

Greetings!

The Forest Preserve District of Will County is dedicated to our environmental policy of reducing the waste produced by staff and visitors in our preserves. So this spring, Plum Creek Nature Center and Environmental Learning Center are Waste-Free Lunch Zones!

Why, you ask? Did you know that an average school child generates 67 pounds of lunch-related waste each school year? In a single season (half a school year) Plum Creek Nature Center, alone, hosts 50 classes, averaging 25 kids each—which is almost 21 tons of garbage going into the world!

“Willy’s Waste-free Challenge” is our solution and a challenge to all the schools visiting our site this fall. During your students’ visit, we’ll weigh the garbage left over by their class after lunch. The spring class with the “smallest waste” (least weight) will earn an award from the District and a school visit from Willy Woodchuck, our official mascot! One prize will be awarded for grades kindergarten through 3rd and one for grades 4th and above.

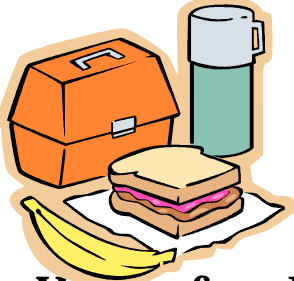

For the day of their visit, students will be asked to bring lunches which include only items that can be eaten, reused, recycled or composted—a **zero-waste lunch**. This is a big change for trips to Plum Creek Nature Center and the Environmental Learning Center. Change is not easy, but these efforts basically change the containers—not necessarily the food! Your children will appreciate that their actions can have an impact on the environment.

Attached to this letter and on a separate flier, we’ve provided resources to answer any questions you may have about how to make your lunches waste-free. Our staff is happy to help address any concerns.

Thank you for your support,

Plum Creek Nature Center Staff
27064 Dutton Road
Beecher, IL 60401 708-946-2216

Environmental Learning Center Staff
20851 Briarwood Lane
Mokena, IL 60448 708-479-2255

 <p>Pack a Waste-free Lunch</p>	 <p>Avoid a Disposable Lunch</p>
Lunch items in reusable containers like insulated bags, partitioned plastic containers, etc.	Lunch items in plastic bags, foil, or wax paper.
A cloth napkin.	Paper napkins.
Reusable household utensils, when needed.	Disposable plastic spoons and forks.
Drinks in a thermos or reusable, re-sealable container.	Disposable drink boxes/pouches, cartons, and straws.
A reusable lunchbox or backpack.	Pre-packaged lunches, single-serve pre-packed items.

One item can have a long-lasting effect...It only takes two years for an orange peel to break down naturally, but a plastic bag may take decades!

Producing a waste-free lunch saves money over buying pre-packaged foods, helps the environment by producing less litter which means fewer landfills, and lessens the chance of wasps and other pests invading your meal. Not to mention, starting a waste-free habit could improve your child's health!

Websites that aren't a waste of time:

- www.wastefreelunches.org
- www.epa.gov/epaoswer/education/lunch.htm
- www.laptoplunches.com

Thanks again for your cooperation.