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January 29, 2018

Christopher Bray, Chairman
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Vermont State House
115 State St.
Montpellier, VT 05633

Dear Chairman Bray and Committee Members:

Sent via email to: Judy Newman, Committee Assistant (jnewman@leg.state.vt.us)

Subject: Letter from the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance regarding proposed amendments to Act 148

Dear Senator Bray and Committee Members:

I am writing to offer comments on the currently proposed amendments to Act 148 now before the committee. I am with the Bennington County Regional Commission and am responsible for assisting the thirteen towns of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance in implementing their solid waste implementation plan. The Alliance includes the towns of Arlington, Bennington, Dorset, Glastenbury, Manchester, Pownal, Rupert, Sandgate, Searsburg, Shaftsbury, Stamford, Sunderland and Woodford, with a total population of 35,000 people, over 2,000 businesses and 25 schools. The Alliance Board has not had an opportunity to meet to discuss the proposed amendments, and my comments are based on previous discussions of that board.

Act 148 was adopted in 2014 and 2018 will be the fourth year it has been in effect. It seems premature to make major changes to this important piece of legislation. We all are learning our way in the process of increasing recycling and reducing the amount of material disposed in landfills.

Variable Rate Pricing: In 2015, our Alliance completed a solid waste implementation plan, and each town adopted an ordinance requiring haulers to implement variable rate pricing. This method of charging for solid waste had already been the norm for haulers in Bennington County. Repealing this requirement would disrupt our current pricing system and could significantly alter the amount and types of solid waste recycled vs. sent to landfills.

Listing Facilities in Solid Waste Implementation Plans: The previous solid waste implementation plans, and our current plan, both specified siting requirements for solid waste facilities. Under current law, all solid waste facilities must comply with those requirements before being listed in the SWIP and only listed facilities can be certified by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources. Removal of that requirement would eliminate an important area of local control over facility siting.

Fast Trash: While we do not utilize fast trash, the members of the Alliance would like the opportunity to use that option if it were offered by a hauler. Since fast trash could provide the services of a certified facility, such sites should be required to collect trash, recyclables and food scraps.

Thank you for your work on this bill and your consideration of the needs of the Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Batcher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael S. Batcher
Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance