

# ZERO WASTE How Important Is It?



October 1, 2015, San Rafael, CA – Once upon a time our natural world was near perfect and sustainable, but that was some time ago. We had little knowledge or tools and we had to make do with what we had to survive. Over time we were able to build upon our knowledge and create tools that could be passed on to improve our lives.

Over even more time our intelligence grew to a point where we were able to manipulate our resources and environment well beyond our needs. Today we have reached a point where our numbers and consumption have exceeded our planet's capacity to sustain life indefinitely. Many believe the problem is too many people and great inefficiency when it comes to managing our resources. Others like myself believe there's some truth to what they believe but the real truth is we simply consume and subsequently waste far too much, so much that no amount of zero waste as currently defined will do us much good.

The reason I believe is we are too focused on ZERO WASTE (to landfill) with little to no regard to how much we consume, environmental damage caused, or how much our community is losing in terms of potential opportunities: economic, environmental and cultural.

There's no doubt that achieving zero waste has its merits, but it's clear we'll never achieve the desired results without first making a more concerted and honest effort to reduce our great consumption of stuff and travel and make reuse central to our local economy. Here in Marin we represent some of the world's most consuming and wasteful (unsustainable) people in the world, consuming upward of 5 times the carrying capacity of our finite planet.

Waste is not just something we divert or put in a landfill. Waste is consuming far more than one needs to sustain oneself while others go without. Waste is consuming far more of our planet's finite resources when it's unnecessary to sustain life. Waste is also the underutilization of resource capacity and potential.

Unfortunately time is not on our side and we need to begin to act with the greatest urgency as though the health of our planet was at stake, that is its capacity to support life as we have come to know it but can no longer take for granted. It's our time to act more responsibly and life will be better for all.

What's needed is a reassessment of our solid waste stream that will make it economically viable and self-supporting, and a twenty-first century circular recovery and reuse center where our so called solid waste is transformed into new green materials, products, jobs and business opportunities, creating a more sustainable and equitable (circular) economy, complementary of our nature would. This is achievable by placing higher economic value and importance around its integral life-sustaining roll in a finite world.

Zero waste would be important if we made an equal effort to reduce our excess consumption and worked to achieve the full value and potential of our planet's finite resources and capacity.

OHIAS (Our Health Is At Stake) a Marin community benefit organization has designed a center as its first community benefit project and will be know as the Marin Community Benefit Cooperative. In the simplest terms the cooperative will recover, transform and elevate local resources (energy) and human potential to their highest and best potential use and community benefit.

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