

RREO Meeting  
1/27/2015  
Carnegie Building  
Southwest Colorado Recycling Study

Miriam called the meeting to order at 9:00am and explained who the COG is, 4 counties 8 municipalities, and described COG goals in regards to regional recycling. This meeting was set up to discuss where we currently stand as a region with our recycling, what our future recycling goals look like, and how to appropriately spend remaining funds of the RREO grant, which is approximately \$17,000-\$20,000 based on regional needs.

The meeting was then turned over to Laurie Batchelder Adams with LBA Associates, consultant with the current RREO grant, who explained that the study region includes all of Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma and San Juan Counties. She clarified that the study covers municipal solid waste (MSW) only - or "public trash" generated by homeowners, businesses, and institutions. It does not cover industrial waste (such as construction/demolition debris) or agricultural waste.

Laurie has worked in many rural communities and is familiar with the struggles rural communities face. The information presented through means of a slide show was compiled from:

- Reported landfill, recycled & composted quantities
- Data provided by private & public service providers in the region
- Waste audits conducted by Miriam, Fort Lewis College interns, and volunteers to understand what recyclables & organics are being landfilled

**QUICK REGIONAL STATS**

- 2014 population of about 99,000 (given the 6500-square mile area, this is about 15 people/mi<sup>2</sup>).
- Region generated about 107,000 tpy MSW in 2014 - 14% of this total by weight was diverted through recycling & organics recovery programs. The average waste generation rate was approximately 5.9 pounds/capita-day.
- Served by 3 disposal facilities including the Archuleta Landfill and the Montezuma Landfill & the privately-operated Bondad Landfill. Tip fees for these facilities range from \$39-\$52/ton and reported facility capacities range from 20 to over 40 years minimum.
- Key policies include a mandatory pay requirement for residential curbside recycling in both Durango and Cortez.
  - Strong mix of public & private programs - non-governmental solid waste service providers include: Phoenix Recycling, Waste Corporation of America, Waste Management, 4 Corners Recycling Initiative, Baker Sanitation, RECLA, Belt Salvage, Bruin, Evergreen Cleaning, Elite & At Your Disposal.
- Curbside is known to generate more recycled tons than drop site due to convenience. The area in & around Durango, Cortez, & Pagosa Springs mostly have curbside - other areas are mostly served by drop sites.
- Similarly, commingled collection (including single-stream) typically generates more tons due to convenience (single-stream is not a silver bullet, however, as the quality of collected materials requires processing before marketing). Areas in & around Durango, Pagosa Springs & San Juan County are mostly served by commingled collection.
- Waste audit results indicated that 25% of disposed waste was organics that could have been recovered through composting & other means (i.e., food & yard waste).

- Other audit results in some samples that may warrant further investigation included high residential scrap metal & glass levels - as well as high commercial cardboard & plastic levels.
- Over the next 10 years, if our region diverted twice as much of the recyclables managed by current programs & twice as much food/yard waste, our diversion levels could increase to nearly 30%.

### **CHALLENGES TO ADDITIONAL WASTE DIVERSION**

- Biggest challenges include low population/density, lack of policy, high unit costs (low tons) & long-distance hauling.
- Effectively communicating facts and incentives associated with diversion are another significant challenge, especially with decentralized programs that collect different materials & have different messages & incentives.
- Finally, the region struggles with managing glass (some programs collect separately from commingled materials or not at all) & organics (the only compost operations is a pilot yard waste program underway in Montezuma County & the Durango Compost Company vermi-composting system).

### **KEY FACTORS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES**

Name of the game is to increase the number of quality tons - can be accomplished by

- Policies that drive diversion (including enforcement)
- Regionalization
- Effective public education and outreach (in both residential & commercial sectors)
- Organics recovery

*Additional information on what these factors might entail for our region was provided in the slide show.*

### **AUDIENCE UPDATES**

*Following the slide presentation, Laurie asked each entity present to give current updates and describe the issues seen with recycling. The following summarizes input from the audience.*

#### Recla:

- Working to develop a new Durango facility
- MSW includes tires & cars (be clear when defining waste stream)
- Cars, appliances, computer can 100% be recycled but most do not know this
- Having a facility convenient to everyone increases participation

#### Phoenix Recycling:

- Development of new regional, single-stream processing materials recovery facility (MRF) is underway - will benefit all recycling stakeholders in region with the exception of those that won't choose to bring their recyclables to Durango
  - Want to serve SW region & improve economics of current and future programs and also keep more jobs
  - Expect processing to be based primarily on manual sorting & will be able to accept both commingled & multi-stream loads
  - Currently have the land near the Durango airport and have the financial backing
  - Are submitting an RREO grant application for new baler & need letters of commitment from communities & haulers (i.e., active participate & partnering although there is no

legal obligation to follow through if MRF evolves differently than expected) - grant request will be for \$250,000 (entire MRF is a \$2.5M) & deadline is end of February.

- Needs for increasing diversion rates include efficient collections & local processing (long-distance hauling erodes potential revenue)

#### City of Durango:

- Current initiatives focus on
  - Expanding commercial collection of recyclables as well as outreach to this sector
  - On-going increase in residential subscriptions also a goal (83% residents currently subscribe)
  - Continue working with county on HHW collection (every other year) and to provide e-waste collection in the city (every Saturday)
- City of Durango moved to bigger facility in 2013 due to shortage of space & to provide more efficient management of single-stream & cardboard
- The drop site at the city facility serves primarily non-city residents
- City recycling services are operated as an enterprise funding with no taxes or other subsidies (unlike most other public programs) - therefore fees are required to off-set net costs (funding is very much an equity issue for the city)

#### La Plata County:

- County currently revising zoning ordinances applicable to new recycling facilities - there are hurdles from the planning perspective with respect to compatibility of site locations (sites that fit with rural landscape and are convenient are sought but difficult to find).
- County does in-house recycling (especially paper).
- Currently conducting public education and outreach around new state paint recycling law.
- Also working to address herbicide carry over is also an issue for composting.

#### At Your Disposal:

Collect single-stream (including glass) curbside in the Pagosa Springs area - bale cardboard. Relatively new to recycling.

#### Durango Compost:

- Small vermi-composting with coffee grounds.
- Venture with Phoenix Recycling to establish new MRF in short-term, campus with potential full-scale composting facility in long term (possibly 3 or so years out) at same location (issues have included permitting a facility and finding a location).

#### Montezuma County:

- Manages recyclables collected in only half county - including Cortez's curbside collection (serves only serves 8,000 people) - as a result;
  - Are looking at moving from multi- to single-stream on the landfill/transfer end
  - May expand to accept recyclables from UT & NM
  - Talking to Rocky Mtn Recycling in Salt Lake City about taking single-stream
  - Have space to store materials - looking at storing regional glass until local uses can be developed (will take for \$0)
- Operates pilot yard waste/biosolids compost facility - will be moving to permanent facility after this year.

- Landfill has 240 year lifespan - moving away from balefill operation (have purchased landfill compactor)

#### Elite Recycling:

- Collecting single-stream (with glass separate) curbside in Pagosa Springs area

#### Archuleta:

- County's multi-stream recycling program was just brought on-line last year
  - Obtained baler with RREO grant
  - Bale commodities, ship from site direct to market in some cases
  - Use glass for landfill leachate system
- County feels region needs team work and financial cooperation between all stakeholders

#### Angel of Shavano Recycling:

- For-profit company that has grown from a hauling only to operating a network of drop sites & transferring/brokering regional multi-stream materials in/around Chaffee County
  - Has purchased cardboard from Archuleta County & Pagosa Springs haulers
  - Have created 5 full-time jobs in addition to 2 owners
  - Donates 5% of annual revenues to community causes - attributes doubling in tons received as direct result
- Has been through regional planning & reality of rural recycling - key issues
  - Single-stream in a rural area is very tough to get it going and hard for it to stay sustainable
  - Quality of product is what will keep program going (more attainable with multi- than single-stream) - if quality is main focus, increased diversion rates will come
  - Strong need to educate & re-educate the public
  - Critical to pay attention to markets (which change constantly) and not just diversion

#### Belt Salvage:

- Scrap metal collection is big issue - need more collection convenience & good pricing to encourage generators to divert these materials
- Also education - it's amazing how many people do not realize what they can and cannot recycle
- Price is market driven - not arbitrarily set

### **AUDIENCE DISCUSSION**

*Following the round-robin updates (above), Miriam & Laurie facilitated a general discussion of where the Recycling Task Force should go in terms of next steps and completing the RREO grant projects. The following summarizes input from the audience>*

#### Regional Efforts

Is a regional effort warranted including all governments & service providers? Would a regional collaboration allow us to improve economics across the region?

**Elite:** Agreed that regional efforts would be great, but still need to provide private sector the ability to compete, distinguish themselves & make a profit. If we depend on each other and someone goes down or changes their mind, there is a huge snowball effect on many others. As a business, a solid foundation and program is needed.

**Montezuma:** Different regions do different things to get to the same end result as each other. Government should stay away from private services.

**Recla:** Local governments need to stay away from services provided by private sector.

**Elite:** Elite & Phoenix work closely with Durango to consistently collect same materials. Public education messages do differ.

**Laurie:** One scenario could be an inter-governmental agreement for a "hub" recycling facility that would guarantee pricing and revenue sharing for a finite period but not regulate other activities

**La Plata County:** Regional effort could bring San Juan Basin Recycling Association under the COG because they need a home.

**Miscellaneous:**

- All governments need to have compatible strategy with consistent materials & messaging.
- Consider making regional strategy a blueprint for other regions (doesn't currently exist in Colorado).

Community Outreach

Education and marketing were identified several times as an area needing more attention in this region (especially in terms of consistency, emphasizing diversion incentives & reaching the commercial sector).

**Montezuma County:** It was noted that community outreach is completely different depending on audience, i.e. Fort Lewis College intern versus rural resident.

**Durango Compost:** Education & outreach at regional level would be especially effective.

**Angel of Shavano** - Educating folks creates a more quality product.

**Belt** – Need to get children involved. Belt does tours of their facility for kids because kids are visual.

**City of Durango** - started with educating schools grades kindergarten through college and found this very effective.

Waste Diversion Policy

There are a wide range of policies that encourage diversion - some are voluntary incentives (like pay-as-you-through) while some are mandates (like Cortez & Durango's collection programs). What would the region like to see?

**Durango Compost:** Need to look at regional policies like a disposal ban on cardboard or scrap metal.

**Montezuma** - If you are forced to do something with policy, there is reluctance. If you *encourage* folks without policy there can be more participation.

**Angel of Shavano** – Business donation has been very effective in increasing diversion in Chaffee County.

**Archuleta:** Without some public policy, risk private companies cherry-picking only high-value material. Need good policy to add value to materials & keep jobs in region.

**Miscellaneous:**

- The region needs to make sure drop sites are serving the entire region.
- Regionally, glass is a big problem. Recycling glass is especially challenging from collection/hauling & quality perspectives. Large quantities would be needed to support local glass markets.
- Need to remember that diverted tons can compete for revenues with landfill tons in some counties.
- Also need to consider the avoided cost of landfill disposal when measuring benefits of recycling.

### Organics

While probably not a short-term fix given the lack of collection and processing infrastructure in place today, there is a need for a long-term approach to organics recovery in region.

**City of Durango:** Need to watch specifications (e.g., Durango park program previously required compost use but didn't specify local (was purchased from Denver market)).

**Montezuma:** There is need (county receives over 20 tons/week food waste from local grocers).

### Next Steps:

- Miriam will make a presentation to the SWCCOG board of directors in March - this will ensure recycling information is provided to many policy makers. Miriam is willing to go and talk to other boards or organizations about this endeavor as well.
- SWCCOG & LBA will work to conceptually develop policy, education & regional collaboration options for further consideration.
- A second regional Recycling Task Force meeting will be scheduled in mid to late March to discuss findings.