

E-cycling at CVNP

By Volunteer Sustainability Reporter Emily Bryant

Old electronics that end up in landfills can release toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead, and cadmium that are harmful to the environment. Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) has worked diligently since 1997 to keep its unwanted electronics out of landfills—an estimated 40.7 tons total through 2008.

At the root of CVNP's success is its partnership with the UNICOR Recycling Factory in Elkton, Ohio. UNICOR is also known as Federal Prison Industries. Inmate workers carefully segregate all of the specific electrical components of a discarded object to be shipped out to "jobbers." The recycling center is sustained by proceeds from these sales.

CVNP also gives back to the community. Much of the national park's old but still usable information technology (IT) equipment is donated to local schools to help disabled students better communicate, to help students learn languages, to link schools to a district server, and for other educational purposes.

Dee Strickland, now the Facilities Management Specialist, started CVNP's recycling program when she was the park's property technician. The mantle has since passed to current Property Technician Rich Vitello. Although the technology of electronics has greatly improved since CVNP's program began, the overall recyclability of electronics has not. "It's cheaper to throw away and buy new. Even if you want to get something fixed, you can't," said Strickland. While most electronics are still not "greener" by design, everyone can make the effort to keep unhealthy electronic byproducts out of landfills and the environment by locating and using an e-cycling center in their area.

On Saturday, April 25, Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association (CVNPA) celebrates Earth Day with its annual Members' Electronic Recycling Day. CVNPA members can bring their membership card and up to 10 items (not counting cell phones or ink jet cartridges) to Station Road Bridge Trailhead and materials will be taken with CVNP recyclables to the UNICOR facility.

When it comes to the future of e-cycling, Dee Strickland believes that small changes could go a long way. "People today have little down time. Businesses and governments should make it

easier by giving citizens more facilities, with better hours, in which to recycle their electronics.” Individuals can also write to their local governments and ask for aid in jumpstarting and reducing the cost of e-cycling programs.

In addition to e-cycling, CVNPA also recycles used batteries, paper, phonebooks, cardboard, waste oil, scrap metal from demolition and building rehabilitation projects, and more.

Get Involved!

- Join CVNPA and e-cycle through their annual program. For more information, visit www.cvnpa.org.
- Become an E-cycleter, a volunteer who helps CVNPA process e-cycling donations. Must be 18 years or older and able to lift 40 pounds, bend and twist, and work in all weather conditions. Contact Jocelyn Buckey at (330) 657-2909 ext. 106.
- E-cycle through your local community. For example, Summit Country residents can drop off unwanted computers and other electronics at the Household Hazardous Waste Recycling Center, 1201 Graham Road, Stow, during business hours. For more information including a list of acceptable items, call (330) 374-0383 or visit www.saswma.org.

Do you have a talent for writing and an interest in green solutions to environmental problems? We are looking for more Volunteer Sustainability Reporters to cover behind-the-scenes stories at the national park. It is a great opportunity for emerging writers to gain real-world experience. Contact Arrye Rosser at (440) 546-5992 or arrye_rosser@nps.gov for more information.