



EARTHCHECK

LEADING DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD™

WASTE WRAP

In our inaugural meeting of 2024, the Leading Destinations of the World™ delved into some tough trash talk. As we reflect on 2023, it's evident that our communities grappled with the challenges of waste management and the impact that this has on our sustainability journey. Whilst 15 of our destinations are performing at or above baseline level, it remains a core challenge for all and much more can be done in this area.

Whilst there is no cookie cutter, or one size fits all approach to waste management, our two virtual sessions led by Piet van Zyl ([EarthCheck Research Institute](#) and [Positive Impact Forever](#)), unpacked some tactics and strategies for managing waste more effectively.

What's the problem?

An estimated 2.12 billion tons of waste is dumped annually, the UN report that on average, each person wastes 120kg of food per year and the world is seriously off track to reduce food waste by 2030.

For EarthCheck destinations globally, challenges are faced on how to scope the waste measured under the destination standard, how waste diverted from landfill is treated and the levels of contamination across different waste streams. Then there's the issue of illegal dumping and how we factor that into our measurement.....

What can we do?

The first step is to **REVIEW**. As EarthCheck likes to say, you can't manage what you don't measure!

By undertaking a review (assessment or sample) of our waste, we can identify tailored solutions to reduce the amount of waste we are facing and shift the community engagement with waste management processes. These may need to start small at a precinct level and be scaled over time – with the scaling may taking a replication approach in new precincts rather than just extending what you are already doing.

Then comes the other Rs.....

- **Refuse** (my favorite quote of the day, recycling is like putting a bandage on gangrene – we need to start refusing to really make an impact!)
- Rethink
- Reduce
- Reuse
- Recycle
- Repair

There is a leadership and communications role that sits here, with the big question – What's In It For ME?! Whether businesses or the community you are engaging, what are the benefits of doing the right thing? In engaging in the program? Providing the what will support stronger engagement and participation in schemes and programs.



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Some examples from destinations globally include incentives – for example communities in Indonesia offer rice in exchange for certain waste types, container return schemes in Finland offer discounts to local supermarkets and some precincts even offer rent relief options for those delivering effective waste management processes.

Where to from here?

EarthCheck remains committed to facilitating knowledge sharing and learning opportunities. We encourage you to:

- Watch the videos – [here](#) and [here](#). I have also included a rough transcript (attached) to support translation if required.
- Learn from others – EarthCheck will continue to share case-studies highlighting some of the innovations and great approaches we see.
- Engage in all the levers you have – policy (example [here](#)), education, incentives, etc.
- Educate – internally and externally – communication is key to share your story and bring others on the journey.

Case study: Furano

Challenged by a murder of crows attacking the landfill, the residents of Furano had enough. Until the 1950's the region only disposed of waste through landfill. This led to environmental pollution, foul odors and sewage issues.

Public and private sectors joined forces to address the challenges they were facing with waste management to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill and approach waste management differently.

This program of work sought to close the landfill and educate the community. A six year window was provided to transition from landfill to garbage separation. By 1963, six types of garbage were sorted. Food waste was sent to the Furano District Environmental Sanitation Centre – a collaborative effort among municipalities. The compost that comes from this goes to vegetable gardens of households and farms. Now, there are 14 types of garbage sorting! This includes plastics, PET bottles, food waste, cans, combustible garbage, hygiene products, newspapers – magazines – cardboard, bottles- ceramics- glass, ash, animal bodies, batteries – fluorescent lights, dangerous waste, garden waste and large items – electrical appliances, each to be disposed of in a specific bag or taken to the correct refuse point. For waste that is incorrectly separated, it will not be collected and a warning sticker will be placed on the bag.

In addition, the laws and systems related to waste disposal have changed significantly, and various garbage recycling laws such as the "Containers and Packaging Recycling Law" in Heisei 7 and the "Home Appliance Recycling Law" in Heisei 13 have been enacted, and from the 13th fiscal year.



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Through the implemented program, the community shifted its behaviour leading to a recycling rate of 90% - the highest in Japan. This is now a cultural approach.

Currently, efforts such as recycling markets and garbage collection apps are continuing to maximise the movement of reuse and recycling.

Tourism is a major industry for Furano, shifting the behaviour of visitors is now a core part of the community program ensuring that the values of the community are instilled in those who come to explore.

SAVE THE DATE

Our next Fireside Chats will be held **7 August**, more details to come.