



News & Updates

December 2021

Back to [a New] Normal

No one is unfamiliar with the events of last year. We can try to ignore it, but it's still true — Rob Gogan has retired and left Harvard University. We are slowly adjusting to a Rob-less campus, though it helps that he stays in touch (see below!). We're also adjusting to the return of a bustling campus, with more students than ever back in person and with staff back in varying degrees. The increase in campus population is showing up in our waste tonnage numbers: the amount of trash, recycling, and compost leaving campus has crept back up to near pre-pandemic levels.

After a long closure, our **Recycling & Surplus Center is open again!** The current hours are Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Our volunteers have been busy, and our regulars are happily back to browsing. Our LABBB students are also back helping us sort items each week. To help grow our community even more, and to keep everyone updated, the Surplus Center is **now on Facebook!** Find us [here](#).

As campus gets back to a new sense of normalcy, while still experiencing a pandemic, we want to say a big **thank you** to all the people who kept campus running and continue to do so.

Campus Updates

New Soft Plastic Recycling Program at HKS and Beyond

Thank you to the Office for Sustainability's Emily Flynn Pesquera for her hard work in initiating **a new recycling stream** on campus! Through Emily's work at Harvard Kennedy School, we now have a few pilot locations recycling "soft" plastic (i.e., low density polyethylene plastic: plastic bags, film, bubble wrap, etc.). This type of plastic is not accepted in our main recycling stream on campus since it can get caught in sorting equipment, causing delays and hazards for recycling workers. This effort, as part of Emily's work on HKS's Sustainability Leadership Council, is one of many innovative initiatives to reduce plastic on their campus, while also promoting plastic reduction in the larger Harvard community.

Along with the HKS pilot location, Harvard Business School, Mail Services, and Information Technology are also recycling soft plastics now. If you would like to learn more about this program, please [reach out](#). **We will also be accepting these plastics for recycling at the Recycling & Surplus Center at 28 Travis St.**

Talking Trash: HDS Student's Popular Waste Talk Series Cultivates Interest in Waste

Sakiko Isomichi, a student at the Divinity School, started her virtual Waste Talk Series last year with a goal of demystifying our waste systems. Each talk featured a speaker with a different expertise in the waste world, from Harvard waste-related systems to industry, design, municipal perspectives, and more. For covering such a broad and complex topic as waste, the series did an impressive job of both illuminating where our streams go and allowing for the nuances of their management. And it got more people talking about waste! The series ran from September 2020 to April 2021, and continued to increase in popularity during its run. While Sakiko's series is completed, those who missed it can take her advice to: "be curious about waste" and investigate the waste systems around you. Her own work continues through her research, her work on the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, and her position on Harvard's Council of Sustainability Student Leaders.

Retirement Update from Rob Gogan



It's hard to believe that I retired from Harvard a year ago now. Harvard Recycling was such a big part of my life for thirty years, and now the whole operation is carrying on without me. But I am still active in the world of recycling. I serve on the board of MassRecycle, the state's professional recycling group. My biggest activity with them is advocacy for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

There are several bills before the Massachusetts Legislature which will require producers to take responsibility for recycling the goods they manufacture. Paint, mattresses, electronics, and recyclable packaging all have bills under consideration by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. I testified in favor of these bills back in June. The current consumer economy allows producers to use any materials they want to produce their goods, and lets taxpayers and institutions like Harvard handle the consequences. In my little town of Acton alone, recycling cost tax-

payers almost \$200,000 last year. This set-up requires the public sector to subsidize the materials management problems caused by the private sector. If you are interested in learning more about how your city or town can promote EPR in Massachusetts, check out the MassRecycle website [here](#).

A retirement surprise for me was that I need a car. It feels weird after 30 years of taking the T, biking and walking all over campus! Look me up on Facebook to see my ditch-digging adventures to get a charging station out to our driveway. I'm glad that at least the energy I'm using to drive is 100% wind and solar.

This summer, I installed solar panels on our 26' leeboard schooner, the Blue Moon. The auxiliary motor is now 100% solar charged. So far, with plenty of advice from friends, I've managed to install all the circuitry for the battery banks, lights, fans, a composting toilet, and power stations for pumps, vacs and USB chargers. The Blue Moon is berthed on the Pocasset River on Cape Cod, in a marina that



also cultures scallops and oysters. Next summer: lithium batteries and carbon-free cruising galore!

With my wife Frann, son Josh and friends, I have taken a few classes on foraging wild food, nature journaling, fungus identification and natural history in our area. Check out my Instagram nature posts @robogogan. I hope some of you can revive the Harvard Campus Nature Watch. There's a lot of good nature news right on Harvard's campus!

I am forwarding a few photos to show you what I've been up to.

Please feel free to keep in touch! My personal email is rob.gogan@gmail.com.

Thanks as always for recycling!



Campus Nature Watch

Hopefully this very brief wildlife summary is an homage to the past nature watch updates of yore, and not an insult to their memory! Pictured are turkeys in Radcliffe Yard and a coyote at 114 Western Ave. Coyotes were also spotted near a Harvard Recycling truck early one morning this semester. Perhaps they were looking for Rob!



If you see any interesting flora or fauna, help keep the Nature Watch alive and send them in to dailey_brannin@harvard.edu.

Community Resources

[RecycleSmartMA](#), which was already a very helpful resource for finding out how to properly dispose of different items, has added a [Recycling Road Map](#) page! This page shows how your recycled materials contribute to a closed loop manufacturing system, as well as where your recyclables end up depending on which Massachusetts municipality you are in. We are planning on adding similar, Harvard-specific information on where all of our waste streams end up, so keep an eye out for updates to our own [website](#).

Also check out a [recent opinion piece](#) in the *Boston Globe* urging Boston's new mayor, Michelle Wu, to stop the city's use of incinerators as a method of trash disposal. The piece is informative and filled with links to other helpful resources. It also happened to be written by Lily Pollans, who was a speaker at one of the Waste Talks mentioned earlier!

Upcoming Events

- The *Valentine's Day Cosmetics Drive* will continue again in 2022 with donation boxes around campus for toiletries, cosmetics, hygiene products, and more. Donations benefit Cambridge's YWCA. Feel free to [reach out](#) if you'd like to host a donation box in your area or want to know where the nearest one is. We will be contacting previous host locations in January.
- Cabot Science Library and Harvard Recycling will be hosting a virtual *Intergalactic Fixit Clinic* on February 12, 2022! At Intergalactic Zoom Fixit Clinics you present your broken item to a global assembly of expert community repairers and get suggestions for things to try. After all items have been presented, items/participants and repairers move to Zoom breakout rooms to implement the tips and hopefully, fix the items. Can't wait for Feb 12? You can get online help with repair (or give online help) through Fixit Clinic's 24x7 around-the-clock around-the-world Global Fixers Server on Discord. Register for either Intergalactic Zoom Fixit Clinics or the Global Fixers Server [here](#).
- *Other Waste-Related Events*: We are tentatively planning waste audits and FreeCycles to resume next semester. If you'd like to have one of these events for your department or to volunteer at one, please [get in touch!](#)

An Introduction

Last but not least, a quick introduction to this newsletter's author. My name is Dailey Brannin and I am the new Recycling Services Coordinator. I've worked at Harvard in Facilities Maintenance Operations since 2015, received my Master's in Sustainability from the Extension School last May, and am thrilled to take on this new role! One aspect I am especially excited about is helping to develop Harvard's Zero Waste strategy with the newly formed Waste Stewardship Steering Committee, a collaboration between FMO, EH&S, OFS, and others. Thank you to Rob, Kieran Clyne, Wayne Carbone, and all the many, many others who have helped me these first few months. I look forward to meeting and working with more of you. If you ever have questions, comments, or other feedback, please reach out to me at dailey_brannin@harvard.edu.

That's all for now – thank you for reducing, reusing, and recycling!

