

# Benefiting both the environment and the economy

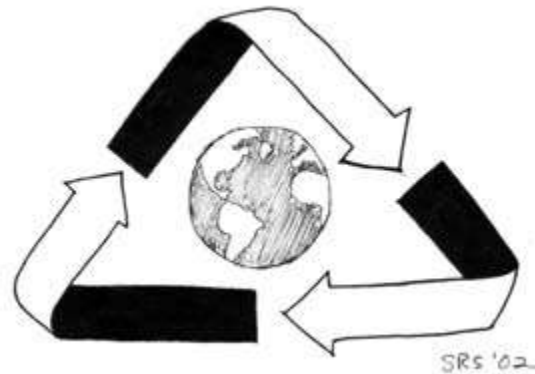
By: Seth Baum

Posted: 4/4/02

Ever thrown away an aluminum can?  
Spit out your gum in the recycling bin?  
Seen someone else doing the same?  
Think it doesn't matter?

Think again.

Recycling is an easy way to help both the environment and the economy. Every piece of paper, can or bottle you recycle saves natural resources, energy, money and landfill space, and it reduces pollution both locally and globally. Even if protecting the environment isn't for you — which it should be — recycling's positive effect on the economy should be enough for you to put your waste in the right place.



Here on campus, I find that students often don't recycle what they should, or worse, put what they shouldn't into recycling bins. This is worse because when garbage gets in a recycling bin, nothing in the bin can be recycled. So if you catch someone in the act of doing this, be sure to put them in their place.

Most students who don't recycle probably just don't care enough to bother. Indeed, it usually does take a little extra effort. But the benefits are worth it. Each can or bottle or piece of paper might not seem like much, but all of our stuff together adds up to a lot.

It may seem obvious that if you recycle a material, you avoid removing more of that material from the earth. This is even true for paper, since many paper products are still made from old growth forests. If you don't believe me, ask the UR students who saw old growth forests in Oregon getting chopped down during their Alternative Spring Break trip a few weeks ago. Eventually, these materials may become scarce, although hopefully that time won't come for a while. Recycling paper will postpone that.

Recycling aluminum cans may also help preserve forests, since forests are often cut down to mine bauxite, the mineral used to make aluminum.

It also takes much less energy to make a product from recycled materials. Aluminum sees the biggest difference — making a can from recycled aluminum requires one-twentieth

the energy of making it from new materials. Throwing away an aluminum can wastes as much energy as filling the can halfway with oil and dumping it out in the garbage.

Recycled paper requires half as much energy and recycled glass uses a third less energy. The energy saved by recycling a glass bottle could power a 100 watt light bulb for four hours.

Since recycled materials never make their way into the garbage, they save space in landfills. Though not the most glamorous subject, it's becoming more and more of a problem. New York City already has to — at great expense — truck its garbage to Virginia and Pennsylvania. It's only a matter of time before similar problems occur around the country and the world. Because recycling saves landfill space, it helps both the environment and the economy. It is particularly important to recycle plastic, which is not biodegradable and therefore stays for long periods of time in landfills.

Another way recycling helps the environment and the economy is by reducing pollution. Pollution not only hurts the environment by causing health and aesthetic problems and in some cases contributing to global climate change, but it also hurts the economy by costing us more in things such as health care and cleaning up our air and water. Making recycled aluminum causes 95 percent less air pollution, recycled paper causes 75 percent less air pollution, recycled glass causes 50 percent less water pollution and 20 percent less air pollution. Our air and water will definitely be cleaner if we put our waste in the right place.

To help out, students who want one can get dorm-room recycling bins from UR Facilities. If you'd like one, contact Audrey Stewart at as005j. The small amount of effort it takes to order a recycling bin can make an impact in the big picture — environmentally and economically.

*Baum can be reached at [sbaum@campustimes.org](mailto:sbaum@campustimes.org).*

Media Credit: Susana Schroeder