

2009 Success Story: University of Michigan

Facts at a Glance

- The University of Michigan Wolverines football team competes at Michigan Stadium, with a capacity of 109,901.
- Michigan Stadium is the largest stadium in North America and the third largest in the world.
- Michigan achieved a diversion rate of 15.601% during the 2009 Game Day Challenge and maintained an average diversion rate of 20% for the entire season.
- Michigan recycled 9.49 tons of cardboard/paper and 19.63 tons of mixed containers over the course of the 2009 football season, saving the equivalent of 161 trees!
- Michigan had cardboard collection carts near all vendor areas. Vendors placed cardboard in the carts, and recycling staff transported the cardboard to the recycling dumpsters.

Program Overview

The University of Michigan represented the Big 10 in Game Day Challenge 2009, and did so from the largest stadium in North America, Michigan Stadium. The school has been recycling at home football games since the mid-1990s, bringing a long tradition and a wealth of experience to the challenge.

Michigan hired its first Recycling Coordinator in 1989, and the same year began to collect recycling in campus housing. In 1994 the school began recycling cardboard at the football stadium, and in 1999 two recycling stations were set up at the stadium for mixed containers. In the first home game of the 2000 football season, 11.84 tons of bottles were recycled. In 2006 Michigan joined the RecycleMania program, and in 2009 became a competitor in the inaugural Game Day Challenge.

Three hours prior to kickoff, a crew of about 12 students makes sure all bins and cardboard carts are emptied and in place. One hour before kickoff, students go outside the gates and encourage entering fans to recycle their bottles and cans before entering the stadium.

Labeled recycling bins were paired with trash bins around the concourse. Sandwich boards with recycling information were placed at each main gate and recycling staff encouraged fans to recycle their water and soda bottles as they entered the stadium. No open containers are allowed in the stadium.

There were no bins in the seating area, but there was a recycling announcement at half time reminding fans to recycle.

A smaller crew of about five students came in on Sunday morning to recycle cardboard and pick up bottles and cans from the ground around the concourse. The students also collected cardboard and bottles from the field. A group from a local high school volunteered to clean the stands.

The following was read over the loud speaker system just prior to halftime:

"Michigan fans are recycling champions! At today's game, the University of Michigan is participating in the US Environmental Protection Agency's Game Day Recycling Challenge! UM has been invited to represent the Big 10 and compete against other schools in this inaugural challenge. Help us win by recycling your soda and water bottles in the blue bins located around the concourse! Remember, Don't Trash the Big House!"

Recycling staff told fans about U of M's participation while promoting recycling outside of the gates into the stadium. The "script" included "UM is competing against other schools today to see who can recycle the most at today's football game. Please remember to recycle!"

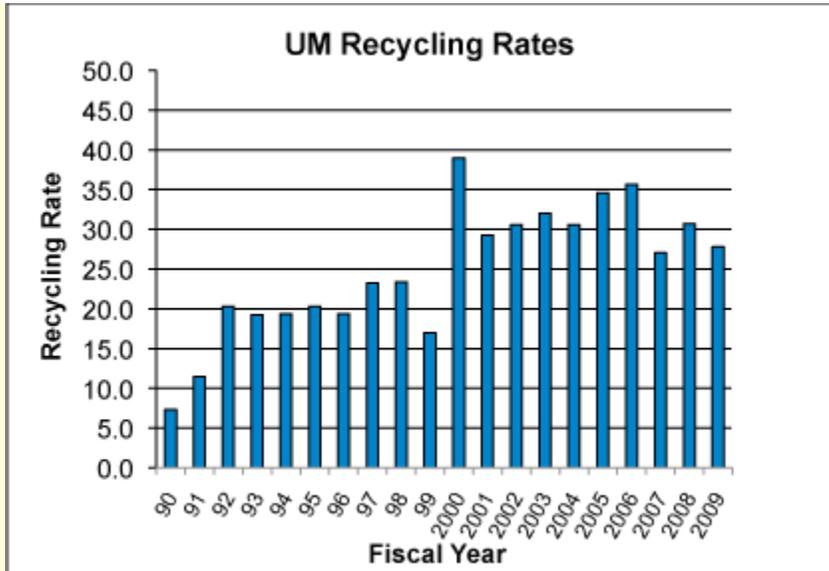
Students are divided among the gates leading into the stadium concourse and the sections that lead into the actual stadium. They line and move the 275 recycling bins to high traffic areas, always ensuring that bins are next to trash cans. Next, they visit the concessionaires in their assigned area, collect flattened cardboard and place it in a recycling dumpster onsite. Once the gates open to the public (generally 1.5 hours before kickoff), students take recycling bins outside of the gates to collect the open beverage containers that cannot be brought into the stadium. From this point until kick off, the students verbally encourage fans to recycle, answer questions, and thank them when they recycle correctly.

Tracy Artley, recycling coordinator for U of M says that the success of recycling at athletic events is directly correlated to the attitude of the students – if they are outgoing and energetic, there is better participation outside the gates than can be achieved at the gates with more reserved students. Once kickoff occurs, the students are free to leave. Groundskeepers are used to keep an eye on how full the recycling bins are during the game. They arrive one hour before kick off and work a four hour shift. Michigan generally has two groundskeepers at each game. They are responsible for pulling the bags on any recycling bin that it overflowing, placing the material in a recycling dumpster, and relining the bin.

Finally, as Michigan is a bottle-bill state, the school has a number of can collectors both inside and outside the stadium who collect all soda bottles and cans and recycle them on their own. While the school does not directly encourage this practice, they don't work to prevent it either. The material removed by these independent individuals is unaccounted for in U of M's recycling totals each game. On the Sundays following home games, a 6-student crew arrives at 8 a.m. to finish collecting piles of cardboard left by the vendors. The stands are cleaned by a local high school, and they separate all recyclables from the material they collect in the stands.

Results from 2009 Game Day Challenge

Category	2009 Result
Diversion Rate (%)	15.60%
Per Capita Waste Generation (lbs/person)	0.36
Gross GHG Reductions (MTCO2E)	18.9
Per Capita Recycling (lbs/person)	0.056
Per Capita Composting (lbs/person)	0



Source: University of Michigan (2010)