

# *Talking...* **TRASH**

The Newsletter of the SWANA Florida Sunshine Chapter

Fall/Winter 2023

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TOMORROW**

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Drury Plaza Hotel Orlando - Disney Springs Area  
February 19-21

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# Support Services for Solid Waste Management in Florida

Uncertain Times. Informed Decisions.

We understand the immediate and longer-term impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on solid waste operations, not least in terms of looming inflationary pressure, labor shortages, and uncertainty surrounding supply chain issues, which has affected procurement of new equipment and parts and distorted recycling markets. Many services such as curbside recycling remain popular with the public, yet for the majority of our clients are economically marginal. Waste generation has changed during the pandemic, with many haulers reporting sustained increases in residential waste and recycling streams coupled with declines in commercial volumes. No matter the challenges you are facing, Geosyntec can help your solid waste operation to be more efficient and resilient for an alternate future.

## What We Offer

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**For additional solid waste advisory-related services, visit [geosyntec.com/swa](https://www.geosyntec.com/swa)**

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# Letter from the President

December 2023

The holiday season is upon us bringing with it festivals, events, family get togethers, holiday parties, and seasonal residents coming back to our communities to enjoy the Florida winter weather. Now more than ever, it is important that we look out for each other on the roadways including our garbage haulers. With so many coming from out of state to visit our beautiful cities and towns, they do not always know where to go and can be unpredictable drivers. While they should be looking out for our garbage trucks, we also need to be aware of them and drive accordingly by asking our drivers to be defensive, expect the unexpected, and when in doubt give the other driver space. The gift of a traffic accident is one that no one wants and getting home safe is the greatest gift we can give our family and friends this holiday season.

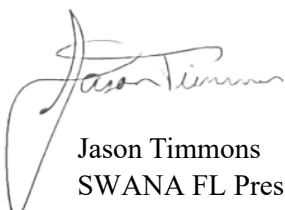


The SWANA Florida Winter Conference in Orlando is coming in February 2024 at the brand-new Drury Plaza hotel near Disney Springs. This is an exciting opportunity to be in a new facility near the most magical place on earth. We hope you can join us in connecting with peers and learning about the newest innovations in solid waste management with colleagues throughout the industry.

This issue of Talk Trash has a lot of great information on recycling materials such as glass and food waste, reaching net zero by prioritizing waste in the climate agenda, and reaching your communities using technology. Also, a new feature to Talking Trash is the Florida Organics Recycling Central for Excellence (FORCE) Corner providing information on the resources available through that program for your organics recycling initiatives.

We are also very excited to roll out our new SWANA Florida Store so that you can now purchase a variety of SWANA Florida shirts and hats to show your SWANA FL pride. I look forward to seeing you in your new SWANA FL gear in February at the Winter Conference. I wish you all a happy, healthy, and prosperous holiday season and new year, and I look forward to an amazing 2024!

Sincerely,



Jason Timmons  
SWANA FL President

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# Partnerships, Investments, and Transparency Strengthen Glass Recycling

**Marissa Segundo**

Technological advances in glass recycling and the new fee-for-service recycling economy strengthen glass recycling. The foundation of today's recycling industry hinges on ever-evolving Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) to process and market inbound materials. However, in recent years, many MRFs have taken a hard look at their investments and contracts to account for the true cost of recycling. Glass recycling has grappled with misperceptions about its appropriateness in single-stream MRFs. While residents expect to be able to recycle glass, end markets demand recycled glass (cullet).

MRFs often face a challenge: contaminants in the glass pile, such as non-glass residue (NGR), organic debris, small plastics, shredded paper,

and glass fines can compromise the quality and marketability of recycled glass or cullet. MRFs and municipal collaboration can shatter glass recycling barriers.

## **AI-Powered with Gold-quality Glass: Single Stream Recyclers/Balcones**

Single Stream Recyclers/Balcones (SSR) is the first artificial intelligence- (AI) powered recycling facility in the state of Florida. The 100,000-square-foot MRF features 12 robots and 14 optical sorters on 11 acres in Sarasota on the Gulf Coast. The state-of-the-art facility processes about 50 tons per hour of commercial and residential material—approximately 12,000 total tons per month. Of those tons, glass represents about 15% in some of their contracts. More than 80% of SSR/Balcones glass goes directly to beneficiation at the SMI plant in Sarasota.

Prior to the improvements, SSR used a solitary fiber screen that proved inefficient at removing contaminants from the glass. In those days, SSR paid to dispose of the contaminated glass due to high non-glass residue (NGR) content. With the help of SMI, they revamped their process to “build



*The SSR team standing in front of their glass pile.*



*Glass optical sorting machine removes fines at SMI plant.*



*After SMI receives glass from MRFs it is further cleaned for end-markets. Clean emerald (green) glass at an SMI glass processing plant.*

the perfect system,” according to Jake Hansen, General Manager of SSR/Balcones.

In this “perfect system” for SSR, glass was removed immediately from the flow of material using glass breakers. The glass then travels to a 3D-combi vibratory screener to remove larger non-glass residue. Four of the facility's 145 conveyor belts are dedicated to moving and cleaning glass. Conveyor belts facilitate air separation of fines (glass too small to market) and a vacuum to remove paper and other non-glass residue (NGR).





*All colors of glass are accepted and separated by SMI into three primary colors – flint (clear), amber (brown) and emerald (green).*

These improvements reduced SSR/Balcones' NGR to an average of 10-12% of tonnage. Higher quality glass nets the company more value for their clean glass, and saves on disposal fees and transport, which reduces the overall carbon footprint of the glass recovery operation. Regular maintenance, like daily cleaning and monthly screen changes, aids in keeping the system running smoothly.

Cleaner glass also comes with accolades; in 2021, the Glass Recycling Coalition awarded SSR/Balcones their highest certification, a gold MRF glass certification, the first gold-certified MRF in the state of Florida.

Overall, SSR/Balcones strives to reduce the amount of recyclable glass occupying landfill space and to close the loop on glass recycling.

### **Municipal Impact**

While investment in equipment transforms glass recycling opportunities, municipalities can ensure that recycling operations align with community recycling goals by setting up clear guidelines

in MRF processing contracts. There are three simple ways to strengthen partnerships for glass recycling through contracts.

#### *#1: Contract Clarity*

Municipalities should insist on transparency clauses in recycling processing contracts, requiring MRFs to provide detailed information on their recycling processes and end markets for

recycled materials, including glass. Require a list of glass recycling contamination remediation measures like shaker screens, trommels, air knives, eddy currents, and more.

#### *#2: Accountability and Reporting*

Establishing regular reporting mechanisms allows MRFs to share data on recycling rates, contamination levels, and adherence to industry standards. This fosters accountability and builds trust between MRFs and the communities they serve. Reporting can reassure residents that their recyclables are being handled responsibly. The International Scrap Recycling Institute (ISRI) has specifications on three-mix MRF glass that can be included in contract language.

#### *#3: Longer Term Contracts*

Longer-term partnerships with MRFs build trust and incentives for investments. A MRF may be more likely to invest in a glass clean-up system if they know they will have consistent feedstock and willing partners in user education to keep those inbound tons cleaner.

## **By the Numbers:**

**2017** SSR Sarasota facility built, accepting material 2018

**2020** SSR acquired by Balcones Resources Group

**2021** Gold MRF glass certification

**100,000**-square-foot MRF

**12** robots, **14** optical sorters, **145** conveyor belts

**50** tons per hour, **9,500-12,000** tons per month

**15%** of material is glass

### **Driving Forces**

Partnerships with processors are essential in this dynamic era of recycling. The convergence of investments and contract transparency emerge as driving forces behind glass recycling's strength across the U.S. and right here in Florida.

*Marissa Segundo is Principal and Chief Strategist at Transformations PR, a recycling and sustainability communications firm. For nearly 20 years, she has created award-winning strategic communications campaigns for public and private sector clients. She can be reached at [marissa@transformationsPR.com](mailto:marissa@transformationsPR.com) or visit [www.TransformationsPR.com](http://www.TransformationsPR.com).*

*For more information on Glass Recycling Coalition's MRF Certification program, visit <https://www.glassrecycles.org/industry-tools-1/mrf-glass-certification>.*

**Photos courtesy of SMI.**

# Commentary: Waste Must Be Higher Up the Climate Agenda if We Want to Achieve Net Zero

**Chris Williams**

We all know there is a worldwide problem with waste. National and local governments cannot contemplate achieving their net zero targets without also properly addressing how they manage the waste their countries create. However, all is not lost, we must encourage people and businesses to reuse and recycle more and throw away less.

## **Consumption is Increasing. How Do We Waste Less?**

Currently, based on current rate of consumption, the amount of waste we generate shows no sign of trailing off. According to the World Bank, [in 2020, the world was estimated to generate 2.24 billion tons of solid waste, which works out to 0.79 kilograms \(1.74 pounds\) per person per day](#). But with rapid population growth along with growing urbanization, the amount of waste generated annually is expected to increase by 73 percent from 2020 levels to 3.88 billion tons in 2050.

It is therefore vital that we turn the tide, and consumers, corporations, and

governments consider steps they can take to reduce consumption and ensure that we begin to reduce the volume of waste we generate.

Let's bring into play the circular economy. Let's start to share, lease, reuse, repair, refurbish, and recycle existing materials and products as long as possible. In this way, the lifecycle of products is extended.

## **Technology Could be Distracting Us from Improving Waste Management Policies**

In the push for net zero, it is easy to see why exciting and innovative new technologies receive the lion's share of attention. Electric vehicles, hydrogen fuel, and solar panels all have a critical role to play in decarbonizing our economy, reducing our use of fossil fuels, and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

However, these technologies produce waste as well. We must think about how to reuse, recycle, or dispose of new technologies once they reach the end of their service life. That is why every new and existing process or

technology that arrives on the market should include its own disposal as part of its production and operating cycle.

Thankfully, this approach is already underway. For example, batteries are a hot topic just now, and a [June 2023 report by RMI](#), an independent non-profit organization working to accelerate the clean energy transition, focused on the need for a circular battery economy to help manufacturers to mitigate the issues associated with EV battery production, and ensure that waste from the industry is kept to a minimum.

The RMI report calls for effective policy-making that covers every aspect of an EV battery's service life, including:

- Supply chain traceability
- Material transport and storage
- Improving manufacturing and production with intent to reuse and recycle
- Increasing battery recycling
- Upgrading old batteries for reuse



*Circular economy.*



## Waste Must be More than an Afterthought

Failing to properly manage and minimize waste harms the environment. It pollutes the air, the soil and water supplies, which, in turn, has serious knock-on effects for our immediate and long-term health and well-being.

Managing waste often takes a back seat because governments and businesses regard it as an expensive afterthought. But far from being a sunk cost, practical, effective waste management and recycling is in fact an investment.

By not taking waste management more seriously, we significantly undermine our chances of reaching net zero and damage the planet's ongoing ability to sustain us as well.

*Chris Williams is Founder and CEO of UK cleantech [ISB Global](#) and believes that effective and sustainable waste management must be an essential part of the global push for net zero. ISB Global provides software that allows environmental, waste management and recycling businesses to track, measure,*

*report, and analyze their waste and recyclable materials. As a UK-based company, ISB Global has offices in the U.S., South Africa, and Pakistan. Current clients include Rumpke and Waste Pro USA. Chris can be reached at [chris.williams@isb-global.com](mailto:chris.williams@isb-global.com), through LinkedIn at [www.linkedin.com/in/cjwilliams/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/cjwilliams/), or visit [www.isb-global.com](http://www.isb-global.com).*

*To see a [turnkey investment by ISB Global's customer Rumpke](#), visit [www.recyclingtoday.com/news/rumpke-breaks-ground-central-ohio-mrf](http://www.recyclingtoday.com/news/rumpke-breaks-ground-central-ohio-mrf).*

### References

- [www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management](http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management)
- <https://rmi.org/how-policy-can-advance-a-circular-battery-economy/>

**Image source:** [www.istockphoto.com/photo/abstract-icon-representing-the-ecological-call-to-recycle-and-reuse-in-the-form-of-a-gm1340716614-420705949](http://www.istockphoto.com/photo/abstract-icon-representing-the-ecological-call-to-recycle-and-reuse-in-the-form-of-a-gm1340716614-420705949).

Courtesy of ISB Global.



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# Advertising Opportunities Available

It's not too late to reserve a space in the Spring issue of Talking Trash.

## Job Openings

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or visit

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

for more information.

# Case Study: Leveraging Recycle Coach as a Tool to Optimize Outreach Efforts in St. Johns County

Matthew Denny

In January 2023, the St. Johns County Solid Waste Division partnered with Recycle Coach, a pioneering tech company established in 2001.

Recycle Coach provides customizable applications to local governments, cities, and municipalities. Their app has been a groundbreaking innovation and serves as a platform for engaging and educating communities to become more knowledgeable about their recycling programs.

While the Recycle Coach app offers a wide range of features, such as personalized curbside collection reminders, a robust search function providing disposal guidance for thousands of items, and an array of educational content, St. Johns County has leveraged it as tool to optimize outreach initiatives.

## Customer Service and Outreach

The 'Report a Problem' feature within the app has been employed by administrative staff to enhance customer service. It allows direct communication with residents, enabling staff to quickly address any questions or concerns. Furthermore, staff can seamlessly access collection schedules for residents without the need for hauler intervention. This streamlines operations and improves customer experience.

St. Johns County has also used the app to cross-promote content and outreach materials. By connecting educational videos and brochures to specific materials, residents can easily access pertinent resources



**We've Partnered with Recycle Coach!**

Download the Mobile App to become a better recycler today!

Go to [www.recyclestjohns.com](http://www.recyclestjohns.com)



**Recycle Coach Features:**

- Use the 'What Goes Where' feature to search for items and find out if they are recyclable.
- Look up your collection schedule and set weekly reminders.
- Using the 'Image Search' feature you can take a picture of an item and learn how to properly recycle or dispose of it.
- Test your knowledge by completing the 'We Wanted to Know' quiz questions each week.

Not into Apps? Use the Recycle Coach tool at: [www.recyclestjohns.com](http://www.recyclestjohns.com)

when they look up various items. To promote their Adopt-A-Road Program, they have linked information about the program to the materials most commonly found as road-side litter, such as 'cigarette butts.' They have even leveraged the app to combat improperly discarded fishing line by highlighting the piers and boat ramps with receptacles for fishing line disposal.

## Diverting Material from the Waste Stream

While the app helps residents become better recyclers, St. Johns County sought to take it a step further. They developed a comprehensive depot list that includes local businesses, non-profits, thrift stores, and recyclers within the county. Each organization on the list is linked to the specific materials they accept, including their addresses and contact information, which empowers residents to arrange drop-off or pickup services. This

provides alternative disposal methods for items not accepted in the curbside recycling program and encourages residents to donate, reuse, or repurpose household items instead of landfilling.

Not only does the creation of this depot list help divert materials from the waste stream, but it enhances visibility for local businesses and non-profits. The strong rapport and open line of communication between the County and these entities facilitates the reporting and capture of recycling tonnage data for the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Annual Solid Waste Report, ultimately contributing

to the overall recycling rate for St. Johns County.

## Ensuring Quality

In addition to monitoring the recycling rate, the County is also conducting a case study to track the contamination rate in the recycling stream. These metrics help evaluate the efficacy of their optimized outreach efforts through Recycle Coach. By empowering residents and giving them the resources they need, St. Johns County is committed to ensuring the sustainability and quality of their recycling program, paving the way for a cleaner, more environmentally responsible future.

*Matthew Denny is Outreach Coordinator for Public Works, Solid Waste Division, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners, at (904) 827-6980 or visit [www.sjcfl.us](http://www.sjcfl.us).*



# Food Waste Composting or Not

**Matthew Morse, PE**

When you are driving behind a garbage truck and you roll down the windows to catch a whiff of that ripe municipal solid waste (MSW), most of what you are smelling is food scraps. But those rotting zucchini and old eggshells are not all they are cracked up to be. The vast quantities of food we throw away have environmental impacts.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that food waste results in 58% of landfill methane emissions, which is a potent greenhouse gas (GHG). Reducing the quantity of food waste is the best option to prevent these GHG emissions; other options, such as feeding animals or composting with food waste, can also reduce GHG

converts organic matter into carbon dioxide instead of the methane that would be generated in landfills.

However, landfills that have gas-to-energy systems beneficially use the methane to generate electricity or produce natural gas. The energy from landfill methane offsets atmospheric emissions and the need to use other GHG-emitting fuels. For landfills that recover methane for energy, large-scale food-waste diversion could impact the methane generation and energy produced.



So, should food waste be composted or not? Obviously, the different perspectives would benefit from further analysis. The most environmentally beneficial and economically feasible method may ultimately depend on each individual community, its infrastructure, and their goals. Regardless, source reduction—preventing the generation of food waste in the first place—may be the most beneficial solution, environmentally and economically.

*Matthew Morse, PE, is an Engineer at JonesEdmunds. He can be reached at (352) 377-5821, ext. 1444 or e-mail [MMorse@jonesedmunds.com](mailto:MMorse@jonesedmunds.com).*

## Notes

1. US EPA. Wasted Food Scale. Accessed October 28, 2023. [www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale](https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale)
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3. US EPA. Composting. Accessed October 28, 2023. [www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/composting](https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/composting)
4. SWANA Applied Research Foundation. "Food Waste Diversion Programs and their Impacts on MSW Systems". April 2016.



generation. Landfilling is considered the least desirable management option.<sup>1,2</sup>

Food-waste composting has seen limited use in backyards, neighborhoods, community gardens, and pilot systems. Scaling this up to manage on a municipal basis can be very challenging, though there is widespread interest in food waste composting. Simply, composting involves the controlled, aerobic decomposition of organic matter over several weeks. Typically, bulkier yard waste is added to softer organic matter (e.g., food waste); at the end of the process, the product is a dark, earthy soil amendment.<sup>3</sup> Composting

and often generates methane that is not captured by LFG-collection systems.<sup>1</sup>

A 2016 Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) study on food waste noted that removing food waste from landfills "is likely to have a neutral or slightly positive impact on LFG-recovery rates."<sup>4</sup> However, this same study concluded that for landfills with efficient methane-recovery systems for energy use, a larger environmental benefit (i.e., GHG reduction) may be obtained from sending food waste to landfills instead of composting because these landfills typically have more efficient LFG-collection systems.

# Member News



## FORCE Corner – Florida Organics Recycling Center for Excellence Miriam Zimms

### *Florida FORCE Website State Regulations Subpage*

The “Rules & Regulations” subpage (under the “About” page) contains a comprehensive list of state regulations and policy memos regarding composting and organics recycling in Florida. On this page, the website visitor will find links to the following:

- FORCE Brochure on 62-709 2010 Rule Change
- FDEP’s Composting and Organics Recycling subpage contains information about the organics recycling program in Florida, [www.floridadep.gov/OrganicsRecycling](http://www.floridadep.gov/OrganicsRecycling)
  - The focus and goals of the program
  - Activities under the program
  - Link to Source-Separated Organics Processing Facilities (SOPF)
  - Link to Rule 62-709
- Publications regarding FL Compost Use and Yard Waste Best Management Practices
- Florida’s Biosolids Program Downloads, Forms, Rules, and Links
- Florida Air Permitting Compliance Program Downloads, Forms, Rules, and Links

### *Florida FORCE Website Presentations Subpage*

The “Presentations” subpage (under the “About” subpage) houses all

PowerPoint documents given by FDEP organics recycling and FORCE technical staff on an annual basis to various associations throughout FL. Presentations cover a wide range of topics, such as:

- Updates on the recovery and disposal data of organics recycling in FL.
- Role of organics recycling in an integrated solid waste management program.
- Grant opportunities available to the private and public sectors.
- Rules and regulations overview and updates, including Chapter 62-709, F.A.C.
- FORCE website updates, historical yard waste and compost research, educational materials and resources, statewide facilities map, and “how-to” navigation, etc.

Presentations are organized on the FORCE website by year, and the website has all presentations going back to 2016 containing historical data. FORCE staff maintains this information as an educational resource for the state’s organics recycling industry. Since 2001, FORCE has served as a clearinghouse for historical and current educational and research information for Florida’s agricultural, public, private, and institutional sectors fostering organics recycling business throughout the state.

*Miriam Zimms is FORCE Technical Manager and Director of Programs for Kessler Consulting, Inc.*

*For more information, on the Florida FORCE Website State Regulations Subpage, visit [www.floridaforce.org/about/state-regulations](http://www.floridaforce.org/about/state-regulations).*

*For more information, on the Florida FORCE Website Presentations Subpage, visit [www.floridaforce.org/about/presentations](http://www.floridaforce.org/about/presentations).*

## Congratulations 2023 SWANA International Road-E-O Winners

The 1st and 2nd place winners of our 2023 SWANA FL Road-E-O represented our chapter this weekend at the 2023 SWANA International Road-E-O in Denver, Colorado. Our contestants did great, and we brought home three trophies! Congratulations to Drew Lashbrook with Lee County (2nd – Loader), Joe Marshall with Clearwater (3rd – Tractor Trailor) and Eric Pasco with Tampa (2nd – Rear Loader). Way to go!

## Check Out the New SWANA FL Store

We are delighted to announce the launch of our new [online store](#)! The new store provides members with the opportunity to purchase a variety of quality shirts and hats with the SWANA FL logo. Get your apparel today and represent the chapter at your next business meeting or show your SWANA FL pride at our upcoming chapter events!







## Sponsorship Opportunities

We invite you to become a sponsor of the SWANA FL 2024 Winter Conference. As a conference sponsor, your organization will be recognized as a valued supporter. All general and exclusive sponsors will receive recognition as follows:

- \* In pre-conference promotional emails
- \* On the SWANA FL website
- \* On conference signage and in program
- \* On screen prior to the conference general sessions and during all breaks

By actively supporting this event, your organization will benefit by strengthening its prominence as a leader in the solid waste industry and by increasing your network of contacts and established partners within SWANA. Registration deadline for sponsors to be included in participant materials and on signage is January 26, 2024.

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- ☐ Tuesday Lunch - \$5,000 - includes sole recognition at lunch, table signage, one full-conference registration and half-page ad in conference agenda
- ☐ Wednesday Lunch - \$5,000 - includes sole recognition at lunch, table signage, one full-conference registration and half-page ad in conference agenda
- ☐ Conference Bags - \$1,500 **plus** the cost of selected bag - includes logo on bags that will be distributed to all attendees
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**To become a sponsor, register online at**  
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## Upcoming SWANA FL Events

**2024 Winter Conference**  
February 19-21  
Lake Buena Vista, FL

**2024 Chapter Road-E-O**  
April 26-27  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL

**2024 Summer Conference**  
July 14-16  
Orlando, FL

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