



COALITION *for* RESOURCE RECOVERY

NYC Paper Foodservice Packaging Recycling Pilot Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why doesn't everybody recycle paper cups?

Historically, many mills have had difficulty recycling paper cups and other types of paper food packaging because of the coatings used and food contamination. In addition, the volume of paper packaging generated at restaurants has not been sufficient to off-set the costs of an additional truck to pick up the material.

This pilot is testing Starbucks paper coffee cups certified as recyclable with old corrugated cardboard (OCC), a material already recycled by most restaurants. This certification demonstrates that the coatings at the quantity used do not negatively impact most mills and that the material can be recycled into the same high quality products made from OCC.

As part of the pilot, Global Green's Coalition for Resource Recovery (CoRR) will test and evaluate the impact of food contamination, including how pure a material stream can be achieved and the impacts on recycling.

2. What is the climate change benefit of this program?

Every year, 58 billion paper cups are used in the US at restaurants, events, and homes. If all paper cups in the US were recycled, 645,000 tons of waste would be diverted from landfills each year, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2.5 million mtCO₂e, equivalent to removing 450,000 passenger cars from the road. If successful, the pilot could influence the design of all paper food packaging which could potentially increase the benefits above by ten-fold.ⁱ

While the potential of the concept being tested is significant, the climate change benefit of the pilot program is minimal.

3. Are all cups added to the recycling bin going to be recycled?

CoRR's goal is for all cups collected in the pilot to either be recycled with mixed waste paper or old corrugated cardboard.

4. What are the cups made into?

Old corrugated cardboard is used to make a variety of products. Pratt Industries on Staten Island, where some of the cups will be recycled, makes 100% recycled content pizza boxes out of old corrugated cardboard and mixed waste paper.

5. What questions are you seeking to answer for this pilot?

Global Green's Coalition for Resource Recovery is seeking to demonstrate that fiber-based food packaging certified as OCC Equivalentⁱⁱ provides equivalent performance to OCC in the containerboard recycling stream when recycled at mills at ratios equivalent to four times the anticipated volume at a paper mill, if the recycling system being tested was widely adopted. If successful, this first test will demonstrate that the material from seven Starbucks stores, held for 7-14 days, can be recycled with OCC into high value products at a concentration less than 1% of feedstock at the mill. CoRR plans to expand the number of retail partners involved in the pilot, as well as the range of paper packaging collected with each successful recycling trial. CoRR's pilot program will continue to expand until sufficient volume has been achieved to demonstrate success at four times the anticipated volume in the waste stream.



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6. What about plastic cups, napkins, stirrers, and the pastry bags?

Due to the scale of the initial pilot at Starbuck stores, and the importance of a pure stream, items such as plastic cups, napkins, stirrers, and pastry bags will not be accepted or promoted for this test. CoRR's goal is to certify and collect as many materials that can pass OCC-E certification as possible. CoRR also is evaluating launching pilot programs to recycle plastics and food waste.

7. If the pilot goes well, what is phase II?

If the pilot goes well, CoRR will expand the number of stores and materials collected for a phase II test with the goal of demonstrating that the OCC-E material can be recycled with OCC at four times the anticipated volume in the waste stream.

8. How do you certify cups as recyclable with OCC?

The cups were certified using the Fiber Box Association's Wax Alternative Protocol. The protocol is available at: <http://www.corrugated.org/Upload/Files/WaxAlternativesStandard.pdf>. Testing was conducted by Western Michigan University's Recycling and Coating Pilot Plants. . The protocol does not account for impacts of prohibitives and outthrows that may be collected in bags of spent material.

9. What about public space recycling?

CoRR recognizes the importance of recycling packaging discarded in the store, at home, or in public spaces. CoRR feels that the lessons learned from the in-store pilot can be applied to public space and residential recycling for future tests.

ⁱ Freedonia. 2008. Cups & Lids to 2012. Study #2429. Assumed a paper cup weight of 10.1 grams. EPA WARM Tool and Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator used to calculate potential greenhouse gas and energy savings.

ⁱⁱ Only the base material has been pre-screened using the Fiber Box Association's *Voluntary Standard for Repulping and Recycling Corrugated Fiberboard Treated to Improve Its Performance in the Presence of Water and Water Vapor*. The protocol does not account for impacts of prohibitives and outthrows that may be collected in bags of spent material.