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Inside the Johnston Landfill

The only landfill in Rhode Island is in Johnston. It started collecting waste in the early 1980s, and if we do not change our habits, it will be full in 19 years. Since every city or town in Rhode Island has rejected having a landfill, our next option is transporting our waste out of state. The difference between a landfill and a dump is that landfills are covered, completely enclosed, and do not smell, while at a dump, trash is thrown in a pile, exposed to the open air, and smells. Landfills are closed systems, meaning the waste decomposes really slowly in an oxygen-free environment. Landfills begin as a hole in the ground with sand and a rubber mat as the base. Any gases produced in the landfill, primarily carbon dioxide and methane, are pulled from the hill with a vacuum. The methane is then sold and used as fuel in order to generate enough electricity for 28,000 houses. Trash is then piled on top, followed by a rubber mat, and then covered with 12 to 18 inches of soil every night, and this cycle continues until the landfill reaches a maximum height.



The primary source of waste in the landfill is food which is hugely disappointing because all food can be composted, turned into rich soil, and used to plant other crops. Recyclables are another category of items found in the landfill that shouldn't be. Commercial trash is barely sorted through while residential trash is not looked through *at all*. This means it is THAT much more important that we are putting only trash in our garbage cans because whatever we put in the trash will end up in the landfill forever.

Do not throw your plastic bags in the trash or recycling! If thrown in the trash, due to their light weight, they fly everywhere and the fences surrounding the landfill cannot catch all of them. All stretchy plastic film, grocery store bags, Ziplock bags with the zipper cut off, newspaper bags, etc. even if they are ripped can be returned to the bag drop bins outside most grocery stores. Plastic bags are NOT supposed to go in the recycling bin at all. They get stuck in the recyclable sorting machines and require the whole recycling process to be stopped so an employee can rip the plastic bags from where they are stuck. Either line your recycling bin with a plastic bag and leave it in there when you dump your recyclables or don't use a plastic bag at all. It is very important that you clean your recyclables before you toss them in your bin so they do not contaminate other items.



As you're walking around campus, drinking a beverage in a glass or plastic bottle, plastic cup, or an aluminum can, and you wonder where to recycle it, you might have had trouble finding a recycling bin. Now you don't have to! Shiny, new, blue recycling bins are popping up all over campus! Plus, there are even more on the way!



Remember how frustrating it was to try and squeeze your large Dunkin' Donuts cup into the small openings in the white and green recycling bins around campus? Well, say goodbye to your frustrations! The Office of Environmental Health and Safety has drilled larger holes into the lids of these recycling bins, to ensure that you can recycle with ease! Remember, plastic Dunkin' Donuts cups and the lids are recyclable, but the straws and Styrofoam are trash. Instead of feeling guilty about throwing away your Styrofoam cup, that you used for all of 15 minutes, come to Harkins LL18 to get a free coffee-cup koozie! Or even better, bring a clean reusable cup with a lid and get your beverage of choice at the refill price!



Ever get confused trying to recycle in Slavin? Lucky for you, all unclear trash and recycling bins in Slavin have been properly labeled with either a mixed recycling sticker, detailing exactly what can be recycled, or a landfill sticker, because that is exactly where your trash is going-- to the landfill!

If you ever need to recycle cardboard on campus, please break down the box and leave it right next to the recycling bin, not in it! Cardboard is recycled separately and is put into a compactor on campus while the rest of the recyclables go into totes and are picked up by Waste Management.

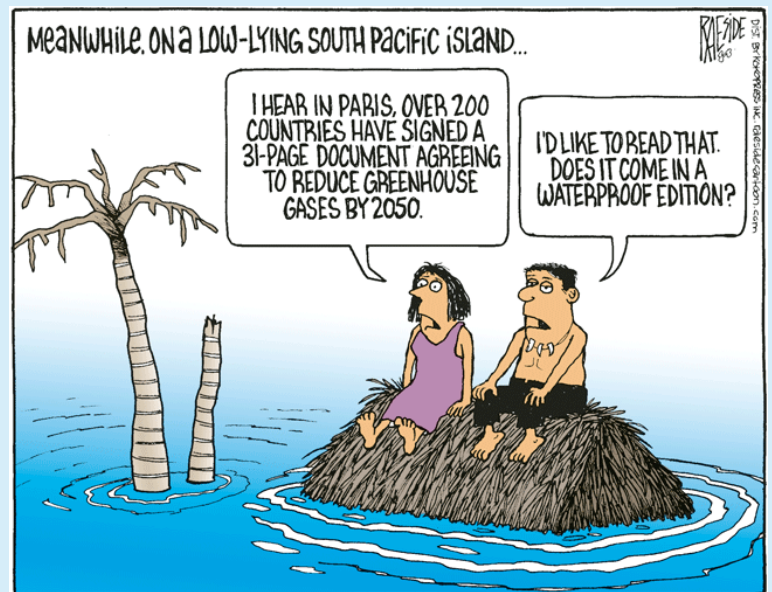
Rhode Island is Still in the Paris Climate Agreement

President Trump pulled the United States out of the Paris Climate Accord on June 1st. This global agreement was created in 2015 with ambitious goals to combat climate change and to ensure that global temperatures stay, ideally, under 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

That same day, governors of Washington, New York, and California bound together to uphold the goals of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, forming a group of states called the United States Climate Alliance. The following day, June 2nd, Rhode Island governor Gina Raimondo, joined the United States Climate Alliance. Right now, thirteen states belong to this group, two of which are our neighbors Massachusetts and Connecticut. Raimondo wants to multiply the amount of clean energy in the state by a factor of ten by 2020 and double clean energy jobs.

We cannot afford not to protect the environment by implementing clean energy and phasing out dirty, polluting fossil fuels. The sooner we act, the less expensive flood protection and health care costs will be.

According to the World Resources Institute, the United States is the country with the second highest greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Due to our massive contributions to climate change, the US must take responsibility for our actions and work to reduce our impact on the environment. We need to show countries that we are willing to make changes so that others will follow.



Get In The Loop: Local Environmental News Sources

RIFuture is a great source of local progressive news, but often and very thoroughly covers environmental news in Rhode Island. It is very interesting that most people group environmental protection with those on the "left." Environmental protection is not a political issue, it is a human issue. Climate change and resulting effects will impact everyone, regardless of what you believe.

RI Future.org
Progressive News, Opinion & Analysis



ecoRI news

If you're looking for a news source focused solely on the environment, EcoRI is an incredible resource for those living or working in the ocean state. They write articles describing issues such as the conditions of Narragansett Bay, clean energy vs. fossil fuels, environmental protests, and much more!!



Mark your calendars! On Friday September 8th, at Fete Music Hall, ecoRI will be hosting a Zero-Trash Birthday Bash, celebrating eight years of bringing crucial environmental news to our attention. If you have never been to a zero-waste event, it might be really neat learning how these individuals manage to have a huge party without generating any waste. Come check it out and help support a great cause!

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please contact us at the Office of Environmental Health & Safety.

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Newsletter brought to you by Alex Duryea, Student Sustainability Coordinator

Food, Clothing, and Dorm Item Drive During Move-Out

During move-out this spring, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety held a food and clothing drive.

Students donated 1,650 lbs of food that were then given



to the Rhode Island Food Bank, which provides food to those in need both in Providence and in surrounding areas.

Students also donated 2,000 lbs of clothes,

given to the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a charity that provides a number of services for those in need all across the country.

Around the same time, Campus Ministry held a drive for school and dorm items called Lightening Other's Loads. They collected over 300 items that will be reused by incoming freshman who need it the most this fall!

If you were around during move-out there were innumerable perfectly usable items thrown in the garbage. Some students might have been heading home in a plane or a car, having limited space for items they accumulated throughout the year. These programs did a great job at reducing unnecessary waste and diverting it from the landfill, providing it for those in need instead.

