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## Thinking About Plastics

I know it's August, but did you know that July was a very special month? Summer vacations, 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations, (and then the creeping realization that summer was beginning to wind down). Here's one more designation worth adding: "Plastic Free July".

Started in Western Australia in 2011, this movement has millions of participants in more than 150 countries, according to their [web site](#). Their goal is to build a global movement that dramatically reduces plastic use and improves recycling. During the month of July, we are invited to 'Choose To Refuse' single-use plastic.



July is gone, but it's never too late to refuse single use plastics, like drinking straws, to-go containers, coffee cups, and plastic shopping bags. Anymore, reusable options for these items are readily available. More importantly, it is a matter of making a commitment to carry reusable replacements with you. Every year, people generate more than [2 billion tons](#) of waste, [ninety-nine percent](#) of which is discarded within 6 months!

We are frequently led to believe that plastic packaging and consumer goods are recyclable because they have the recycling symbol on them. But that's not always true in practice. For example, some plastic containers are recyclable, but the inks and labels used on them are problematic. In a recent [press release](#), according to Steve Alexander, president and CEO of the Association of Plastics Recyclers (APR), "At the end of the day, recyclability goes beyond just being technically recyclable. There must be consumer access to a recycling program, a recycler must be able to process the material and there must be an end market."

Manufacturers must assume more responsibility in making sure their packaging is recyclable in the true sense of the word. I would argue that this is more important than "consumer" behavior. It's time to keep plastics in a closed loop system and out of the eco-system where it does so much harm. The responsibility begins with the makers of consumer products and should extend through the disposal of their packaging.

Be well,  
Julie

## Free Webinar "Hub & Spoke - A Recycling Model for Rural Communities"

Join us for a free webinar on **Tuesday, August 28th from noon to 1:00 pm**. Recycling in rural areas presents unique challenges. One option is to form multi-community partnerships to capitalize on economies of scale. Learn how rural Nebraska communities can improve their recycling programs with the hub and spoke recycling model. Sarah Pierpont of Pierpont Consulting and Executive Director of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition will be our presenter.

### Biography

Sarah Pierpont is executive director of the New Mexico Recycling Coalition and



founder/director of Pierpont Consulting. In partnership with SCS Engineering, she completed the statewide Rural Iowa Hub and Spoke Recycling Study for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources that categorized and assessed rural recycling within Iowa, and incorporated a feasibility study to determine the appropriateness of hub and spoke recycling for improving efficiencies.

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## Our Zero Waste Journey with Nebraska Communities



NRC recently completed the Zero Waste Community Roadmap Project\*, the first project of its kind in Nebraska. Over the course of five years, NRC worked with five communities to help their leaders see the value of integrating a Zero Waste approach in their planning to reduce waste going to landfills. Through education, dialogue, waste assessments, surveys, and visioning, NRC developed strategies for reducing waste through policy, infrastructure, and education. Over \$12,000 of grant funds directly supported our Zero Waste communities to promote and enhance their recycling and waste reduction initiatives, plus more than \$55,000 worth of in-kind hours. Here are a few highlights of our work with communities on their Zero Waste Journey:

- **Keep Cass County Beautiful** - Implemented a pay-as-you-throw model, called “Save as You Throw” or “SMART,” for residential trash services in Louisville, including an upgrade to their curbside recycling services with a free, 95-gallon recycling cart for bi-weekly pickup of household recyclables as well as the Hefty Energy Bag Program.
- **Louisville Public Schools** – Began a composting program that has diverted nearly 5 tons of food waste from the landfill. The school’s recycling program also collects 14,500 pounds annually.
- **Wayne Green Team** – Implemented new recycling programs for glass and batteries, while programs for hard-to-recycle materials, such as electronics, household hazardous waste, holiday lights, eyeglasses, and prescription drugs, continue through various events. NRC assisted in the purchase of 32 recycling bins for their public parks and community events, and more than \$4,000 of NRC’s grant funding went to launching an educational Zero Waste Marketing Campaign.
- **Broken Bow** - A new, centralized location was sited for their drop-off recycling center with plans to improve the area with landscaping, lighting, and signage. NRC’s grant funding contributed \$3,500 to the enhancement project.
- **Custer County Recycling (CCR)** - A “Recycle Right at Area Drop-off Sites” flyer was mailed to over 10,000 households in the region to increase recycling participation and address some of the most problematic contamination issues.

\*Funding by [Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality](#)

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Webinars & Events



### [Gage County Scrap Tire Cleanup Event](#)

August 15-16 | 8am - 5pm | Parking lot north of Gage County Fairgrounds

### [Safety Training Courses](#)

Nebraska Safety Council | [View the calendar](#)

### [Thinking in Systems - NRC 2018 Annual Awards Luncheon & Workshops](#)

Tuesday, October 2 | 8am - 1pm | Country Club of Lincoln | [REGISTER](#)

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## Articles of Interest



### [Visualizing the effects of China](#)

*5 charts that show the trade flow effects of China's import policies*

### [Sample Policies to Prevent Plastic Pollution](#)

*Stopping marine debris at the source*

### [The 8 attributes of successful sustainability leaders](#)

*Courage, Conviction, Cleverness, Contrariness, Collaboration, Cheerfulness, Charisma, Humility*

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