



# County of Santa Cruz

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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JOHN A. FANTHAM  
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS

**AGENDA:** JUNE 13, 2000

May 24, 2000

### SANTA CRUZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**701** Ocean Street  
Santa Cruz, California 95060

#### SUBJECT: SOLID WASTE CHARACTERIZATION STUDY

As your Board is aware, the county is required under Assembly Bill 939 to reduce its landfill disposal amounts, by the end of the year 2000, to 50 percent of the total amount of waste generated in the unincorporated area. The county's progress in meeting this mandate is determined after the year 2000, through a report submitted to the state in August 2001.

On December 15, 1998, your Board approved a study to precisely define the county's progress toward the 50 percent mandate and to further identify what additional steps could be taken to ensure that the county would meet and sustain the disposal reduction goal. More specifically, the intent of the study was to identify what was still being disposed of and to inventory the amount of diversion actually taking place. This study included in-field sampling of trash during the late winter and summer of 1999. An extensive inventory of all diversion activity (i.e., waste reduction, recycling, composting) was conducted during the first ten months of 1999 and Public Works has now received the results of the Waste Characterization Study.

The results of this study show that the county, in the year 1998, had achieved a disposal reduction rate of about 47 percent. Approximately 112,600 tons of refuse were disposed and approximately 100,200 tons diverted. This rate, once approved by the California Integrated Waste Management Board (CIWMB), will replace previously calculated rates based on 1990 figures on waste disposal and diversion. These 1990 based rates have been found to be very problematic in terms of their accuracy. The Public Works Department has submitted a request to the CIWMB for approval of the new rate and we expect an answer by the end of July.

More importantly, the study has provided a good snapshot of how well the County's diversion programs are succeeding, what materials were still being thrown away and by whom. For example, the curbside recycling program has been extremely successful for the residential

population of the unincorporated county using the service. Very few **recyclables** were found in the refuse samples taken from residential curbside participants. The study did find, however, these residents are not recycling junk mail, aseptic containers and milk cartons as much as they could be. This type of situation can readily be addressed through focused public outreach to curbside participants.

The study revealed that additional diversion can be achieved in three broad areas: construction and demolition waste recovery, food waste recovery (both residential and commercial), and business recycling. Recovery of construction and demolition waste offers the most immediate opportunity for substantial diversion and is therefore considered the top priority for action. Establishing new programs and expanding existing County programs in these three areas, along with minor improvements to residential recycling, should provide the needed diversion to take the county over the 50 percent milestone and to maintain such levels into the future. The specific program recommendations contained in the study are summarized in Attachment "A" to this letter. A complete copy of the report (titled "Waste Characterization Study and Measurement of Waste Diversion Activities") is on file with the Clerk of the Board.

In conclusion, implementation of the programs summarized in Attachment "A" should enable the county to reach the 50 percent mandate, based on calculations in the Diversion Study. However, the 50 percent disposal reduction should really be viewed as a milestone rather than as a point of completion. It is certainly in the County's best interests to extend the lifespan of the Buena Vista Landfill as long as possible beyond its currently projected 18-year capacity. Disposal options after Buena Vista closes will be very hard to come by and much more expensive.

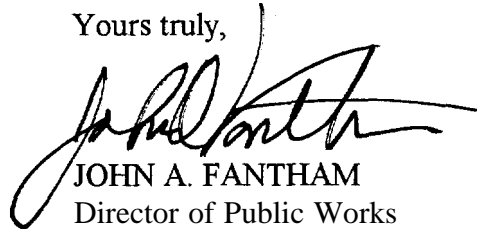
Ten years of disposal records reinforce the point that as the economy grows, the amount of waste disposal grows. While this trend can be slowed through continually increasing diversion activities, the real impact will be through a long-range comprehensive emphasis on zero or minimal waste generation practices. This approach should be viewed not as a quantitative goal but as a policy-based process and a way of doing business that permeates everyday activities throughout the local business, government and residential community. Your Board's adoption of Resolution 440-99, last November, is a step in this direction, encouraging the pursuit of zero waste as a long-term goal in order to significantly reduce or eliminate waste and pollution in the manufacture, use, storage and recycling of materials.

It is therefore recommended that your Board take the following actions:

1. Accept and file the final report on the Santa Cruz County Waste Characterization Study.

2. Direct Public Works to develop and issue a Request for Proposals to conduct a construction and demolition waste recovery operation at the Buena Vista Landfill, with a report back to your Board on or before September 26, 2000.
3. Direct Public Works to include within its fiscal year 2000/2001 work plan an increased allocation of resources for public outreach and technical assistance on waste reduction, recycling and composting for both the residential and business communities as recommended in the Waste Characterization Study report, contingent on approval of the fiscal year 2000-2001 appropriations.

Yours truly,

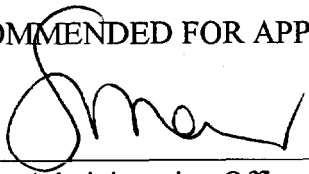


JOHN A. FANTHAM  
Director of Public Works

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Attachment

RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL:



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County Administrative Officer

copy to: Public Works Department

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## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED NEW AND EXPANDED WASTE DIVERSION PROGRAMS

### Construction and Demolition Waste

#### 1. Landfill-based Separation Programs

Public Works has been developing a program to recover construction and demolition waste at the Buena Vista Landfill. This program would include gate fee incentives for source separation and specialized equipment to target specific materials such as wood, metals, drywall and cardboard which are commonly found in construction and demolition waste. Candidate loads would be directed to a dedicated area of the landfill for the separation and recovery process. Reusable building materials such as bathroom fixtures, cabinetry or usable lumber can be recovered for resale. Funds are being recommended in the Public Works solid waste budget for fiscal year 2000/2001 to initiate this program. We are therefore recommending issuance of a Request for Proposal to provide construction and demolition material diversion services.

#### 2. Outreach to Industry

The study interviewed a number of construction/demolition businesses and found that while there are many who are familiar with the benefits of source separation for recovery and incorporate those practices in their business, most such businesses do not have the information nor do they recycle. In the coming fiscal year, staff will develop and initiate a targeted outreach program to inform the industry of these recycling opportunities and the benefits of disposal reduction practices.

#### 3. Permit Conditions/Deposits

This past year has seen the rapid and widespread use of local permit conditions and of a monetary deposit system to ensure waste reduction practices with construction and demolition activities. Numerous cities and counties in the state are making use of this practice and staff has compiled information on several different approaches. We believe this overall mechanism to ensure waste reduction could be very effective in our county. We will continue to formulate a strategy that can be presented to your Board for consideration depending on the success of the landfill separation program discussed above.

#### 4. Landfill Bans

The County now bans several items from landfill disposal (i.e., tires, mattresses) and the range of prohibited materials could be expanded as needed (i.e., to include wood, metals, yard waste, etc.) to ensure that these items do not enter the landfill. Extensive public information and meaningful enforcement make this strategy most effective. Staff will continue to review the potential of this concept for future action, particularly those jurisdictions that have comprehensive landfill bans in place.

## Food Waste

### 1. Residential Waste Reduction Outreach and Support

Food waste comprises almost one-third of the residential disposal sampled by the study. In the absence of collection options, programs to encourage home composting offer the most promise for reducing the quantity of this material coming to the county landfill. We are continuing to expand our extensive outreach effort which would make use of the home composting and worm composting public information, technical assistance and other resources available in the county.

### 2. Business Waste Reduction Outreach and Support

Again, an extensive public outreach program combined with technical assistance to promote on-site composting, surplus food donations and **efficiencies** in food preparation are possibilities being investigated for the food service and food retail industry in the unincorporated county. The proposed Public Works solid waste budget for next fiscal year includes funding recommendations for startup of both business and residential food waste recovery outreach and support.

### 3. Separate Collection/Composting

Separate collection of source separated food waste is now beginning to emerge as an effective method to divert a **sizeable** portion of the commercial waste stream. The City of San Francisco sponsors a separate collection program which supplies a private composting operation in Sonoma County. The City of Santa Cruz is exploring the option of separate collection of food waste for delivery to a composter in southern Santa Clara County. As separate collection of food waste has the greatest potential for large scale food waste diversion, Public Works will continue to investigate the feasibility of such a system for the unincorporated area, possibly connecting with large scale composters in Monterey County.

## Business Recycling

### 1. Recycling Collection Outreach and Support

Public Works has been working with the County's franchised refuse hauler and Ecology Action over the past 18 months to provide recycling assistance to franchise collection customers. This program involves conducting waste assessments at individual businesses to identify and establish appropriate recycling collection services. This program should be expanded to provide information and technical assistance to all businesses, both franchise customers and all others. The proposed Public Works solid waste budget for next fiscal year includes **funding** recommendations for such program expansion.

### 2. Landfill Bans

As discussed above, landfill bans of recyclable materials that continue to appear in commercial refuse is an alternative that should be considered if other methods of commercial waste diversion yield low results. This strategy can target individual materials such as cardboard or mixed paper and would place the burden on the franchised hauler to inform their customers of the proscribed materials and offer a recycling collection alternative.

Included in this category is recycling collection at multi-family dwellings such as apartments and townhouses. These settings typically rely on centralized collection containers to serve all residents in a particular complex. Some places are doing well and others have minimal participation. The proposed Public Works solid waste budget for next fiscal year includes funding recommendations for expansion of the department's current program of outreach and on-site assistance.

Residential Recycling and Waste Reduction

This sector can best be addressed as two separate areas: curbside and self-haul. While curbside recycling is basically successful, there are improvements to the program which can yield increases in diversion. These improvements can be achieved through more focused public outreach to ensure residents take **full** advantage of the available curbside recycle services.

About 40 percent of the households in the unincorporated county do not subscribe to refuse (and recycling/yard waste) collection service. This large number, in theory, self-hauls to the county disposal facilities. The study shows that this group, as a whole, is recycling 15-20 percent less than those with curbside collection. Physical improvements to the recycling centers at the County facilities are scheduled for the coming year and an expanded outreach program is also being developed. An increase in refuse disposal fees, a decrease in fees for diversion materials, a landfill ban for **recyclables** and/or initiation of universal or mandatory refuse collection are other possibilities for increasing diversion. Public Works does not recommend mandatory collection until all other avenues for maximizing diversion have been exhausted, but it is an option the Board may wish to consider at a later date.