

# Chapter 20: Solid Waste & Recycling

## INTRODUCTION

Managing waste is an ongoing challenge throughout the world. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimated that, in 2006, an average of 4.6 pounds of municipal solid waste per person was produced each day in the United States. In the Rutland Region, additional costs associated with transporting, filtering, recycling, incinerating, and / or burying garbage are especially high, due to its rural settlement.

Reducing the amount of waste, increasing recycling, and seeking cost-effective management solutions are three key components of planning for solid waste. This chapter of the *Regional Plan* addresses the structure for waste management in the Rutland Region and its relationship to other community interests.

## CURRENT CONDITIONS

Vermont statutes require all municipalities, either individually, through a solid waste management district, or through an intermunicipal association, to adopt a solid waste implementation plan (SWIP) that conforms with the State Solid Waste Management Plan.

These detail the goals, objectives and implementation strategies to be used to meet the requirements of the Solid Waste Act of 1987.

The responsibility for the planning, administration and implementation/management of solid waste in the Rutland Region lies with two entities: the Rutland County Solid Waste District (RCSWD or District), formed under state law permitting municipal compacts and the Solid Waste Alliance Communities (SWAC), formed under an interlocal contract.

These organizations work to provide their member towns with collective bargaining agreements for a hauler to transport recyclables and garbage from

transfer stations to their final destinations, prepare and maintain solid waste plans, provide community outreach and education, and manage hazardous waste collection days in all communities. The District also operates a transfer station local in Rutland City off Gleason Road.

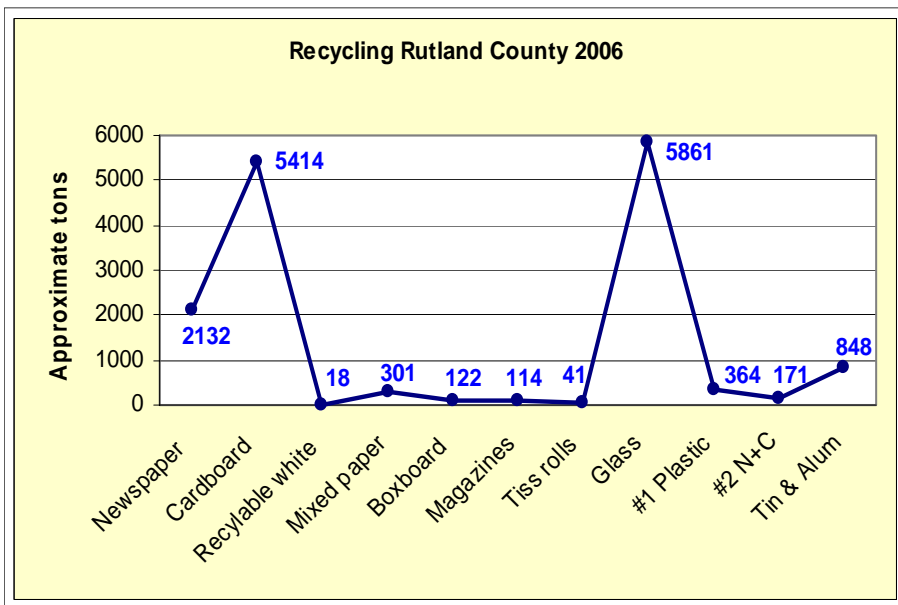
In every town but one (Proctor), residents and businesses are responsible for getting their trash, yard waste, and recyclables to a local or regional transfer station or a private waste management facility. Individual households may choose to bring this solid waste to the transfer station themselves, have an agreement with an independent contractor, or have an agreement with one of the Region's two large-scale haulers. Proctor households have door-to-door pickup.

All communities currently contract to have the solid waste that is not recycled or reused hauled out of the County to either state certified landfills in Moretown and Coventry, Vermont, the Wheelabrator Incinerator in New Hampshire or the Adirondack incinerator in Hudson Falls, New York. Pawlet residents self-haul their trash to the Granville, New York transfer station where it is ultimately taken to the



Large-scale composting, if introduced, could serve not only to reduce waste generated in the Region but also provide composted to the local agricultural community. See the Agriculture and Forestry chapters for details.

## RUTLAND COUNTY RECYCLING TOTALS, 2006



Source: Rutland County Solid Waste District, Solid Waste Alliance Communities

# CASE STUDY:

## WALLINGFORD TRANSFER STATION

The Town of Wallingford and its transfer station are members of the Rutland County Solid Waste District. The transfer station serves the towns of East Wallingford, Wallingford, and South Wallingford.

The station is run by Stearns Stewart and has been in existence for approximately twenty-five years. Many of the programs he discussed are run at other transfer stations in the Region within both the District and Solid Waste Alliance Communities.

In his nine years at the station, Stewart cites the steady increase in volume of trash as the biggest change he has seen. When he started in 1998, one 40-yard container could hold a week's worth of trash; now the station fills a container each of the three days per week they are open.

The Wallingford transfer station uses a modified pay-as-you-throw system, using punch cards purchased from the town. The first 50-punch card is provided to residents each year by the town and is punched one to three times per bag, depending on its size.

### Recycling

As volume of trash increases, efforts to reuse and recycle are also pumped up. The station processes plastic, glass, cardboard, junk mail/magazines, and newspapers, in addition to special items like appliances and textiles.

Stewart and his team are happy to assist residents in special collections. Each year, they save and separate returnables for the schools, bringing in about ~\$5000 in 2006.

### By the numbers: 2006

The Wallingford transfer station serves a population of nearly 2,300 residents. In 2006,

the transfer station handled 574.15 tons of trash, as well as 163.98 tons of recyclables. This boils down to 1.38 pounds of trash per capita per day and 0.44 lbs of recycling per capita per day: nearly 25% of solid waste is processed as recycling.

Notable programs at the Wallingford transfer station helped divert 1180 lbs of waste from landfills in 2006, including the electronics, textiles, and DIY oil collection programs.

### More Good Ideas

Stewart reported that local residents have developed some innovative ways of using materials that would otherwise become trash or have to be hauled away as recycling.

A local dairy farmer has been taking newspapers and reusing them as animal bedding on his farm. This partnership saves the Town hauling and disposal fees. Twenty tons of newspaper were used locally in 2006.

Another community-member initiated collection is for packing peanuts. A local resident picks up packing peanuts collected at the station, she makes dog biscuits and uses the peanuts to ship them all over the world!

### Special Collection Days

In addition to the unlimited access to hazardous waste disposal at the Gleason Road transfer station in Rutland enjoyed by both RCSWD and SWAC member towns, Wallingford also provided three successful special collection days in 2006. Forty-one visitors participated, keeping 33 lbs and over 180 gallons of hazardous waste, plus 103 fluorescent light bulbs out of landfills.

Hudson Falls Incinerator.

In the past, waste management occurred much more frequently at the local level. Changes to Vermont state laws, however, played a significant role in the closure of most community landfills in the 1990s.

Commercial waste is managed through private contracts with various haulers and local businesses, without the direct involvement of municipalities.

### Recycling and Composting

All transfer stations in the Rutland Region offer recycling services. Recycling, as with solid waste, is hauled by the selected contractors. The types of materials accepted at transfer stations is based on the capabilities of the hauler. Larger transfer stations typically have a wider range of products that can be accepted. Currently all transfer-station based recycling must be separated by the user.

The RCSWD and SWAC both promote household composting of fruit, vegetables, grains, and yard waste by selling plastic composting units at discounted rates. At present, there are no municipal or regional composting facilities.

## UNMET NEEDS

### Solid Waste Recycling

The re-direction solid waste from a final destination in a landfill or incinerator is the most significant unmet needs in the Rutland Region. Though data relating to the proportion of recyclable or compostable materials sent away with trash is limited, indicators suggest that there is a great deal of room for improvement. Among the reasons for this:

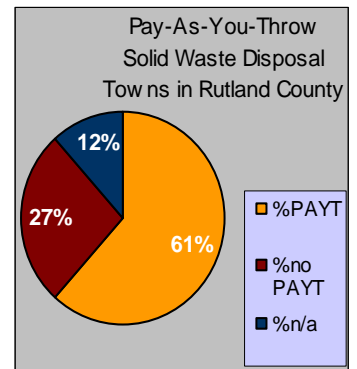
- Convenience: separation of each category of recyclables from one another at home and / or the transfer station is more time-consuming and confusing than simply putting all solid waste into trash bags.
- Cost: Communities in the Rutland Region have slowly made a transition from tax-based trash handling fees to “pay-as-you-throw” systems that charge residents per bag of garbage and provide for free recycling. In many communities, however, the cost per bag remains low for fear that residents will choose illegal dumping.
- Contracted agreements: Individuals and businesses with contracts for on-site solid waste removal may pay a premium for recycling services because of the



### FAST FACT

The Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) program is becoming more popular. About sixty percent of Rutland County towns use this form of generator-accountability.

In May 2006, Castleton adopted PAYT. Since May 2006, the tons of solid waste decreased by 38% compared to the previous twelve months.



Sources: Solid Waste Alliance Communities, Rutland County Solid Waste District



RRPC Staff

Transfer stations throughout the Region offer recycling facilities. There remains room for improvement in encouraging greater use of these facilities and in increasing the types of products eligible for recycling.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Vermont's solid waste law, Act 78, adopted in 1987, set goals of source and waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and when all other options have been exhausted, disposal. Much of the responsibility for solid waste management was left to local authorities.



separate pickup and/or handling time involved. In addition, haulers do not necessarily have an incentive to reduce the amount of solid waste since their income is derived from this.

- Education: waste generation does not generally impact most residents; solid waste management is a closed system intentionally limited effects on residents in the area. As a result, the collective effects of solid waste generation are not on the minds of most residents.

### *Additional Unmet Needs*

- Disposal costs in Vermont have been noted to be among the highest nationwide. This is largely due to the rural nature of the State and the associated transportation costs, for businesses who generate the most waste, residents who travel to the transfer stations, and for the haulers to take waste to the landfills.
- There are no large-scale composting facilities in the Rutland Region. As a result, unless residents choose the use a household-scale composter, all organic waste is thrown out instead of being used to rejuvenate farm fields or gardens.
- Items produced from recycled materials are increasingly available in today's market, however it seems that conventional goods maintain a stronghold on consumers, as the associated costs of recycled materials drives up the price for these 'green'

alternatives.

- Disposal of hazardous materials, though offered to all residents and businesses, is not followed by all. With the increasing number of households in the Region, the amount of improperly-disposed hazardous waste is growing.
- Beneficial use of biosolids has been declining. Most sludge is processed through Rutland City's treatment plant. Although some has been composted in the past, it is currently being used as landfill cover material in Coventry, VT. Septage is collected and delivered for treatment at town wastewater treatment plants.
- Although there are fewer large scale occurrences of illegal burning or dumping of solid waste, these still cause environmental and public health threats. Some towns lack ordinances prohibiting incineration, and enforcement is a perpetual problem.

## FUTURE TRENDS

The nature of solid waste management is that waste or waste by-products accumulate. As landfills become filled, additional sites will need to be found and capped facilities will need to be maintained. The cost of new facilities, and the impacts of such facilities should they be located in the Rutland Region, are high and would be borne by residents and businesses.

The anticipated increase in the number of households – both seasonal and year-round – will be met by an increase in the amount of solid waste, and subsequently, an increase in disposal and transportation costs.

Technological advances are allowing for single stream recycling, where sorting of recyclables becomes unnecessary. This convenience should encourage more recycling within the Region.

## MEETING CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

Several steps can be taken at the local and regional level and by the private sector to reduce the burden of solid waste in the Rutland Region.

- The challenge of trying to increase the proportion of recycled solid waste will be met through a combination of greater public outreach and education, altered fees structures that provide incentives for recycling (while at the same time limiting illegal dumping), and the introduction of a single-stream recyclables system by area haulers.
- Increase education to businesses and residents about trash disposal options, and specifically hazardous waste
- Large-scale composting may be addressed through creative solutions is actively working to establish an incubator farm site based loosely on Burlington’s Intervale. Among Intervale’s programs is a large-scale, local

composting facility that collects scraps from residents and businesses and sells the resulting soil back to the community.

## RUTLAND RPC ACTIONS

- Participate in the update and implementation of Solid Waste Implementation Plans developed by the Solid Waste Alternative Communities and Rutland County Solid Waste District.
- Work with local planning commission to address solid waste issues and solutions while undertaking town plan updates.
- Work with all levels of government and with landowners and private operators to identify old waste sites, to urge and to assist as appropriate, evaluation of any potential health hazards and determination of proper cleanup measures.
- Work with the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link to locate farmers, businesses, and residents to participate in food waste composting program.
- Assist municipalities in educating the local officials and the public about proper disposal of household hazardous wastes and exempt small quantity generator wastes, and about source reduction, reuse recycling, and composting of waste.



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) should NOT be put out with the trash or dumped down the drain because water-bodies and septic systems can become contaminated and some hazardous waste materials have the potential to injure sanitation workers, children, pets, or wildlife.

For more information about the HHW disposal programs, visit the RCSWD and SWAC websites.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Solid Waste Alliance Communities website: <http://www.rutlandcountyswac.org>
- Rutland County Solid Waste District website: <http://www.rcswd.com>
- Mercury Education and Reduction Campaign: <http://www.mercvt.org>
- Association of Vermont Recyclers: <http://www.vtreyclers.org>
- Vermont Agency of Natural Resources: <http://www.anr.state.vt.us/students.htm>
- Vermont Business Material Exchange: <http://vbmex.org/index.php>

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