

### FOCUS ON RESIDENTIAL DRINK CONTAINER WASTE

The current New York State Returnable Container Act (RCA), also known as the Bottle Bill, passed in 1983, places 5 cent deposits on carbonated soft drinks, beer and malt liquor, mineral water, soda water, and wine cooler containers up to one gallon. Pending legislation in the New York State legislature has proposed to expand deposit eligibility to all beverage containers except milk, juice, and hard liquor. Containers for those beverages, as well as for non-beverage items such as syrups, medicines, or bottled food, would remain exempt from the law, as would all containers over one gallon. In order to provide data to assess the pros and cons of expanding the New York State Bottle Bill, the

WCS categorized all beverage containers into three groups:

- those covered by the current RCA (deposit containers),
- those that would be covered under an expanded act (**potential deposit** containers), and
- those that are not now and would not be covered under an expanded act (non-deposit containers).

All plastic, glass, and metal beverage containers were sub-sorted into these three categories. They were also counted. Because so few containers were found in the paper stream, results are summarized for the metal/glass/plastics stream (MGP) and the refuse stream only. In the full Final Report, results are also presented for the combined waste stream (refuse, MGP, and paper).

The results in the table on the following page are presented in four ways:

- "Percent of Containers": This statistic tells us the breakdown of containers in MGP or refuse by deposit status and by material type. For instance, out of all containers found in the MGP stream, 4.51% were deposit PET bottles
- "Percent of Stream": This statistic tells us how much of the total weight of discards are represented by containers of different deposit status and material types. For the above example, out of the entire MGP stream of over 4,600 tons per week generated in New York City, 1.28% of that weight, or 58.85 tons weekly is accounted for by deposit PET bottles.
- "Weekly Tons, Average": Tells us how many tons each week of MGP and refuse is comprised of containers.
- "Number of Containers Generated Citywide, Weekly Average": Using count data from the sort operations, we can calculate how many containers are recycled with MGP or thrown out with refuse each week. Over 870,000 deposit PET containers are recycled in NYC weekly, and another 2.6 million are discarded in the residential trash.

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## 2004-05 NYC Residential and Street Basket Waste Characterization Study

Summary: NYC Residential Drink Container Waste								
Material Category: Subcategory	Percent of containers		Percent of stream		Weekly Tons - Annual Avg.		Number of containers generated citywide, weekly average	
	MGP	Refuse	MGP	Refuse	in MGP	in Refuse	in MGP	in Refuse
<b>Deposit</b>								
PET Bottles	4.51%	8.19%	1.28%	0.29%	59	156	873,028	2,650,653
Clear Container Glass	4.53%	9.08%	1.28%	0.33%	59	172	186,276	522,850
Green Container Glass	4.04%	4.84%	1.14%	0.17%	53	92	175,462	357,863
Brown Container Glass	5.52%	6.98%	1.56%	0.25%	72	133	256,839	524,024
Other Container Glass	0.04%	0.06%	0.01%	0.00%	1	1	2,839	4,697
Aluminum Cans	1.60%	4.76%	0.45%	0.17%	21	90	922,638	3,773,562
<b>Deposit Total</b>	<b>20.23%</b>	<b>33.92%</b>	<b>5.73%</b>	<b>1.22%</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>2,417,082</b>	<b>7,833,649</b>
<b>Potential Deposit</b>								
PET Bottles	11.19%	10.03%	3.17%	0.36%	146	190	3,273,843	4,506,609
HDPE Bottles: Natural	3.13%	1.69%	0.88%	0.06%	41	32	447,306	566,299
HDPE Bottles: Colored	0.15%	0.13%	0.04%	0.00%	2	2	15,455	39,632
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #3 PVC	0.00%	0.03%	0.00%	0.00%	0	1	496	2,642
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #4 LDPE	0.01%	0.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0	1	4,596	52,843
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #5 PP	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0	0	1,757	2,642
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #7 Other	0.11%	0.06%	0.03%	0.00%	1	1	11,085	26,128
Clear Container Glass	4.55%	7.16%	1.29%	0.26%	59	136	195,108	477,346
Green Container Glass	0.26%	0.26%	0.07%	0.01%	3	5	6,353	11,743
Brown Container Glass	0.03%	0.07%	0.01%	0.00%	0	1	1,217	5,284
Other Container Glass	0.07%	0.07%	0.02%	0.00%	1	1	2,568	4,404
Aluminum Cans	0.54%	0.64%	0.15%	0.02%	7	12	222,639	353,166
<b>Potential Deposit Total</b>	<b>20.03%</b>	<b>20.19%</b>	<b>5.67%</b>	<b>0.72%</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>438,970</b>	<b>878,071</b>
<b>Non-Deposit</b>								
PET Bottles	7.11%	6.89%	2.01%	0.25%	93	131	1,148,792	1,962,522
HDPE Bottles: Natural	7.98%	6.14%	2.26%	0.22%	104	117	1,297,443	1,429,691
HDPE Bottles: Colored	11.40%	8.21%	3.23%	0.29%	149	156	1,164,067	2,052,061
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #3 PVC	0.14%	0.30%	0.04%	0.01%	2	6	25,774	104,218
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #4 LDPE	0.02%	0.11%	0.01%	0.00%	0	2	7,390	76,916
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #5 PP	0.33%	0.40%	0.09%	0.01%	4	8	101,519	214,600
#3 Through #7 Bottles: #7 Other	0.62%	1.82%	0.17%	0.07%	8	35	102,240	823,173
Clear Container Glass	19.71%	17.13%	5.58%	0.61%	257	325	643,495	1,202,467
Green Container Glass	10.30%	3.34%	2.91%	0.12%	134	63	224,396	146,198
Brown Container Glass	1.44%	0.95%	0.41%	0.03%	19	18	45,645	78,971
Other Container Glass	0.54%	0.43%	0.15%	0.02%	7	8	16,537	41,687
Aluminum Cans	0.14%	0.17%	0.04%	0.01%	2	3	61,596	67,521
<b>Non-Deposit Total</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>45.89%</b>	<b>16.91%</b>	<b>1.64%</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>1,093,909</b>	<b>2,360,017</b>
Total Nondesignated Plastics	1.2%	2.8%	0.3%	0.1%	16	53	254,857	1,303,162
Total Designated Metal, Glass and Plastics	98.77%	97.21%	27.95%	3.48%	1,288	1,846	11,183,543	20,779,251
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>28.30%</b>	<b>3.58%</b>	<b>1,304</b>	<b>1,899</b>	<b>11,438,399</b>	<b>22,082,412</b>

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## 2004-05 NYC Residential and Street Basket Waste Characterization Study

### Fast Facts from the WCS on Containers

- By count per 100 lbs, people recycle more metal, glass, PET, and HDPE containers through DSNY's curbside program than they throw out in the trash. For every 100 lbs of refuse or MGP generated, about 120 such containers are recycled and only 20 are thrown out.
- The vast majority of beverage containers are designated for recycling. The only type of beverage containers currently not designated for recycling under the curbside program are #3 - #7 bottles. These make up only 1.2% of all containers in MGP and only 2.8% of containers in trash. By total weight the numbers are even lower. Out of all MGP collected, for example, only 0.3% consists of #3 - #7 bottles.
- Although by count per 100 lbs there are more beverage containers in MGP than refuse, by weight people are throwing out slightly more containers than they are recycling (because there is so much more trash than MGP). In total, 1900 tons of containers a week are thrown out and 1300 are recycled properly.
- There are fewer deposit containers per 100 lbs of MGP than potential or non-deposit containers. For every 100 lbs of MGP recycling that is collected, there are:
  - 26 deposit containers
  - 45 potential deposit containers
  - 52 non-deposit containers.

### *As you read on:*

Readers should bear in mind that the container sorts for the WCS looked at containers in Refuse, MGP, and Street Basket waste collected during the WCS only. In addition, the results do not address the following phenomena:

- Containers sold or consumed in NYC during the study period
- Containers redeemed for deposit in NYC during the study period
- Containers scavenged at street level in NYC during the study period
- National trends of any kind

Readers interested in the redemption rate for returnable containers; the effect of the law and proposed changes to the law on diversion or waste composition; or who have other questions that involve container production, consumption, redemption, or scavenging will need to do their own supplementary research in conjunction with the WCS Drink Container Sorts and Counts results.

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