

ZERO WASTE MARIN

ZERO WASTE EVENT GUIDE: STEPS TO A SUSTAINABLE EVENT



Marin County is striving to reduce landfill waste through recycling, composting, and reducing unnecessary packaging. Thank you for helping us reach our goals by utilizing zero waste best practices for your event!

This guide has been prepared by Zero Waste Marin staff to help events hosted in Marin County to produce less landfill waste. If you have questions about this guide, please contact us at zerowaste@marincounty.gov.

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Appendices A, B, C, and D are included at the end of this guide.

Pre-Event Planning

There are steps that need to be taken while planning an event that minimizes waste. A quick reference of items that need to be done before your event includes:

- ✓ Communicate with vendors about how they will help support zero waste at your event, including purchasing of proper service ware, utensils, etc. If applicable, set up vendor contracts that put these stipulations in writing.
- ✓ Contact the hauler in your area to set up proper services for landfill, recycling, and compost.
- ✓ Determine how you will incorporate proper infrastructure, such as 3-bin (or 4-bin) sorting stations with landfill, recycling, and compost, into your event. This could include renting color-coded bins and asking for signage from Zero Waste Marin or your hauler.
- ✓ Hire a waste management service or recruit volunteers to manage waste during the event.
- ✓ Depending on the type of food served and number of attendees, your event could be required **by law** to donate any surplus edible food at the end of the event. For questions about this requirement, please contact us zerowaste@marincounty.gov.

Working with Vendors

Initial Communications

In preparation for your event, it is important to communicate with your vendors about what they are selling and how they can help your event minimize landfill waste. It is important to confirm the following with each of your vendors:

1. Let them know that vendors at events are required to comply with the [Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance](#).
2. Confirm with them that any takeaway food is served on truly compostable fiber products (no compostable plastics), or with truly recyclable materials such as aluminum foil.
 - a. Review the Compostable Serviceware Guide (Appendix A).
 - b. Review the following section about why compostable plastics are not accepted in Marin and confirm that your vendors know this.
3. Discuss other strategies to reduce waste, such as:
 - a. Providing condiments only in bulk, avoiding many small packets.
 - b. Not providing bags, unless upon request.

Review the Rules on “Compostable” Plastics with Vendors

Compostable plastics are not accepted at Marin’s commercial compost facility for a variety of reasons. Please review this section so that you are aware of the rules and are able to answer

any questions from your vendors. Zero Waste Marin staff are available for additional clarification. Compostable plastics are not accepted in Marin for the following reasons:

- Compostable plastics frequently do not break down during the composting process.
- Some compostable plastics may contain harmful chemicals such as PFOS and PFAS.
- Compostable plastics look very similar to their plastic counterparts, which can make it more challenging to remove contaminants from compost.
- When compostable plastics end up in oceans and bays, they behave similarly to petroleum-based plastics, resulting in litter pollution and potentially harming wildlife.
- Marin's compost facility produces certified organic compost; if compostable plastics were accepted, the finished compost could not be used on organic farms.

For all the above reasons the County's Reusable Foodware Ordinance prohibits the use of "compostable plastic" foodware at events.



Utilizing Zero Waste Contracts

Because the success of making an event zero waste hinges on the types of materials generated at the event, it is crucial to have your vendors on board. One way to do this is to ask vendors/caterers to sign a contract based on your agreed-upon event materials, food, and recycling and composting guidelines. Please see the Sample ZW Guidelines for Vendors (Appendix B); the below bullets are example contract requirements.

- Vendors will comply with the [Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance](#).
- Vendors will provide only truly recyclable or compostable options (in accordance with the Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance) for takeaway materials.
- Vendors will utilize the proper waste sorting bins (landfill, recycling, and compost) when disposing of any of their materials at the event, or you may suggest that they "pack-it-in, pack-it-out" and dispose of their waste at their place of business.
- Vendors will not give away or provide any non-durable items that may end up in the landfill shortly after distribution.

Setting Up Infrastructure

Create Waste Stations

Waste stations are locations – landfill, recycling, and compost – are available together in a convenient, easy-to-use system. Best practices for waste stations include:

1. Ensure stations are available in high-traffic areas, e.g. by main eating areas.
2. Waste stations should have bins that are color-coded (black or grey for landfill, blue for recycling, green for compost). Consider using bags that match these colors to reinforce for attendees (however, note that recycling and compost must be removed from bags when doing final disposal into hauler bins).
3. Each station should have clear signage labelling the different bins.
 - a. Include photos or 3D examples of what is accepted in each bin.
4. Assign waste monitors at waste stations to assist with sorting.
5. Ensure all stations are consistent and look the same.
6. Avoid “lonely” bins, e.g. bins without all sorting options located together.

Contact Zero Waste Marin for information on borrowing event stations.

Signage

Signage is critical to help remind attendees of zero waste efforts. At events, there are two main types of signage:

1. Sorting signage: Sorting signage is located by sorting stations, and is clearly labeled with “landfill”, “recycling”, and “compost”. Its purpose is to remind attendees of which bin is which, and what items can go in each bin.
2. Educational signage: Educates the attendees about your waste goals for the event (e.g. we are aiming to recycle and compost 75% of our waste!) and why waste sorting is important.

Zero Waste Marin and the various haulers in Marin have sorting signage available. Contact Zero Waste Marin or your hauler about sorting signage for your event.



Zero Waste Staff and Volunteers

Whether you decide to hire a paid waste management service or recruit volunteers to help with zero waste efforts, it is important to have people dedicated to reducing waste at your event. Each waste station should feature a trained volunteer or hired staff person who assists attendees, ensures that there is no contamination between bins, and helps increase public awareness.

First, determine how many volunteers are needed based on the number of waste stations at your event. You will also want to determine how many shifts of volunteers are needed based on how long your event is.



Ideas for Recruiting Volunteers

- Contact local community groups or service organizations.
- Reach out to local high schools; students are often required to complete community service, or a Green Club might be interested in volunteering.
- Conservation Corps North Bay or Green Mary are both options for paid station monitors.

Identify a Zero Waste Leader

- In addition to your team of volunteers, you should assign a Zero Waste Leader. This person will train and manage your volunteers.
- This person is likely to be part of your Event Staff rather than a volunteer. This person oversees all zero waste activity and is trained on all components of your event. The Zero Waste Leader should carry a complete set of event information that can be easily given to another trained person to take over if needed.
- This set of information should include multiple copies of the venue map, volunteer list and schedule, and zero waste talking points (Appendix C).

Volunteer Training

Volunteers will need to be trained to know how to staff waste stations. At minimum, volunteers must know which items at the event should go into which bins.

To implement your volunteer training:

1. Determine how you will be doing your training. Is it in the days before the event, or the morning of the event when they arrive?
 - a. If the training is before the event, is it in-person or online?
 - b. Who is leading the training?
2. Get examples of items being provided at the event from vendors.
3. Confirm where these items belong with the hauler or Zero Waste Marin.
4. Provide example items to the volunteers and teach them where these items must be sorted. Provide a one-page “cheat sheet”, if necessary.

Volunteer Supplies

Below is a list of supplies that will be helpful for your volunteers:

1. Identifying items such as lanyards, hats, or vests that help attendees recognize them as waste station helpers.
2. Gloves, trash grabbers, and extra bags to manage the waste stations.
3. A venue map with waste stations and disposal locations where bags will be emptied.

Waste Logistics During the Event

Below are some helpful questions to answer about day-of logistics at your event.

- ✓ How often will the bags be collected from waste stations?
- ✓ Who will pick up full bags from waste stations and bring them to the disposal location?
- ✓ Where will the bags be taken, and the collection bins be stored during the event (disposal location)?
- ✓ When will the hauler be picking up collection bins?
 - If your event is on a weekend, it is likely that the hauler will not pick up the collection bins for service until Monday, or that special weekend service will need to be coordinated. Plan for where collection bins will be stored until service.
- ✓ Who will be taking metrics to determine if you were successful in reducing waste?

Waste Logistics After the Event

Ensure the waste collected at stations makes its way to the collection bins that will be serviced by the hauler, and ensure you are aware of what day they are coming. Before the waste is collected, take photos of the final, sorted material to determine if there were any issues contamination, or if sorting was successful.

For additional guidance, see the Zero Waste Event Checklist (Appendix D).

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Appendix A - Compostable Serviceware Guide

IMAGE	SKU	DESCRIPTION	LINK
	94080	Fiber 2 Compartment 14oz Container – 8x6x1.5”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94080
	94084	Unbleached Plant Fiber 3-Compartment 29oz Tray – 10x7.5x1.5”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94084
	94088	Unbleached 5 Compartment Fiber School Tray – 10x8.5x1”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94088
	94078	Unbleached Plant Fiber Tray 17oz - 8x6x1.5”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94078
	94086	Unbleached Plant Fiber Tray 20oz - 6.5x5x2”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94086
	94074	Fiber Box – 48oz	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94074
	94076	Lid For 20-48oz Fiber To Go Container	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94076
	PL-SC-U6-LFS	6” Fiber Plate	https://store.worldcentric.com/6-fiber-ripple-edge-plate_6
	94035	Bagasse/Wheatstraw Plate - 9”	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94035
	94038	Fiber Plate – 10” 3 Compartment	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94038
	PR=SC-14-LFS	14” Fiber PizzaRound	https://store.worldcentric.com/14-fiber-pizza-round_2
	PB-SC-U13-LFS	13.5x6.5x1.25” Fiber Flat Bread/Pizza Box	https://store.worldcentric.com/135x65x125-fiber-flat-bread2fpizza-box_2

Zero Waste Marin, otherwise known as the Marin County Hazardous and Solid Waste Joint Powers Authority, is a governmental agency comprised of the County and the 11 cities and towns of Marin. To learn more, visit

www.zerowastemarin.org

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	TO-SC-U15B-LFP	6x6x3" Fiber Box	https://store.worldcenteric.com/6x6x3-fiber-burger-box_5
	TO-SC-U9-LFP	9x9x3" Fiber Box	https://store.worldcenteric.com/9x9x3-fiber-clamshell_2
	TO-SC-UHB-LFP	9x6x3" Fiber Box	https://store.worldcenteric.com/9x6x3-fiber-hoagie-box_9
	TR-SC-10T3-LFS	48oz Fiber Container 3 Compartment	https://store.worldcenteric.com/10x7x5x3-48-oz-fiber-container-3-compt_2
	TO-SC-T3-LFS-P	8x7x3" Fiber Box – 3 Compartment	https://store.worldcenteric.com/8x7x3-fiber-taco-box-3-compt-pack_2
	94058	Fiber Barrel Bowl – 16oz	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94058
	94059	Fiber Barrel Bowl Lid For 8-16oz	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94059
	BO-SC-U24-LFP	24 oz Fiber Bowl	https://store.worldcenteric.com/24-oz-fiber-bowl_3
	BO-SC-U32-LFP	32 oz Fiber Bowl	https://store.worldcenteric.com/32-oz-fiber-bowl-pack_2
	BOL-SC-U24-LF	LID – Fiber – 16-32 oz Fiber Bowls	https://store.worldcenteric.com/lid-fiber-16-32-oz-fiber-bowls-leaf
	BO-SC-64-P	64 oz Fiber Bowl	https://store.worldcenteric.com/64-oz-fiber-bowl_2

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	94061	Bagasse/Wheatstraw Souffle Hot Cup -- 4 oz.	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=94061
	U508NU	Uncoated Paper Cups, Hot Drinks, 8oz, White	https://www.fishmansupply.com/store/product.php?id=132846
	CC-FB-4-LF	4-Cup Drink Carrier	https://store.worldcentric.com/4-cup-drink-carrier
	210CVB3	6.2" Wooden Spoons	https://www.goodstartpackaging.com/utensils/wooden-spoon/
	210CVB1	6.2" Wooden Forks	https://www.goodstartpackaging.com/utensils/wooden-fork/
	RK-FB-6-LF	6" Fiber Spork	https://store.worldcentric.com/6-fiber-spork-leaf
	KN-FB-6-LF	6" Fiber Knife	https://store.worldcentric.com/6-fiber-knife-leaf
	Paper straws	Aardvark paper straws – many varieties of paper straws, all made in the USA.	https://aardvarkstraws.com/
	Snack & sandwich bags	If You Care: FSC and Compostable Certified paper snack and sandwich bags	https://ifyoucare.com/wraps/p/sandwich-bags
	Multiple	100% post-consumer waste recycled paper napkins	https://store.worldcentric.com/store/napkins-and-towels

Inclusion of products on this list does not constitute Zero Waste Marin's endorsement of products or brands.

This compostable serveware guide is not exhaustive of all acceptable products. If the item you are looking for is not included, please ensure the item is fiber-based and unlined. Have questions? Email zerowaste@marincounty.gov.

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Appendix B – Sample Zero Waste Guidelines for Vendors

Vendors Zero Waste Participation Agreement

Thank you for your interest in participating at **[event name]**! We are proud to announce that this event will be utilizing zero waste best practices.

The goal at a zero waste event is to plan ahead and distribute only food and materials that are recyclable or compostable (not any materials that will be landfilled). “Waste Stations” consisting of recycling, compost and landfill collection containers will be available to participants at numerous locations throughout **[the event venue]**. As a vendor handing out food or products at this event, you play a vital part in the success of our zero waste initiative.

Vendors attending **[event name]** are required to hand out only recyclable, compostable, or reusable materials. Remember, if an item is not recyclable locally, we cannot recycle it, even if your supplier has told you it can be recycled. If you have any questions as to whether your items are considered recyclable or compostable, please call **[event Zero Waste Leader name and contact number]**. We will answer your questions and help you understand your important role in this zero waste event.

Please note that you will be asked to remove any non-recyclable or non-compostable items from your booth for the duration of the event. You will only be allowed to distribute recyclable or compostable products. Food is compostable and all food should be distributed on compostable wares that are compliant in Marin County. Find acceptable compostable products for food ware for zero waste events as Appendix A in the Zero Waste Event Guide.

Your signature on the vendor application acknowledges that you will abide by all zero waste guidelines and requirements. Our zero waste goal is simple to attain if you plan ahead of time the kinds of materials you will be providing to the public at the event. Here are some ideas that can help you achieve this goal:

- Use the least amount of packaging possible or remove the packaging before distributing items.
- Use post-consumer recycled content paper for flyers, programs, and handouts. Choose to print on paper with the highest recycled content you can find.
- Do not use “neon” fluorescent or dark-colored papers. These can be harder to recycle.
- Candy wrappers, energy bars, chip bags and packaging from pre-packaged food are landfill items.

We cannot compost or recycle wrappers of any kind. Please consider the health of our participants and the environment and avoid including individually wrapped candy at your booth.

Thank you for supporting our zero waste goal and we look forward to working with you to make this a successful zero waste event.

Sincerely,

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Appendix C – Sample Zero Waste Talking Points for Attendees and Vendors/Caterers

Q. What is Zero Waste?

A. Zero waste is a philosophy and a design principle for the 21st century. It includes reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting, but goes beyond that by taking a whole system approach to the vast flow of resources and waste through human society. Zero waste reduces consumption, minimizes waste, maximizes recycling and composting, and ensures that products are made to be reused, repaired, or recycled back into nature or the marketplace.

Q. How much of a difference will zero waste really make?

A: California's Short-Lived Climate Pollutants Reduction Strategy (SB 1383) aims to reduce organic waste disposal 75% by 2025 in order to address methane emissions from landfilling organic waste. Following the mandates included in this law will help Californian's dramatically reduce the total amount of waste sent to landfills, address climate impacts, and improve environmental outcomes. These actions not only reduce air, soil, and water pollution, but also help us recover valuable resources that can be repurposed for other uses. Composting food scraps helps us to create nutrient-rich soil additive, and recycling our bottles, cans, and paper helps to offset the need to extract more natural resources.

Q: Why do dirty paper plates and napkins go into the compost bin instead of the recycling?

A: These items are not clean enough to be recycled into new paper, but are made of uncoated fiber (no plastic coating) and can therefore be broken down by microorganisms. This process results in a nutrient-rich soil amendment (compost) that can be used for growing more, and healthier, plants. These compostable service ware items meet ASTM 6400 or 6868 composability standards, meaning that they biodegrade in municipal or industrial composting facilities at a specified rate that is usually 180 days or fewer. Composting thus creates an extremely rich and useful end product that can flow in a circular way back to our local farms and gardens.

Q: Why is recycling better than landfilling things away?

A: Recycling is better than throwing resources away (landfill) because it:

- 1) conserves natural resources by reducing our need to mine for raw, virgin materials,
- 2) reduces energy consumption that would be necessary to manufacture new materials from scratch, and
- 3) creates less air, soil, and water pollution than manufacturing.

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Appendix D – Zero Waste Event Checklist

Use this checklist in tandem with the Zero Waste Event Guide to help make your event beautiful and environmentally responsible.

Waste Stations:

- If applicable; at least 2 weeks in advance, contact the facilities team at your event's location to request waste stations. Be prepared with your estimated amount of attendees and quantity of total waste.
- Waste stations should be placed in convenient locations, and side-by-side in the same order for each station (example: blue, green, black).
- Place waste stations in visible, high traffic areas that do not conflict with the Fire Marshall's requirements (i.e., entrances, exits, bathrooms, etc.).
- Provide waste station monitors to assist attendees while they are sorting. Monitors help ensure that there is minimal contamination between bins and help increase public awareness.

Food & Foodware:

- Familiarize yourself with the [Marin County Reusable Foodware Ordinance](#).
- Employ zero waste purchasing practices, including using reusables wherever possible!
- If you will not have outside food vendors, provide and/or sell food that does not require utensils. This can drastically reduce overall waste at your event.
- For compostable ware please only use items found in Appendix A of the Zero Waste Event Guide. No compostable plastic! Make sure all vendors are aware and do not bring non-compliant foodware.
- Provide condiments (e.g., sugar, ketchup, mustard, salad dressing) in bulk instead of in individual packages and servings.

Event Greening:

- Make sure to avoid using: plastic bags, styrofoam, plastic utensils, stir stick or plastic straws, disposable decorations, pre-packaged goodie bags, or individually-wrapped promotional items.
- Let attendees know about your greening efforts in advance and include the information in announcements, including asking attendees to recycle and compost (describe bins and sample items for each bin).
- Thank attendees for bringing their own refillable water bottles, coffee mugs, cloth napkins, utensil kits, and food containers to eat from and take leftovers home in.
- Limit promotional items to useful, durable items.