

**From:** pegnericstevens@gmail.com

**Sent:** Monday, April 13, 2020 10:32 AM

**Subject:** [External] testimony re: suspending recycling due to Covid 19

To the Vermont Natural Resources Committees:

I have been following recent testimony on whether or not Vermont should suspend recycling efforts due to Coronavirus and instead ship recyclables to Vermont's only landfill, owned and operated by Casella.

I read Casella's testimony. Then, being an English teacher who always required my students to do extensive research, checking sources for reliability and factual integrity, I did an internet search for effects of Coronavirus on the waste/recycling industry.

What I found, (anyone could who did the same search), is that- while retail and curbside recycling may be shut down temporarily to protect the public and essential workers from direct contact, and six feet of separation and requirements for masks for workers in sorting of recyclables in the industrial setting have been put in place- the recycling industry is still going strong.

According to recycling industry spokespersons, there is a market for recyclables! Especially paper and cardboard- for obvious reasons as customers do more online shopping and supplies of paper goods are short. The only market seeing a downturn is in metals, notably aluminum.

So, there is no call for landfilling recyclables now. I suspect the only reason for Casella to promote this idea is to pad their bottom line to make up for losses experienced in the recent stock market decline in response to the Covid19 pandemic. It would appear this is an opportunistic, cheap and self-serving shot to say all recyclables should be landfilled now. Prove me wrong, please.

Vermont has worked hard to pass legislation promoting recycling in order to reduce the tonnage load on landfilling (tonnage for which fees are paid to Casella when delivered to the landfill). There is no need or reason to turn that back. Why should Vermont be the first state in the nation to do so?

Research shows that handlers of waste are at no greater risk picking up recyclables, as long as they are wearing protective gear. The additional precaution of wearing latex gloves under safety gloves and wearing masks is encouraged as sufficient precaution. Most haulers work alone in their trucks. Outside of trucks, six feet of separation can be required in settings where more than one worker works in the same space. These are the same or more strict requirements that are being placed on other essential workers like grocery store staff.

Of course my concern is for the health and safety of essential workers everywhere, most of whom have limited to no health insurance or paid sick leave. So, yes, protect the workers, and continue to protect the environment by maintaining recycling efforts and supporting the recycling industry. The landfill industry is doing fine as is.

Thank you for doing the research. Here are the links to the pages that informed me.

<https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/coronavirus/recycling-becomes-more-essential-during-covid-19-outbreak>

<https://naparecycling.com/waste-related-to-covid-19/>

<https://recyclingpartnership.org/covid-19/>

<https://www.recyclingtoday.com/article/recycling-industry-companies-respond-covid-19-with-changes/>

<https://www.waste360.com/commercial/covid-19-sparks-downturn-us-commercial-recycling>

Sincerely,  
Peggy Stevens  
Charleston, VT

(The issue of composting organics is entirely separate, and one of limited infrastructure, particularly in the NEK. Other areas in the state have functioning composting facilities and should continue to utilize them with increased worker protections in place. We could do more to replicate these composting systems in areas in need of upgrade, for the benefit of keeping organics out of the landfill and to create new employment opportunities in the composting industry.)