



May 27, 2021

## Glass Recycling Update

VPPSA manages the regional curbside recycling contract on behalf of James City County, York County, the City of Poquoson, and the City of Williamsburg. The program has been offered in all four communities for the past 25 years, in some communities, even longer. Over the last two decades, the collection of recycling at the curb has seen many changes. These changes have been made to make recycling easier on the resident. Starting out, the program asked residents to separate materials and use several different containers to place the separated recyclables at the curb for collection. Progress in recycling sorting technology allowed for the advent of what we currently call "single stream" recycling. Single stream allows residents to place all acceptable recyclable materials together into one container, for collection at the curb. Introducing rolling carts to the program and eliminating the smaller bins allowed for more efficient collection, using automated collection trucks.

All these improvements in the collection of recyclables did result in some negative effects on the processing of recyclables. Mixing the materials together in one container for collection results in higher contamination. Glass has become harder to separate from the other materials because it breaks. Over the years, VPPSA has vetted our recycling processors to make certain that the materials listed as "acceptable" for recycling are, in fact, being recycled. Glass has always been included in our list of acceptable materials and will continue to be accepted. The materials placed in the rolling carts is collected and processed by TFC Recycling. Their processing facility is in Chesapeake and once the materials are delivered to that plant, they are separated through a variety of technologies. Glass is separated but the technology cannot fully separate all the glass from the overall mix at this time. What can be separated is reused and recycled by industry.

James City County and Owens-Illinois are offering a new glass-only recycling program in the coming months. This is a fantastic opportunity to recycle glass locally and VPPSA fully supports this endeavor. The glass-only recycling program provides a more efficient way to recycle glass bottles and jars by keeping the material separated from the other commonly recycled materials, such as paper, steel food cans, and plastic bottles. Residents can be assured that glass placed in their curbside collection carts is also being recycled. It is exciting to have an additional option to recycle glass locally and we encourage residents to recycle, no matter which option they choose!

