

# Waste Report 2020





## Purpose

The Hudson River Park (HRPK) [Community Compost Program](#) has taken considerable steps towards sustainability since its initiation in 2016. Today, the Park welcomes food scraps from the community for composting at 10 drop-off sites (3 additional sites from previous years). The COVID-19 pandemic prevented major compost programs in NYC from remaining operational, making it prudent for HRPK to provide its services to the public. HRPK also works to monitor landfill and recycling bin usage in the Park as part of the [Park Over Plastic](#) initiative to reduce plastic pollution, (HRPK, 2020). The purpose of this report is to share findings from the Park’s waste metrics and provide data to inform day-to-day operational strategies and sustainability measures within the Park.

## Project Goals

- Operate and maintain 10 community compost drop-off sites and manage over 100 landfill and recycling bins within the Park.
- Streamline waste metrics, increase recycling and expand waste management capacity.
- Engage and educate the community through programs, resources and volunteer opportunities.



**Fig. 1 (left)** | Students learn how organic waste is collected at HRPK’s compost center and processed in an aerating vessel in order to produce compost.



**Fig. 2 (above)** | Map of [food scrap drop-off sites](#), landfill bin and recycling bin locations. Piers containing paired landfill and recycling bins are broken into 5 segments. Segments are represented by outline color.

Yellow = segment 3, Dark blue = segment 4, Red = segment 5, Pink = segments 6 & 7

## Composting Methods

- HRPK’s horticulture staff collects all the organic waste that is produced when maintaining the Park.
- Members of the community bring their organic waste to a drop-off location, open daily from 7am-7pm.
- Organic waste collected by GrowNYC— an environmental organization with compost drop-off sites around NYC— as well as from park tenants and offices are brought to HRPK, (NYCGrow, 2016).
- All organic waste is dropped off at HRPK’s compost center on 33<sup>rd</sup> street where it is weighed and processed in the Park’s [Green Mountain Technologies In-Vessel Earth Flow industrial composter](#).
- Nutrient rich compost is returned to plant beds in the Park and continue to be maintained with the support of volunteers.

## Waste Collection Methods

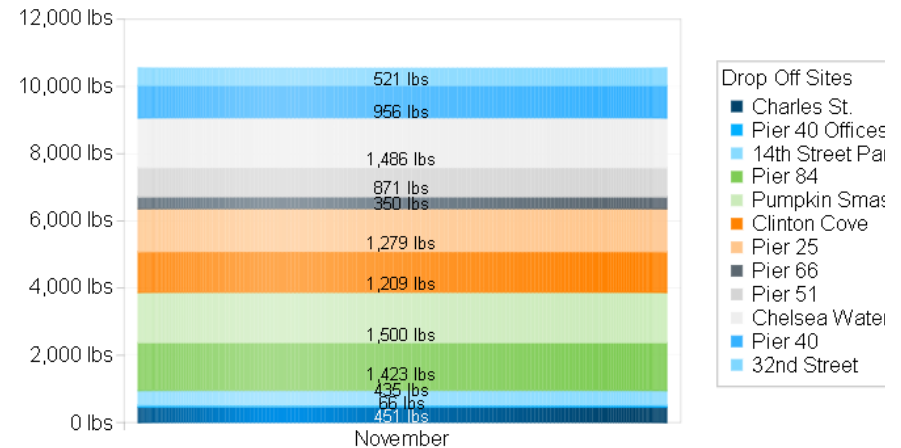
- Compost bins are paired with trash and recycling bins at 10 locations.
- Bins are checked daily in the morning and evening and when bags are at least 50% full, they are replaced with an empty 40-45 gal trash bag.
- Number of bags removed are recorded by pier and/or esplanade, which are then grouped by segment from south to north of the Park (Segments 3-7).
- Trash and recycling waste is dropped off at Pier 40 to be compacted and picked up weekly by [DSNY](#).
- Data input was streamlined into a tracking sheet starting in June 2020.

## Major Findings

In 2020, the Park composted 386,000 lbs. of organic waste. This is a combination of community food scraps totaling over 36,000 lbs. plus 350,000 lbs. of horticultural waste. Due to COVID-19, composting in the Park was paused between March 18<sup>th</sup> and September 14<sup>th</sup> 2020, a period of time that the Park historically receives high amounts of food scraps. Even with this gap, the total organic waste composted reached 90% of the total in 2019.

The Park's trash and recycling waste from June to November was over 33,800 bags or about 1,352,000 gallons. Additionally, trash bins in the Park were consistently fuller than recycling bins in each location.

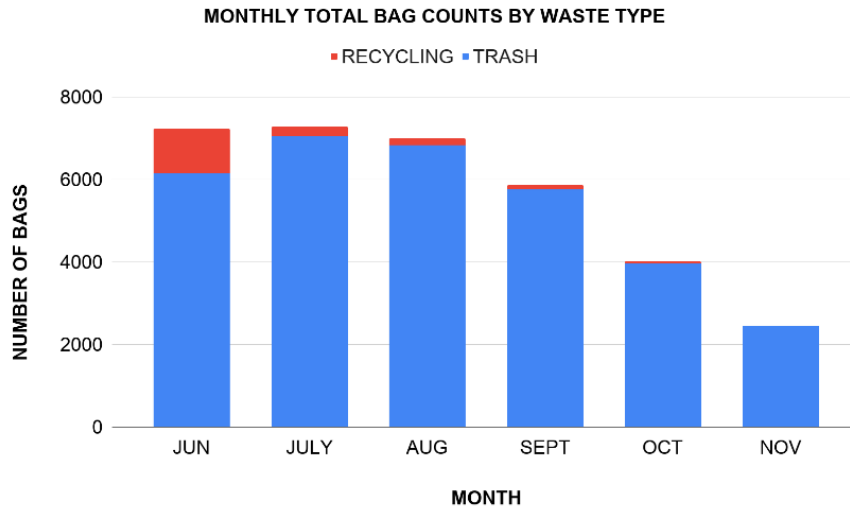
Food Scrap Collected Per Month from Community Drop Off Sites



**Fig. 3** (above) | Food scraps were most abundant in November with a total of 10,547 lbs. In 2019, the total in November was 8,286 lbs.

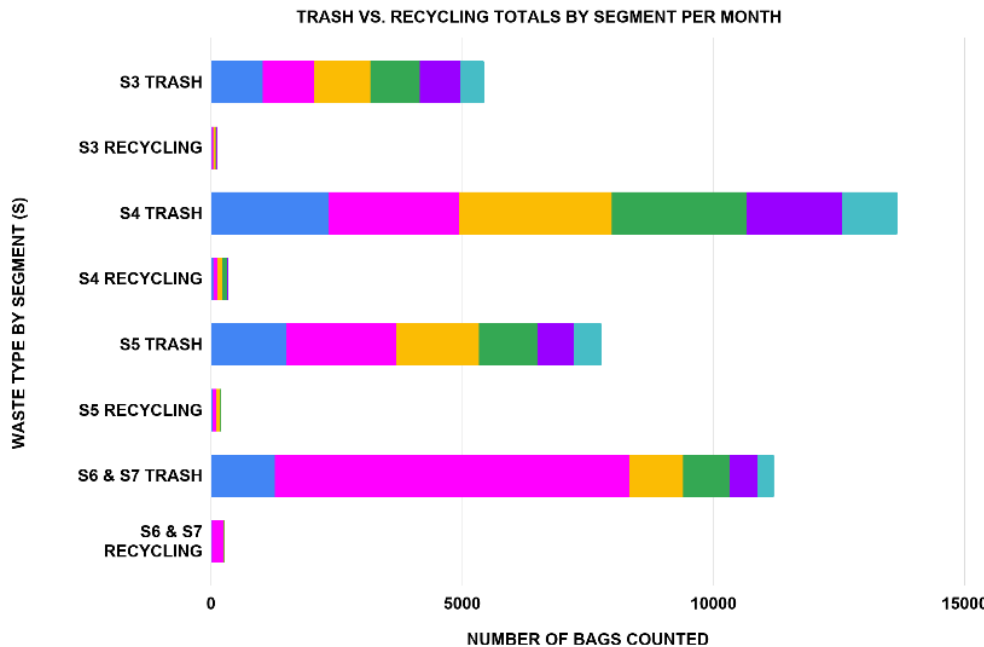
## Major Findings continued

- Community drop-off total food scraps: 23,878 lbs.
- The most food scraps were dropped off at Pier 25, a total of 4,202 lbs.
- Out of the three newly opened drop off sites, Clinton Cove had the most food scraps, a total of 1,400 lbs.
- Segment 4, which represents the West Village and Meatpacking neighborhoods, had the highest amount of waste with 41% of all segments' waste.
- 17% of the waste in June was recycling; the highest proportion of recycling to landfill waste than any other month.



## Take Aways

The COVID-19 pandemic posed new challenges to the Park and community. Public outdoor spaces played a bigger role in the health and wellbeing of New Yorkers. With gyms, schools, venues, restaurants etc. either closed or at reduced capacity and nearly all Park programming gone virtual, the Park allowed for visitors to make use of the outdoors in more ways than before. Additionally, NYC composting was halted which left many locals questioning the future of city sustainability. The need for composting and drop-off sites was evident with food scrap totals being nearly just as high and, in some months, higher than in 2019 e.g. November. Areas of the Park with lawns, fields or outdoor restaurants had higher levels of trash perhaps signifying high activity of Park users with to-go food and beverages. Towards the end of the year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Pumpkin Smash composted 1,000 lbs. of old Halloween pumpkins in a socially distant, in-person program.



**Fig. 4** (above left) | Trash and recycling proportions by month

**Fig. 5** (left) | Waste type collected by segment throughout the Park. Segment 4 collected the most trash and recycling.

## Future Directions

HRPK waste metrics will continue to be collected and further streamlined to support Park sustainability goals. This information has provided some insight on seasonal waste disposal behaviors within the Park as well as waste disposal at different locations. The data has revealed that there are more recycling bags collected in the summer months than in the fall months. Segments 4 and 6 showed highest amounts of trash and may benefit from increased bins or signage to prompt proper disposal. Helpful next steps can include collecting individual trash and recycling bin data as well as integrating weights of each bag to understand a more accurate measurement of waste consumed in the Park.

2020 has demonstrated the Park community's need and enthusiasm for composting. Encouraging visitors to compost at Park events, involving more volunteers at the HRPK Compost Center and increasing educational signage can help to expand HRPK's Community Compost program in 2021. Overall, continued monitoring of trash, recycling and compost bins and involving community members can help to strategically reduce marine debris, carbon and methane emissions and protect valuable natural resources like Hudson River Park for years to come, (United Environmental Protection Agency, 2020).



**Fig. 6** (above) | Community members celebrated Park sustainability and smashed pumpkins

## References

HRPK. (2020). Park Over Plastic. *Plastics are harming our waters. We're over it, aren't you?*  
<https://hudsonriverpark.org/the-park/sustainability/park-over-plastic/>

NYCGrow. (2016). *About GrowNYC*.  
<https://www.grownyc.org/about>

United Environmental Protection Agency. (October 29, 2020). *Reducing the Impact of Wasted Food by Feeding the Soil and Composting*. <https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/reducing-impact-wasted-food-feeding-soil-and-composting#main-content>