

WASTE REDUCTION, RECYCLING AND LITTER CONTROL



THE LITTER TAX

Since 1971, Washington's statewide litter collection, waste reduction and recycling programs have been funded by a tax on wrappers, bottles and other items typically found in roadside litter.

The 0.015 percent tax on retail sales of these items generates about \$9 million a year for the Waste Reduction Recycling and Litter Control Account.

In 2015, Ecology-funded programs picked up 1,909 tons of litter and cleaned 20,068 miles of road statewide.



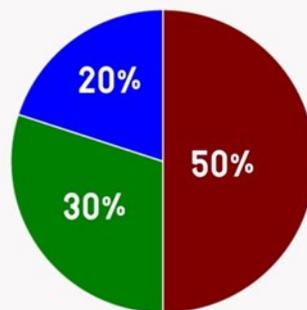
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Keeping Washington beautiful, preventing waste

Washington's beauty is natural. Keeping it that way takes hard work – and hard currency.

For the 2013-2015 biennium, Ecology's \$9.7 million Waste Reduction Recycling and Litter Control Account (WRRLCA) budget is split three ways: 50 percent, or about \$5 million, goes toward litter pickup and waste prevention through the Ecology Youth Corps and other state agency programs. Thirty percent of the account, or \$3 million, is spent on waste reduction and recycling efforts, and 20 percent, or \$2 million, goes to local governments under the Community Litter Cleanup Program.



Litter Tax Distribution

50% Litter pickup
30% Waste reduction and recycling
20% Local governments

Cleaning up

The most visible use of WRRLCA is supporting the Ecology Youth Corps. Each year, this program hires several hundred teenagers across the state to pick up roadside litter. Since its inception, more than 12,000 teens have participated in the Ecology Youth Corps, gaining valuable job skills, teamwork experience, safety awareness, and learning about environmental topics. The program also hires adult crews to clean up medians and illegal dumps.

In calendar year 2015, Ecology crews picked up 1.116 million pounds of litter and cleaned 5,245 miles of highway.

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RESTORING RESOURCES

Since 2009, funds from WRRLCA have been diverted from their intended purpose, first to the general fund and then to state parks.

This diversion is scheduled to end in 2017 and restore full funding for Washington's waste reduction, recycling and litter control efforts.

In addition, Ecology will request that the Legislature allocate \$4.6 million from WRRLCA to expand state and local programs.

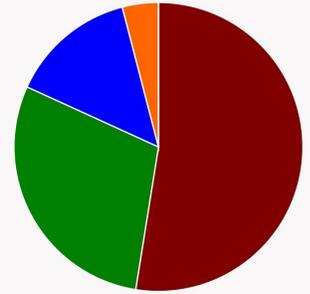
This additional funding will:

- Improve waste reduction and recycling efforts, such as working on problem materials like plastic bags and glass.
- Expand grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations, with a focus on recycling and litter reduction public education.
- Expand the Ecology Youth Corps, allowing crews to pick up another 400,000 pounds of litter.
- Restore the statewide litter prevention campaign, including the litter reporting hotline.
- Expand efforts to prevent food waste and increase organic waste recycling.
- Reinstate a school award program to provide schools the necessary funding for waste reduction and recycling campaigns.
- Restore Washington State Patrol "cover your load" emphasis patrols and litter enforcement.
- Expand the Department of Correction's litter pickup program, allowing crews to pick up another 700,000 pounds of litter.

Cleaning Up

In 2015, WRRLCA funds helped to pick up more than 3.8 million pounds of litter. Who did the heavy lifting?

Ecology Youth Corps - 1,115,870
Local Governments - 1,992,470
Department of Corrections - 552,931
Department of Natural Resources - 157,608



Reducing waste, improving recycling

The 30 percent of WRRLCA funds that go toward reducing waste and boosting recycling produce important environmental and economic benefits for our state. In 2013, more than 50 percent of the waste generated by Washington residents and businesses was recovered for recycling and other uses – one of the highest rates in the country.

While reducing the amount of waste going to landfills is an important goal in its own right, recycling also reduces greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution and conserves natural resources.

National statistics show that manufacturing with recycled content requires, on average, 17 times less energy than producing the same product from virgin materials.

In 2013, 8 million tons of material was collected for recycling in Washington. This effort saved the energy equivalent of 1 billion gallons of gasoline, or more than 128 trillion British thermal units (BTUs) of energy – enough to power almost 1.3 million homes for a year, or nearly half the households in Washington.



Photo by Helen Freilich