

Waukesha County Stormwater and Recycling Municipal Updates

June-July 2026

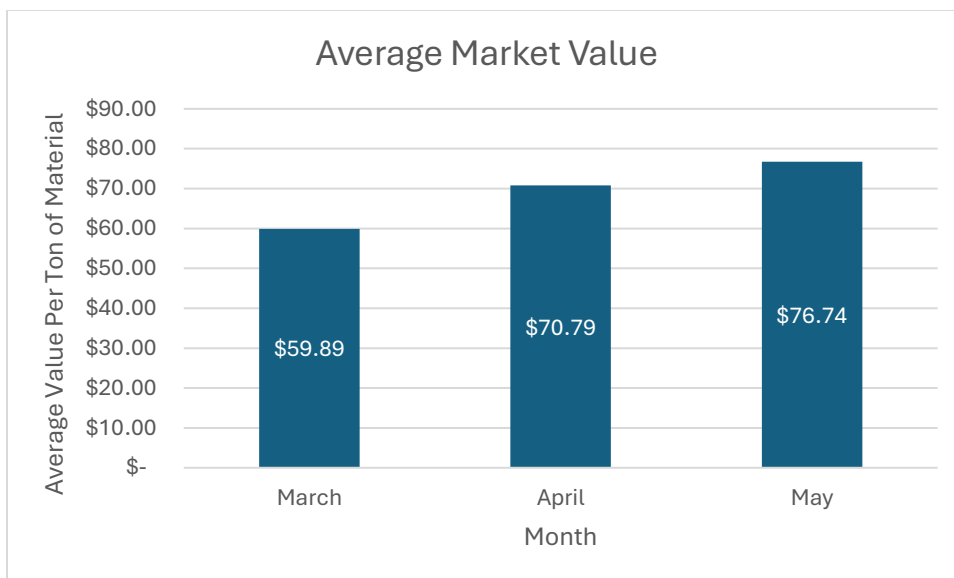
Recycle Right Campaign: Waukesha County is continuing its “Recycle Right” campaign from April through October 2026 to help residents recycle correctly and reduce contamination. The campaign features media outreach; social media posts, ads & videos; email newsletters; a postcard; and community events/direct engagement. Monthly messaging highlights specific materials like paper, cans, glass, plastics, and cartons, with tips to keep items loose, empty and dry. A news release about the campaign was distributed in May and is attached to this email for reference. We encourage you to share these resources to help residents recycle confidently.

As part of this campaign, staff were talking about *Recycling Right* last month on TMJ4’s The Morning Blend. Check it out here: <https://www.tmj4.com/shows/the-morning-blend/steps-for-smarter-recycling>

Recycling Composition Study: Preparations are underway for Waukesha County’s annual recycling composition study, which will take place this fall (date to be determined). This study analyzes recyclables collected from the Waukesha County Responsible Unit to estimate the material mix, overall quality, and amount of non-recyclable contamination in incoming loads. County staff will work directly with contracted community haulers to coordinate accurate and efficient sampling as materials are delivered to the MRF. The study results will help determine the average market value of collected recyclables for the coming year.

Please continue encouraging residents to recycle right, by sharing recycle right campaign resources (attached and mentioned above) through your channels, to help improve material quality and support strong results.

Recycling Performance: Below, please find the monthly average market value per ton for recyclables.



For March through May 2026, Midwest recycling market index reporting shows a generally improving recycling market: aluminum remained one of the strongest of the listed commodities, steel increased steadily, and cardboard (OCC) posted continued gains through May, while mixed paper recyclables also moved upward, though they remained at comparatively low levels. Plastic containers like milk jugs and laundry detergent bottles (HDPE) performed much better than plastic water bottles (PET) during the period, with natural-colored HDPE strengthening each month, in contrast to PET, which dropped in April and recovered only slightly in May. PET is the clearest weak spot in spring 2026. After remaining at very low levels in March, it declined further in April and showed only a limited rebound in May, reflecting continued weakness in end markets. Overall, the March–May 2026 Midwest market shows that metals and HDPE provided the most resilience, fiber improved modestly, and PET remained the primary area of concern and the commodity to watch most closely heading into the summer.

Event Recycling: With summer in full swing, many municipalities and organizations around Waukesha County are planning their community events. The Waukesha County Recycling and Solid Waste team offers a free recycling bin-lending program for events in Waukesha County. Supplies are limited during peak event-season so coordinate now with cduffy@waukeshacounty.gov to get your supplies secured for your upcoming events!

Staff Update: Recycling and Solid Waste Supervisor, Abbie Liedtke, will be out of the office on maternity leave beginning in July until approximately November. During this time, please contact recycling@waukeshacounty.gov for assistance, and County staff will be available to help.

WI Stormwater Week September 19 to 27: We will have special stormwater education tables in the passport event at Apple Harvest Fest at Retzer Nature Center on September 19th. Please consider having your municipality become a partner for this awareness event. [Sign up here \[click\]!](#)

➡ Stay tuned for FREE educational webinars & a statewide Call to Action for WI residents!

🗨️ More details soon at <https://www.wistormwater.com/>

Salt Wise Winter Equipment Open House in Mukwonago on October 8 from 9 to 11:30.

Expect peer-to-peer conversations among public and private sector equipment operators, policy discussions with elected officials, and lots of learning for all. We will discuss current practices and facilitate conversations around next steps through a show-and-tell of winter maintenance equipment.

Upcoming Events:

[Clean Water Festival](#) June 27th at Pewaukee Lake Beach

[Waukesha County Fair](#) July 15 from 12 to 4 pm in the 4-H Kids Zone in North Hall of the Forum Building

[Hartland Kids Fest](#) July 29, 9:00 to 1:00 pm

[Oconomowoc Kids Fest](#) August 4, 9:00 to 1:00 pm

[Mukwonago National Night Out](#) August 4, 6:00 to 8:30 pm

[Delafield National Night Out](#) August 4, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

[Sussex National Night Out](#) August 5, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

[Waukesha National Night Out](#) August 5, 5:00 to 8:00 pm

[Hartland National Night Out](#) August 6, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

[Big Bend National Night Out](#) August 13, 5:00 to 8:00 pm

[Oconomowoc National Night Out](#) August 21, 5:00 to 8:00 pm

Email List: Is someone at your municipality missing out on these updates? Please share their email with cduffy@waukeshacounty.gov to get added to the distribution list!



Waukesha County

Department of Parks and Land Use

Contact: Natalie Fairbanks
Phone: 262-896-8328

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Date: Tuesday, May 26, 2026

WAUKESHA COUNTY LAUNCHES SUMMER-LONG CAMPAIGN TO HELP RESIDENTS “RECYCLE RIGHT”

(**WAUKESHA, Wis.**) – This summer, Waukesha County is making it easier for residents to recycle with confidence. Waukesha County Recycles is kicking off a countywide recycling education campaign designed to help households understand what belongs in the recycling bin – and what doesn’t.

Throughout the summer months, the initiative will bring practical tips, community outreach events, and easy-to-follow resources directly to residents across the county. The goal is simple: reduce contamination in recycling carts and ensure more materials are successfully recycled.

“Removing waste from recyclables provides for higher quality recycled material, better market value for the material and a financial win for taxpayers,” Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow said. “This campaign is about giving residents the tools they need to make recycling simple and effective.”

While most residents want to recycle responsibly, confusion about acceptable materials can lead to items ending up in the wrong place. Plastic bags, food waste, and certain packaging materials are among the most common items mistakenly placed in recycling carts, which can contaminate otherwise recyclable materials and disrupt processing at recycling facilities.

The summer campaign will focus on three key messages:

- **Know what belongs in your cart.** Common recyclable materials include clean paper, cardboard, metal cans, and certain plastic containers.
- **Keep items loose, empty and dry.** Do not bag recyclables, as equipment cannot sort bagged materials. Food residue and liquids can contaminate recyclables.
- **When in doubt, throw it out.** Non-recyclable items placed in carts can cause serious disruption at recycling facilities.

Department of Parks and Land Use
515 W. Moreland Blvd AC 260
Waukesha, WI 53188
262-896-8300



Residents can expect to see recycling education throughout the county this summer, including social media tips, community outreach events and digital resources.

By improving recycling habits, Waukesha County aims to reduce contamination, lower processing costs, protect natural resources and conserve landfill space.

Residents can learn more about how to recycle correctly and access educational resources at waukeshacounty.gov/recycling.

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Recycle Right Social Media:

<p>June</p>	<p>Recycle paper cartons this month and all year long – they’re a valuable commodity. Follow these easy tips to Recycle Right:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO recycle food and beverage cartons (milk, broth, juice) when empty - no straws please!• DON’T put recyclables in plastic bags or put plastic film in the cart as they tangle sorting equipment. Return bags, wrap, and film to a retail drop-off. <p>Not sure about an item? View Waukesha County’s recycling guide here: waukeshacounty.gov/recycling</p>	<p>CART THOSE CARTONS!</p> <p>Keep your straws out!</p> <p>Waukesha County Recycles waukeshacounty.gov/recycling</p>
<p>July</p>	<p>In July, help recycling efforts by focusing on glass. Follow these easy tips to Recycle Right and keep hazards out of your cart:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO recycle only glass bottles and jars; empty, rinsed, and with lids removed.• DON’T place hazardous materials (batteries, propane cylinders, chemicals, sharps) in recycling or trash carts. <p>Need guidance on disposing of these items? Find resources at waukeshacounty.gov/disposal</p>	<p>BOTTLES AND JARS IN, HAZARDS OUT!</p> <p>Keep metal lids separate!</p> <p>Waukesha County Recycles waukeshacounty.gov/recycling</p>

Recycle Right Newsletter Copy:

<p>June</p>	<p><i>Headline:</i> Cart Those Cartons! <i>Copy:</i> Recycle paper cartons this month and all year long – they’re a valuable commodity. Follow these easy tips to Recycle Right:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO recycle food and beverage cartons (milk, broth, juice) when empty - no straws please!• DON’T put recyclables in plastic bags or put plastic film in the cart as they tangle sorting equipment. Return bags, wrap, and film to a retail drop-off. <p>Not sure about an item? View Waukesha County’s recycling guide here: waukeshacounty.gov/recycling</p>	<p>The graphic features the headline "CART THOSE CARTONS!" in blue and green text on a crumpled paper background. Below the headline is a blue wavy line. The bottom half has a dark blue background with a white milk carton and a juice carton, both with green checkmarks. To the right, it says "Keep your straws out!" and includes the Waukesha County Recycles logo and website.</p>
<p>July</p>	<p><i>Headline:</i> Bottles and Jars In, Hazards Out! <i>Copy:</i> In July, help recycling efforts by focusing on glass. Follow these easy tips to Recycle Right and keep hazards out of your cart:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• DO recycle only glass bottles and jars; empty, rinsed, and with lids removed.• DON’T place hazardous materials (batteries, propane cylinders, chemicals, sharps) in recycling or trash carts. <p>Need guidance on disposing of these items? Find resources at waukeshacounty.gov/disposal</p>	<p>The graphic features the headline "BOTTLES AND JARS IN, HAZARDS OUT!" in blue and green text on a crumpled paper background. Below the headline is a blue wavy line. The bottom half has a dark blue background with a green glass bottle and a clear glass jar, both with green checkmarks. To the right, it says "Keep metal lids separate!" and includes the Waukesha County Recycles logo and website.</p>