

Recycling Our Area's Resources

Copper Valley's community recycling program has been a successful example of how this small community succeeds through volunteer efforts in cooperation with local networks and resources. With a mission to reduce the amount of waste going into the local landfill and educate the public about the benefits of recycling for conserving resources, Recycling Our Area's Resources (ROAR) was formed in 1991. This small group of volunteers worked to help local residents, agencies and businesses move their materials into the recycling stream.

Over these 16 years, ROAR has helped to recycle 122 tons of materials that otherwise might have been burned or disposed of in the landfills. Sixty-five tons of newspaper, twenty-two tons of mixed/office paper, five tons of cardboard and thirty tons of aluminum cans (for those of you wondering that's 1.92 million cans!) make up the total tonnage.

In 1994 and again in 2004, the Copper Valley was honored as "Outstanding Recycling Community" of the year by Alaskans for Litter Prevention and Recycling as a result of ROAR's efforts, but the organization was on the road to "volunteer burnout".

Processing and transfer of these recyclable materials in the early years was very labor intensive. Cans and paper had to be stored in bundles in an old van and shipped to Anchorage through a donated backhaul. For many years, this unscheduled transfer had to be done just a few hours after a call from Valdez, loading quickly when the truck was passing through town.

Volunteers, under short notice, moved literally tons of materials into the Carlile van by hand, sometimes in subzero temperatures with headlamps! Volunteers staffed the van on one Friday and Saturday each month, again in cold and exposed conditions.

The organization quickly realized that it was time to switch gears. Three planning workshops took place throughout 2003-2004. During these workshops ROAR worked with local businesses, tribal governments, non-profit organizations and federal agencies to develop strategies for building regional and local recycling capacity.

The group decided to employ a coordinator to help build a volunteer base and infrastructure and to streamline operations to reduce the amount of volunteer labor needed

to move materials. They decided to create more efficient, user-friendly collection systems for the community, expand the amount and types of materials recycled, as well as find local reuses for paper and other materials. It was also important to provide education and outreach to increase awareness about the importance of recycling and participation in local recycling programs. Finally, ROAR wanted to develop and support satellite drop-off locations and conduct spring "Can Round-Ups" to deal with large volumes of recyclables accumulating in communities.

As a critical first step, Mt. Sanford Tribal Consortium (MSTC) secured funding for a part-time Recycling Coordinator. Over the next three years, coordinator Liz Rietveld built ROAR's board and volunteers, streamlined operations, wrote grants and provided project and grant administration.

Since 2003, ROAR, along with many local supporters, has been able to meet many of the goals outlined in the earlier workshops.

Through a grant from the Rasmusson Foundation, ROAR purchased a road-worthy tractor trailer: recyclable materials are loaded directly into the trailer and transported with local shipper, Copper Basin Distributors.

The desire to create more efficient collection systems resulted in the construction of a loading dock with after-hour bins for 24/7 drop-off of paper and aluminum cans. This project was funded through the Denali Commission, MSTC and Native Village of Tazlina. The organization now supports new drop-off

locations at Tazlina Trading Post and Tonsina Lodge as well.

Funding from the Denali Commission enabled the purchase of a second trailer for transporting baled cardboard from large producers in the region and two cargo trailers for can round-ups as in Willow Creek and Slana.

ROAR provides local livestock owners with shredded white paper for bedding throughout the year and supports electronic recycling collections each spring.

Creating awareness of the recycling program and the importance of recycling has been a priority. An outreach program about crushing cans was created and over 150 can-crushers have been distributed to household recyclers making loads more valuable. ROAR also is now brokering their goods through Valley Solutions for Recycling in Wasilla with a greater return per pound.

ROAR has annual presentations at Earth Discovery Day and hosts local field trips to the recycling center for area



Local farmer's use shredded paper for livestock bedding. Photo courtesy of ROAR



Above: ROAR recycling center and transport van, located just off the Glenn Hwy. Right: After hour bins for aluminum cans. Photos courtesy of ROAR

students.

Volunteers are very important and ROAR has many dedicated to the success of recycling in the Copper Basin. Currently, ten organizations and businesses, such as Copper Valley Electric Association, provide monthly sponsorships. These sponsorships provide the volunteer labor to process the materials from the public drop-offs into the transport trailer. "Working at the recycling center is a great opportunity for CVEA employees to give back to the community and help protect the environment. It is very easy and can be fun for all who participate," according to Sharon Crisp, Director of Communications for CVEA.

ROAR's regional recycling center is located at Mile 188.5 on the Glenn Highway in Glennallen. For maximum convenience, the bins are open 24/7 for drop offs.

The following recyclables are accepted:

- Aluminum Cans: Crushed preferred, clean of aluminum foil and garbage
- Newspapers: Loose, NO bags, boxes, strings or bundles
- Office Paper: Loose, white or colored, NO boxes, bags, bundles, trash, etc
- Shredded Office Paper: Bagged and placed in old van; **Do not put in Office Paper Bin!**

Alternative drop off or collection sites:

- Cheesh'na Village: drop-off for aluminum cans, antifreeze and used oil



- Village of Chitina collects aluminum cans.
- Gulkana Village recycles a wide variety of materials
- Tazlina River Trading Post, Kenny Lake Mercantile, Tonsina Lodge: Aluminum can drop off locations

If you are interested in volunteering at the ROAR recycling transfer site, or if your community would like to host a can round-up, contact Sharon Daniel at Copper Basin Sanitation, 822-3600.

Please Remember to Crush Your Cans!

