



## HIGH COUNTRY CONSERVATION CENTER

### Pay as You Throw and Universal Recycling Frequently Asked Questions

For overarching information on these programs, including descriptions of Pay as You Throw and Universal Recycling, please visit [HC3's website](#).

#### General Questions for Residents, Businesses and HOAs

#### **Can you explain which program - Pay as You Throw or Universal Recycling - applies to which type of residents and businesses?**

Pay as You Throw applies to residents who have individual carts for trash collection. Universal Recycling applies to all businesses and to residents who use dumpsters for their trash service. For more info, please [visit our webpage](#).

#### **Do these programs work?**

Yes, Pay as You Throw (PAYT) programs are in place in more than 7,500 communities in the US. In Colorado, PAYT and Universal Recycling programs are in place in many communities including Vail, Durango, Aspen, Pitkin County, Carbondale, Boulder, Ft. Collins, Golden and more. Many of these communities have landfill diversion rates between 30 and 38%, as a result of PAYT and Universal Recycling programs. Landfill diversion means the amount of recycling and compost materials that are kept out of the landfill. For comparison, Summit County's diversion rate is only 20% and we have a communitywide goal to reach 40% by 2035.

#### **Will I continue to be able to use my same trash and recycling service?**

Yes, you may continue to use your current trash and recycling collection provider. These private companies (including Waste Management, Timberline Disposal and Recycling, Summit Roll-Offs and Summit VIP) will continue to operate and offer services in Summit County, and you will be able to choose your provider.

#### **If I take my own trash to landfill, do these programs apply to me?**

No, if you take your own trash to the landfill, these programs do not apply to you. These programs apply to residents and businesses that have trash collection service.

## **Is my recycling actually being recycled?**

Yes. Recyclables placed in your single stream cart are transported by your waste hauler to the Summit County Resource Allocation Park (SCRAP) where items are compacted – all together – into large blocks called bales. The bales are shipped to a larger recycling processor called a materials recovery facility, or MRF, in Denver. In Denver, those recyclables are processed, sorted and sold to manufacturers making new products from your recyclables. However, if you place non-recyclables or dirty items into your single stream cart, it increases the overall cost of recycling and the non-recyclables end up in the trash regardless. In the worst and rarest cases, a truckload of recycling contaminated with too much trash could end up in the landfill.

Items recycled at the drop-off centers are also transported to the SCRAP. Staff bales cardboard, plastic #1 bottles, aluminum, etc. separately and sells these items directly to the manufacturers making new products.

## **Why is recycling important? It seems incredibly complicated and expensive for communities.**

Recycling reduces the need to mine new resources, thereby conserving forests, water and minerals. Additionally, each ton of materials recycled saves nearly three tons of carbon emissions. In 2021, recycling in Summit County saved more than 16,000 tons of carbon emissions, which was equivalent to taking more than 3,400 cars off the road for a year. Increasing recycling not only reduces carbon pollution, it also reduces plastic and other pollution in our environment. Studies have revealed tiny pieces of plastic in the farthest reaches of Rocky Mountain National Park, in unborn babies, and in 94% of tap water samples collected in the U.S. Recycling also extends the life of our landfill, and drives Colorado's economy by providing a source of essential materials for manufacturing.

## **Why isn't glass allowed in single stream recycling?**

When single stream recycling is collected at your home or office, everything gets compacted into the recycling truck, meaning glass breaks into tiny pieces. Glass shards ruin processing equipment, and they can become embedded into paper or plastics, which then become trash. Additionally, when glass is separated from single stream it can be infinitely recycled into new glass bottles. In other communities that accept glass in single stream, that glass is typically downcycled into fiberglass which is sent to the landfill at the end of its life.

## **How can I recycle my glass?**

Glass is accepted at all three drop-off recycling centers and at 11 additional glass stations located throughout Summit County. For businesses and residents who share trash dumpsters, glass recycling service is available through Summit Roll-Offs and Timberline Disposal and Recycling.

## **Why don't these programs include composting food and yard scraps, since those organic materials produce methane in a landfill?**

The breakdown of organic materials – including food and yard waste – do produce methane when buried in the landfill. As a result, composting food scraps is incredibly important. HC3 and Summit County government have expanded food scrap collection in recent years. In 2021, more than 253,000

lbs of food was composted by residents through a [free food scrap program](#) offered in four convenient locations. And more than 40 businesses – including all four ski areas – are composting their food scraps.

HC3 will continue to work with local businesses and residents to expand food scrap collection. Once Pay as You Throw and Universal Recycling programs are up and running in Summit County, composting may be added to policies in future years. For most residents and businesses, recycling is easier to implement than composting, so the focus of the initial policy is on recycling and not composting. Keep in mind that recycling one ton of single stream saves nearly three tons of carbon emissions, meaning that this type of policy would be like taking an additional 1,300 cars off the road annually. Businesses and HOAs that have shared trash dumpster service should contact either Summit Roll-Offs or Timberline Disposal to add food scrap collection.

### **How is our community working to reduce recycling contamination?**

Recycling “contamination” occurs when trash or non-recyclable items that people perceive as recyclable (i.e. berry plastic clamshells or plastic bags) end up in our recycling. Every community has contamination in their recycling, and resort communities with many visitors have higher contamination rates. The EPA estimates that average recycling contamination rate in the US is 25%.

Through the implementation of Pay as You Throw and Universal Recycling programs, we will have extensive outreach and education aimed at residents, visitors and businesses to ensure that recycling guidelines are clear. By offering consistent recycling programs across the entire community, providing onsite technical assistance to businesses and HOAs, and expanding Oops Tag initiatives (recycling containers are tagged with notes offering tips on how to improve recycling), we aim to reduce recycling contamination as these new programs roll out. There are a multitude of communities that have reduced their contamination rates using the aforementioned actions.

### **As a resident, what if my bill increases as a result of these programs and I can't afford to pay?**

We anticipate that local governments will create assistance programs for low-income residents, whether residents have individual carts or shared trash service with their neighbors. Frisco has adopted Pay as You Throw and Universal Recycling programs that will go into effect starting October 2023, and Frisco residents who qualify for SNAP may apply for assistance starting in summer 2023.

## **Residents with Individual Cart Curbside Collection**

### **If I have curbside trash service with an individual cart, but take my recycling to the recycling center now, will I have to pay for curbside recycling with the Pay as You Throw Program?**

Yes, you will receive curbside recycling. The new Pay as You Throw program will bundle trash and recycling service for all residents with individual carts. This will give you the convenience of having single stream recycling at your home. Single stream recycling will allow you to recycle metal cans, paper, as well as plastic bottles, jugs and tubs all in one cart. Glass is not included in Summit County's single stream. You may continue to use the recycling centers which also accept glass, food waste and juice cartons.

## **What if I have an individual cart with curbside service, but I pay through my HOA?**

Pay as You Throw applies to all residents with an individual cart, including group accounts paid through an HOA. Waste haulers will work with HOAs directly to determine options for each group account.

## **Will the free recycling centers go away?**

No, there are no plans for the free recycling centers to close with these new programs in place. Summit County Government operates three free recycling centers in Breckenridge, Frisco, and Silverthorne for residents. Residents who have curbside recycling collection are encouraged to recycle glass and food scraps at the free sites to reduce the amount of trash being landfilled.

## **As a resident, will my trash bill go up with Pay as You Throw?**

Local governments cannot tell private companies how much they can charge for their services. Under the Pay as You Throw (PAYT) program, waste haulers will be required to provide curbside recycling collection to all customers who have trash collection. This combination of recycling and trash service will be offered for one monthly price. In addition, towns will require that waste haulers offer three sizes of trash carts (small, medium and large – which will be defined with gallon sizes). The small trash cart with recycling service will be considered the “base” rate. The medium trash cart service level will cost 80% more than the base rate, and the large trash cart service level will be an additional 80% increase from the base rate. The lower cost of the smaller trash carts incentivizes residents to recycle more and produce less trash. Please watch [HC3’s informational video forum](#) for further details.

Based on data from other communities with PAYT in place, we expect 50% or more of full-time residents to opt for a medium or small trash cart. In other Colorado communities, residents that opt for the small trash carts have saved money compared to pre-PAYT pricing, and residents who have opted for large trash carts are paying more than before PAYT was in place. In the same way that residents pay less for electricity or water than their neighbors who use more electricity and water, people that produce less trash will now pay less than their neighbors who generate more garbage.

## **Who is paying for the new trash and recycling carts?**

Waste Management and Timberline will purchase the new carts. These companies prefer to use their own carts, as they know they work with their trucks and have branding that is visible down the street. Some of the smaller waste haulers require customers to buy their own carts, but this will not be a change since that's the way it currently works. If a Waste Management or Timberline customer has their own cart that works with that company's trucks and is approved by that company, a customer can continue to use their own cart.

## **Where can we donate the carts to avoid them going to the landfill?**

The trash providers will keep any large carts that are traded in for smaller sizes, as long as the carts are in good condition and don't have an old company name (such as a company that is no longer in service). There is adequate demand for carts, so the companies will keep them in rotation. HC3 expects to offer a temporary cart recycling program for customers to bring old carts that are damaged or have old company names on them.

## Businesses, HOAs and Residents with Shared Trash/Recycling Service

### **What are additional requirements for HOAs or commercial entities proposed under the Universal Recycling program?**

Commercial entities (including HOAs and businesses) that have trash service will be required to have recycling service. Half of Summit County's commercial trash accounts with local waste haulers already have recycling collection. Commercial entities will need to have 50% recycling volume compared to their trash service volume. For instance, a business with a 4-yard trash dumpster that is picked up weekly would need to have 2 yards of recycling each week. Recycling options include single stream and/or glass 96-gallon carts and/or cardboard collection in varying sized dumpsters. For commercial entities with public areas containing trash cans, recycling bins will need to be next to each trash can. Businesses with liquor licenses will be required to have glass recycling service, and hotels will be required to offer in-room recycling bins. HC3 is available to assist you and learn more about your business or HOA's recycling needs. Please reach out to Allie Flynn at [allie@highcountryconservation.org](mailto:allie@highcountryconservation.org).

### **As a business or HOA, will my trash bill go up under Universal Recycling?**

For businesses and HOAs that already have recycling service, as long as their recycling volume is 50% of their trash volume, they should not see any impacts to their bills based on the Universal Recycling program. Commercial entities that do not currently have recycling in place, will need to add recycling service, which will increase trash/recycling costs. Many businesses and HOAs find that over time (6 months to a year) – once employees, residents and/or renters learn that there is recycling collection on site – recycling volumes will increase and trash service frequency or the size of trash container will decrease, resulting in decreased costs for trash collection.

### **What if my business or HOA doesn't have space to add recycling within our trash enclosure?**

HC3 will provide onsite assistance for HOAs and businesses, including site evaluations and recommendations. There is a two-year phase-in period for commercial entities to meet requirements, and an additional two-year extension available for commercial entities that provide evidence of compliance hardship.

We also expect that local governments and/or HC3 will also have a grant process to assist HOAs and businesses with a portion of the costs to reconfigure dumpster enclosures and to add recycling signage. HC3 will also create several sample enclosure configurations and best management practices to assist HOAs and businesses.