

Zero Waste advocate rolls out organics collection by bike

Gibsons Recycling

SEAN ECKFORD / STAFF WRITER
APRIL 14, 2016 12:12 PM



Buddy Boyd poses outside the Zero Waste Store with the electric bicycle he plans to modify to collect organics for composting.
- Sean Eckford Photo

Earth Day is a big deal for Buddy Boyd of Gibsons Recycling. Boyd, one of the world's top zero waste advocates, has taken to using the occasion to introduce new initiatives. One year it was the purchase of electric vans for his fleet. Another, it was starting up on-site composting at the Gibsons Resource Recovery Centre. This year, Boyd has a plan to collect kitchen scraps and organic waste on a bicycle.

Boyd said there's a real need to get serious about diverting organics from landfills, which he estimates is at least one-third of what people in Gibsons are throwing out, but he also recognizes that backyard composting isn't practical for everybody. He also thinks curbside collection is not the answer.

"I'm definitely 100 per cent against mandated curbside collection in a community that has wildlife issues ... we don't want to entice wildlife to come in and view those containers at the curb as bait," he said.

Boyd's new pilot project, which he hopes to start late this month, will be aimed at people who aren't already bringing their compostables to his depot, or composting on their own.

"I'm going to do it in Lower Gibsons, because I think Lower Gibsons is a perfect place considering the proximity to this depot. I'm going to see if I can find some seniors, or people who don't drive, or people who don't currently compost, and see if they'd like to participate in a once-a-week free pickup."

Boyd said he sees the pilot running about three months, during which he'll track how much he's collecting and extrapolate the results to get an idea of the potential within the town. "If we can get people to participate and have a little fun, it doesn't have to be painful to do better," Boyd notes.

Boyd said he chose a very skookum Volt Bike because he was looking for a "work vehicle." He's planning to have it modified with a special carrier to hold from 20 to 45 kg of material. Then, using one of the depot's electric vans as a central point, he'll cycle from place to place loading up on organic waste and shuttle to and from the van to empty the carrier as it fills up. When the rounds are done, the van will take everything up to the depot.

As well as getting ready to launch the bicycle collection pilot project, Boyd will be spending this weekend on Vancouver Island, where he's a featured speaker at a pair of Earth Day events: The Creatively United Earth Week event in Victoria on the 16th, and an event for Zero Waste Sooke on the 17th.

Boyd believes that in some ways Vancouver Island is ahead of the curve when it comes to adopting zero waste, but it's still a bumpy road.

"One thing that's happening in the zero waste movement is that as more and more governments get involved, they're making some poor choices about what to do with the materials collected. For example, the CRD [Capital Regional District] and Victoria have a huge challenge now because they don't know what to do about glass. Their system is 'co-mingled' so glass is contaminated by other recyclables. We advocate 'source separation' ... Contamination and co-mingling is not really conducive to zero waste," he said.

Boyd also said one message he's trying to get across is the idea that entrepreneurs and citizens are best placed to get communities to a zero waste goal.

"If you look at the movement around the world, it's not government that leads the zero waste movement – it's grass roots individuals," Boyd said. "We do have some government folks [in the zero waste movement], but they don't lead it, they participate within it."

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