



## Recycling has a magnetic appeal

**R**ecycling isn't just for aluminum cans. Computer tapes, CDs, video, cassettes and other items we encounter daily on the job are good candidates. And they don't need to end up in landfills.

Five years ago, UGP folks came to this realization. Switching from reel-to-reel tapes for backing up computer systems to more efficient high-density tapes left the region with between 5,000 and 8,000 old tapes.

Environmental Specialist **Ted Anderson** and Information Specialist **Jane Stowe-Harrell** teamed up and came up with a plan for putting them to use again. They found a Seattle-based firm that recycled tapes. The tapes are wiped clean to remove

their magnetic memory.

The company then snips the tape into strips for use in making credits card, key cards and other cards bearing magnetic stripes. And it's not just the tape. The firm also recycles the plastic containers.

Anderson and Stowe-Harrell worked with Western's General Counsel Office to develop a Westernwide agreement to recycle old tapes and launched the program in 1995. "I think it's neat to turn my bank card over and wonder if the magnetic strip came from Billings," mused Anderson.

"In the first year, we must have shipped between 6,000 and 7,000 pounds of tapes from UGP," recalled Stowe-Harrell. "Now we fill a box about once a quarter and ship it out." To date, a total of 10,000 pounds of tapes have been recycled.

CSO participated in the program earlier, but was able to find a local firm in Aurora, Colo., which avoided shipping expenses. "Instead of turning the tape into magnetic strips, this firm degausses the tapes and resells them," explained **Kevin Wirick**, CSO computer operator lead.

Like the Seattle firm, the Aurora recycler also accepts diskettes, CD's and other magnetic media.

"Regardless of how we do it, I'm just pleased that we've found ways to keep this material out of landfills and put them back to use," commented UGP Environmental Manager **Nick Stas**.

**(Note: For more information on recycling magnetic media, contact Wirick at 720-962-7596 or e-mail [wirick@wapa.gov](mailto:wirick@wapa.gov) or Anderson at 406-247-7385 or e-mail [tanderso@wapa.gov](mailto:tanderso@wapa.gov).)**

