

Fort Polk sorts out common recycling questions

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Guardian staff writer

FORT POLK, La. — Most people want to do the right thing, but knowing how to recycle on Fort Polk can sometimes be confusing.

Fort Polk's Net Zero Waste program is comprised of many components, but the Recycling Center is a key aspect. "Understanding how on-post recycling works can make a huge difference and benefit all Fort Polk Soldiers and Families," Tammy Veillon, installation sustainability coordinator, said.

Regular recycling in the housing areas is privatized through a third party contractor and is not Fort Polk affiliated.

However, on-post residents may still bring clean cardboard and paper products to the Recycling Center. A percentage of revenue from these products go back to the participating Soldier's unit through the "Riches for Recycling" program. Units may participate as well by bringing plastic (#1, no caps) and aluminum to the center in addition to cardboard and paper. On a yearly basis, each unit is ranked according to how much they recycled and rewarded a proportionate percentage.

Units and offices on post may request Fort Polk's Net Zero Waste interior recycling bins if they do not already have them. The "White Paper Only" bin is for copy paper from the printer. Even if colored ink is on the paper, it can still go in this bin as long as it is copy paper. The "Mixed Paper Only" bin is for other paper products such as tissue boxes and flyers. The "Plastic Bottles Only" bin is for clear, #1 plastic bottles (no caps — these are a different type of plastic and can become dangerous projectiles for workers during

the recycling process). The fourth bin is for clean, rinsed out aluminum cans. Fort Polk's outside recycling bins are 30 gallon plastic and airtight (blue and green), and are split in half, each containing two separated sections for "paper" and "plastic."

Why can't I recycle everything?

While it is possible to recycle many types of products, the higher the number on a product (on a scale of 1-6), the more difficult and expensive it is to recycle. The Recycling Center only opened a few years ago, so Fort Polk hopes to perfect each type of recyclable before moving onto the next, starting with #1 (clear plastic bottles), said Veillon. A large amount of each product must be accumulated before it can be recycled. Recyclables must also be cleaned to reduce smells and vermin and keep the facility clean (no greasy pizza boxes or dirty bottles). The Recycling Center also recycles other items such as printer cartridges, car batteries, motor and cooking oil.

Where does the money go?

Besides the "Riches for Recycling" program, the Qualified Recycling Program, an initiative of the garrison commander, is allowed to use proceeds for four different purposes:

- 1) Sustaining the recycling program so it can continue to run
- 2) Pollution prevention — outreach and awareness
- 3) Buying new equipment
- 4) Morale, Welfare and Recreation — Funds may go back into MWR to support events and activities for Soldiers and their Families (such as the July 4 fireworks and Brantley Gilbert concert — Gilbert performed for free but logistics cost \$50,000, and this was paid for by MWR). Last



year, the recycling program donated a total of \$125,000 to MWR thanks to profits from recycling.

How do I get there?

The Recycling Center is easy to get to from Entrance Road:

- Head down Louisiana Ave
- Take a right onto Alabama Ave
- Take a left onto Maine Street (directly across from the 1st MEB dining hall) and drive straight through the gates of the Recycling Center, bldg 3622.

The center is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

For more information, visit the Net Zero Facebook page at "Fort Polk Net Zero Waste" or click on the green "NZW" link on Fort Polk's home page (www.jrtc-polk.army.mil) to see a complete list of items the Recycling Center accepts.

Patrons may also call Veillon at 531-4278 for containers and/or training information or the Recycling Center at 531-7556 for general information.