By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

Forty-two percent of everything thrown away in Nebraska landfills can be readily recycled. That's according to a 2010 waste study commissioned by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

That results in nearly $50 million in unneeded landfill tipping fee costs. The estimated value of those recyclables exceeds $137 million dollars.

Jane Polson, president of Keep Nebraska Beautiful, would like Nebraskans to do better. Keep Nebraska Beautiful is the statewide coordinator of America Recycles Day today (Thursday).

This is the only nationally-recognized day and community-driven national awareness initiative dedicated to promoting and celebrating recycling in the United States.

Since its inception in 1997, communities across the country have organized events for America Recycles Day to promote recycling awareness, commitment and action.

Polson said Nebraska would add over 13,000 jobs, increase economic activity in the state and boost tax revenues by recycling the common recyclable waste that is now being landfilled.

Recycling locally

The city-run recycling program in Imperial takes many types of materials. However, it only takes certain types of those materials.

For instance, according to City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland, in the plastic area only milk jugs, detergent bottles and pop bottles are accepted.

In the paper area, newspapers, magazines and office or mixed paper are accepted. Mixed paper, Leyland said, is junk mail, printer paper and envelopes. No cardboard should be mixed in with the paper.

The cardboard area is separate from the paper area at the recycling center. Cardboard includes product and mailing boxes.

Steel cans are accepted. They should be flattened, Leyland noted.

Aluminum cans are also accepted by the city. Leyland said, however, that most people prefer to sell their own cans.

Glass is also accepted. The city's glass-crushing machine has a magnet that removes metal caps and blows the paper labels off the bottles. It would be nice, Leyland said, if the caps were removed before recycling.

Glass is the only recyclable the city doesn't sell. It is used in city projects, such as scattering it on ice.

The plastics, which are ground up and packed in large boxes, are sold to Sandhills Plastics in Kearney.

The steel is sold to U.S. Recycling in Ogallala, while the aluminum cans are sold to Chuck Vette of Wauneta.

The paper and cardboard are sold to First Star Fiber of Omaha. Leyland said the city has just entered a market in Denver, International Paper, which also takes cardboard.

"Cardboard has always been the biggest seller," Leyland observed. At present it's being sold

for $65-70 per ton, down from $140-150 per ton last year.
In March the city sold newspaper for $85 per ton, but is a lot lower now, Leyland stated.

Fun recycling facts

- The number of cans recycled every 30 seconds equals the number of people who could fill an entire pro football stadium.
- A glass container can go from recycling bin to a store shelf in as few as 30 days.
- Recycling one aluminum can will power a 46-inch LED TV for 3 hours.
- Did you know that shampoo and mouthwash bottles are recyclable? Even the cardboard roll from toilet paper can be recycled.
- Plastic bags are recyclable. Many retailers have drop-off collections for plastic bag recycling. Other bags that can be recycled as well are dry-cleaning bags, bread bags and newspaper bags.