

ENVIROTALK



EMBRACING CHANGE AND GROWTH: THE NEW LOOK OF ENVIROTALK

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SPRING/SUMMER 2025



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The City of Tacoma's Environmental Services Department is evolving to better serve our community and ratepayers. Our commitment to creating healthy neighborhoods and a thriving Puget Sound - leaving a better Tacoma for all - remains at the heart of everything we do. This refreshed edition of EnviroTalk reflects our dedication to clear, effective communication and keeping our community informed and engaged.

In 2025, we are embracing significant changes, including the search for a new Director to lead Environmental Services. Throughout this transition, our commitment to enhancing the quality of life in Tacoma and protecting our natural resources remains unwavering.

We are also excited to announce the formation of a new Science Division, aimed at strengthening our data-driven approach to reliable service delivery and environmental stewardship. This division will enhance our decision-making process, support innovative solutions, and help us address complex operational and environmental challenges. By prioritizing science and data, we are ensuring that our actions today contribute to a healthier, more sustainable Tacoma for future generations.

As we navigate these changes, our focus remains on serving our community with transparency, innovation, and dedication. Thank you for your continued support and engagement.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey M. Smyth, P.E.

Geoffrey M. Smyth, P.E.
Interim Director, Environmental Services Department

UPCOMING EVENTS

17TH ANNUAL SOUTH SOUND SUSTAINABILITY EXPO

Saturday, April 26 | 10 AM - 3 PM | UW Tacoma Campus

This free, family-friendly event celebrates and promotes environmental sustainability and community resiliency. Explore a vibrant mix of vendors, activities, and displays showcasing regional organizations working to improve the environmental sustainability of the South Sound. More at southsoundsustainabilityexpo.org.

BEYOND THE BIN COLLECTION EVENTS

May - September 2025 | Every Second and Fourth Saturday
Tacoma Recovery and Transfer Center, 3510 S. Mullen St.

Give unwanted items a second life! From May to September, drop off reusable clothing, toys, housewares, small appliances, furniture, and more every 2nd and 4th Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., at the Tacoma Recovery & Transfer Center (3510 S. Mullen St.). Donations will go to local nonprofits. No hazardous waste, mattresses, or large appliances. Details at cityoftacoma.org/beyondthebin.

ES "NIGHT AT THE RAINIERS" BASEBALL GAME

Tuesday, May 27 | 6:00 PM | Cheney Stadium, 2502 S Tyler St.

Come out to Cheney Stadium for Environmental Services Night on Tuesday, May 27 at 6 p.m. For \$23.50, you'll get a reserved seat ticket, exclusive T-shirt, and a ballpark meal - plus, \$5 from each ticket supports Tacoma Tree Foundation and Northwest Salmon Research. More information and tickets at WeRTacoma.com.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION MEETINGS

Second Thursday of Each Month | 4:00 PM | CUW, 326 E D St.

The Environmental Services Commission (ESC) advises Tacoma's City Council and staff on utility rates, policies, and programs. Meetings are held at 4 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the Center for Urban Waters, and are open to the public. Learn more at cityoftacoma.org/ESC.

NEW SCIENCE DIVISION ENHANCES ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

Environmental Services is excited to announce the formation of a new Science Division, designed to enhance our commitment to science-driven solutions, environmental stewardship, and regulatory compliance.

This new division will bring together several key teams, including the Environmental Services Laboratory, Environmental Programs, Environmental Compliance, and Urban Forestry. By uniting these groups, we aim to strengthen our ability to support scientific research, evidence-based decision-making, and environmental innovation.

The creation of the Science Division will position Tacoma as a

regional leader in environmental science and policy, allowing us to better address complex environmental challenges and protect the health of our community and natural resources. Recruitment for a Science Division Manager will begin in mid-to-late spring 2025. This role is not a newly funded position but a repurposing of an existing vacant role.

We are excited about the possibilities this new division will bring and look forward to serving Tacoma with even greater expertise and dedication.

Discover more about the new Science Division and all ES divisions at cityoftacoma.org/es.



STAFF SPOTLIGHT:

JP HOBBS, SOLID WASTE COLLECTOR/DRIVER



A Little About JP

After 17 dedicated years of service to Environmental Services, JP continues to find new ways to improve and refine his work every day. Operating equipment and working independently are what he enjoys most about his role as a Solid Waste Collector and Driver, reflecting his commitment to continuous growth and learning on the job.

Favorite Tacoma Spot:

Before it closed this year, Burger Ranch was JP's favorite local spot, not just for the great food, but because it was his first ever job, a tradition shared with his siblings.

Life Outside of Work:

When he's not behind the wheel, JP loves camping and traveling with his family, embracing the great outdoors and creating lasting memories.

Learn more about our Solid Waste utility at cityoftacoma.org/solidwaste.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES BY THE NUMBERS



**3,542,840
POUNDS**

In 2024, the Tidy-Up Tacoma program collected an impressive 3,542,840 pounds of trash, helping to create cleaner, healthier neighborhoods. By addressing litter and engaging the community, the program contributes to a more beautiful and inviting Tacoma, ensuring a safer environment for all those who live, work, and play in Tacoma.

**OVER 8.14
BILLION
GALLONS**

In 2024, Tacoma's Central Treatment Plant and North End Treatment Plant together treated an astounding 8.14 billion gallons of wastewater! That's enough to fill nearly 690,000 Olympic swimming pools, or enough to fill the Tacoma Dome over 33,800 times!

**416,333
CALLS**

Last year, our Environmental Services Customer Service Team fielded an impressive 416,333 calls, assisting customers with everything from utility billing inquiries to service requests. Their dedication to providing exceptional customer service ensured that each call was handled with care and professionalism.

**747
TREES**

In 2024, the Community Tree Program, a partnership with Tacoma Tree Foundation now in its second year, distributed 747 trees across Tacoma, with 79% planted in low-opportunity neighborhoods. By prioritizing communities with the greatest need, the Community Tree Program is helping to grow greener, healthier neighborhoods throughout Tacoma.



BEHIND THE SCENES: CUW LABORATORY

The Environmental Services Laboratory at the Center for Urban Waters provides comprehensive testing for Tacoma's Stormwater, Wastewater, and Solid Waste Utilities. Using advanced technology, the lab analyzes pollutants like PFAS, VOCs, PCBs, metals, and nutrients. Their expert team ensures regulatory compliance, supports research, and develops environmental solutions to protect Tacoma and Puget Sound's health and sustainability. Learn more about the Environmental Services Utilities supported by the ES Laboratory at cityoftacoma.org/es.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:



Solid Waste Management has again partnered with Northwest Center and their Big Blue Truck program for upcoming Beyond the Bin collection events.

Tacoma residents can already donate reusable items at the Big Blue Truck collection site at the Tacoma Recycle Center or the attended station near the Tacoma Mall - and now, they'll have even more opportunities to give back.

Big Blue Truck makes it easy to donate clothing, shoes, and textiles while supporting Northwest Center's mission to create a more disability-inclusive community. Donations help fund education, advocacy, and employment programs, directly impacting lives in our region.

Together, Solid Waste Management and Big Blue Truck are keeping reusable items out of the landfill. Each year, Big Blue Truck diverts about 7 million pounds of recyclable goods, helping fund programs for nearly 35,400 children and adults with disabilities.

Join us at an upcoming Beyond the Bin event to donate your reusable items and make a difference. Small actions, like donating gently used items, can create a ripple effect of positive change.

Beyond the Bin events are scheduled every second and fourth Saturday from May - September at the Tacoma Recovery and Transfer Center. More at cityoftacoma.org/beyondthebin.

Learn more about Northwest Center and what items they accept at nwcenter.org.

ART FOR ACTION: NEW MURAL INSPIRES POLLUTION PREVENTION

A vibrant new mural now greets visitors at the Tacoma Recovery & Transfer Center, carrying an important message: "If it hits the ground, it hits the Sound." Created by Tacoma artist Jesse Peterson, this mural serves as a colorful and creative reminder that pollution from our streets, sidewalks, and neighborhoods flows untreated into Puget Sound through the stormwater system.

"My interest in painting murals comes from a sheer love for our City, a genuine desire to communicate positive social messages, and to make meaningful connections with people," Peterson shared. "I want my murals to

be a source of pride for the neighborhood."

Next time you visit the Tacoma Recovery & Transfer Center, take a moment to enjoy the mural and reflect on its message. Every action we take can help protect Puget Sound and our environment for future generations.

Find more of Jesse Peterson's work at tacomaartsroster.com/artists/jesse-peterson or by checking out his Instagram page [@joose253](https://www.instagram.com/joose253).

Learn more about how you can help prevent stormwater pollution at cityoftacoma.org/stormwaterpollution.



CLEAR OUT AND CLEAN UP WITH CALL-2-HAUL



Ready to clear out unwanted household items this spring? It's easy for residential solid waste customers to dispose of unusable items through Tacoma's Call-2-Haul Program at no extra cost! You can take advantage of this convenient service twice per year to clean out bulky items and clutter. With Call-2-Haul, you can dispose of:

- **Up to Three Large Items:** This includes large rolls of carpet (up to six feet in length and one foot in diameter), mattresses, furniture, power yard equipment, barbecues, large household appliances, wheelchairs, and exercise equipment.
- **And/Or Up to 15 Boxes or Bags of Small Items:** Such as small household appliances, lawn chairs, walkers, broken toys, strollers, and clothing.
- **No household garbage, recyclables, yard waste, or construction debris** are accepted.

Schedule a residential curbside pickup by calling **(253) 573-2468 weekdays between 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**, or make an appointment to drop off your items at the Tacoma Recovery and Transfer Center. Learn more at cityoftacoma.org/call2haul.

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