

The Mission and Goals of the Eastern Rensselaer County Solid Waste Management Authority (ERCSWMA)

Mission: To manage solid waste generated within the Member communities in the most economically feasible and environmentally sound manner.

The Eastern Rensselaer County Solid Waste Management Authority was formed by an Act of the New York State Legislature in July 1989 for the purpose of managing solid waste generated within Member municipalities. The Authority was formed based upon a Home Rule Request by the municipalities. Originally, joining the Authority

- Represented protection from larger outside municipalities which were seeking to site landfills and burn plants in the more rural and less populated towns and villages of the ERCSWMA;
- Represented the opportunity to manage waste instead of just disposing of it in non-environmentally acceptable methods;
- Represented a means of reaching an economy of scale as the price of waste disposal began to escalate; including an economy of scale with recyclables as mandated by law;
- Represented a chance to earn revenues from "tipping fees" to help pay for closure costs for existing landfills; and
- Represented a chance to participate in a government that gave each municipality the exact same vote.

Since its creation, the Authority has accomplished many (although not all) of its goals toward environmentally sound and economically feasible solid waste management, including the following:

GOAL: Maximize Reduction

The Authority has produced and distributed brochures, newsletters and other information on waste reduction through better practices such as reuse, recycling and composting. Through data collection, monitoring and intervention with member communities on their waste generation trends, the Authority actively seeks to reduce the amount of waste entering landfills and reduce disposal costs.

Additionally, outreach programs to schools, civic groups and interested parties are developed and implemented as requested. This outreach is primarily performed through school programs, displays at fairs and community events and through brochures. "Clean-up" days have been instituted in member communities. Residents delivering material are educated on-site as to the reusability of their unwanted material. Those materials deemed to be of some value are placed to the side for others to take or they are trucked to the ERC Community Warehouse. This low-tech waste exchange has resulted in about 5% reduction of materials disposed at such collection days.

A substantial grant from the New York State Energy, Research & Development Authority ('NYSERDA') for the purpose of developing a "Community Warehouse" was awarded to the Authority. One facet of the ERC Community Warehouse is to match donors of unwanted but useable items with recipients. Additionally, research on storage alternatives for donated materials and energy costs saved play an important role in the overall project. This project is proceeding extremely well, and many individuals, local and state governmental offices have profited from being able to either donate goods or purchase usable items at extremely low prices. The waste reduction aspect continues to improve as more residents take advantage of the ERC Community Warehouse to offer a variety of items for reuse, including furnishings, equipment, appliances and even hazardous waste (such as paints, roofing tars, etc.).

GOAL: Maximize Recycling

Utilizing a phased-in approach, the Authority has created an extremely successful collection, transportation and marketing system for member communities. Recyclable materials are collected **source separated** and containerized in 30 and 40 yard roll-offs. Convenience station attendants notify the Authority office when full, and arrangements are made for transportation to markets. At this time, all markets are either paying markets, or markets which offer a tipping fee that is substantially less than our cost to dispose of these same recyclable materials. All equipment purchases and hauling services have been chosen as a result of competitive bidding. Some markets are bid, but most are negotiated based upon an evaluation of those available locally, their tipping costs, distance to communities, ease of delivery and reliability.

It is through source separation that this Authority is able to provide economical recycling for its residents.

GOAL: Maximize Collection and Disposal of Household Hazardous Waste

After reduction and recycling programs, the Authority recognizes that disposal of hazardous waste is critical to sound solid waste management. Since 1992, the Authority has sponsored 6 household hazardous waste collection days. Two household hazardous waste collection events and electronics collection days are currently scheduled each year. By working with other communities in Capital District area, the ERCSWMA has reduced the cost for hazardous waste collection significantly.

In addition, the ERCSWMA staff works with commercial entities and school districts to assist them in the proper disposal of hazardous materials. An extensive public education program is tied into the actual collection days through the use of the reservation system. This system requires participants to call first, thus affording the Authority staff the opportunity to discuss hazardous waste reduction techniques.

GOAL: Maximize Composting of the Organic Fraction of the Waste Stream

Prior to any major decisions, the Authority conducted a great deal of research, both literature and pilot projects. Six waste characterizations, wherein household waste was hand sorted into 47 different categories, were conducted. The purpose of these multiple characterizations was to provide accurate data on the type and quantity of waste generated locally.

Based upon these studies, the Authority worked for several years to facilitate the construction of a composting facility which would address the disposal issue for all organics. A site was carefully chosen after a protracted siting study was performed including numerous meetings throughout the Authority. The in-vessel technology was identified as the best available and most preferred technology for use at a site in ERCSWMA. A bid for a 30 ton per day public works project was issued and awarded. Subsequently, the Authority Members agreed to shelve the 30 TPD public works approach because economics were now playing a much greater role than environmental issues. The Members decided that privatization of the composting facility would lead to a more economical tipping fee, as the private sector is in the business of making a profit. Public works projects cannot make a profit, rather they just render the service.

GOAL: Provide proper disposal for all residuals after the above goals are maximized

The Authority entered into a twenty year contract with EAC OPERATIONS/ALBANY, INC. for the disposal of all municipal solid waste generated by member communities and acts as liaison between EAC and member communities to insure non-contaminated residuals for landfill disposal.

GOAL: Provide stable, economical, long term disposal options

Pursuant to the State Solid Waste Management Act. Of 1988, the NYSDEC was required to close all un-permitted and/or un-lined landfills in the State of New York. All landfills in ERCSWMA met that closure criteria. Thus at the Members request, in 1990, the ERCSWMA negotiated with NYSDEC for the progressive closure of landfills within its territory with the exception of Poestenkill. This progressive closure allowed ERCSWMA communities to benefit doubly: they had a near-by disposal site and the tipping fee was reasonable. Communities who had extended landfills profited even more as discussed below.

In addition to negotiating an orderly progression of closure which would allow ERCSWMA communities to continue to pay the lowest disposal cost for the longest period of time, The ERCSWMA negotiated for Schaghticoke, Nassau, Stephentown and Hoosick Falls to site temporary transfer stations at their existing landfill sites. These temporary sites have since become permanent.

Overall, had those landfills been immediately closed down, it can be reasonably concluded that the ERCSWMA saved it's communities collectively, about \$1.8 million dollars from 1990 through 1995.

GOAL: Provide appropriate services to the member municipalities in the area of solid waste management, including, but not limited to the following:

- Preparation and implementation of approved solid waste management plan
- Successful extension of the following landfills: Berlin/Petersburg, Stephentown and Nassau resulting in revenues directly to those towns of nearly \$700,000 and access to reasonable disposal options for all communities
- Active participant in the settlement of Hoosick Falls landfill litigation, including using Hoosick Falls sludge as part of final landfill cover
- Two Hazardous Waste Collection Days per year
- Two Electronics Recycling Days per year
- Grant writing and administration
- Operation of ERC Community Warehouse for waste reduction
- Alerting local government to "business" inventory in stock at ERC Community Warehouse
- Marketing for recyclables
- Containers for recyclables, C&D materials and special collections
- Transportation scheduling for recyclables and garbage
- Newsletter, town/village recycling calendars
- Regulatory reporting
- Clean-up days for bulky goods, scrap metal, miscellaneous junk, tires, etc.
- Bulk purchasing options for recycled office products
- Consistent, well-run, well-insured, permitted garbage disposal sites
- Education for reduction and recycling
- School programs on solid waste management
- Marketing and scheduling for Construction & Demolition materials
- Technical assistance to transfer station operators
- In-house services for Research & Development projects
- Technical assistance to member communities in writing and competitively bidding contracts for waste hauling
- Competitive bidding for garbage districts
- Public education programs at community events
- Consultations with commercial entities for specialized waste products
- Telephone assistance to all callers on all topics from all over New York State
- Total preparation and layout of educational flyers for individual communities
- Consultations with Supervisors and Mayors at their request

- Economical, permitted sludge management
- Collection of household batteries for recycling
- Legislative updates regarding solid waste and other environmental issues
- Economic benefits of participation in regionalized efforts at the multi-county, state and multi-state levels
- Six day manned educational booth at the Schaghticoke Fair

- Whatever else communities request including acting as liaison between the NYS Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health; Rensselaer County offices; haulers; waste brokers; etc.

FUTURE GOALS: The major goals of the Authority for the future include:

- Increasing the types and quantities of recyclables as the markets grow, shrink or change
- Encouraging proper backyard composting as opposed to illegal dumping or burn barrels
- Through privatization, composting all or a designated portion of the organic waste
- Continuing to maintain legislative tracking to stay on top of environmental regulations issued by the state and federal government
- Continuing the practice of specialized collections such as hazardous waste, textiles, batteries, and other unique and hard to market items
- Continuing to provide reliable, flexible waste disposal sites
- Continuing to provide education to residents through recycling flyers, specialized brochures, meeting, and press releases