

Westchester County News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Catherine Cioffi
Communications Director
Office - (914) 995-2932
Cell- (914) 954 -5579**

CCioffi@westchestergov.com

***Westchester County Executive George Latimer Highlights Environmental
Achievements During His Administration***

*Latimer's efforts to protect our environment expanding with new textile recycling
program through the Department of Environmental Facilities*

Watch full press conference [HERE](#).

(White Plains, NY) – To further Westchester County's commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness, County Executive George Latimer is announcing the expansion of Westchester's Textile Recycling Program in partnership with Helpsy. The Westchester County Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF), under the leadership of Commissioner Vincent Kopicki, First Deputy Commissioner Lou Vetrone and Assistant Commissioner Melissa Rotini, will now be offering a Textile Program that allows municipalities to provide curbside textile services to all residents. This service enables residents to schedule free pickup appointments on designated service days and it's all aimed at encouraging residents to contribute to a greener future by responsibly disposing of their clothes, shoes, towels, rugs, and other textile materials.

Latimer said: "In 2022, Westchester County continued to demonstrate why we are a regional leader in the field of environmental management when we posted a recycling rate of 51%, far outpacing the EPA national average of 32%, but we are not satisfied. This effort is another step in our effort to get this County to recycle more. Westchester County is setting the standard for sustainable practices and I am proud of my Administration's efforts to create a resilient and eco-friendly community."

As of December 2021, DEF has broadened the scope of its Textile Recycling Program at the Household Material Recovery Facility (H-MRF) to include a wider range of textile materials. Notably, the program accepts items in any condition—whether torn, worn, stained, or featuring broken zippers—as long as they are clean, dry, and odorless.

Vetrone said: “In 2023, DEF witnessed a remarkable 16% increase in textile recycling participation, with residents delivering over 16 tons of textiles to the H-MRF. This surge in engagement demonstrates the community's commitment to sustainability and environmental responsibility.”

Participating municipalities will be assigned a regular service day, during which residents can conveniently sign up for a pickup appointment. A Helpsy service provider will then visit the residence to retrieve textiles. Subsequently, Helpsy will process these items at their White Plains Facility, either for reuse or recycling.

Westchester Leads on Recycling

The amount of residential solid waste disposed by the County has decreased from 525,950 tons in 2005 to 379,557 tons in 2022, a reduction of 146,393 tons or 28%. This massive reduction in waste is due, in large part, to recycling education and the many innovative programs and initiatives launched and managed by DEF, including Recycling Enforcement, Medication Take-Back, the Mobile Shredder program, Boat Wrap Recycling, Electronic Waste Recycling, Organic Yard Waste Recycling, and Household Recycling Day events. DEF also established the Household-Material Recovery Facility to manage hard-to-dispose of wastes, and makes regular upgrades and improvements to the equipment at the Daniel P. Thomas Material Recovery Facility, where curbside recyclables are processed.

Food Waste

In recent years, DEF has introduced programs designed to divert food scraps from the waste stream for composting. Last year, under the Residential Food Scrap Transportation & Disposal program, the County collected more than 1,000 tons of food scraps for composting. DEF also operates CompostED, an education and demonstration site that composts two tons of food waste each week. The site serves to educate municipalities on to the establishment of food compost sites and the integration of food waste composting at their own organic compost yards. This past year, DEF worked with the City of White Plains on the opening of its own local food waste recycling program at its Gedney Yard recycling site. The City of White Plains is now able to compost all food scraps collected at their drop off location and provide residents with nutrient dense compost.

Environmental Leadership

During Latimer’s two terms, the County has received certifications as a Green Purchasing Community and Climate Smart Community through the State’s Department of Energy & Conservation - further showcasing Westchester County's dedication to sustainability.

During his time as County Executive, Latimer has signed crucial environmental legislation such as the Lead-free Water in County Parks Act, Addressing Asthma in Disadvantaged Communities Amendment, Renewable Energy Database Act, Equity in Environmental Legislation Act and Single-use Plastic Items Upon Request Law.

Sustainable Westchester Executive Director Noam Bramson said: “The County's wide-ranging environmental leadership, of which this expansion of textile recycling is only the latest

example, is making a critical positive difference to our future, and reflects a commitment to forward-looking policy and practices. As the region's environmental shared service provider, Sustainable Westchester has been proud to partner directly with the County on everything from the clean energy transition to green workforce development, and we will continue to foster collaboration among all of Westchester's cities, towns, and villages, recognizing that we can accomplish far more together than on our own.”

EV Charging Stations

Latimer has additionally initiated efforts like the electrification of Westchester County’s car and bus fleet, including legislation now mandating that 20% of spaces in parking lots or garages must be designated for EV charging. Now, any vehicle purchased must be electric, including plug-in hybrid EVs. Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging infrastructure has also been expanded in County Parks and County-owned parking lots. Monthly webinars have been sponsored and held to encourage the transition to electric fleets and the addition of charging stations for municipalities and residents. With the recent announcement of the innovative Municipal Electric Vehicle Charging Grant Program, the County is contributing up to 50% of the cost of EV charging station design, procurement and installation for public parking in Westchester cities, towns and villages.

Demand Response & Other Efforts

The County has also partnered with NuEnergen to implement a Demand Response Program to enhance energy efficiency while earning money toward the County’s operating budget. Other efforts include the Green Building Benchmarking and Green House Gas Inventory, both of which are helping the County better understand the emissions of buildings in the County and have significantly contributed to a more sustainable building environment.

Parks, Recreation and Conservation Environmental Achievements

The Department of Parks, Recreation & Conservation, under the leadership of Parks Commissioner Kathy O'Connor and First Deputy Commissioner Peter Tartaglia, have completed numerous projects to advance the County’s environmental efforts, including initiatives such as Hudson River Fishing Advisory work, the Flora of Ward Pound Ridge project and a turtle monitoring project at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation.

Collaboration with the Soil & Water Conservation District has resulted in tree planting at Saxon Woods and soil sampling at multiple County parks. The Parks Department has also been at the forefront of electrification efforts, replacing noisy, polluting 2-stroke engine equipment with battery-powered alternatives.

Partnerships with organizations like Perfect Earth Project and involvement with the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (LHPRISM) showcase the County's commitment to best practices and invasive species management. Efforts to combat Spotted Lanternfly and Beech Leaf Disease Management are just a few examples of the County Parks Department’s dedication to environmental conservation.

Director of Environment, Energy & Sustainability Peter McCartt said: “The achievements highlighted today demonstrate Westchester County's commitment to addressing climate change and promoting sustainable practices. As we move forward, we will continue to explore innovative solutions and engage the community in building a greener and healthier future.”

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About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just over one million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com