

## 2021 ELDORADO/285 RECYCLES ANNUAL REPORT

### MISSION

*The mission of Eldorado/285 Recycles is to encourage all residents of Eldorado and the Hwy. 285 corridor to reduce the amount of material they send to the landfill by practicing the “5 R’s:”*

- (1) Refusing to buy unneeded items,*
- (2) Reducing unnecessary packaging,*
- (3) Repairing whatever they can to extend its life,*
- (4) Reusing other people’s unwanted “stuff” in place of buying new, and*
- (5) Recycling or composting remaining materials whenever possible.*

### 2021: A Second Unusual Year

Many will remember 2021 beginning with the hope that vaccinations would lighten the impact of the pandemic but the emergence of new SARS-CoV-2 variants and low vaccination rates in some parts of the country/world resulted in the continuation of the challenge to return to ‘normal’. Unfortunately, losses and hardships continued for many.

Our activities continued to be scaled back in 2021 due to health and safety concerns. Nevertheless, we met regularly, via Zoom, to keep up-to-date on community and national developments, advise and educate others about the value and need for recycling and reuse options, and plan activities for 2022. We look forward to 2022 being a better year.

### YEARLY HIGHLIGHTS

- Backyard worm compost (BWC) systems continued to be installed. We have now surpassed 240 BWC systems – 24 installed in 2021. Additionally, we began to provide new straw bales and worms to people who wanted repair/enhance their existing compost system.
- Plastic Committee (now known as the Beyond Plastics Committee) was formed to keep legislative initiatives on track and serve as a research/information committee on plastic pollution and related issues.
- Plastic Forum (screening of **Story of Plastic** and **New Mexico Taking Action on Plastic Waste** and panel discussion) was held on April 30; 118 people registered and 41 people attended the panel discussion.
- We worked with Santa Fe County to re-open the Reuse Center in August.
- A “Buried in Plastic” educational event – a funeral procession with a plastic-filled coffin, music and a town crier - was held on October 31 at the Plaza.
- There were changes made in the items collected at La Tienda collections. We continue to collect pens, dental containers, razors, corks, rubber bands, and Christmas/holiday lights but no longer collect “beauty” containers.

## ADMINISTRATION

- In 2021 Libby Maclaren and Andrew Rodney served as Co-Chairs, Taylor Ward as Treasurer, and Nancy Ostiguy as Secretary.
- Throughout 2021 meetings were held on Zoom. Until public meetings are once again safe, in 2022 we will hold our monthly meetings on ZOOM.
- Meetings are on the second Tuesday of every month, from 4-6 PM. All are welcome. If you are interested in joining us please email one of our co-chairs for a zoom invitation (Andrew Rodney, [andrewroodnet@mac.com](mailto:andrewroodnet@mac.com), or Libby Maclaren, [libbymac3@icloud.com](mailto:libbymac3@icloud.com)).
- Our website [eldorado285recycles.org](http://eldorado285recycles.org) continues to attract attention. During 2021, The number of visits to our website was 24,558 while the number of hits was 159,640.
- Because we recognize the importance of reaching out beyond the Eldorado/285 area, we work with Santa Fe City and County agencies and staff to improve their practices and educational efforts to encourage all residents in Santa Fe County to practice the 5 R's.

## PROGRAMS

- **ADVOCACY:** Throughout 2021, we continued to be the leading advocates for recycling in the Santa Fe area. A petition requesting that the Reuse Center be reopened was submitted to the County. We met several times with Santa Fe County officials (Gary Giron, Les Martinez, Ryan Ward, Hank Hughes and Olivia Romo) to advocate for re-opening of the Reuse Center. The Reuse Center reopened on August 25, 2021. Additionally, several meetings were held with Commissioner Hughes about introducing a County-wide ban on plastic bags. An ordinance was drafted but Anna Hamilton withdrew the motion to introduce the ban because of lack of legal staff to assist in the process.
- **COMPOSTING:** Our “compost pile in every backyard” program in 2021 installed 24 new “straw bale worm-composting systems” in Eldorado and along the Hwy. 285 corridor bringing our total number of installed systems to 240. For this program we purchase straw bales, deliver them to the recipient, setup the system, seed it with worms, and train the new composters on how to maintain their new system. In 2021 we began to provide minimal composting systems— a few straw bales and some worms – for those who wanted. Additionally, worms were sold to people who needed to refurbish their compost system.
- **EDUCATION and OUTREACH:** We continue to submit articles about recycling, reuse and various methods of reducing wastes to newsletters published by the ECIA (Vistas) and La Tienda and publish ‘articles’ on NextDoor Eldorado. In 2021 we continued our EcoDog program in which we post periodic messages and answer questions about recycling on NextDoor.
- **BURIED IN PLASTICS:** An event was held on October 31 to educate the public about the quantity of plastic in our lives. A funeral procession was held with a plastic-filled coffin, music and a town crier at the Plaza.
- **COMMUNITY:** 2021 saw our continued participation in Santa Fe County’s "Adopt-A-Road" Program. Our project is the heavily used section of Avenida Vista Grande (from Hwy 285 to Avenida El Torreón). These cleanups occur

spring and fall. Both spring and fall, more than 10 large bags of litter were removed from our local road – approximately 45 pounds.

- FUNDRAISING: Because we are a not-for-profit volunteer organization, we rely on the unpaid work of our volunteers, donations, and on money earned at a flea market with sale items donated by our members. In 2021 the flea market was re-started and in June we facilitated the reuse and repurposing of \$660.76 worth of goods.

#### DOCUMENTING SOME OF OUR EFFORTS:

Despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic, over 1,200 hours of activities have been devoted to our recycling programs, compost installations, road clean-ups, and educational efforts/programming, e.g. newsletter articles, “Buried in Plastics” and Plastics Forum.

Quantifying our impact is difficult. However, we have tracked the success of our recycling collections programs.

- The Backyard worm compost (BWC) system diverts a significant amount of waste from the landfill. In the United States we discard almost 40 million tons of food waste per year – approximately 219 pounds per person per year. It is estimated that 43% of food waste comes from American homes. If we assume that each of the 240 composting systems we have installed are still being used and each system serves, on average, two people, we have assisted in diverting approximately 57,600 pounds food waste each year from the landfill.
- Cork recycling continues; 102 pounds of corks were sent in for reuse/recycling. [The Cork Club in Houston assisted with some of the shipping costs.]
- TerraCycle Recycled Items:
  - Over 45 pounds of personal care and cosmetic products containers were shipped.
  - Eighty pounds of dental items were shipped.
  - Thirty pounds of pens were shipped (sponsored by Jacobs Engineering).
  - Razors continue to be collected. In 2021, we collect 10.1 pounds.
  - Pens – 37.3 pounds – were shipped to Terracycle in February 2022 (most were collected in 2021). Jacob’s Engineering purchased the box.
- Electronics continue to be a challenge. Best Buy will take some items, and, for a fee, electronics can be dropped off at BURRT. While electronics are specifically listed as items we do not accept at the Reuse Center, they continue to accumulate. We deliver these not reusable electronics to BURRT, but there is a charge for this disposal; over 220 pounds were taken to BURRT in 2021.
- Athletic shoes are taken to local shelters or to Goodwill. Over 500 pairs were delivered in 2021. Over 600 pairs of socks were collected for Socktober!
- In addition to holiday lights, we recycle electrical cords and chargers. Approximately 146 lbs. of lights and other metals were taken to Capitol Scrap Metals.
- By request, presentations on zero waste and recycling were made, via Zoom, to *Civitan* and *The Transition Network*. [Thank you, Karen and Stephanie!] We hope to do more outreach and educational presentations in the future.

## PLANS FOR 2022

In general, we will continue our main activities that we have summarized above and will look for additional opportunities to encourage the "5 R's."

- **COMPOSTING:** Continued emphasis will be placed on backyard composting, the most effective and best energy-saving way of diverting fully 30% of a household's trash from the landfill.
- **ZERO WASTE:** As public events are once again begun, we will continue to help Eldorado organizations make their events zero-waste-events. We wish to continue with the city of Santa Fe and other event sponsors to make their events zero-waste as well.
- **SUPPORT and EDUCATION:** We will work to make the City and County recycling activities successful and help in implementing the recycling required by the existing ordinance at all County convenience centers.
- **"BURIED IN PLASTIC" EDUCATIONAL EVENT** – a funeral procession with a plastic-filled coffin, music and a town crier – is planned for January 17, 2022 at the Roundhouse. Other events are being considered.
- **COUNTY-WIDE PLASTIC BAG BAN:** Several meetings were held in 2021 with Commissioner Hughes about introducing a County-wide ban on plastic bags. This effort will continue in 2022.
- **RESTAURANT SURVEY** We are planning a survey of local restaurants in the Eldorado area to discern their use of environmentally friendly dining ware and carry-out items in the hopes of helping each establishment use more compostable and recyclable materials. This survey was scheduled for 2021 but was postponed due to the pandemic.

We wish to thank all the organizations who worked with us to conduct zero waste events, all the individuals who recycle at home and have contributed to our special recycling collections, and all those now operating backyard composting systems.

In addition, we are thankful to have received a donation to help our zero waste and recycling efforts from the Eldorado Arts and Crafts Association, as a portion of a percentage that is donated by the artists who participate in the Studio Tour.

**IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**