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Glass Discontinuation Explained

December 3, 2018

On November 1, 2018, all forms of glass were discontinued as a recyclable in both Redwood and Renville Counties'. There were many factors behind the decision to discontinue recycling glass including a declining demand for glass materials, increased transportation costs, and an increase in processing expenses associated with such issues as contamination from non-recyclable materials.

Historically glass was one of the original examples of a "re-use" material. Milk, soda, and beer were almost exclusively produced and sold in glass bottles. To reduce costs, the beverage industry created and promoted a "re-use loop" in the returnable bottle, which the beverage industry collected, transported, and re-used the glass bottle after the beverage was consumed. Re-useable items eventually became known as a "recyclable" material. Over time the development and marketing of aluminum and plastic began to take over the industry. In comparison to glass, these materials were lighter to transport, cheaper to produce, and more convenient to take on-the-go. As the nation's priority for convenience by the consumer grew, the demand for glass and its uses have dwindled offering little to no value for the product and greatly reducing the number of facilities available to accept recycled glass.

Contamination in glass has been an issue for many years. The glass jar or bottle being placed in your recycling bin does not have the same appearance when it's being separated and processed at the facility. Non-recyclable materials, which are often placed in the recycling containers with the glass, contaminates the glass load to the extent that it is impossible to process and market the glass product, leaving a sanitary landfill as the only option for disposal (**see photo below**). The following items are common contamination materials mixed in with the glass:

- Non-recyclable glass, including automotive, television, light fixtures, and windows
- Dirt, potting soil, and cat litter
- Food waste and coffee grounds
- Button batteries
- Shredded paper/plastic spoons/straws
- Lids and caps from pop, beer, milk, detergent, and food containers

Unfortunately, due to market changes, it has become increasingly difficult and expensive to locate end users for recycled glass. Factors such as distance to market, increased processing costs, high contamination levels, and rising expenses to provide the program have led to the decision to discontinue the acceptance of glass.

We recognize that this is a major change. In an effort to continue to reduce expenses, we request residents and businesses to no longer dispose of their glass with other recyclable items.

