

2005 Annual Solid Waste Report

The Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act of 1990 requires the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), with the cooperation of the Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA), to report annually on the state of solid waste management in Georgia. Per the Act, the FY 2005 report, covering the period of July 1, 2004-June 30, 2005, contains information on:

- the status of local and regional solid waste management planning in Georgia;
- the number and types of solid waste handling facilities in the state;
- the remaining capacity of each permitted solid waste handling facility;
- the number and types of solid waste grants and loans made to local governments;
- a compilation and analysis of solid waste management data provided by cities and counties through their completed Solid Waste Survey;
- a statement of progress achieved in meeting the 25% waste reduction goal established in subsection (c) of Code Section 12-8-21;
- a statement of progress achieved in solid waste management education;
- any revisions in the state solid waste management plan deemed necessary; and
- recommendations for improving the management of solid waste in Georgia.

The Solid Waste Management Act requires all local governments to have, or be included in, a solid waste management plan that demonstrates adequate waste disposal capacity and collection capability for a 10-year period. Sixty cities and 17 counties did not have an approved plan by the end of FY 2005. Local governments that failed to adopt approved solid waste management plans are listed and continually updated online at: www.GeorgiaPlanning.com

During FY 2005, 16.2 million tons of waste was sent to Georgia disposal facilities. Most of this waste entered lined, monitored landfills operating under federal Subtitle D regulations. A small percentage of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) entered unlined landfills that have been allowed to operate under their pre-Subtitle D permits. Construction and Demolition waste (C&D), a subset of MSW, is generally disposed in unlined landfills that are less expensive to operate.

At the same time Georgia's population and overall disposal increased so too did the amount of permitted disposal capacity; Georgia now has approximately 28 years of remaining permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal capacity and 17.2 years of remaining permitted Construction and Demolition (C&D) disposal capacity. It is important that the state and local governments carefully monitor the remaining permitted disposal capacity throughout the state. In FY 2005 approximately 60% of the permitted disposal capacity in the state was contained in 7 of the 126 landfills permitted in the state. This concentration heightens the need to carefully monitor the financial assurances of these and all the disposal facilities in the state. It also emphasizes the need for local solid waste management planning and annual monitoring of the implementation of these plans. Overall Georgia is blessed with an adequate supply of permitted disposal capacity; only one area of the state – the Northeast Georgia RDC, had less than 10 years of permitted disposal capacity. (See section A Disposal and Capacity and section B Per Capita Disposal for more details)

The level and type of solid waste, recycling, and yard trimmings collection services provided throughout the state varies greatly depending upon a community's size, density, and demographic profile. The number of local governments whose residents have access to recycling services has slowly dwindled during the last three years. Collection programs for glass, scrap metal, aluminum, and newspaper have fallen most dramatically, with collection programs for glass falling from 289 as reported in FY 2000 to 180 in FY 2004. Collection programs have been trimmed mainly from small, rural communities. While some of the decrease may be attributed to the low survey response rate in 2005 this decline is also part of a general decline in recycling collection programs and rates across the nation. Solid waste management education and recycling promotion remain one of the key elements in maintaining viable programs. On a more

positive note, more jurisdictions reported collecting problem wastes such as Household Hazardous Waste.

During FY 2004, 24 cities and 27 counties reported actively promoting waste minimization practices such as home composting or beneficial reuse of yard trimmings. During FY 2004, 365 cities and 57 counties reported collecting yard trimmings for diversion from MSW landfills, however inert landfill disposal is reported as one of the leading “processing” methods for these materials.

As the trend toward fewer, larger (and usually privately owned) landfills continues, solid waste transfer stations are becoming a popular method of streamlining solid waste collection services. Only 20 cities reported that they or their contractors used transfer stations for the collection or disposal of residential waste in FY 1995. By FY 2004, 153 cities or their contractors were using transfer stations to manage residential waste. (See section C: Solid Waste & Recycling Collection of the report for more details)

Another growing trend that needs to be carefully monitored is the amount of waste imported to Georgia for disposal and its potential impact on future disposal capacity and Georgia’s environment. With statewide posted MSW tipping fees at \$34.95 per ton (\$30.21 for C&D waste), far less than Northeastern states and Florida, Georgia landfills represent considerable cost-savings for companies moving large amounts of waste. Because the waste reduction goal specified in the Act includes all waste disposed in MSW landfills, this out-of-state waste is included in our progress toward meeting the waste reduction goal, and undercuts waste reduction and recycling efforts undertaken by Georgians. On a per capita basis, 7.47 pounds of waste entered MSW landfills daily during FY 2005, and nearly one pound/day of that came from outside Georgia’s borders. (See section B: Per Capita Disposal and section D: MSW & C&D Landfill Tipping Fees of the report for more details)

During FY 2005 the EPD did not receive an appropriation of the Solid Waste Trust Fund to support local government waste reduction and recycling infrastructure grants and GEFA did not issue any low interest loans for solid waste management projects. (See section E: Grants and Loans to Local Governments)

As the disposal rate continues to increase in the state, a statewide strategy needs to be developed to identify the barriers to increasing the waste disposal diversion rate in the state. The State Solid Waste Management Plan needs to be updated and needs to identify strategies and resources necessary to reduce the waste disposal rate in the state. The growing number and use of inert landfills, solid waste transfer stations, and out-of-state waste imports needs to be monitored for their impact upon the quality of life for all Georgians as well as their potential long term impact upon Georgia’s environment.

The full report, as well as reports from past years, is available online at www.dca.ga.gov, under Office of Environmental Management programs.