

House Committee on Natural Resources and Energy (Room 44)

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S. 208 - An Act Relating to Solid Waste Management

(1) Establish a Pilot Recycling Program for Construction and Demolition Wastes

The NEKWMD is generally supportive of this pilot proposal and the diversion of construction and demolition wastes from landfill disposal.

(2) Remove the 1-ton Exemption for Haulers of Solid Wastes

The NEKWMD is supportive of this provision. There are several haulers registered with the NEKWMD that are not currently required to register with the State. Eliminating this exemption will assist us in our compliance efforts.

(3) Create an Exemption for Haulers to Provide Parallel Collection of Recyclables in Areas Where Alternative Services Exist

The NEKWMD is supportive of this provision for a number of reasons.

(A) The requirement for haulers to provide parallel collection of recyclables will decimate the hauling community in the NEKWMD. We currently have over 30 registered haulers collecting wastes throughout our District. Three haulers are currently providing single-stream services for recycling to residential customers. One additional hauler has indicated they would be able to provide single-stream collection of mandated recyclables if required by law. The remaining haulers are small haulers with one or two employees and one or two vehicles. Since there is no processing capacity for single-stream materials in the NEKWMD, all of these materials would have to be shipped to either Rutland or Williston. This added cost to transport these materials will significantly raise the cost of trash collection since recycling costs cannot be billed directly to the customer. Even if many of the small haulers were willing and able to provide this service they would soon be priced out of the market because they cannot recognize the economies of scale that the larger haulers have in their ability to consolidate materials. The result is local jobs will be lost and trash prices will soar.

(B) The NEKWMD currently has 26 facilities that collect source-separated recyclables. These recyclables are collected, processed, and sold by the NEKWMD. In 2013, the NEKWMD sold \$185,000 worth of materials – 27% of our total budget. Because of the rural nature of the NEKWMD, it makes sense to consolidate materials at these facilities and have them serviced by

the NEKWMD. We estimate an additional \$100,000 can be generated through the sale of recyclables if the current system remains in place. If haulers are required to collect mandated recyclables, the only efficient way to do so curbside is via single-stream. If this happens in the NEKWMD, the revenue derived from keeping these materials in the District is lost because of the lack of access to single-stream processing. Not only is the revenue lost, but users will be forced to pay more (through elevated trash fees) to have these materials shipped elsewhere as noted above. The 26 facilities not only collect mandated recyclables, but also serve as aggregation centers for electronics, scrap metal, food scraps, batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, aerosols, agricultural film, plastic bags, hard-covered books, used motor oil, etc. The point is that having the haulers provide parallel collection will not allow the facilities to close. They will still need to operate to collect these other items. So we will have 2 systems in place for collecting all of the items that are currently collected under one system, thus reducing the efficiency of both systems.

(C) The NEKWMD, currently and historically, has generated far less waste than the national average and other parts of Vermont. In fact, the NEKWMD is already well below the generation rate the Agency of Natural Resources has set as a target - 2.7lbs/person/day. Our rate for 2013 was 1.78/lbs/person/day. We have been at or below 2.0lbs/person/day for over 10 years.

(D) The NEKWMD is confident that the landfill bans and unit-based pricing requirements of Act 148 will have the intended effect of increased recycling and decreased waste generation without the added financial burden of parallel collection.

(E) In NEK towns that have full-service facilities (trash and recycling), 80% of residential waste and 70% of municipal solid waste (MSW) is funneled through those facilities. While we understand that parallel collection was intended to make recycling more convenient, we need to ask ourselves why should we pursue a system that makes trash and recycling services more convenient than any other service in the NEK? Our residents will have greater access to trash and recycling services than they will food and fuel.

(F) In an effort to increase convenience to residents in the NEK, we will be working with our member towns to expand hours of operation and add trash collection services at those facilities that don't currently accept trash.

(4) Establish a Solid Waste Infrastructure Assistance Fund within the Waste Management Assistance Fund and Raise the Landfill Tax by \$1 per Ton

The NEKWMD is supportive of more closely examining how the current \$6/ton tax is allocated before increases are considered.

NEKWMD resource requirements in order to comply with Act 148 are estimated between \$455,000 and \$1,150,000. These figures assume an increased recycling rate from 20% to 35%. Resources include infrastructure improvements, processing upgrades, and transportation upgrades. The wide range in estimates is primarily due to the pricing of used equipment versus new equipment.

These resource requirements do not include development of additional capacity to collect and process food scraps, which could add at least another \$200,000.

We do anticipate annual increases in revenue of approximately \$100,000 from the additional volume of recycling processed and sold. This additional revenue would be used to lessen the impact of the costs mentioned above

(5) Create a Solid Waste Infrastructure Advisory Committee

The NEKWMD is supportive of this initiative.

(6) Require Agency of Natural Resources Report on Solid Waste Governance

The NEKWMD favors the inclusion of all Vermont towns in a Solid Waste Alliance or District.

S208 as it is currently written asks the Secretary of the Agency of Natural Resource to submit a report that includes “(2) *whether or not consolidation of solid waste management districts is necessary to accomplish the objectives of 2012 Acts and Resolves No. 148.*”

Since Districts, Alliances, and Towns will not have had a chance to complete their own Solid Waste Implementation Plans, let alone implement them, it will be impossible to adequately address this question by December of 2014 – the timeframe stated in the bill. It might be more prudent to require this study 2 years after implementation of the management plans occurs. This would allow sufficient time for all planning entities to have implemented their Plans and respond to several of the deadlines imposed by Act 148.

The NEKWMD also believes the Agency’s Materials Management Plan (MMP) will provide the impetus for some towns to join Alliances or Districts. The MMP will force Alliances and Districts to be more accountable, which will be helpful in evaluating whether or not the governance structure should be altered (i.e. consolidation of planning entities).

In conclusion, it is an exciting time to be involved in solid waste management in the State of Vermont. We applaud the Legislature and the Agency for steering Vermont towards a cleaner and greener future. The passage and implementation of Act 148 are, and will be, landmark events. The NEKWMD is actively preparing to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

We are confident we will be able to comply with the law and are working with our counterparts in other Alliances and Districts in an effort to standardize services in the NEK and across Vermont. We have been active in the Universal Recycling Working Group, which was responsible for developing standardized, statewide symbols for recycling, trash, and organics. The Working Group is currently working on common messaging to be used to educate the public on the requirements of Act 148. The NEKWMD has also been actively involved in the Food Cycle Coalition, which is working on developing the state-wide resources necessary for reducing, recovering, and recycling food scraps.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this very important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Paul Tomasi, directly at 802-626-3532 or director@nekwmd.org.