EPA REGION 6 – SOUTH CENTRAL

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Dallas, Texas 75270

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HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Serving Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Texas and 66 Tribes

The Importance of Pollinators

Many types of plants, including fruit and vegetable crops, depend on animals for pollination. In addition to honeybees, many other types of animals pollinate crops and wildflowers, including:

- Wild bees.
- Ants.
- Beetles.
- Wasps.
- Lizards.
- Birds.
- Bats.
- Butterflies.

We are concerned about declines in pollinator health and are working to protect bees and other pollinators from pesticide risks. Learn more about what EPA is doing to protect pollinators.
Learn about what our partners are doing.

National Pollinator Week is June 19-25. You can find Basic Tips and Education Resources for Pollinator Protection in this link or click on the Bertie the Bee picture for a direct link to the Bertie the Bee Coloring Book and other useful information.

The health of kids and teachers is key to learning in the classroom.

The #EPASaferChoice label can help schools find safer cleaning products for people and the environment.

What Is the EPA Excess Food Opportunities Map?

The U.S. EPA Excess Food Opportunities Map supports nationwide diversion of excess food from landfills. The interactive map identifies and displays facility-specific information about potential generators and recipients of excess food in the industrial, commercial, and institutional sectors and provides estimates of excess food by generator type.

The map displays the locations of nearly 950,000 potential excess food generators. These include:

- correctional facilities.
- educational institutions.
- farmers markets.
- food banks.
- healthcare facilities.
- hospitality industry.
- food manufacturing and processing facilities.
- food wholesale and retail.
- restaurants and food services.

The map also displays the locations of communities with source separated organics programs, refrigerated warehousing and storage facilities, and about 6,500 potential recipients of excess food. These include:

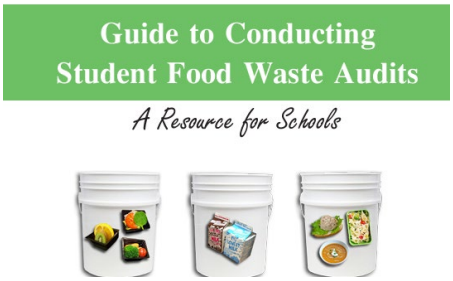
- anaerobic digestion facilities.
- composting facilities.
- food banks.

The map has been updated to Version 3.0. The updates and additions include:

- Two new data layers: refrigerated warehousing and storage, and farmers markets.
- A new healthcare subsector: nursing homes and residential care facilities.
- Two additional types of hotels: bed-and-breakfast inns and other.
- Data layers from EPA EJScreen that users can toggle on/off. A key data layer is the food desert data layer under the critical services gap menu.
- USDA Food Environment Atlas data layers that can also be toggled on/off. These include Food Insecurity (state-level data) and Food Assistance (SNAP, WIC, and others).
- Updates to all data for excess food generators and recipients.

For more information on the changes in Version 3.0, visit the Frequent Questions about the U.S. EPA Excess Food Opportunities Map.

Reducing Food Waste at K-12 Schools



Food waste is the single largest component of waste sent for disposal, much of which ends up in landfills, where it generates methane, a powerful greenhouse gas

(U.S. Environmental Protection Agency)

K-12 schools have a special role in not only reducing, recovering, and recycling food waste on their premises but also in educating the next generation about the importance of food conservation and recovering wholesome excess food for donation to those less fortunate.

Most importantly, increasing consumption and reducing wasted food means children get the nutritional benefits from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP).

The best way to tackle food waste is to make sure students consume what they take. This involves good planning by school nutrition staff, getting students involved in decision-making, and having teachers educate students on the impacts of wasted food.

Strategies

- Offer-versus-serve (OVS) – Allows students to decline some components of a reimbursable meal as a way of providing choice and reducing waste. OVS is mandatory in high schools, but optional for elementary and middle schools (81 percent of all elementary and middle schools used OVS at lunch).
- Market your meals – Highlight new foods on your menus and serving lines. Consider holding taste tests and recipe competitions or creating a student advisory committee to provide feedback on food acceptability and recipe names.
- Extend lunch from 20 to 30 minutes – In a poll by NPR and the Harvard School of Public Health (PDF, 1 MB), 20 percent of parents of students from kindergarten through fifth grade surveyed said their child only gets 15 minutes or less to eat. Extending the lunch period can improve dietary intake and reduce food waste.
- Create share tables – Share tables are designated stations where children may return whole and/or unopened food or beverage items they choose not to eat. These items are then made available to other children who may want another serving during or after the meal service. USDA encourages the use of share tables and offers implementation guidance.
- Saving food items – Students who may not have time to finish their meal during the designated lunch period may save certain meal components for later in the day. For food safety reasons, this practice should be limited to food items that do not require cooling or heating.

I Am Interested in Composting. Where Can I Learn More?

Composting is the controlled, aerobic (oxygen-required) biological decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms. Organic (carbon-based) materials include grass clippings, leaves, yard and tree trimmings, food scraps, crop residues, animal manure and biosolids. **Compost** is a dark, crumbly, earthy smelling, biologically stable soil amendment produced by the aerobic decomposition of organic materials.

Learn more at https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/composting.

Sunwise Toolkit and Samples

The National Environmental Education Foundation's SunWise program is a free environmental and health education program that teaches K-8 children about sun safety, UV radiation, and stratospheric ozone. Educators, parents, caregivers, and others **who register for the SunWise program** receive a FREE toolkit with over 50 cross-curricular, standards-based activities that encourage young people to explore, assess, and understand their natural environment and how it affects their health.

Extreme Heat

ALWAYS CALL 911 if you are in immediate danger and need emergency help.

Individuals, communities, and businesses can plan for and reduce the effects of extreme heat. Keep yourself and your family cool when the thermometer tops out. Check weather alerts and warnings from the National Weather Service.

- **Prepare for hot weather before it happens - homeowners, communities, businesses**
- **Stay healthy during extreme heat**

July Is Smart Irrigation Month

Do you wish you had a landscape that required less water and maintenance and still made your neighbors jealous? Find out how beautiful your landscape can be by checking out the water-smart landscape design photo gallery by clicking on your region in the map below. We hope you find one that calls out to you and is right for your region.

All of our gallery photos came from WaterSense photo challenges and we thank all of the participants who are helping to show how beautiful a water-smart yard can be! If you're already enjoying the benefits of a water-smart landscape, contact the WaterSense helpline to add a photo of your landscape to the gallery and inspire others. Please note that clicking on an area of the country below will take you to a corresponding WaterSense photo album on the EPA Flickr account.

Basic Information About Land Revitalization

How does EPA encourage sustainable reuse?

EPA's Land Revitalization Program fosters strong partnerships with communities to address environmental issues, promote sustainable redevelopment, and encourage public involvement in area-wide planning, to enhance economic development, create green jobs, and maximize the efficiency of site cleanup efforts. Technical assistance and tools assist communities in transforming their previously contaminated sites into sustainable redevelopment projects. The program documents and shares these projects to encourage other communities to revitalize their sites.

The Land Revitalization Program brochure describes how land revitalization approaches can help communities.

What is land revitalization?

Land revitalization is the sustainable redevelopment of abandoned properties. The program encourages communities and landowners to reuse and redevelop land that was previously contaminated and turns it into public parks, restored wetlands, and new businesses. Revitalizing an area cleans up a community to make it safer, greener, and offers more jobs to its residents. These fact sheets describe various approaches to land revitalization.

New Grant Program for Zero-Emission Heavy-Duty Vehicles, Infrastructure, and Workforce Development

The Environmental Protection Agency announced the launch of the nearly $1 billion Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program to fund the replacement of certain polluting heavy-duty vehicles with zero-emission vehicles. Funded through the Inflation Reduction, EPA will award competitive grants for projects that will reduce climate and air pollution from heavy-duty vehicles, support good-paying jobs and improve air quality for communities across the country, particularly those overburdened by air pollution.

The 2024 Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program will support the adoption and deployment of eligible Class 6 and 7 zero-emission vehicles while also funding zero-emission vehicle fueling infrastructure and workforce development and training. Across the nation, over 3 million Class 6 and Class 7 vehicles are currently in use, spanning a wide variety of vehicle types and vocations, including school buses, refuse haulers, and utility and delivery trucks. The Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program will help advance the commitment to environmental justice and the Justice40 Initiative, which sets the goal that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments in climate, clean energy, and other areas flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution, including air pollution.

In the United States, the transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and a leading source of health-harming pollution. Most of the vehicles eligible for replacement are powered by internal combustion engines that pre-date recent EPA emission standards. These vehicles emit harmful pollutants like nitrogen oxide, fine particulate matter, and greenhouse gases. Pollution from these vehicles is associated with respiratory and cardiovascular disease, among other serious health problems. Children, older adults, those with preexisting cardiopulmonary disease, and those of lower socioeconomic status are particularly vulnerable and are at a higher risk for these health impacts.

The implementation of the 2024 Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program is designed to help applicants across the country transition to zero-emission vehicles and reduce air pollution, which will result in improved health outcomes, less noise pollution, and the creation of good-paying clean energy jobs.

To meet the needs of diverse potential recipients and encourage participation in this grant opportunity, EPA is providing two separate sub-program competitions under this single Notice of Funding Opportunity:

- The School Bus Sub-Program for applicants replacing school buses.
- The Vocational Vehicles Sub-Program for applicants replacing non-school bus Class 6 and 7 vehicles – including box trucks, refuse haulers, dump trucks, street sweepers, delivery trucks, bucket trucks, and utility trucks.

EPA anticipates approximately 70% of available funding will be for projects under the School Bus Sub-Program and approximately 30% of available funding will be for projects under the Vocational Vehicles Sub-Program.

Eligible applicants for both competitions include States, municipalities (including school districts), Indian Tribes, territories, and nonprofit school transportation associations. EPA anticipates awarding at least 15 grants to eligible applicants from Tribes and territories. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act statute requires that at least $400 million of the program's funding go to projects that will serve one or more communities dealing with significant pollution as defined by EPA's National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

The deadline to apply for the 2024 Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program is July 25, 2024. EPA expects to announce awards by the end of this year.

To learn more about the Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program, applicant eligibility, selection process, and informational webinar dates, please visit the Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program webpage. Questions may also be directed to cleanhdvehicles@epa.gov.

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Protecting human health and the environment.

EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

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UPCOMING NEWSLETTER

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Listserv Sign-Up

EPA CLEAN SCHOOL BUS

Sign up to stay in touch about the Clean School Bus Program!

You will receive the latest information delivered to your inbox about upcoming funding opportunities, how to apply, upcoming webinars, and eligible technologies and their benefits.

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In our next issue, the September 2024 Region 6 Healthy Schools Newsletter will feature Pollution Prevention Week, Children's Health Month, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, and America Recycles Week.

Healthy Schools is published by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 - South Central in Dallas, Texas. Region 6 includes the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas as well as 66 Tribes. For general information about Healthy Schools, to provide feedback on this newsletter or suggestions for future topics, or to be added or removed from the distribution list, please contact Cathy Gilmore, Senior Environmental Employee for Healthy Schools at Gilmore.cathy@epa.gov.

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