

DISPOSAL

“Humans simply cannot exist in the natural world without exerting some impact. Nevertheless, while we cannot hope to have no impact, we can hope to have less impact.”

----Jon Witman
Professor of ecology and evolutionary biology,
Brown University

CVSWMD Philosophy

Landfilling and incineration of waste will be viewed as the most onerous of choices of all our waste management options. The CVSWMD will work towards the adoption of a zero waste ethic in its management philosophy over the course of this Plan's lifetime. Interjecting into that process substantive efforts to provide for disposal will only detract from our efforts to prevent waste.

This self-imposed transformation from waste management to waste reduction and resource management places a hefty responsibility on our organization. It also presupposes the ongoing appointment of visionaries to our board, the retention of talented and innovative staff, and the placement of great faith in the leadership of our member communities, their business owners and operators, and our residents. It is only with the cooperation of all these individuals and sectors that we can succeed in this re-direction of resources.

ACTIONS

The CVSWMD's first step in this process is to commit to a series of actions that relegate landfilling and incineration to an undesirable status in our deliberations, planning and programming. At the least, we will:

- Establish pricing strategies that favor non-disposal options in addition to or within incentive-based rate structures;
- Provide member communities with substantive incentives to embrace disposal alternatives;
- Model zero waste practices throughout our organization;
- Place an emphasis on the solid waste hierarchy in priority order, with waste elimination/reduction being most favored and disposal being the least favored;
- Develop programming that supports and establishes non-disposal options;
- Decline to site a municipally owned landfill or incinerator within our region unless other disposal options, including the evaluation of emergent technologies, are investigated;
- Assume that all existing and currently permitted landfills and transfer stations are consistent with our Plan until such time as they re-apply for a permit, even if our District alters its guidelines for siting and operations;
- Establish stringent guidelines for siting disposal facilities (including a landfill, incinerator, and other disposal facilities that may become technologically viable in future years) within our borders, whether publicly or privately owned and/or operated, that serve to protect the long-term environmental and public health of our region; and
- Continually review and consider new technologies for waste management that have the potential to diminish or eliminate the need to site a landfill.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

The majority of nearly 40,000 tons of waste – or about 3.5 pounds per person per day – disposed of in our region goes to the Waste USA landfill in Coventry or the WSI, Inc. landfill in Moretown. These represent the only two lined landfills operating in Vermont. A very small portion of our waste may find its way to a landfill in Bethlehem, New Hampshire. Historically, tires from our region have on at least one occasion been incinerated outside the state of Vermont. The State of Vermont Solid

Waste Plan reports that approximately one-fourth of all Vermont waste is handled at landfills outside of the state. The same plan document states: *At current rates of fill, the two permitted lined landfills will reach capacity in about seven years – or sooner if all of Vermont's waste (including municipal solid waste, construction/demolition debris, wood waste, biosolids and other wastes) were disposed of in-state.*

These two facilities are located on property that previously contained unlined landfills. Requests to open new cells at these facilities may be forthcoming. In addition, four more municipally owned lined landfills have been sited and permitted. Three solid waste districts – Greater Upper Valley, Northwest and Lamoille – and the Town of Randolph own their own sites. The Chittenden District is also pursuing landfill siting and permitting.

Because of the remaining life left on existing options, the possibility of expansion at these sites, and the impending possibilities of one or more additional facilities opening, the CVSWMD sees no need to be concerned about capacity in the immediate future. As a matter of sound planning and responsibility to our member communities, the CVSWMD will watch the landfill development situation within our state. The District director will be responsible for reporting new information to the board.

As a practical matter, however, the issue of capacity diminishes significantly as an item to occupy our time and resources as our District shifts to a zero waste – resource management approach. Ever increasing disposal costs, which are reflective of diminishing capacity and are typically viewed as a detrimental precursor to capacity crisis, are not an unwelcome incentive in assisting us in achieving this different set of goals. While we are not suggesting that our residents be unduly burdened by excessive disposal costs, we are embarking upon an effort that, if successful, will result in rising costs for disposal having much less impact on our population.

Costs for disposal are presently between \$62.50 and \$81.60 per ton, not including state and district taxes; this means most residents typically pay between \$2.25 and \$3.00 per bag of trash. We do not foresee these rates falling even as the municipal landfills begin to open. It is our hope, though, that our zero waste efforts will

dramatically reduce the amount of garbage residents and local businesses send to landfill. In this regard, even if disposal prices rise, there should be ample opportunity to hold the financial impact to a reasonable level. Obviously, residents and businesses will always save the most money by eliminating their production of waste. An increased number of options for reuse and diversion, even when fees are involved, should offer opportunities to save money in comparison to the cost of disposal. The CVSWMD therefore makes it a priority to expend its time and effort to establish reasonably priced disposal alternatives in lieu of debating the cost of disposal unless unforeseen issues arise that compel our board to consider a change in this position.

LANDFILLS AND OTHER WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITIES

Landfills and incinerators are the two types of disposal facilities that currently handle the majority of the developed world's municipal solid waste. New technology is emerging that may present other viable disposal facility options during the life of this Plan. As an example, the CVSWMD points to the Solid Waste Energy Recycling Facility (SWERF) operating in Wololong, Australia and its "offspring" currently planned for sites in England and Florida.

New disposal technologies may or may not be comprehensive, eliminating some portion of the municipal solid waste (msw) stream or targeting only a specific portion of it. The CVSWMD director and staff will remain aware of developing technologies via the trade journals, regular attendance at conferences and trade shows, participation in professional associations, and meetings of industry, environmental and relevant governing organizations. The District will consider, develop and add criteria and categories of solid waste disposal facilities that require conformance with the District Plan as it sees fit over the duration of this Plan. These may be the same or different than those set out in this Plan for landfills. Further, despite the fact that we may not have criteria established for a specific type of disposal facility accepting municipal solid waste, we require that such proposals be submitted to us prior to seeking local zoning, building and other town or city permits. The purpose of this requirement is so that we may work cooperatively with our member community that is the potential host-community to develop review standards that address not only

our regional solid waste concerns, but health, safety and quality of life concerns of the community.

At the time of writing this Plan, the CVSWMD has no intention of siting a District-owned landfill. Having just completed a review process during the latter part of calendar year 2001 of a private proposal intending to site a landfill within our region, our District also has no desire to encourage additional private proposals of this nature. However, we recognize that the world is an ever-changing experience and we provide for both a process and criteria with which to evaluate proposals for landfills within this Plan. As we believe that government should be representative of the people, the process seeks to guarantee public input, even of divergent opinion.

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

NOTE: Landfill siting criteria are to be found in the Facilities Chapter of this Plan. These criteria will apply to all landfill proposals- public or private - until the District revises those criteria or this Plan. It is the District's intent to consider revisions to these criteria through a public process that will be undertaken in 2003, subsequent to submitting this Plan to the State of Vermont for approval. This section – ***Commitment to Action*** - will be revised if we develop new landfill criteria and a process for evaluating proposals. We expect to:

- Hire a consultant to help us research options and areas that should be of concern to us. Use Dr. G. Fred Lee's and Dr. Anne Jones-Lee's¹ work as the starting point for determining criteria and process recommendations. This information will be available in anticipation of, and presented at, the stakeholder meeting(s) where we will be seeking public input. The information provided by the District is intended only as a starting point, not a comprehensive listing of points we are considering.
- Hold (a) public, landfill stakeholder meeting(s). The intent of this meeting will be to identify all areas of concern regarding landfills from various levels of our communities. We will consider surveying our elected town officials in addition to this public meeting. It is not our intent to craft, review or discuss the particular

¹ Doctors G. Fred Lee and Anne Jones-Lee have conducted research and engage in consulting work related to environmental impacts of solid waste management options, and have a particular reputation for identifying concerns and issues that should be considered and addressed when reviewing proposed landfill sites and operations.

wording of criteria at this point. We wish to understand the issues that are of concern to our member communities and their residents, as well as prospective proposers of such facilities. From this information we will work with our consultant to develop a draft of the process to be used to review proposals and the criteria that will apply.

- At a Fall 2003 board meeting, staff and our consultant will present this draft information to the board for discussion. We anticipate that this regular board meeting will include a public hearing on the proposed criteria and process so that board members have an opportunity to hear public input.
- Amend the SWIP to reflect changes and additions to the landfill site selection and review process as may be decided by the board.