


INTERVIEW: Yosemite Has A Trash Problem. What's Being Done About It?

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By Ezra David Romero



Yosemite National Park

Yosemite National Park has a trash problem. The more than 4 million people who visit every year and those that live in Yosemite leave 2,200 tons of garbage there annually. The park service is working to decrease the amount of that trash that ends up in the Mariposa County Landfill.

To find out more about the park's [Zero Landfill Initiative](#), FM89's Ezra David Romero interviewed Yosemite National Park Ranger Jodi Bailey and Wildlife Biologist Caitlin Lee-Roney. Listen to that interview by clicking play above.

"The county landfill is already facing a pretty big challenge. It's probably got a lifespan of seven or eight years left." - Jodi Bailey

"We started trying to make it easier for people to recycle the things that they bring," says Bailey. "In our first year of the Zero Waste Initiative we bought about 150 new trash and recycling containers and new labeling on the recycling."

The park collects mixed recycling and new labels showcase that with pictures. The Zero Landfill Initiative is partly funded through Subaru of America, the National Parks Conservation Association and the Yosemite Conservancy.

The park set a goal of diverting 80 percent of the waste collected from the landfill by 2017. Bailey says the park won't make that goal, but that all upgrades and infrastructure changes should be in place sometime in 2018.

"The county landfill is already facing a pretty big challenge," Bailey says. "It's probably got a lifespan of seven or eight years left and it's really expensive to try to close down a facility like that, and to find a new one. By us improving our ability to manage our trash and to get more recycling out of here that reduces our burden on the landfill."

To help decrease the amount of trash collected in the park, Bailey says visitors should prepare better, leave excess packaging at home and try to recycle everything they can. Below is what the park recommends.

Leave excess packaging behind! When preparing for your trip, choose gear and food with the least amount of packaging or get rid of excess packaging before you leave home. Do your best to avoid buying single use products. Not only does it reduce waste when you are here, but saves you packing space!

Use Refillables! Bring as many reusable items as possible, such as water bottles, travel mugs, utensils, food containers, cooking gas canisters, and reusable bags. Use refillable propane cylinders for camp stoves and lanterns. Bonus: Refillables not only reduce waste, but save you (and us) money.

Use Rechargables! Use lanterns, flashlights, and other devices that rely on renewable or rechargeable batteries. Small portable solar chargers work well for keeping cell phones and other electronics running.

Dispose of trash and recycling properly. Be sure to put true garbage in the garbage can and recyclable items in the recycling containers. Disposing of waste properly and recycling helps keep Yosemite green and protects wildlife.

Don't abandon unneeded gear. If you don't need your camping gear after your trip to the park, but don't want to take it home with you (you can't take it on the plane or you don't need it, etc.), please consider donating it to an organization that can use it.