

MEMORANDUM

TO: PROFESSOR JO ARCHIBALD
FROM: MICAH CHITRAROFF
SUBJECT: SOLID WASTE FIELD TRIP
DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2019

Purpose:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a review of the field trip that we took to the Humboldt County Recology Recycling Facility on October 18, 2019 at 8:00 am. This trip went over the basic responsibilities of the plant, the inside workings, and how to be a responsible citizen when it comes to recycling. This information will be covered in the Discussion Section of this Memorandum.

Discussion:

During this field trip, the first thing we went over is some basic facts about Recology. Recology is the 5th largest recycling plant in the US and are currently working towards zero waste by lobbying and improving their own recycling capabilities to be able to reuse everything and prevent any more landfill usage. The Arcata Branch of Recology currently takes in 70 to 80 tons of material a day. Their curbside recycling now fits the standards for Chinese reclamation which is a level of only 0.5% contamination. Recology recently underwent a retrofit to improve their recycling processes that cost around 2.5 million dollars.

The group was able to see firsthand the path the material takes as it gets sorted. First the material is taken up a conveyor belt to get manually sorted by workers. They took out cardboard and metals which would clog the next portion of the sorting process: the glass breaker. The glass breaker smashed the bottles and the glass shards would fall to the bottom and get sorted out because it is heavier than the other materials. Next the material goes through finger screens that sort out paper materials from the rest. From there on, the rest of the material is sorted out by hand like plastic films or bags and any other contaminated material.

During the last part of our trip we learned how to distinguish what is or isn't recyclable. Any materials contaminated with non-consumable liquids like shampoo bottles or cardboard covered with hydrophobic materials like milk cartons cannot be recycled. Solid metals, plastic bags or films, plastic clamshells, tempered glass, or anything too small to be sorted like confetti cannot be recycled as well. Any materials containing different materials must also be separated as well such as a hardcover book or a tin coffee can with a plastic lid.

Conclusions:

This field trip reconnected me with the process that trash takes and how important it is to be knowledgeable about what can or cannot be recycled. I think that the world is too disconnected with their trash and this has caused a sort of apathy towards what happens to it after it leaves the house as

long as you don't see it again. The last part of the presentation was very helpful to me because I really didn't fully understand what could be recycled prior to this. This kind of shook me because I was under the impression that I fully understood the recycling guidelines prior to this. This knowledge is crucial to have and education towards recycling should be a higher priority.