



**WAIM**  
Windham Area  
Interfaith Ministry

# Thread City Mend-A-Thon

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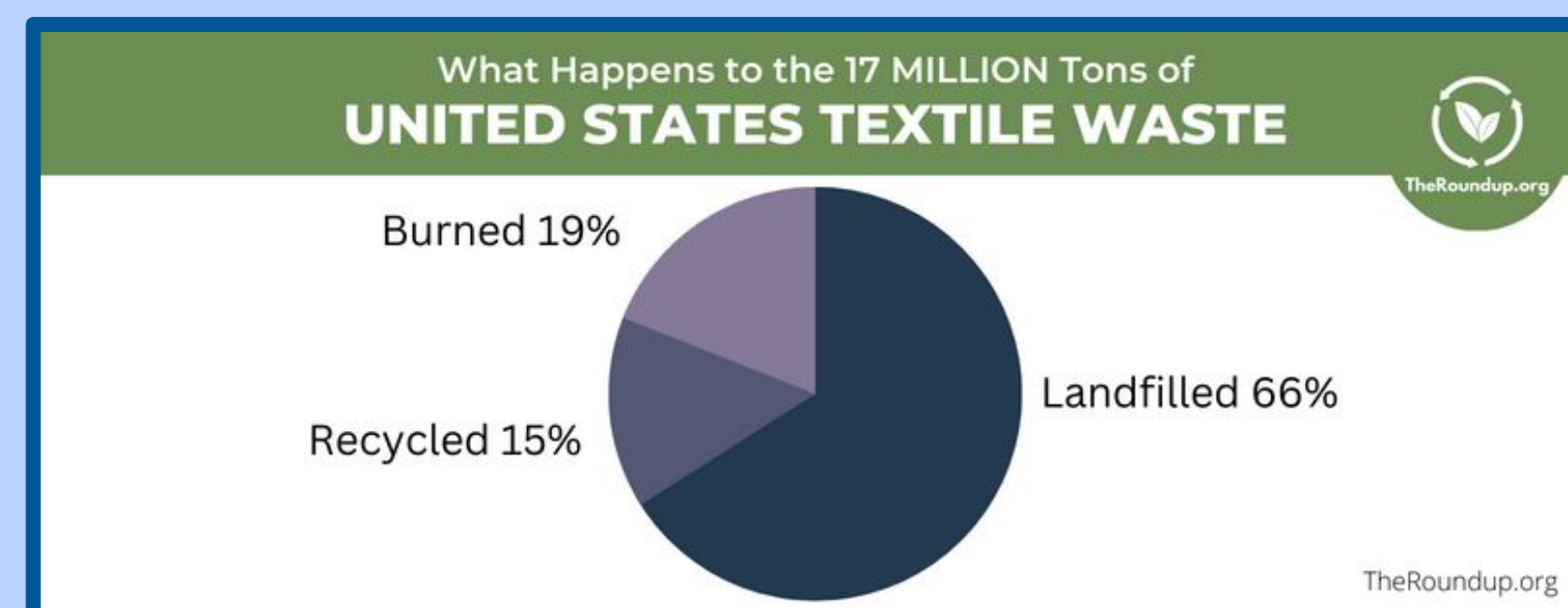
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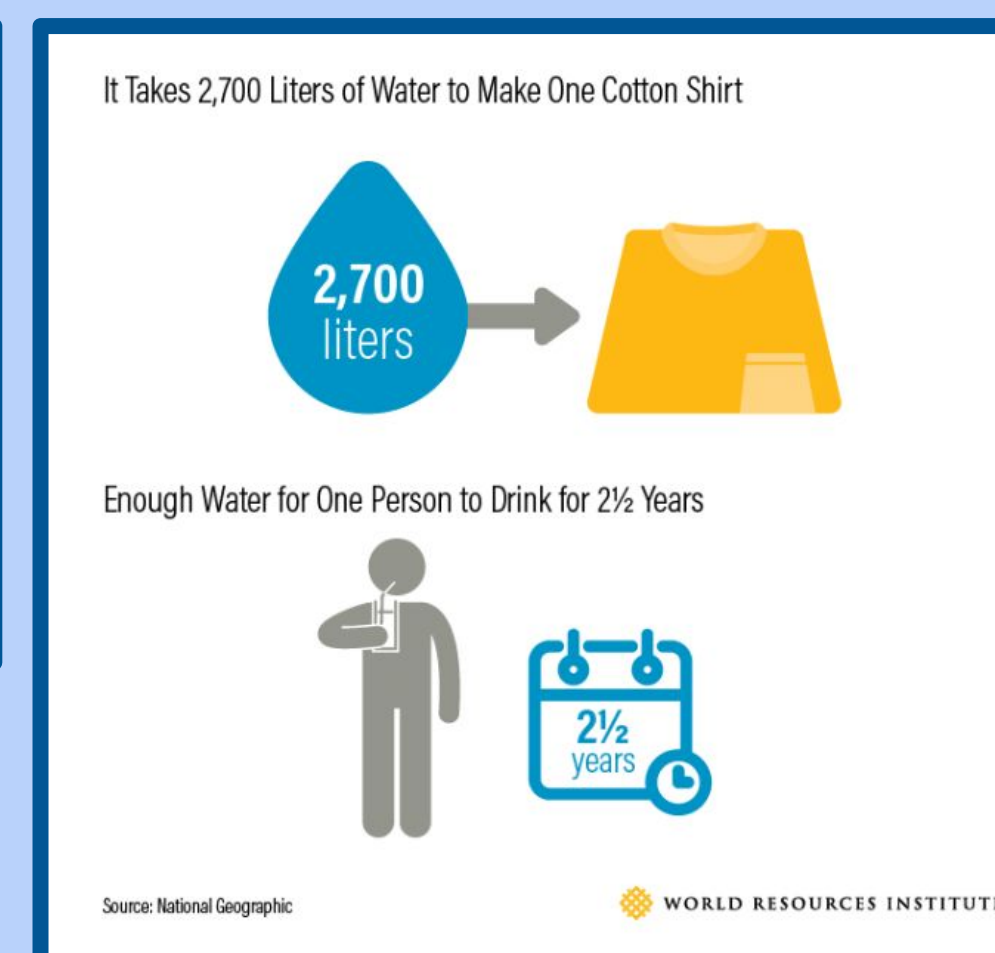
## Project Motivation & Goals

Textile waste is a global problem, with the fashion industry producing **97 million tons** of waste in 2023 alone, with a large amount of it going straight to landfills.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the overwhelming amount of textile production and waste, an estimated **2 out of 5 children living below the poverty line in the US experience clothing insecurity**, defined as insufficient access to well fitted, seasonally appropriate, and in good condition clothing.<sup>2</sup>



Left: What happens to 17 million tons of US textile waste (TheRoundup.org), Right: Amount of water that is used to produce a cotton shirt (World Resources Institute)



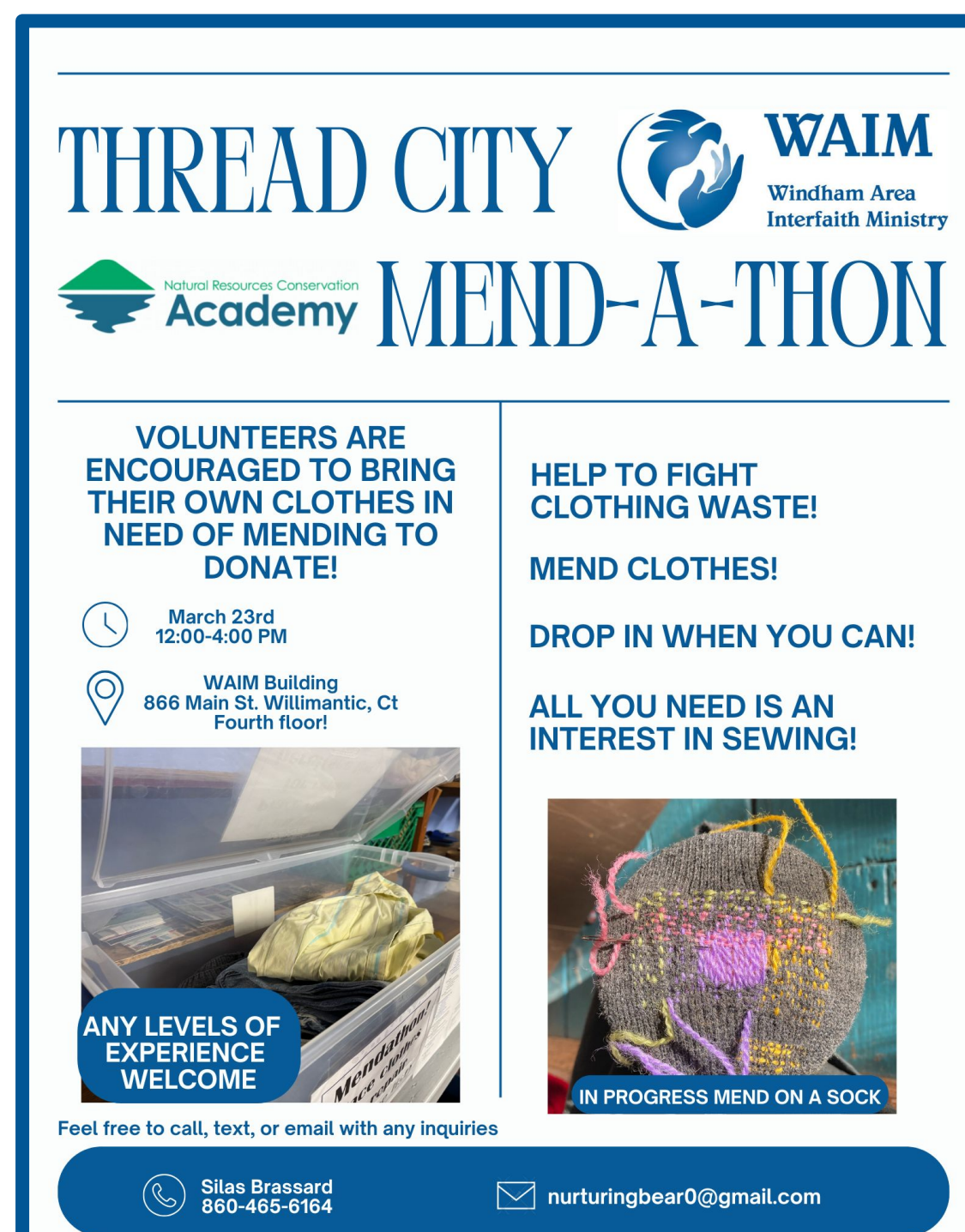
Poor quality and decreased value of clothing itself contributes to this issue, making it easier to just buy another \$2 shirt than to fix the first shirt after it gets a hole in it.

Mending clothes that already exist is a **radical act of conservation**, with a single cotton t-shirt costing **2,700 liters** of water to be made.<sup>3</sup>

My goal with this project was to host a **Mend-a-Thon event** to combat this issue and help my community by:

- Repairing clothes with minor damage destined for the landfill
- Donating the mended clothes to people who may not be able to afford them otherwise

## Planning



Event promotional poster

Before the event could happen, a lot of work had to be done:

- I made a rubric to help volunteer sorters recognize the clothes that needed mending
- Worked with volunteers to collect additional clothing donations
- Designed and distributed an event poster to various businesses, libraries, church sewing circles, and community social media pages around the county
- Gathered the following supplies for the event: thread, sewing machines, darning supplies, patches, needles, scissors, pins, an iron and ironing board, extension cords, and refreshments.

## Project Outcomes

**The Mend-a-thon was a great success!**

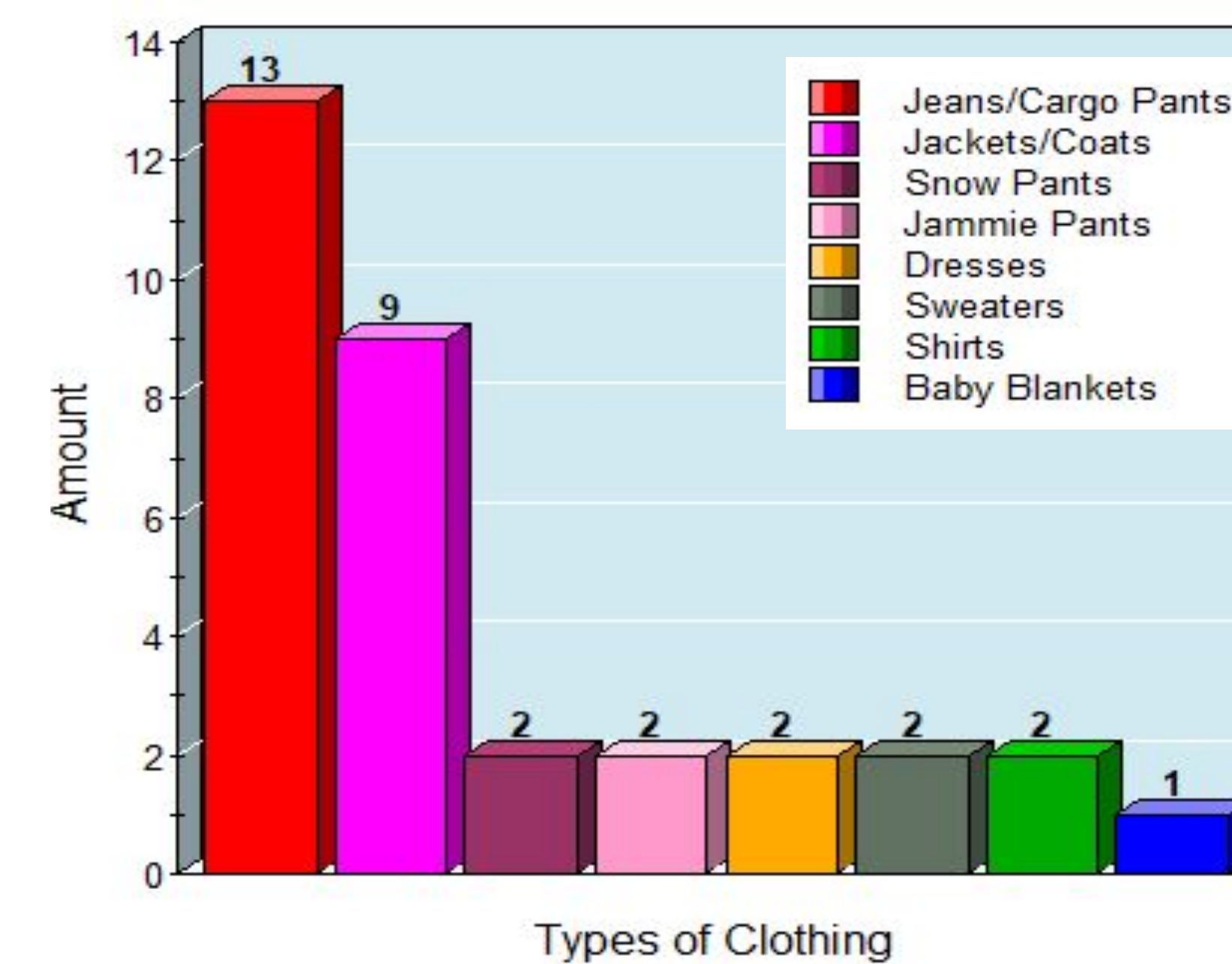
- **13 dedicated volunteer** menders attended
- **33 garments were mended** and are now back in circulation

**The donated clothing had a variety of ailments:**

- Popped seams
- Rips in hems
- Broken and missing belt loops
- Missing buttons
- And many more!

**Methods of mending we used at the event were:**

- Darning
- Invisible seaming
- Re-hemming
- Replacing buttons
- Patching
- Reinforcing



Graph: Number of types of items mended

New clothing takes an exceptional amount of water to produce!

To produce the clothing we mended would require 38,690 gallons of clean water!<sup>4</sup>

That amount of water could sustain 210 people for an entire year. By giving clothing new life, we conserve other natural resources.

*Repairing and mending clothing in a world where fast fashion dominates really does feel like a revolutionary act; a reclamation of time, creativity, and sustainability.*  
- Katie Douglas, Mend-a-thon volunteer



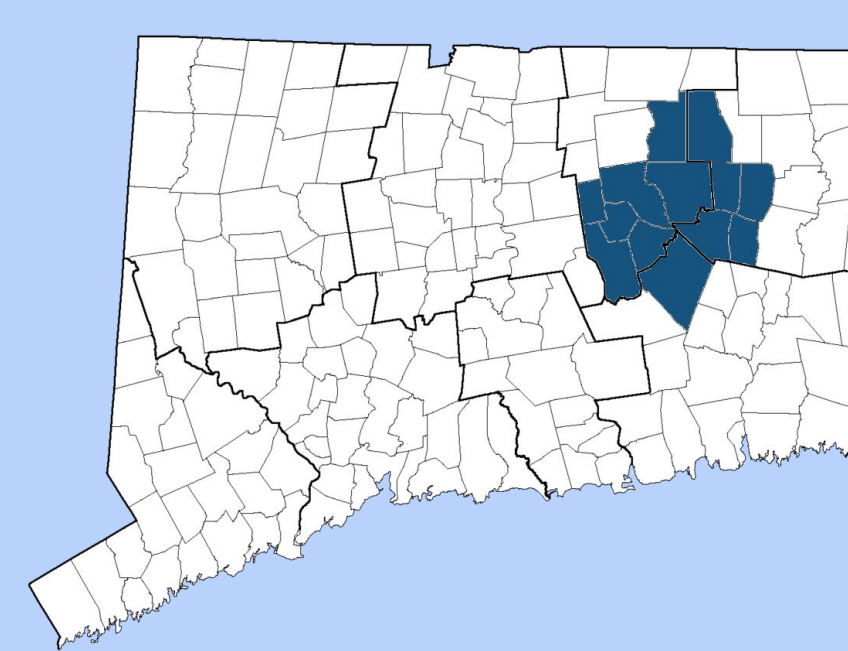
Top: Silas demonstrating how to repair the belt loop on a pair of jeans, Middle: Mend-a-Thon event in action and mending supplies, Bottom: Mended jeans and volunteers.

## Community Partnership

- I worked with **Kristin Fortier and Susan Amy Hunter at the Windham Area Interfaith Ministry (WAIM)**, as well as many other volunteers on this project.

*Windham Area Interfaith Ministry is a community non-profit whose mission is to uplift and unite the community by providing caring services to their neighbors with dignity and respect.*

- The folks at WAIM helped by providing me with a venue, a donation system, and their knowledge and expertise.
- A few of the volunteers brought their own sewing and mending supplies and clothing donations to the event.



Left: Silas gathering mended clothing items after the Mend-a-Thon, Center: Connecticut towns (in blue) that are serviced by WAIM, Right: Silas Brassard, Kristin Fortier, and Molly Daigle during a tour of WAIM.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

- By providing a space for people to learn about and experience **active non-traditional conservation**, we not only **preserve the skills humans** have depended on for the majority of our existence, but open new doors of expression for underserved people through **access to a wider and more unique wardrobe**.
- Several volunteers expressed interest in attending more events like this one, as well as more people who couldn't attend but would like to in the future!
- We are hoping to host **several more Mend-a-thons**, making them a bi-yearly or yearly event, so keep an eye out!

## Acknowledgements and References

I want to acknowledge and thank Kristin Fortier, Susan Amy Hunter, La Carmen and the amazing volunteers at the Windham Area Interfaith Ministry for your help and guidance with sorting the clothing, planning the event, and for lending your expertise in navigating community outreach. Molly Daigle and Laura Cisneros were very helpful and patiently answered questions. I received NRCA funding (from Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut) for project supplies and a stipend. An extra thank you to my parents and grandmother for driving me around and making it so I could do all that I did!

### References

1. Royal Waste, (01/15/2024) How much waste does the fashion industry produce? - Royal Waste Services Inc.
2. Note in the Pocket, Addressing Clothing Insecurity - Note in the Pocket
3. World Resource Institute, (01/10/2019) By the Numbers - Elizabeth Reichart and Deborah Drew
4. Material Exchange, (03/22/2023) The water in my closet would take 520 years to drink - Andrea Kennedy