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Zero Waste Events Guide

For the Climate Smart Glacier Country



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What is a Zero Waste Event?

The [Zero Waste International Alliance](#) defines Zero Waste as

“The conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products, packaging, and materials without burning and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human health.”

Put simply, a Zero Waste Event diverts all material and waste generated from an event away from the landfill. In this, Zero Waste events require all vendors who supply goods to swap out single-use plastics with BPI compostable products and recyclables, therefore allowing all food scraps and containers to be collected on site for composting and recycling. In our community, this also means getting to contribute to the compost and soil that directly helps grow the food for our families. To have a successful Zero Waste event, there are several intentional steps that must be planned for and executed, which will be described in detail throughout this guide.



Why Is Zero Waste Important?

It is no secret that Whitefish has become a “place-to-be” tourist destination, and for good reason! According to the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce, millions of people travel to the Flathead Valley each summer to experience our beautiful alpine lakes, breathtaking hiking scenery, ecologically diverse fly fishing, Glacier National Park, and more. Although this tourist industry is pivotal to Whitefish’s success, it no doubt puts additional pressure on our landfill system.

As the Flathead landfill is set to reach capacity by 2030, it is pertinent that we come together to divert as much waste as possible through Zero Waste Events. These events help preserve our beautiful lands and create a healthy, thriving community for the years to come. Community events like farmers markets, concerts, conventions, festivals, and more keep our valley thriving and connected. At such events, it is easy to ignore the waste that we generate and the consequences of it. Zero Waste allows these vital events to continue while also reducing negative impacts of waste production.



Guide Contents

Zero waste events are a great way to show your commitment to the environment while creating a model of zero waste for your guests. The key to a zero waste event is careful planning so that all materials used and disposed of are reusable, recyclable, or compostable. By thinking ahead of time about all the materials your guests will be using and disposing of, it's easy to plan waste out of the event. This zero waste event planning guide will give you the resources and tools to easily reduce waste at your next event. You will be walked through the steps needed before your event, during your event, and after your event.

By using this guide, you will:

- Learn how to easily incorporate zero waste best practices into your event
- Start planning aspects of your own zero waste event
- Explore a variety of tools for planning your zero waste event, including:
 - Recycling and composting information specific to Montana
 - Vendor information for ordering reusable and compostable service ware
 - Methods for tracking event waste diversion
- Local Partners making Zero Waste happen
- Volunteer roles and training

This event planning guide will also introduce you to strategies for reducing waste, whether your event is small or large, business or fun. For a zero waste event to feel easy and achievable for attendees, advance planning is required to set things up in a simple way. The more preparation you do ahead of time, the less you need to do the day of your event. Decide what you want to take on and read those sections that will help you reach your goal. Samples of information sheets, venue maps, waste tracking tools, and more are also noted in this guide and will help you along the way as you plan your event.



CONTACTS

Local Partners

It takes a community to enact change and make a difference, and this applies to executing a Zero Waste Event as well. Together, the Heart of Whitefish, Land to Hand Montana, Dirt Rich, and Climate Smart Glacier Country have partnered together to bring Zero Waste Event planning to Whitefish. Each organization and their contributions are as follows:

The Heart of Whitefish is a 501(c)3 nonprofit whose mission is to create a vibrant downtown for the community through thoughtful event planning. In this fashion, they took the leap and decided it was important for Whitefish and the community to employ the Zero Waste market. They are the fiscal sponsor for the composting and have become an upstanding model for how these events can be made possible. Over four years, the Whitefish Farmers market has purposefully and diligently diverted over 27,000 gallons of waste from the landfill, a number that continues to grow as the market and tourism industry expands.

Land to Hand is a 501(c)3 nonprofit based here in the Flathead Valley whose mission is to build a strong community food system that fosters socially just ways of accessing food. In this, they run numerous food access programs at the Kalispell, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish farmers markets. At the Whitefish farmers market, they organize and provide the manpower to operate Zero Waste. For all inquiries, contact 406-616-2017 or hello@landtohandmt.org.

Dirt Rich, a locally owned commercial composting facility, is the champion for all Zero Waste Events in Whitefish. Dirt Rich is an organization that wishes to *Be the Change* by helping local people grow better food, reduce waste, and preserve our wild spaces. For more information and quotes of billing for your event, email at dirtrichcompost@gmail.com.

Climate Smart Glacier Country is another nonprofit organization partner to make the Whitefish Zero Waste market a success. According to their website, the mission of Climate Smart Glacier Country is to address the challenges that a changing climate creates for water and food security, public health, and recreation in the Glacier National Park region. They engage the public to develop local solutions that will conserve resources, promote clean energy, and foster a thriving community for ourselves and future generations. For all inquiries, you may contact info@climatesmartglaciercountry.org.



The Heart of Whitefish **Land to Hand MT**

[WEBSITE](#)

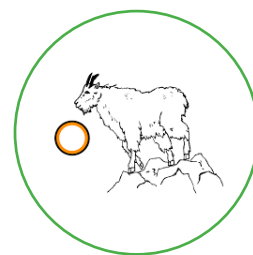


[WEBSITE](#)



Dirt Rich

[WEBSITE](#)



Climate Smart Glacier Country

[WEBSITE](#)

Successful Zero Waste Events in Whitefish

Zero Waste event planning can apply to all types of events, of all sorts and sizes. From a block party to a large street festival, reducing waste follows the same basic principles. Know that each opportunity to hold a Zero Waste event makes a difference both for the environment and through the opportunity to show others that this is achievable. In fact, there are numerous, successful events that happen in Whitefish that are classified as Zero Waste (Table 1).

Event	Description	Attendees	Waste Concerns
Whitefish Farmers Market	Weekly Zero Waste event Tuesdays end of May – end of September	1,000-3,000	Food Trucks, Market Vendors
Whitefish Legacy Partner's Hootenanny	1-day event in August	500-1000	Food Trucks, Adult Beverages, Music
Oktoberfest	Two weekends late fall	10,000+	Food Trucks, Adult Beverages, Music
Whitefish Arts Festival	Friday, Saturday, Sunday in July	5000+	Food Truck, Artists Booths
Greatfish Fun Run	One day event in September	3,000+	Course Water Cups, Food Waste, Community Booths
Last Best Ride	Weekend event in August	1000+	Course Water Cups, Food Waste

Pre-Event Planning

This section of the guide contains everything you need to know about pre-event organization and preparation to make your event successfully Zero Waste.

Contract a Commercial Composter

A Zero Waste event can only be made possible with the assistance of a commercial composter. Here in Whitefish, the only local commercial composter is through Dirt Rich. Dirt Rich has the capacity to collect all food and product waste, outside of aluminum cans, for your event. Afterward, they will compost all products that then turn into fertilizer and compost for our community farms and families. Contact Dirt Rich at dirtrichcompost@gmail.com to see if you can contract their services for your event and curate pickup plan.



Waste Management Plan

Zero Waste Stations need to be set up in key locations throughout your event venue, such as by entrances, exits, and eating areas. Each station will need collection bins based on the items you are collecting: Reusables, Liquids, Recyclables, Compostables/Organics, etc. For a zero waste event to be successful, the venue must be set up so that guests can easily participate. Often this will be the first exposure many of your guests will have to zero waste. Providing consistent sorting containers for Zero Waste Stations, locating these stations in every area a guest might need to sort waste, using clear signage, and assigning volunteers to sorting stations will all be key to success.

There are two typical waste management plans you can employ at your event, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. These stations are Dispersed Stations and One Waste Stations.

Dispersed Stations typically consist of separate bins for each recycling or waste option, all clustered together. For example, you may have 5 stations: one at the entrance of the event, one at the exit of the event, one near the field where live music is played, and two where food trucks are present. Each station could have a collection bin for aluminum cans, one for compostable containers and food waste, both being labeled accordingly.

Pros

- Stations are more visible to consumers
- Consumers do not need to search for waste station, which can often leads to confusion and more trash being left around in the venue

Cons

- Need more staff to check each bin and monitor overflow, transferring full bins to the main Zero Waste Station

One Waste Stations will be a singular, central location where all waste is brought. Here, staff will be location to assist event goers in separating content into one either compost bins or aluminum recycling. Typically, the composter composter will be present to haul compost waste directly into the truck.

- Pros
 - Simpler version, less Zero Waste staff required
 - Waste is all centralized
 - Having one waste station with an information booth encourages consumers to interact with the booth and understand better what Zero Waste is and its benefits
- Cons
 - Can lead to confusion as consumers have to search for where to dispose of waste

Consistency of Containers

It is important that every sorting station at your event looks the same to avoid confusion for your event guests. Consistency is key. Everywhere that you have a container for landfill (garbage) items, you also need to have containers for every other stream (recycling, composting/organics, liquids, etc.). In some cases it will be necessary to remove or cover existing landfill or recycling containers and plot new zero waste stations needed for the event. It is also important that each sorting station have containers in the same order (from left to right). This makes it easier for guests to become familiar with what goes in each container without having to read signs every time.

Materials are available to borrow for events, such as the depot park garbage covers, bins, main Zero Waste station tent, recycle bins for aluminum, vests, grippers, and signage. Reserve with the Heart of Whitefish and the Whitefish Farmers Market at info@whitefishfarmersmarket.org



Container Placement

We suggest a range of bins and waste stations, but you must consider other factors, including:

- Quantity of food served and materials distributed
- Venue layout: consider the number of entrances and exits at your venue, where food tables are located, if there are certain places where people can and cannot eat, and any other restrictions.

Once you have determined the number of Zero Waste Stations, you will need to map out their locations within the venue. You might consider having a station wherever there are currently landfill bins. In some cases this is easy to determine. For other events, you will need to consider the layout of the venue and where food and beverages are being served and consumed.

Container Placement (continued)

Example of event map with stations marked for Depot Park.

Whitefish Farmers Market - Zero Waste Map



	Market Storage Shed		L2H Booth		No Dogs Sign		Music Tent		Aluminum Recycle
	Dirt Rich Compost Drop-Off		Market Booth		Music Sign		Trash Vinyl Cover		Compost Bin

Container Signage

As with order of containers at the stations, consistency is key with other supplies. The same signs and the same color bags should be used consistently throughout the venue so that guests can have this as an additional visual cue. You will want two kinds of signs at your zero waste event:

- **Sorting signs** at each Zero Waste Station will help guests know how to quickly and correctly sort their items. Sorting Signs should be very basic and should match throughout your event venue the focus should be on one large word (RECYCLING, COMPOST, LIQUID, LANDFILL). In some events it may help to include photos of the items that go into each container if there are a limited number of items.
- **Educational signs** about your zero waste event will also be used to explain why your event is zero waste and the impact this will have.

Tip: Consider laminating the signs, especially if you will have future zero waste events. Laminated signs are a lot less likely to get torn off your containers or get wet or messy.



Signage Examples

Below you will find examples of signs to laminate for your event.



Signage Examples

Below you will find examples of signs to laminate for your event.

Compost-Friendly

Everything you buy here is compostable—
including our packaging.



Pour Liquids Here

Signage Examples

Below you will find examples of signs to laminate for your event.



Vendor and Caterer Requirements

For a zero waste event to be successful, you need to control all the types of waste generated at your event. It is essential to have event vendors/caterers be part of the zero waste plan. Their buy-in is the only way you will have a successful event.

Things to consider:

- Starting weeks to months before the event, think through all of the materials and components of the event in order to significantly reduce the amount of overall waste generated.
- Determine what products you will allow vendors to use and ban non-recyclable and non-compostable products at your event, such as plastic bags and wraps, condiment packets, chip bags as well as single-use plastic water bottles and polystyrene (Styrofoam).
- Decide what you will require vendors/caterers to provide for compostable serving ware (plates, cups, etc.) All products purchased must be BPI certified for them to be composted safely.



Zero Waste Information Packet

Provide an information packet to all vendors/caterers regarding the event's composting and recycling plans. This sheet should outline the benefits of zero waste, as well as your expectations and guidelines for vendors participating in the event. If you are having vendors apply to your event, be sure to also include the language below regarding Zero Waste in the application. The packet should also include:

List of acceptable items: This portion of the information packet should include a list of acceptable products and supplier information, as well as a list of prohibited materials, such as polystyrene (Styrofoam), plastic water bottles, cups or utensils.

Food guidelines: The information packet should also include any food guidelines for your event. Below are some areas to consider incorporating into your event food guidelines.

Consider how you can ensure that food at your event is not only consumed and disposed of in a sustainable way ("front of the house" operations), but is also prepared in an environmentally-friendly and waste-minimizing way ("back of the house" operations). For example, you can ask that caterers recycle any cooking oil and charcoal used for making event food.

Think of choosing caterers that provide bite-size or finger foods that don't require utensils, and use entrees that can be served in large containers. However, be aware that buffet-style food serving can actually generate more waste, as people are more apt to load up their plates. What method of food containment do you think will best suit your event? Weigh the benefits and costs of different food serving set-ups.

Ask that vendors/caterers serve fewer meat, dairy, and greasy food items, as these are less easily compostable, and in the larger picture, take a greater toll on the environment than other types of food. Also encourage caterers to serve local, organic, and sustainable food whenever possible.

Require that vendors/caterers provide drinks and condiments (water, tea, sugars, ketchup, salad dressings, etc.) in bulk instead of in individual packages and servings, so that they can be used with reusable cups and containers. If drinks or condiments cannot be provided in bulk, require that vendors/caterers buy those that are sold in compostable or recyclable containers.

Zero Waste Information Packet (continued)

Signed zero waste agreement: Ask vendors/caterers to sign an agreement based on your agreed-upon event materials, food, and recycling and composting guidelines. The below bullets are example contract requirements:

- “Zero waste policies for the event are: no bottled or canned beverages may be served; all supplies used must be reusable, recyclable or compostable; event sorting bins must be used accordingly for disposing of waste.”
- “Vendors must use locally grown, organic ingredients wherever possible in event servings. Vendors are asked to provide local, organic farms/supplier names for publication in event program and signage.”



Zero Waste Information Packet (continued)

Example Zero Waste Guidelines for Non-Food Vendor

Non-Food Vendors Zero Waste Participation Agreement

Dear Vendor:

Thank you for your interest in participating at *[event name]*! We have contracted with Dirt Rich Compost so that we can successfully host a Zero Waste event.

The goal at a Zero Waste event is to plan ahead and distribute **only** materials that are compostable or recyclable (not any materials that will be landfilled). “Zero Waste Stations” consisting of recycling, compost (BPI certified items only) and liquid collection containers will be available to participants at numerous locations throughout *[the event venue]*. As a vendor handing out products at this event, you play a vital part in the success of our Zero Waste initiative.

Vendors attending *[event name]* are required to hand out only compostable, recyclable or reusable materials. Remember, if an item is not recyclable locally, we cannot recycle it, even if your supplier has told you it can be recycled. If you have any questions as to whether your items are considered compostable or recyclable, please call *[event Zero Waste Leader name and contact number]*. We will answer your questions and help you understand your important role in this Zero Waste event. Please note that you will be asked to remove any non-recyclable or non-compostable items from your booth for the duration of the event. You will only be allowed to distribute compostable (BPI certified items only) or recyclable products.

Your signature on the vendor application acknowledges that you will abide by all Zero Waste guidelines and requirements. Our Zero Waste goal is simple to attain if you plan ahead of time the kinds of materials you will be providing to the public at the event. Here are some ideas that can help you achieve this goal:

- Order products from eco-montana.com – all product meet this events Zero Waste guidelines.
- Use the least amount of packaging possible bulk items work best.
- No single use condiment packets, candy wrappers, energy bars, chip bags and packaging from pre-packaged food.
- No single use plastic of anykind
- No glass – we can’t currently recycle glass

Thank you for supporting our Zero Waste goal and we look forward to working with you to make this a successful Zero Waste event.

Sincerely,

[Event Zero Waste Leader

Zero Waste Information Packet (continued)

Example Zero Waste Guidelines for Food Vendor

Dear Vendor:

Thank you for your interest in participating at *[event name]*! This is a Zero waste event, meaning that we need you to purchase and serve BPI certified compostable products or aluminum cans only. We have contracted with Dirt Rich Compost so all products can be composted and diverted from the Landfill.

Our event will have “Zero Waste Stations” consisting of recycling(aluminum), compost (BPI certified items only) and liquid collection containers will be available to participants at *[numerous locations throughout]* or *[the zero waste station tent]* at *[the event venue]*. As a vendor handing out products at this event, you play a vital part in the success of our Zero Waste initiative.

Vendors attending *[event name]* are required to hand out only compostable or recyclable (aluminum). Remember, if an item is not recyclable locally, we cannot recycle it, even if your supplier has told you it can be recycled. If you have any questions as to whether your items are considered compostable or recyclable, please call *[event Zero Waste Leader name and contact number]*. We will answer your questions and help you understand your important role in this Zero Waste event. Please note that you will be asked to remove any non-recyclable or non-compostable items from your booth for the duration of the event. You will only be allowed to distribute compostable (BPI certified items only) or recyclable products (aluminum).

Your signature on the vendor application acknowledges that you will abide by all Zero Waste guidelines and requirements. Our Zero Waste goal is simple to attain if you plan ahead of time the kinds of materials you will be providing to the public at the event. Here are some ideas that can help you achieve this goal:

- Order products from eco-montana.com – all products meet this event's Zero Waste guidelines.
- If you order from other sources it MUST be BPI certified
- Using the least amount of packaging possible bulk items work best.
- No single use of condiment packets, candy wrappers, energy bars, chip bags and packaging from pre-packaged food.
- No single use plastic of any kind
- No glass – we can't currently recycle glass

Thank you for supporting our Zero Waste goal and we look forward to working with you to make this a successful Zero Waste event.

Sincerely,

[Event Zero Waste Leader]

Volunteers

Remember that zero waste is most successful with point people at each station throughout the event. By recruiting and training as many volunteers as possible, you will have a "Zero Waste Team" available to assign to various tasks. Below we will talk about this team.



Volunteers play a key role in the success of a zero waste event. Each Zero Waste Station should feature a trained volunteer who assists attendees, ensures that there is no contamination between the bins, and helps to increase public awareness. It is also a great initiative to involve the community and promote local groups. Your team of volunteers could include:

- Local student groups or sports teams
- Local businesses
- Like-minded organizations – this has the added benefit of reducing the learning curve

To determine how many volunteers you need, use the venue map and identify where and when (pre-event, during, and post-event) people need to be assigned. If your event is more than a few hours, you will need to schedule shifts of volunteers. Assign volunteer roles and time slots in advance.

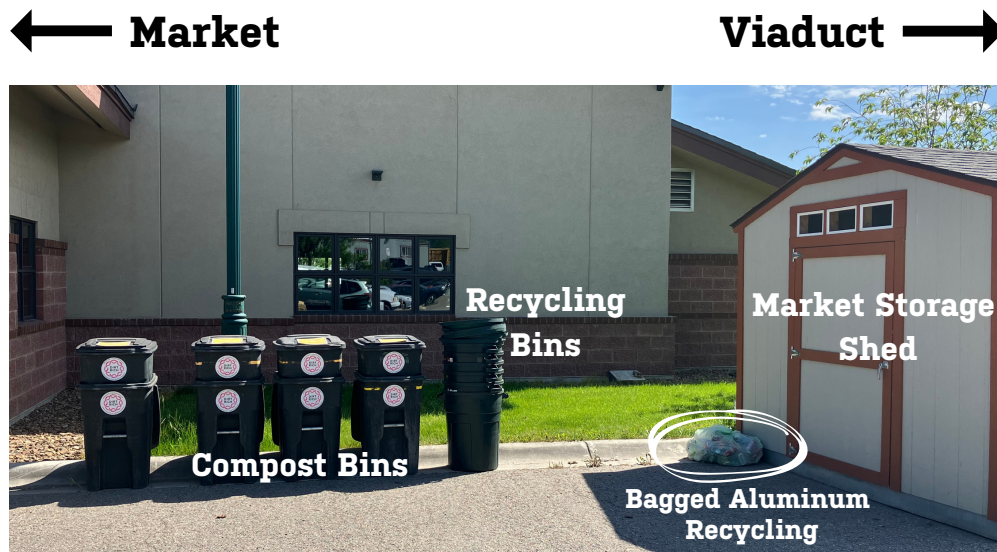
Examples of volunteer roles are:

- Main ZW station and games setup
- Dispersed ZW station set up
- Stations tear down and cleanup
- Gathering and sorting materials during the event
- Consolidating materials in a pick-up location once the event ends

Volunteers (continued)

Example of resource sheet for volunteers setting up/tearing down supplies

Whitefish Farmers Market & Zero Waste SET UP / TAKE DOWN



Farmers Market Booth Items:

- Big white tent (for Market & L2H Booths)
- 6 tent weights (bottom shelf in shed)
- 6 bungee cords
- Clear bins & cardboard boxes of booth items (water bottles, totes, etc.)
- No Dogs Allowed signs (4)

Music Area Items:

- Smaller white tent
- 4 tent weights
- 4 bungee cords
- Market music signs (2)
 - **1 sign on street corner, 1 near tent

Zero Waste Items:

- Zero Waste Station Tent
- Green Vinyl Garbage Covers (8)
- Aluminum Recycling Cans w/lids (6)
- Compost Bins (8)
- Box of Compostable Bag Liners
- Garbage grabber tools & 5-gallon Bucket

Event Staff

Zero Waste Leader: In addition to your team of volunteers, you should assign a Zero Waste Leader. This person is likely to be part of your Event Staff rather than a volunteer. This person oversees all zero waste activity and is trained on all components of your event. The Zero Waste Leader should have a complete set of event information (on a clipboard) that can be easily given to another trained person to take over if needed. This set of information should include: multiple copies of the venue map, volunteer list and schedule, and Zero Waste talking points.

Marketing

Pre-event publicity decisions are important opportunities for furthering the message of zero waste. Use your publicity efforts to acquaint and remind attendees of zero waste strategies and to emulate these by using alternatives to printed publicity materials. Pre-event publicity campaigns can include the following message: "We are striving to make this a zero waste event with the goal of 90%+ waste diversion."

- Incorporate waste diversion messages by using:
 - An official event website
 - An official event Facebook account or event page
 - An official event printed material (flyer, poster, postcard, etc. made from recycled content)
 - Other publicity through Twitter, YouTube, press release, newsletters, ads, etc.

Day Of Event

You have completed your weeks of careful planning to reduce the amount of waste coming into and being generated at your event, and you have recruited the necessary zero waste volunteers for event day. Today is the big day – it is time to put your volunteers to work in implementing your zero waste plan! Below you will find all the information you may need to successfully execute a zero waste event.

Information Distribution

Before the event set-up begins, make sure that the Zero Waste Leader and other key event staff have all the necessary information and resources to run the zero waste event components:

- Venue Map with Resource
- Recovery Stations clearly marked
- Sample Volunteer Roles
- Sample Zero Waste Talking Points for Attendees and Vendors/Caterers
- You should also set up a zero waste home base for supplies (e.g. bags, gloves, extra maps, etc.) and information.



Volunteer Training

As volunteers arrive to help with set-up, have your Zero Waste Leader in a well-marked and known location to greet volunteers. Make sure volunteers have received training (or provide training if not given in advance), review responsibilities, and have all of the materials/supplies needed for their volunteer shift.

Volunteers working at the Resource Recovery Stations should have a set of supplies, including:

- Volunteer identification items (e.g. “Ask Me About Zero Waste” pins, t-shirts)
- Sample Zero Waste Talking Points for Attendees and Vendors/Caterers
- Gloves
- Extra liner bags for containers
- Venue Map with their assigned Resource Recovery Station clearly marked, as well as dumping locations for any waste stream they are expected to remove from their station
- The contact number to reach the Zero Waste Leader with any questions or problems

Resource Recovery Stations

As volunteers arrive to help with set-up, have your Zero Waste Leader in a well-marked and known location to greet volunteers. Make sure volunteers have received training (or provide training if not given in advance), review responsibilities, and have all of the materials/supplies needed for their volunteer shift. Volunteers working at the Resource Recovery Stations should have a set of supplies, including:



Reusables



Liquids



Recyclables



Compostables
Organics



Landfill

Signs should be taped in place on sorting containers and at each Resource Recovery Station. Sample items can also be taped to collection containers.

Why Is BPI Certification Necessary?



According to the [Biodegradable Products Institute \(BPI\)](#) website, the BPI Certification Mark indicates third-party verification of compostability for manufacturers and brand owners to use on products and packaging and for consumers, end-users, and composters to use when determining whether or not a product or package is compostable. BPI is the leading third-party verification of ASTM standards for compostable products in North America. The BPI Certification process is rigorous and ensures that items can be cycled back into the soil safely at a commercial composting facility. This is done through testing to the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards and applying additional restrictions on carcinogens and fluorinated chemicals.

Often, companies label products as compostable when they are not to charge more, which is known as *greenwashing*. It is also very common to denote products that are biodegradable as synonymous with compostable when they are not.

Biodegradable is a simple term used to describe when a product will break down or transform into smaller pieces with no given time frame and also require no chemical testing. In contrast, a compostable item will biodegrade in a specified time frame, and when it does so it will yield nontoxic, safe to consume, results for humans and the environment. There are lots of options on the market, but BPI is the best way to ensure all composted materials being sent to a commercial compost facility are safe, can actually break down into the soil, and will preserve the quality of the compost.

Where to Source Compostable Products

As stated previously, not all compostable options are rated the same. Below you will find a comprehensive list of safe, certified compostable options available to purchase for your event, researched and verified by the [Whitefish Farmers Market](#).

- [BPI-Certified](#): Search resource for BPI-certified products. If it isn't on this list, it isn't BPI certified!
- [Eco Montana](#): A Montanan distributor of compostable food ware, from fork to plate to drinks, they have it all!
- [Bonnie Bio](#): Certified 100% Compostable 100% Biodegradable Plastic Alternative
- [US Foods](#): Compostable and bio-based disposable serving ware and packaging
- [Better Earth Compostable](#): Has numerous compostable food container options

Where to Source Recyclable Products

Recycling goes hand-in-hand with composting at Zero Waste Events. You also have to be very clear what is recyclable. Currently in Northwest Montana that means very little. Aluminum cans are the easiest item to recycle while clear soda bottles, only plastic #1 and #2, can be recycled with [Valley Recycling](#). All steel and aluminum cans are indefinitely recyclable, and therefore are the preferred recyclable option. As ALL food soiled containers from cans to greasy cardboard are not recyclable, it is best to stick with drink containers as the only recyclable zero waste option.

- Best option: all regular metal soda cans
- [Montana Silver Springs](#): Recyclable Aluminum Water Bottles, branded with Glacier National Park logo Philipsburg, MT Businesses can purchase through [Fun Beverage](#)

Message From Dirt Rich



We at Dirt Rich want to extend our gratitude for your involvement in the Whitefish Farmers Market and in turn supporting the ongoing efforts by Heart of Whitefish and Land to Hand to make Zero Waste events an accessible priority in our community. We look forward to working with you this coming season. If you don't already know us, Dirt Rich is a team of five providing composting services to the farmer's market, Flathead Valley and all of Glacier National Park. We haul and recycle all organic waste produced by the market at our processing site in Columbia Falls. Our team specializes in community education for waste reduction and regenerative agriculture concepts and produces high quality compost products.

Thanks to Heart of Whitefish, Land to Hand and each of you who vend at the market each year, we've been able to divert over **27,000 gallons** of what would have been non-recyclable single-use containers and food scraps from the landfill. The compostable material is now enriching our local soil and the recyclables are serving another use. We can't thank you enough for your participation.

The mission of "Zero Waste" means that all single use items distributed at an event can be recycled, rather than thrown into a landfill. To be sure we're not putting unwanted chemicals into our local soils, food vendors are required to provide **100% BPI Certified compostable** products for anything that could possibly be consumed at the market. These items will have a mark on them indicating it is certified. Below are examples of what the certification looks like.



Typically, compostable bowls and plates will be made from a non bleached molded fiber. Cutlery will usually be labeled along the handle somewhere. Hot and cold cups generally have labeling near the seam toward the bottom. **Please note that when ordering online BPI Certified should be listed clearly in the product features.**

In the past we have allowed some non certified items into our compost, such as the red and white paper boats, but found these do not biodegrade at a rate we are comfortable continuing to accept. Last season we sorted **thousands** of these contaminants out of the compost: single serving packets for sauces (ketchup/soy sauce), aluminum foil, saran wrap and cellophane bags. Please consider that there are no trash cans available at Depot Park. Providing items like these causes confusion and market goers end up tossing them into our compost bins!

Last spring, Flathead County Solid Waste projected the new county landfill pit will likely be at capacity by 2030. If more people begin taking the initiative today diverting things that are reusable, this rate of growth could potentially be slowed. Contrary to popular belief, food waste and paper containers do not break down properly in the landfill. Think about events for a moment and how much waste is produced, separate from our normal day activities. Now

Message From Dirt Rich

couple that with tourism! Year after year our local infrastructure is bombarded with excess waste from people who don't live in our beautiful valley full-time. Whitefish itself is severely lacking resources for recycling, so much of the generated waste will be landfilled. This is what makes our market so special! Each week, hundreds of vacationers are participating in our local food system and none of the waste we produce is contributing to landfill growth but rather putting those nutrients back into our soils for food production! When organizers and vendors intentionally seek out solutions for recycling and sorting of the waste stream, this demonstrates their commitment to community and social responsibility. Your participation is an integral part. Together, as a united front, we are showing local leaders what our community values and the type of collaboration needed to make a lasting difference. By taking control of our waste stream, inputs and outputs, we are building community resilience in the face of population growth in our precious valley.

“Zero is a goal which may not be achieved, but that is zero reason to give zero effort”

FAQ'S

Why Recycle?

Reusing, Repurposing and Recycling are the most direct actions we as individuals can take to combat pollution to our local watersheds. If there is another way to use an item, why not take the steps and do so? Throwing things away is a new concept. The culture your great grandparents grew up in prized making use of and respecting all resources. Organics are particularly important to recycle as they are highly valuable to agricultural soils.

Why BPI Certified, my product was sold as “compostable”..?

Unfortunately many distributors are not concerned with the ingredients of products they sell. With little to no accountability they can get away using false claims such as being “compostable” or “all natural, often with the benefit of selling their products for higher prices. Companies with nothing to hide will openly list their ingredients up front and present a certification.

What Are PFAS?

There's increasing awareness and concern in America about the prevalence of PFAS in food packaging. PFAS, or “Forever Chemicals”, are a series of fluorine chemicals used to apply heat/water resistant qualities to paper products. Ironically, when exposed to heat the chemical coating can leach into food or the environment. These molecules do not break down under normal circumstances and bioaccumulate within living organisms, humans included. Any paper items for food ware we collect must be BPI certified compostable, ensuring no PFAS are used in their production. The Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) carries out testing, under ASTM standard ensuring products will fully degrade without leaving behind trace elements or toxic chemicals. Since 2017 this standard has also included fluorine chemicals.

Message From Dirt Rich

What if I am unable to source a product I need that is BPI Certified?

Purchase your container stock well in advance! Reach out to us anytime for help sourcing products or questions about the acceptability of your items. We are happy to help! Eco Montana out of Bozeman is Montana owned and carries dependable products: www.eco.montana.com.

The US Foods store in Evergreen always has various sizes of compostable plates/bowls and straws. This can be a great last minute resource. In the future, we want to see a place like this carry wholesale stock of BPI Certified products for food vendors in the valley. If this is something you would be interested in working towards let us and US Foods know!

Some other resources: www.worldcentric.com <https://www.vegwareus.com>

We look forward to working with you this season!
Brooke, Krista, Alissa, Sarah and Andrew (not pictured)



Zero Waste Events Made Possible

We hope that this guide gives you the confidence to plan and execute a Zero Waste event here Whitefish. As we continue to grow in many aspects, these events are what will keep our town beautiful, thriving, clean, and safe for the generations to come. Remember, there is a whole community behind Zero Waste to help make it possible, with lots of the largest community events being made Zero Waste. You can do it, too!

