once alive) into a dark, rich healthy soil that can be applied to gardens and trees. Summit County is very fortunate to have a large scale composting facility (High Country Compost) located at our landfill in Keystone. This year, the County was able to expand its program and start compost collection at our local schools.

Why do we compost?

Contrary to most belief, the landfill is not a gigantic composting system. In fact, all of your leftovers, yard clippings, and organic wastes that go into the garbage produce a hazardous gas called methane in a landfill environment. Methane is a greenhouse gas 72 times more potent than carbon dioxide. By keeping organics out of our landfill, you help combat climate change! Similar to recycling, composting also diverts materials from our landfill. Organics (including yard waste, food waste, paper, paperboard, and wood waste) make up over 65 percent of the waste stream. When you compost and recycle, your family can keep over 80 percent of your garbage out of the landfill, extending our landfills life for future generations.

How can you compost at home?

Currently, High Country Compost has the infrastructure to only collect commercially. But in a couple of years, we hope to collect from residential too. If your family is interested in composting at home, the High Country Conservation Center provides workshops and online resources to get you started. From backyard composting to composting indoor with worms, there are several things you can do at home to reduce your waste. Check out www.highcountryconservation.org for more information.

Precycling is also a great way to reduce your garbage by not purchasing it in the first place. Take a look at the composting and recycling list on the back of this letter and take it with you when you shop. Buying in bulk and packing lunches in reusable lunch-ware is a great way to start the precycling process. When planning lunches for your children this school year, please help Summit County minimize food and packaging waste by packing a waste-free lunch as often as you can!

A Waste-free Lunch

Pack...

- Lunches in reusable containers
- Drinks in a thermos or reusable container
- A cloth napkin
- Reusable utensils when needed
- A reusable lunchbox or backpack

A Disposable Lunch

Avoid...

- Lunches packed in plastic bags, foil, wax paper
- Prepackaged lunches
- Prepackaged single-serve lunch items
- Paper napkins
- Disposable drink boxes, pouches, cans, cartons, and bottles
- Disposable forks and spoons

It has been estimated that on average a single school-age child generates 67 pounds of lunchtime waste per school year, or 18,760 pounds of lunch waste for one average-size elementary school. Every single piece of packaging or excess food that we eliminate from the waste stream makes a difference. Let's do our part!

OK for School Composting:

Unlike home composting, High Country Compost accepts all food scraps, soiled paper, and yard trimmings.

Food Scraps

(anything that used to be alive)

Baked Goods
 Bones
 Bread and grains
 Cereal
 Cheese
 Coffee grounds
 Dairy products
 Eggs and eggshells
 Fish
 Fruit (pits too and peels)
 Gravy and sauces
 Leftovers and spoiled food
 Meat (including bones)
 Nuts
 Pasta
 Peanut Butter
 Processed foods
 Rice
 Salads
 Seafood (including shellfish)
 Vegetables

Soiled Paper

Coffee filters
 Facial tissue
 Greasy pizza boxes
 Paper cups and plates
 Paper ice cream containers
 Paper bags, napkins, tissues
 and towels
 Paper take-out boxes and
 containers
 Paper tea bags
 Waxy paper milk cartons (no
 foil liner)
 Wax paper
 Neon paper

Other

Cutlery clearly labeled
 "Compostable"
 Plastic clearly labeled
 "Compostable"
 Waxed cardboard and paper
 Cooking oil

OK for Recycling:

This list is specific to school lunches. For additional recycling options in the County, please visit www.highcountryconservation.org or call 970-668-5703.

#1 PETE - Plastic Bottles (with a neck and screw top only)

Soda bottles and water bottles labeled #1

#2 Milk Jugs and Solid Colored Bottles (with a neck and screw top only)

Milk jugs and plastic juice bottles labeled #2

Cardboard and Paperboard

Cereal boxes and brown paper bags

Mixed Glass

Bottles and jars

Mixed Metal Containers

Aluminum cans, aluminum foil and pie plates, tin cans

GARBAGE:

NOT Acceptable for Composting or Recycling

- Foil-backed or plastic-backed paper
- Juice or soy milk type boxes with foil liner
- Yogurt and Butter Tubs
- Plastic bags, wrappers or film (not labeled "Compostable") including Ziploc bags, bubble wrap, packaging, and Saran wrap
- Styrofoam
- #1 - #7 NON-Bottles and #3 - #7 plastics of any kind
- "Biodegradable" plastic (not labeled "Compostable")

Examples of lunch items destined for the landfill:

- Disposable plastic bags used for sandwiches and fruit slices
- Packaging for chips, pretzels, cookies, fruit bars, granola bars and other snack foods
- Single-use containers for yogurts, applesauces, and puddings (NOT RECYCLABLE)
- Disposable juice boxes and juice pouches like Capri Sun,
- Plastic forks and spoons (except those labeled "compostable")

Questions? Please contact Jen Santry at the High Country Conservation Center at 668-5703, jen@highcountryconservation.org or visit www.highcountryconservation.org.