

Chatham Selectmen Endorse Mass Recycles Paper Campaign

By Tim Wood

November 15, 2007

CHATHAM - Today is America Recycles Day, a national effort to encourage more folks to recycle. Last week, the board of selectmen boosted local recycling efforts by endorsing the Mass Recycles Paper campaign, a public-private partnership aimed at promoting paper recycling.

In 2006, Chatham recycled 585 tons of paper, saving \$30,438 in SEMASS fees and earning \$21,615 in revenue for the town. Paper items constitute a large part of the recycling effort at the transfer station, along with glass, plastics, cans, metal objects and others. Included in the paper category are newspapers, junk mail, magazines and cardboard.

"The more we can recycle, the less gets trucked to SEMASS," said Kristin Andres, the town's conservation agent and a member of the 10-person recycling workgroup formed last April to devise ways to increase the town's recycling rate. "And it can bring in revenue. It seems like a win-win, doing something that's good for the environment and for the town."

Each year, Massachusetts residents throw away an estimated 1.5 million tons of recyclable paper. According to the Mass Recycles Paper campaign, that amount of paper would fill Fenway Park 250 yards high, higher than the Prudential Center. The cost of failing to recycle that paper is estimated at \$100 million by the campaign, which is a partnership of the state department of environmental protection, MassRecycle, the state's nonprofit recycling coalition, the federal environmental protection agency, local towns, businesses and citizens.

Several dozen paper items can be recycled, including office paper with staples and paperclips, pasta and cereal boxes and shredded paper. A complete list can be found at the Mass Recycles Paper campaign website, www.massrecyclespaper.org. The campaign is aimed at educating residents and businesses about the wide array of paper products that can be recycled.

Since forming last spring with the goal of informing the public that "it's still important to recycle," Andres said the workgroup has launched a number of initiatives, including placing recycling bins at the Lighthouse Beach overlook, putting up new signs at the transfer station, publishing a bi-weekly recycling column in The Chronicle, and creating a website, chathamrecycles.org, with information about recycling locally as well as general recycling information. The website was created by illustrator Bob Staake, who also designed recycling bumper and window stickers that are available at the permit department and the town offices.

A member of AmeriCorps Cape Cod, David Quinn, is also spending one day a week working on the town's recycling effort. Last week, AmeriCorps gave a presentation entitled "The Recycling Factory" to Chatham Elementary School fourth graders to help kick off the school's recycling campaign. In October, the Friends of Chatham Waterways awarded a \$1,700 grant to fourth grade teacher Stephanie Rae in support of the school's recycling program. Quinn will be working on the program through July, Andres said, and will work with recycling "stakeholders," such as trash haulers, businesses and other institutions, to promote recycling.

The workgroup's goals for the future include placing more recycling bins around town, encourage town departments to buy recycled items when possible, purchase blue recycling bins and make them available to homeowners to help make recycling easier, and produce an education video promoting recycling and air it on Channel 18, the town's government access channel.

Selectmen voted unanimously to endorse a resolution in support of the Mass Recycles Paper campaign, which will hold a special event today in Springfield at a public-private recycling facility.

Chatham's recycling rate hovers around 21 percent, which is lower than in the past and below many other Cape towns, said Andres.

"We can do a lot better," said recycling workgroup member Paulette Fehlig. "We have the people and we have the energy to do it."