



KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

# By the Way

Helping people make a difference in Westmoreland County

AUGUST 2023

## The YEAR in REVIEW



My how time flies when you're having fun! It is hard to believe that it's time for another "year in review." We have been busy, busy, busy here at Westmoreland Cleanways. We are getting well over 100 cars a day at our center. Our crew

of fabulous workers have been working their tails off unloading and processing all the items our great customers have been dropping off. Just how much unloading and processing have they done? Since last June more than:

- 1,400 Freon containing items
- 180 tons of scrap metal
- 76 tons of glass
- 165 tons of paper, cardboard, and books
- 18 tons of lead acid batteries
- 10,000 tires
- 14,000 florescent bulbs
- 1.3 million pounds of televisions and other electronics

We have also densified over 6,000 pounds of expanded polystyrene, better known as Styrofoam. So far, this densified Styrofoam saved over 4,500 CUBIC FEET of landfill space, about the same space as 45 LARGE refrigerators! Instead of going to the landfill, this polystyrene will be made back into plastic pellets and used again in the plastic injection molding industry. We have also processed over 16,000 pounds of plastic containers. Wait!! Did I just say plastic containers?!?! You bet I did!

In talking with many of you on the phone or in person, I heard countless times the desire for a place to recycle plastic containers. We did some searching, found a local source to partner with, and calculated the impact it would have on our budget. As you may or may not know, Westmoreland Cleanways pays the transportation costs to some of our processors. Which, depending on the commodity's market, can unfortunately be larger than the monetary value of recycling the item. Knowing that the environmental

value of a properly recycled item is priceless, and that, fingers crossed, we can cover the additional costs, we started accepting 1-7 plastic containers in February.

We also saw the need for a plastic bag drop off site as some local sources have stopped their collection. This spring, in a partnership with Trex, we started collecting plastic bags and film. Trex accepts the plastic bags we collect and uses them to make the plastic lumber that you see decks and benches made from.

We also have been doing a great job in collecting Household Hazardous Waste (HHW). And when I say "WE", I mean **all** of you and **all** of us here at Westmoreland Cleanways. In the last year we have collected, and either recycled or properly disposed of over 90,000 pounds of HHW, keeping these chemicals, solvents, and more out of the environment.

This year at the recycling center, we had three students working for us this summer. These three young students (Dan, Jonas, & Daniel) did a TREMENDOUS job of helping us unload and process the items we receive every week. Our full-time workers (Mike, James, & Bill) are some of the best employees a business can have. Let me tell you! These guys are **fantabulous** at what they do. No matter if the weather is cold with snow or rain, or unbearably hot and muggy, my crew gets the job done every day—and with a smile! And that Natalie, she is just the best! She has been soooo busy out in the community educating the youngsters about recycling, litter, and composting. During the 22-23 school year she presented programs to nearly 7,000 students and adults. WOW!! Natalie also keeps me on the straight and narrow here at the recycling center—which, let me tell you, is no easy task. I am truly blessed with a premier staff here at Westmoreland Cleanways.

As you can see, it has been a VERRRRY busy year for us. However, I wouldn't want it any other way! Thank you so much for your support and keep those card\$ and letter\$ coming!

Mike Skapura

**WESTMORELAND  
CLEANWAYS AND RECYCLING**

**2022-2023  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Officers**

**Serdar Bankaci, *President***  
**Michael Porembka, *Vice President***  
**William McCabe *Secretary***  
**Barbara McMillen, *Treasurer***

**Directors**

John Bacha  
 Curt Fontaine  
 Fred Goodman  
 Matthew Pellis  
 Michael V. Quatrini  
 Christopher Seaman

**Staff**

**Michael Skapura, *Executive Director***  
**Natalie Reese, *Program Director***

**355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Road  
 Greensburg, PA 15601  
 Phone: 724-879-4020  
 Fax: 724-879-8576**

**website:**

**[westmorelandcleanways.org](http://westmorelandcleanways.org)**

**email:**

**[info@westmorelandcleanways.org](mailto:info@westmorelandcleanways.org)**



**By the Way** is published throughout the year by Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling. Copies may also be found on our web site:  
**[www.westmorelandcleanways.org](http://www.westmorelandcleanways.org)**

## If Wishes Were Pennies, We'd be Rich

Unfortunately, we have seen an increase in "wishcycling" occurring here at the center. Wishcycling is the act of putting non-recyclable items in the recycling bin with the hope that they will be recycled. It's optimistic thinking, but in truth, it can threaten our recycling programs. Items we often see **INCORRECTLY** dropped off in our glass and plastic bins include:



- |                      |                  |                    |
|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| -Ceramic plates/mugs | -6 pack rings    | -Mops and brooms   |
| -Pyrex dishes        | -Plastic coolers | -Lawn mower parts  |
| -Crystal vases       | -Plastic piping  | -Receipts and food |
| -Mirrors             | -Lawn furniture  | waste in the       |
| -Sheet glass         | -Mattresses      | plastic bags       |
| -Plastic toys        | -Car fenders     |                    |

Placing unacceptable items in the recycling bin can cause recyclables to get devalued, which could encourage our recycling outlets to stop accepting material from us. Our staff tries to pick out the incorrect items, but it is very easy to miss an item. Digging through a bin is also a sure way for staff to risk injuring themselves. Then, we must put these incorrect items in our dumpster. That means not only are we paying our usual transportation fees to recycle the plastic and glass we get, but also additional fees to landfill the unaccepted material. The wishcycled items that do mistakenly get shipped out for recycling can damage sorting machines at material recovery facilities—creating unsafe working conditions for their staff, and are still ultimately sent to landfills.

As much as I would love to say everything is recyclable, it's just not true. If you're in doubt, don't just throw an item into the recycling bin, and hope for the best. Please ask a recycling center attendant, or call/email us in the office.

## Recycling Bin Loaner Program

Don't forget – Westmoreland Cleanways offers the Clearstream recycling bin loaner program, absolutely for free! Do you have a family picnic coming up? How about a class reunion? Or do you know a location that could really use a recycling bin? Westmoreland Cleanways offers recycling bins to loan for short-term and long-term events as a better way to dispose of your plastic bottles and aluminum cans. And the best part: it's completely free! Give us a call at 724-879-4020 or email us at



**[info@westmorelandcleanways.org](mailto:info@westmorelandcleanways.org)** to reserve some bins today!

## The Passion to Volunteer Never Stops

That title speaks volumes! This is SO TRUE about the volunteers that have come to our facility this past year. These wonderful folks are another GREAT asset we are fortunate to have. I would be remiss if I didn't give some accolades to all the volunteers who have stepped up this year and poured their heart and soul (along with a ton of sweat and muscle) into helping here at the center as we collect and process the items. These great individuals gave up their time to volunteer here at the recycling center. They got muddy, they got wet, they got cold, they got thirsty – but they kept on going! They are Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, nurses, firefighters, retirees, and non-retirees. They come from St. Vincent, Seton Hill, Greater Latrobe Schools, Mt. Pleasant Schools, and other schools. They are private individuals from Greensburg, Murrysville, Latrobe, Derry, Mount Pleasant, and other local spots that just want to help make a difference. I salute their volunteerism and I admire their passion. To all of you – KUDOS! THANKS! GRACI!



—Mike

## From Here to There, Microplastics are Everywhere

This year we added two new lines to our Recycling Center, plastic containers and plastic bags. We are excited each and every time a new material is added to the Westmoreland Cleanways lineup, but when it comes to plastic we are especially thrilled. In total, we now accept expanded polystyrene #6 foam (commonly referred to as Styrofoam), plastic bottles and containers, and plastic bags and film.

Like all plastics made from fossil fuels, these items don't biodegrade. Instead, due to environmental factors they break down and become microplastics—plastic debris that are less than five millimeters (0.2 inches) in length. Microplastics can become so small, smaller than a strand of hair, that the particles can easily become airborne. Due to their tiny size and light weight, microplastics can travel quickly and have been found all over the globe, even in Antarctica.

Microplastics enter the environment through many methods: as plastic pellet (nurdles) litter from unintentional spills during plastic manufacturing or transportation, as microfibers from synthetic clothing in the wash, as plastic litter that degrades from weathering, and even in the leachate and gases produced at a landfill. On beaches, microplastics are visible as tiny multicolored plastic bits in sand. They have also been detected in marine organisms from plankton to whales, birds, terrestrial animals, in drinking water, and even in the human body. In 2017, a Belgian scientist announced that seafood lovers could consume up to 11,000 plastic particles a year by eating mussels. Concurrently, a research team at the University of Plymouth, U.K, concluded that people will inhale or ingest more plastic fibers from the air than by eating mussels.



Not only are microplastics themselves becoming a nuisance, but they are also causing health issues in various organisms. Because they can absorb pollutants and leach out chemicals, they act as both vectors and carriers of pollutants in the environment, causing harm to life forms. For example, certain bird populations are thought to be threatened by exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals contained in plastics, and laboratory studies of fish have found plastics can cause harm to reproductive systems and stress the liver. There are no studies so far that connect microplastic exposure to poor health in humans, but laboratory tests have shown microplastics can cause damage to human cells.

Recycling is not the ultimate solution to the microplastic problems plaguing society today, but it can be a small part of the remedy. In the grand scheme of things, avoidance, reduction, and reuse are much better solutions to the microplastics problem. However, in our throwaway society that is not always easy to do. Until there is a societal shift, recycling expanded polystyrene, plastic containers and plastic bags and wrap is a MUCH better alternative than landfilling the items or allowing the plastic to become litter.

Information for this article taken from:

Case Studies in Chemical and Environmental Engineering, June 2021, Microplastics in Landfill leachate <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666016420300700>, National Geographic, May 8 2023, Microplastics are in our bodies. How much do they harm us? <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/microplastics-are-in-our-bodies-how-much-do-they-harm-us>, and Britannica, Microplastics. <https://www.britannica.com/technology/microplastic>





# Plastic Bags and Wrap Recycling

## Drop off plastic bags and wrap at:

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling  
355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Rd.  
Greensburg PA 15601

## General Public:

Mondays: Noon – 5 p.m.  
Wednesdays: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
Fridays: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
2nd Saturday of each Month: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

## Businesses/Large volume generators:

Tuesdays: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Thursdays: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Call to schedule an appointment

## Refer questions to:

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling at:  
724-879-4020  
[info@westmorelandcleanways.org](mailto:info@westmorelandcleanways.org)  
[westmorelandcleanways.org](http://westmorelandcleanways.org)



## DO NOT INCLUDE THESE ITEMS IN NEXTREX® PROGRAMS



FROZEN FOOD BAGS



CANDY BAR WRAPPERS



CHIP BAGS



NET OR MESH PRODUCE BAGS



MULCH OR SOIL BAGS

### OR THESE

- ✗ Degradable/compostable bags or film packaging
- ✗ Six-pack rings
- ✗ Vinyl shower curtains or tablecloths
- ✗ Pre-washed salad mix bags
- ✗ PPE- Gloves, masks, or protective wear
- ✗ Bedding or linen packaging
- ✗ Pet food bags
- ✗ Pool covers
- ✗ Shiny, crinkly films like floral wrap
- ✗ Hot dog or meat wrap packaging
- ✗ Lamination film
- ✗ Backyard ice rinks
- ✗ Silage and hay bags

## Don't see your item on the list?

Try these tests to see if your plastic is acceptable or not:

1. See if the package will stretch when you pull it. If **yes**, it can be included. If it tears like paper, then no it can't be included.
2. Is the package shiny or does it make a crinkly/crunchy sound in your hand? If yes, do **NOT** recycle it.

To learn more about the recycling process and TREX products visit:



# Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling



355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Road  
Greensburg, PA 15601

724-879-4020

[info@westmorelandcleanways.org](mailto:info@westmorelandcleanways.org)

[westmorelandcleanways.org](http://westmorelandcleanways.org)

## General Public:

Mondays: Noon – 5 p.m.

Wednesdays: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Fridays: 8 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Second Saturday of Each Month: 8:30 a.m. – Noon

## Business/Large volume generators:

Tuesdays: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Thursdays: 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

## Plastic 1-7 Containers Vinyl siding and fencing



Items must have the accepted symbol



### RINSE CONTAINERS OF FOOD AND CHEMICAL RESIDUE

- Drop off the plastic and vinyl into the yellow bins located near our glass drop-off area, no sorting necessary
- Place plastic items loose into the yellow bins (not in plastic bags or boxes)
- Labels can remain on the containers
- Keep the plastic lids on the containers (metal lids can be placed in our scrap metal bin)
- Vinyl siding and vinyl fencing must be 4ft. or smaller in length
- Do NOT place any plastic bags in the yellow bins– drop them off inside building #11

### NOT ACCEPTED

Plastic straws  
Plastic cup lids  
6 pack rings  
Plastic toys

Plastic buckets  
Plastic lawn furniture  
Plastic storage containers or shelving  
Rigid plastic pieces/parts

Gasoline and kerosene containers  
Plastic tool cases  
Plastic piping such as PVC and ABS pipes

**NOTE:** Plastic bags, plastic wrap and food grade and block polystyrene foam (Styrofoam) are **ONLY** Accepted Inside Building #11 (NOT in the yellow bins)





# Household Hazardous Waste Collection

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month  
 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.  
 \$0.80/lb. credit or debit card only

355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Road  
 Greensburg, PA 15601  
 724-879-4020  
[info@westmorelandcleanways.org](mailto:info@westmorelandcleanways.org)  
[westmorelandcleanways.org](http://westmorelandcleanways.org)

HHW is only accepted on the **1st and 3rd WEDNESDAY of the month** when Noble Environmental is on site. Westmoreland Cleanways employees are not legally permitted to handle HHW at any time and material cannot be stored on site.

When arriving on site, following the recycling entrance sign to the back of the property, and look for the HHW drop off area (building # 8).

To ensure everyone's safety around hazardous chemicals and equipment, stay in your vehicle. Noble Environmental staff will unload your vehicle and collect payment (\$0.80/lb. credit or debit card only). Please note: the weight of the material includes the containers. Noble Environmental will not return storage containers.



## Accepted Household Hazardous Waste:

- 5 gallon containers or smaller
- Oil Based/Latex Paint/Stains/Varnish
- Putties, Adhesives, Glues
- Wood/Metal Finishing Products
- Water Sealers
- Flammable Liquids
- Batteries (any type)
- Light bulb/tube (any type)
- Antifreeze/Automotive Fluids and cleaners
- Household Cleaning Agents and moth balls
- Drain Cleaners
- Lawn & Garden products/Fertilizers/Herbicides/Pesticides



## Prohibited items:

Pool chemicals, Explosives, Ammunition, Radioactive materials, Pharmaceuticals, Syringes, Medical waste, Smoke detectors, Mercury containing devices, and Elemental mercury

For questions about acceptable materials, check with Noble Environmental, 412-567-6566



Residents of some Westmoreland County municipalities have the option to recycle their HHW curbside through their garbage hauler. The service is built into the trash/recycling contract; however, additional fees may apply, and certain materials may be restricted. Where available, it is necessary to contact the hauler to SCHEDULE the service.

## Every Litter Bit Matters

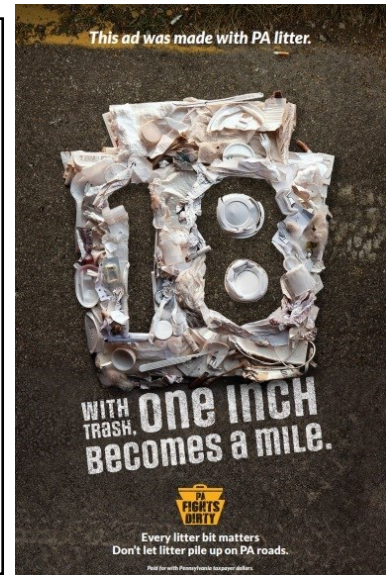
Sadly, Pennsylvania roadways have an estimated 502.5 million pieces of litter on them; that's more than 1,000 pieces of litter per mile. More concerning to me is the fact 97% of Pennsylvanians think littering is not OK, but 40-50% of us still do it! There is a disconnect between what is actually litter and what people perceive as litter. Leaving garbage on the ground next to a garbage can is litter. Dropping small items such as cigarette butts and candy wrappers on the ground is litter. Leaving food or drink behind when leaving a stadium is litter!

**I know I am preaching to the choir, but I'm counting on you, as like minded individuals to help spread the facts about litter and to help share tips to stop littering before it hits the ground.**

—Natalie

### Key Facts

1. Small pieces of litter make up most of our litter. 85% of the litter along PA roadways is four inches or less. Toss your trash—no matter how small—into a garbage can.
2. Litter is proven to attract more litter. Research shows that when an individual sees litter, they're more likely to toss a can, candy wrapper, or cigarette butt in the same place.
3. Some litter, like cigarette butts, are toxic. They may seem small and harmless, but cigarette butts are filled with dangerous chemicals which are toxic to wildlife and humans. They account for one-third of all litter and can take up to ten years to decompose. **Stash them until you can trash them.**
4. Litter costs Pennsylvania around \$350 million every year. Those funds could be used for road repairs, transportation, and safety improvements. Instead, they're thrown away on cleaning up trash.



### 11 Ways to be Anti-Litter

1. Keep a reusable bag in your car to stash trash like food wrappers until you get home, stop at a gas station, or pass a garbage can.
2. Stop trash at its source by living a reduce-reuse-recycle lifestyle. Ask for less packaging, avoid single-use plastics, make items last as long as possible and buy used. Recycle correctly. If in doubt about the recyclability of an item, ask! We are here to help.
3. Cover your trash and recycling bins when you take them to the curb. If you sweep the sidewalk in front of your home, bag any trash and put it in a trash can instead of sweeping it into the street.
4. Cover items being transported in a truck bed. Uncovered trucks are one of the top three sources of litter in PA.
5. Follow the [Leave No Trace code](https://www.nps.gov/articles/leave-no-trace-seven-principles.htm) in Pennsylvania's parks and forests.  
(<https://www.nps.gov/articles/leave-no-trace-seven-principles.htm>)
6. Smoker? Keep a container in your car and pocket for cigarette butts. Cigarette butts contain plastic, leach nicotine and heavy metals, and take about 10 years to break down.
7. Report illegal dump sites. Use the confidential [online form](https://www.keppabeautiful.org/contact-us/report-a-dumpsite/) from Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.  
(<https://www.keppabeautiful.org/contact-us/report-a-dumpsite/>)
8. Check out [PA's Litter Action Plan](https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/littering/Pages/Litter-Action-Plan.aspx). Then call your representatives or your favorite local business to ask what they're doing to prevent litter and how you can join in. (<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/littering/Pages/Litter-Action-Plan.aspx>)
9. Join a local volunteer litter cleanup event through [Pick Up Pennsylvania](https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/pick-up-pa/). Free supplies are provided for PUP events March 1- May 31 and Sept. 1- Nov. 30.  
(<https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/pick-up-pa/>)
10. [Adopt a Road](https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/land-stewards). It's easy to apply, Cleanways can provide supplies.  
(<https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/land-stewards>)
11. If you're a teacher, school administrator, or parent, start a [Litter Free School Zone program](https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/education/litter-free-school-zone/) to get students in the habit of taking care of their trash. (<https://www.keppabeautiful.org/programs/education/litter-free-school-zone/>)

# By the Way - August 2023



WESTMORELAND CLEANWAYS AND RECYCLING  
355 PLEASANT UNITY MUTUAL ROAD  
GREENSBURG, PA 15601

If you do not want to receive this newsletter, please call 724-879-4020 and ask to have your name removed from our mailing list.

## What We're All About

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to protect, restore and maintain the environmental qualities of our county for the benefit of all who live, work, and visit herein. Westmoreland Cleanways accomplishes its mission by sponsoring and promoting programs that address the proper disposal of solid waste through recycling, special collections, and the cleanup of illegal dumpsites and littered areas. We educate the public through presentations, print media and the web.

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling operates a recycling center for hard-to-dispose material, initiates and facilitates programs by bringing together a network of volunteers, industry leaders, and state and local government representatives to provide services in the most efficient and economical manner. We are funded by the county commissioners, member fees, private donations, sponsorships and grants. Volunteers donate time, energy and expertise to carry out our mission.

Volunteers and new members are always welcome. Won't you call our office, visit us on the web, or attend a meeting to learn more about how you can be a part of Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling?

### ~ MEETING NOTICE ~

Regular meetings are held at 6:30 PM at Westmoreland Cleanways' office, 355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Road, Greensburg, PA 15601, on the second Thursday of March, June, September and December. Call 724-879-4020 for information. Everyone is welcome.



We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. To support our activities, please become a member. Return this coupon and your payment to Westmoreland Cleanways, 355 Pleasant Unity Mutual Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ H / W / Cell

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                                     |                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$5             | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Individual \$100 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$15                | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Family \$300     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organization/Business \$25 |                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal \$25             |                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation \$100          | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime Corporate \$500  |

Additional contributions are greatly appreciated.

**Memberships and contributions are tax deductible, as defined by law**

**WE DO NOT SHARE OR SELL OUR MAILING LIST**