

Glass Recycling Cooperative takes receipt of glass crusher Monday

BY KARL HOLAPPA staff writer

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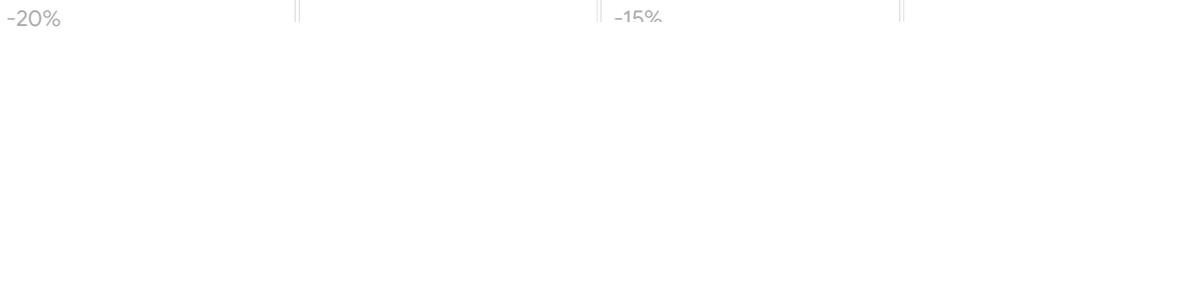
From left, Ellensburg Glass Recycling Cooperative members April Sheeley, Suzanne Noble and Jack Carpenter pose in front of the shed at the IOOF Cemetery where they will set up the glass crushing operation. The glass crushing machine is arriving Monday.

Karl Holappa/ Daily Record

A large package is arriving in Ellensburg today, a package that will inevitably change the path forward for recycling in the community.

The Ellensburg Glass Recycling Cooperative will be taking receipt of a glass crushing machine and will promptly begin to set up and practice using it in hopes of keeping as many glass products as possible out of the landfill. A work crew spent time Friday clearing out a shed at the IOOF Cemetery on Brick Road outside Ellensburg where the machine will be utilized to crush glass into sand.

The cooperative raised money to purchase the machine intended for community use in response to the decision from Kittitas County Solid Waste to discontinue glass collection in October 2019. Cooperative member April Sheeley said the group has raised over \$12,000 for the effort and said that Rotary has handled collections of the donations from the community for the project. Half of the donations will cover the machine and shipping costs, while the other half will be used for supplies and improvements for the site.



-20%

-15%

"We didn't receive any grants for it," she said.

During the work party Friday, the group spent time organizing the structure of the sorting and crushing process, while also helping educate people in the community interested in helping the cause. Sheeley said a group of friends and family of cooperative members will start the initial glass collection process. The individuals, called "glass ambassadors" by the cooperative will decide the best way to collect the glass to bring to the crushing center.

"It's going to be a real organic, decentralized process," she said. "They can go from door to door in their neighborhood, they could just reach out to friends and family. They could do Facebook or email. Some might want you to bring it to their house. Some might want to just meet you in a parking lot."

Regardless of how the glass is collected, Sheeley said the main requirement is that the glass is free of metals and plastic. Although they would prefer if people remove paper labels, she said that glass with paper labels attached can be accepted although it will produce lower quality sand. The other major requirement is that the glass is clean upon arrival.

"We have no water services up here," she said. "We have no garbage. They're just sharing this facility with us."

While the cooperative has received a large amount of interest from individuals looking to donate glass for recycling, they are continuously brainstorming uses for the final product in hopes that the community can utilize it as the process builds up steam. Sheeley said the group initially will use it to fill potholes at the cemetery and will offer it to those who want to find uses around their properties.

"It's basically going to be free to the community," she said. "They can come up and scoop out the amount that they want to experiment with. It's been known to be good for drainage and filtration situations, as well as landscaping purposes because of the drainage and it retains moisture."

Sheeley said she is excited about more advanced possibilities of the crushed glass, such as using it in concrete. She said she did an experiment in conjunction with professors at Central Washington University they found that sand worked well in the concrete mix. She said other potential uses could be in brick and house facades.

"Glass has a better insulation value than rock and sand," she said. "I think it has some energy efficiency components in it."

As the machine begins producing sufficient amounts of crushed glass, Sheeley hopes to work with Central's construction management department to experiment with various applications of the product. She said students have already begun developing hypothetical uses for the product.

"The students haven't actually gotten their hands on it yet," she said. "Hopefully we can move that forward. Also using it in soil in biology classes might be an interesting experiment."

After months of fundraising, getting word out to the community, brainstorming uses and organizing the process, Sheeley said it is satisfying to know that all the effort is finally coming to fruition.

"To me, it feels relaxing," she said. "I feel like finally we are in a place where the process is moving itself, because we have worked so hard for so long."

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