

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



National Cherry Blossom Festival Recycling Project

In 2006, for the first time ever, the National Park Service and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency implemented a pilot recycling program at the annual National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C. The successful program collected more than 20,000 bottles and cans in its three weekends of operation and educated visitors from around the globe. The National Cherry Blossom Festival serves as a template for future recycling programs at special events in national parks.

Facts-at-a-Glance

- This is the first time the National Cherry Blossom Festival offered recycling.
- Awareness of the event reached international audiences.
- 130 volunteers supported the recycling program.
- Recyclables were collected over three consecutive weekends.

“What better way to celebrate the beauty of our natural environment than by doing our part to preserve it?”

- EPA Administrator
Stephen L. Johnson



Program Overview

The National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) collaborated to conduct a pilot recycling project at the National Cherry Blossom Festival from March 25 through April 9, 2006, around the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C. The main goals were to minimize waste by recycling beverage containers and cardboard, control waste so it would not interfere with the enjoyment of the festival, and promote recycling in national parks.



Photo courtesy of U.S. EPA

Large banners made recycling bins easy to find throughout the festival.

Nuts and Bolts

The two agencies operated three recycling stations on the three weekends of the festival; the stations were set up in high-traffic areas near refreshment concessions. Several labeled cardboard bins were provided at each station. Collection focused on the primary recyclable items discarded—glass, aluminum, and plastic beverage containers. A banner was hung on each recycling station, and signs promoting the recycling event were posted at each station.

The 130 volunteers, who worked in shifts, were responsible for directing festival attendees to place empty beverage containers in the bins. The volunteers also helped with litter control, sorted any containers that had been improperly recycled, and removed full bags of recyclables and trash. Corrugated cardboard was recycled directly by the concessionaires.

During the course of the event, 1,540 pounds of aluminum, plastic, glass, and cardboard were collected and recycled. About 90 percent of the containers were PET plastic, about 9 percent were aluminum, and the remaining 1 percent was glass.



Photo courtesy of U.S. EPA

Volunteers directed the crowds of festival attendees to recycle during the three weekends of the National Cherry Blossom Festival.

The Bottom Line

- 1,540 pounds of recyclable cardboard and beverage containers were collected.
- More than 20,000 beverage containers were recycled:
 - About 90 percent of the containers were PET plastic.
 - About 9 percent of the containers were aluminum.
 - The remaining 1 percent of the containers were glass.

Challenges and Solutions

- **Challenge:** Many foreign visitors could not understand the English signs about recycling.
 - Solution:** Use pictures as well as words on all signs.
- **Challenge:** The lightweight cardboard bins were knocked over by the wind.
 - Solution:** Weigh or anchor the bins down or use a more durable bin type.
- **Challenge:** Some vendors and concessionaires sold products with excessive or unrecyclable packaging.
 - Solution:** Work with vendors and concessionaires to avoid excessively packaged products and to select products and packaging conducive to the recycling program.
- **Challenge:** Bins overflowed during peak traffic times.
 - Solution:** Increase the number of volunteers to empty bins during peak times.

Reasons for Success

- NPS and EPA acquired the bins, set up recycling stations, coordinated volunteers, provided signs, hauled waste and recyclables, and supplied press materials.
- Volunteers monitored the recycling stations, educated the public, and picked up litter.

Future Forecast

The pilot program serves as a template for future recycling at the National Cherry Blossom Festival, as well as for other special events. As people attend more events with recycling, they will begin to expect recycling wherever they go.



Signs explained recycling collection with pictures as well as words to help foreign visitors who did not speak English participate in the festival's recycling program.



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Solid Waste (5306P)
EPA530-F-06-022
December 2006
www.epa.gov/recycleonthego

Recycle
on the **GO**

EPA is partnering with other federal agencies, states, municipalities, and organizations to promote recycling away from home.

www.epa.gov/recycleonthego