

# SV readies curbside recycling

By MARIA GAURA  
Sentinel staff writer

SCOTTS VALLEY - Recycling has never been easy for Scotts Valley residents. The city's single recycling center accepts only California Redemption drink containers — while stockpiles of newspapers, cans, plastic and cardboard require a drive to recycling centers in Santa Cruz, Soquel or the San Lorenzo Valley.

But by August 1, recycling in Scotts Valley will be only as far away as the end of the driveway. And recycling will not only become more convenient — it's going to be required by law.

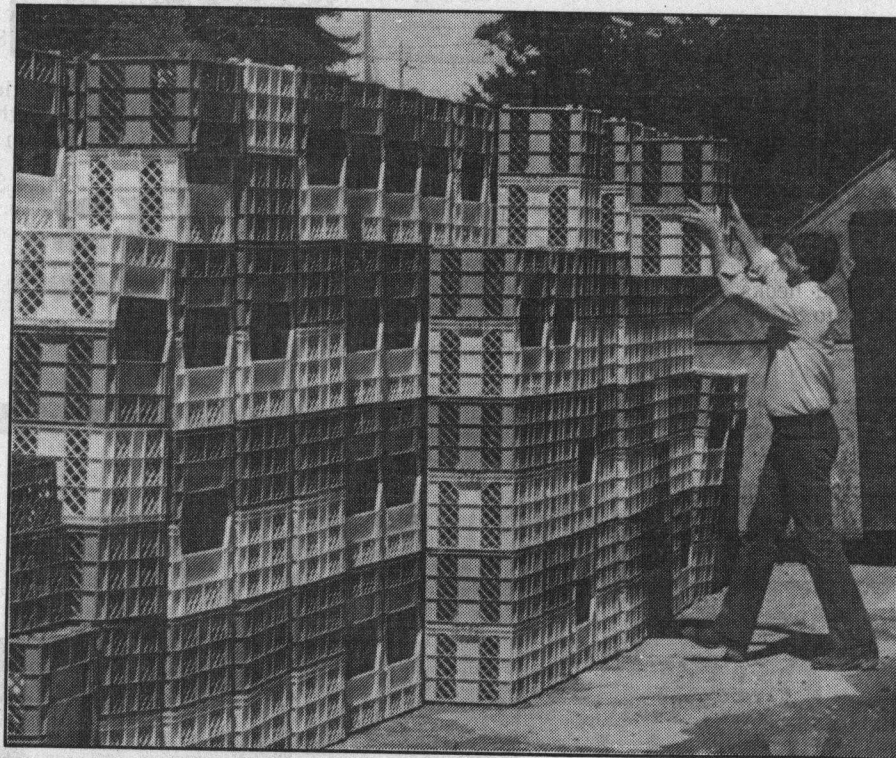
State law that took effect Jan. 1 requires every city in California to cut its trash production in half by the year 2005. Failure to meet that goal could result in fines of up to \$10,000 a day.

Faced with the state's ultimatum and rapidly filling landfills, city officials have begun work on a variety of garbage-reducing projects.

For curbside recycling, every household will be issued three bright stackable containers — made from recycled plastics — to store bottles, cans, plastic and newspaper.

The bins can be stacked on the curb and emptied on regular garbage pickup days. City officials are now mulling ordinances prohibiting the theft of curbside recyclables and imposing penalties for households that refuse to recycle.

"We're not going to go right out and penalize people," said Bob Geyer, wastewater division manager for the city and coordinator of its recycling program. "People need time to get used to this."



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

John Dodd stacks plastic recycling bins in Scotts Valley.

The city will rely mostly on a fee structure that penalizes garbage producers, Geyer said.

"We're hoping that a new fee structure will make it prohibitive to throw away lots of garbage," he said. "The more you throw, the more you pay. And we're not going to have people root through the garbage, but the collectors

will notice if recyclables are left in the garbage. We can start with a friendly tag on the can, asking them to please make an effort to comply."

For repeat offenders, the garbage collectors have a potent tool — they can simply refuse to take away the trash.

"If they continue to leave recyclables in the trash, we won't take the

garbage," Geyer said. "Maybe peer pressure from the neighbors will do the trick."

As a last resort, violators could be fined, he said.

"We need to re-educate the consumer," Geyer said. "We can't continue being the disposable society we've become accustomed to, we're running out of space. People need to be aware of what they're purchasing in the store — and not get stuck with something they're not going to be able to recycle."

Geyer plans to start visiting homeowners associations, area schools and businesses to spread the word on recycling. Students have "a lot of influence on what goes on at home," he said.

Startup costs of the curbside program will amount to about \$1.50 per month per household. The city is considering subsidizing half of that amount, and adding the balance to the monthly garbage bill. Trash collection services are now provided by Waste Management of the Santa Clara Valley.

"The largest amount of landfill waste comes from commercial and industrial users," Geyer said. "And most of that is high-quality, recyclable office paper."

Once the household recycling program takes off, Geyer plans to concentrate on recycling plans for area business. And a countywide plan to collect and compost yard wastes could be in place in four or five years, Geyer said.

Curbside recycling is expected to cut about 15 percent from the garbage totals, and business recycling could trim even more. Diversion and composting of yard waste and sewage sludge is expected to push the totals closer to the desired 50-percent level.