



## **Testimony Offered To the House Natural Resources and Energy Committee**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Lamoille Regional Solid Waste Management District was chartered by the Vermont Legislature in March of 1989 making this our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are a union municipality of 12 towns being all of Lamoille County and the towns of Craftsbury in Orleans County and Worcester in Washington County. We operate 6 facilities, serve a population of approximately 26,000, and collect for reuse or recycling over 30 materials from mercury and batteries to textiles and freon-containing appliances. We are the only District that operates a redemption center where we process over 1,000,000 returnable containers each year.

Examples of our work include: technical assistance to our schools and communities, waste audits for commercial businesses, licensing 19 commercial haulers, special events to responsibly manage household hazardous materials, and grants to member municipalities to address illegal dumping. To accomplish our mission the LRSWMD employs 7 full- time and 9 part- time staff. In addition, I am part-time contracted management. To maximize our impact we forge partnerships with organizations such as Highfields Center for Composting, Wheels for Warmth, United Way, Lamoille County Food Shelf, and the Vermont Solid Waste Managers Association.

The LRSWMD facilities all employ a pay as you throw policy and have a large differential between trash disposal costs and recycling costs to provide a monetary incentive for the latter. In addition, a mandatory recycling collection ordinance is in effect. Haulers are subject to a surcharge (currently \$18.50 per ton MSW, \$14/ton C&D) to fund part of the Districts' budget and there is no per capita assessment or tax on the member municipalities. In order to stretch our limited financial resources we seek out grant opportunities and currently have grant applications in with the Agency of Natural Resources, with State Farm Insurance in collaboration with UVM Extension, and with the USDA in collaboration with ReSource.

## S. 208 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

**The elimination of the 1-ton exemption** would indeed improve diversion rates which is an underlying premise of responsible solid waste management whereas **exemptions for parallel collections** could have the opposite effect. This latter system is essentially the status quo in many parts of Vermont and clearly overall diversion rates are not satisfactory and it has been debated that it requires additional driving.

The systems envisioned by Act 148 to improve diversion are going to require significant investment from both private and public sectors. The existing mechanism for funding and supporting solid waste activities in Vermont is through the \$6/ton franchise tax paid on all material disposed of in a landfill. However, a large portion of this tax collected from haulers is appropriated to other budgets and therefore unavailable for the important work mandated by Vermont's solid waste laws. Reallocating 100% of those funds back to their intended use or **raising the tax rate by \$1/ton** have the same desirable effect which is to provide additional funding for the growing list of mandates. Transparency should be considered in deciding how to fund future programs and infrastructure.

Clearly, the **Solid Waste Advisory Committee** would ensure that all perspectives and interests in the management of materials are considered in the development of new solid waste infrastructure as well as funding mechanisms for such development.

**Solid Waste Governance** has evolved over the past quarter century to where we currently have approximately 32 entities with as many approaches to reducing the generation of waste and maximizing diversion. Each of these approaches yields different rates and comparative success has been difficult to measure. However, with the soon-to-be-finalized Material Management Plan as means of standardizing expectations and outcomes the effectiveness of these entities or the need for consolidation will become evident. The fact that there are a host of unfunded mandates contained in Act 148 combined with a statewide pay-as-you-throw policy will drive increased collaboration, innovation and efficiencies in solid waste governance. Having the Agency compiling data on cost effectiveness and efficiencies on the current system when we are radically changing the system means the report will be seriously outdated as soon as it is completed. It may, therefore, be prudent to consider removing this section from S 208.

It is unlikely that the **Pilot C&D Project** will have any impact on the LRSWMD due to proximity of a facility that could manage these materials as detailed in S. 208.

## ACT 148 IMPLEMENTATION

The LRSWMD is preparing for the challenges of implementing Vermont's Universal Recycling law. While daunting because of the breadth of the mandates it is exciting in that it will require creativity, resourcefulness, innovation and collaboration to be successful. **Planning and feasibility analyses will be essential and occupy a significant portion of the Boards time this next year.** Two examples follow.

#1 Beginning on July 1, 2015 we will lose almost \$40,000 in income from recyclables while costs of hauling and processing increase. We currently use compactors to maximize the amount of recycling we

ship in each load to keep cost of gas and carbon outputs down. With an increase in recycling at facilities and from commercial haulers the LRSWMD will need to consider the feasibility of using larger transport vehicles and accepting recyclables from commercial haulers in order to maximize efficiencies in transportation.

#2 We are surrounded by composting facilities (Highfields to the east, Grow Compost and Vermont Compost to our south, and Green Mountain Compost to our west). We have 2 anaerobic digesters, a chicken farmer and a vermicomposter that collect food scraps, and a dormant municipal windrow composting facility in the District. There is currently a very limited organics collection program run by Highfields along Rt 15 and the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District services commercial customers along Rt 100. That leaves many small villages and a whole lot of homes along rural roads with no residential service. Our challenge is to figure out how any or all of these facilities factor into diversion, what is current capacity versus projected need and then how to move food scraps and other organic material to such facilities in a convenient and cost effective fashion.

One action prompted by Act 148 was the formation of the Universal Recycling Working Group which began as a means of pooling resources and collaborating on outreach and education materials and tools to provide for consistent messaging no matter where in the state you live and work. Similarly, the Vermont Organics Partnership provides a platform for discussing common issues around organics management.

## **MATERIAL MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The MMP provides standards for performance that will serve as the basis of a work plan for much of what the LRSWMD does in the next five years. This includes standards for convenience, education and diversion such that all Vermonters will have a minimum level of solid waste management services.. We applaud the Agency for their efforts to develop this document, to respond to public comments and to marshal it through the adoption process. **Clearly, there are additional costs incurred in meeting those standards and diminishing sources of revenue.**