

2009 Annual Solid Waste Report – Executive Summary

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 Finance Authority (GEFA), to report annually on the state of solid waste management in Georgia. Per the Act, this FY 2009 report, covering the period of July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009, 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 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.

This and previous reports are available online at www.dca.ga.gov, under Office of Environmental Management programs.

Further, the Act requires DCA to report on the status of litter prevention and abatement in the state. The litter report shall include but not be limited to:

- An itemization of expenditures made from the Solid Waste Trust Fund for the prevention and abatement of litter;
- A compilation and analysis of litter prevention, collection, and enforcement efforts;
- An assessment of littering in the state;
- A statement of progress in achieving a litter prevention ethic; and
- Recommendations for improving litter abatement and prevention efforts.

This litter report is available online at www.dca.ga.gov, under Office of Environmental Management programs.

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. Seventy-two (72) cities and twenty (20) counties did not have an approved plan at the end of FY 2009. Local governments that failed to adopt approved solid waste management plans are listed and continually updated online at: www.GeorgiaPlanning.com

During FY 2009, 14.6 million tons of waste was sent to permitted Georgia disposal facilities. Most of this waste entered lined, monitored landfills operating under federal Subtitle D regulations. A small and dwindling 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, generally goes to unlined landfills that are less expensive to operate.

The state continues to have an adequate supply of permitted disposal capacity with 35.1 years of remaining permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal capacity and 35.1 years of remaining permitted Construction and Demolition (C&D) disposal capacity. Remaining capacity is highly variable; in FY 2008 calculated remaining capacity was approximately 26 years. The same math applied to reduced disposal rates effectively added nine years capacity in a single year; it is important to keep in mind that natural or man-made disasters or policy changes can have just as dramatic effect in the opposite direction. It is important for the state and local governments to carefully monitor the remaining permitted disposal capacity throughout Georgia. In FY 2009 more than half of the permitted disposal capacity in the state was contained in just 5 of the 117 active landfills. This concentration heightens the need to carefully monitor the financial assurances of these and all the disposal facilities in the state. Without proper financial assurance, the incredible costs of cleaning up abandoned, leaking landfills may fall to local governments and possibly the state.

This concentrated disposal capacity also emphasizes the need for quality local solid waste management planning. The Northeast Georgia RDC continues to have less than 10 years of permitted disposal capacity. Demonstration of capacity and capacity assurance is highly dependent upon the permitting process and the time it takes for a solid waste handling permit to be issued. This process typically takes several years, during which time permits for surrounding facilities may lapse or private sector business arrangements to accept varying rates of material for disposal can greatly alter the projected life expectancy of existing landfills. (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. To track solid waste management trends, DCA administers an annual survey of all local governments in Georgia.

During FY 2009, 26 cities and 29 counties reported actively promoting waste minimization practices such as home composting or beneficial reuse of yard trimmings. During FY 2009, 304 cities and 45 counties reported collecting yard

trimmings for diversion from MSW landfills. (See section C: Solid Waste & Recycling Collection of the report for more details.)

The increasing use of inert landfills and transfer stations, for which no reporting requirements exist, should be monitored and addressed in local solid waste planning efforts. As the state implements the strategy for reducing the MSW disposal rate, efforts to quantify and address C&D waste reduction and solid waste from mining, agricultural, or silviculture operations or industrial processes or operations should be addressed.

Education efforts are essential to waste reduction efforts. Keep Georgia Beautiful continues supporting the waste reduction and education efforts of the 77 Keep America Beautiful affiliates in Georgia. As state grant funds that have historically helped local governments educate and enforce litter abatement efforts diminish, these local affiliates are struggling to find the necessary resources to keep their communities livable.

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 MSW tipping fees at \$35.97 per ton (\$21.46 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 in Georgia, this out-of-state waste is included in the state's progress toward meeting the waste reduction goal, and undercuts waste reduction and recycling efforts undertaken by Georgians. On a per capita basis, 6.82 pounds of waste entered MSW landfills daily during FY 2009, 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 Fiscal Year 2008, EPD's Scrap Tire program reimbursed a total of \$89,509.12 to three local governments for scrap tire pile cleanups. These were the only SWTF dollars disbursed by EPD during FY 2009.

The Georgia Environmental Finance Authority did not award any SWTF dollars in FY 2009. No new loans were issued for solid waste-related projects, though GEFA continues to administer prior loans.

In FY 2008, DCA's Office of Environmental Management implemented two (2) recycling infrastructure grants, the Away-from-Home Recycling Grant and the Regional Recycling Hub Grant programs, both of which were supported by Solid Waste Trust Fund dollars. DCA awarded \$2,567,518 in FY 2008 to fund these

recycling infrastructure grant programs.



The Away-From-Home Recycling grant included \$350,000 dollars from the SWTF, a program partner contribution \$40,000 Curbside Value Partnership (CVP), and \$25,000 in corporate donations from Coca Cola for a total program value of \$415,000. The program funded grant projects in 29 communities across the State. So far, more than 42 tons of lightweight materials have been diverted from the waste stream for recycling. More importantly, nearly 3 million patrons attending these special events were exposed to the recycling message. And it's important to note that most of the events using the equipment had never collected recyclables before.

The Regional Recycling Hubs grant was funded with \$2,217,518 from the SWTF. DCA leveraged additional funding totaling \$8,042,950 (\$4,938,696 in partner-level support and \$3,104,254 local government support) for the Hub program. For every \$1 (one dollar) of Solid Waste Trust Fund grant funding, DCA leveraged over \$3.60 in partner match dollars from private and local government support. Grants were awarded to four (4) local governments across the State.

Historically funding from the SWTF had been used to support a variety of local government waste reduction programs throughout the state. In response to the needs identified in the 2006 Annual Solid Waste Report and the need to “change business as usual” to affect a change (reduction) in the amount of MSW waste being disposed in the state, a statewide waste reduction and recycling strategy was drafted with the input of local governments and Georgia businesses using recycled content materials. The four part strategy, presented for implementation and funding is outlined below:

- Away From Home Recycling Equipment to facilitate recycling at sporting events, festivals and other special events

- Recycling Hubs Infrastructure dollars to develop collection capability leveraging the private sector's shift toward single-stream processing capability, and increasing collection in rural areas of the state.
- Statewide Recycling Campaign An umbrella marketing campaign focused on increasing recycling participation. This effort will push Georgia residents to look for recycling at special events and their homes and places of work.
- ReTrac – Reporting Metrics All of the above efforts will be tracked via an innovative online reporting mechanism that will link the solid waste annual surveys local governments must complete for DCA, and results from the Away-From-Home recycling campaign.

These efforts are in line with a waste reduction goal that identifies specific targets to meet the general goal of reducing the amount of MSW disposed on a per capita basis. The waste disposal characterization study conducted in 2004 identified what Georgians were throwing away on an annual basis. Using this data, DCA was able to identify the Georgia industry demand for these materials and convened a Recycling Stakeholder Group with over 60 representatives, including representatives from businesses, local governments, and other state agencies to formulate a commodity based waste disposal reduction goal(s). Establishing a baseline goal was the first step to measuring waste reduction and recycling success. The group identified the following goals:

Per Capita MSW Disposal Rate/MSW Reduction Goal					
Commodity	Actual 2004 Lbs/person	Projected 2012 Lbs/person	Projected % 2012	Projected 2017 Lbs/person	Projected % 2017
Glass	0.153	0.140	8%	0.140	8%
Paper	1.181	1.000	15%	0.850	28%
Metal	0.228	0.198	13%	0.186	18%
Plastic	0.663	0.560	16%	0.530	20%
Total	2.23	1.99	11%	1.71	23%

In FY 2008, for the first time, Georgia saw a significant reduction in the per-capita disposal rate. The amount of waste sent to MSW landfills for every Georgia resident fell nearly half a pound, from 7.45 to 6.82 pounds per person, per day. While the economic recession has certainly had an impact upon disposal rates, it can also be fairly argued that the state's aggressive recycling programs and private-sector partnerships are beginning to have an effect. But to meet the goals outlined above, continued diligence, planning and funding will be needed.

Keep Georgia Beautiful continues to improve the litteritcostsyoudo.org website featuring community tools, resources, and other useful information to help

communities, law enforcement, and local officials eradicate litter in Georgia. Additionally, KGB sponsored four local Litter enforcement workshops in June of 2009 that were extremely well received and attended by more than 150 local law enforcement officials. These were held in the KAB communities of Bainbridge, Columbus, Cobb County and Barrow County. The workshops focus on the 2006 Comprehensive Litter Abatement Act and how to incorporate into law enforcement management practices.

Georgia had 11 communities that participated in 2008-09 National Cigarette Litter Prevention Program which KGB helped manage by following up on questions and concerns that the CLPP communities encountered. Results from post tests show an average of 20% reduction on cigarette butts in the area targeted for the Prevention campaign.

Our statewide litter reduction campaign, the Great American Cleanup occurs during the months of March April and May, 2009. Using many of the tools of the Litter It Costs You campaign, events were logged in all 159 Counties in Georgia for the first time in history! 1421 events were held in 737 communities with a total of 80,494 volunteers improving their communities. More than 1,000 **TONS** of trash were picked up from roadways, public spaces, waterways, and trails.

903,981 lbs of electronics were recycled. 2,018,336 lbs of Aluminum steel and 2,078,336 lbs of plastic bottles were recycled. 236,720 lbs of clothing were collected for reuse. 511 graffiti sites were removed and 327 illegal dumps were cleaned up. 863 environmental educational and general awareness events were held statewide with 243,013 people in attendance.

State-level litter education, eradication and enforcement efforts continued with FY 2008 SWTF dollars in FY 2009; these previous years' funds were used to purchase supplies for the workshops mentioned above. The workshops continued through FY 2009, and will be held in FY 2010 as well. Litter abatement and education, from the state level, will likely continue to consist chiefly of supporting local grass-roots efforts. None are more evident than the efforts of Georgia's network of 77 Keep America Beautiful affiliates. Through their volunteer mobilization efforts and business partnerships, these programs typically return \$11 to their communities for every dollar invested. State-level support ensures access to ongoing education, one of the pillars of litter abatement, as well as supplies and coordination assistance.

Budget cuts have restricted DCA's role in solid waste management assistance to local governments. DCA's review of solid waste plans, as required by the Act, has been streamlined to accommodate these changes. However, for the reasons outlined above and to implement the Act, the role of sound solid waste management planning cannot be overstated. Georgia has seen two legal cases with major implications for local governments and the quality of life of their citizens hinge on solid waste planning. Careful planning and resource

stewardship has been proven many times over to be far less expensive than cleanups held after-the-fact.

In addition to cost-savings for local governments, many of the policies that provide better stewardship of natural resources also benefit Georgia's economy. Georgia has among the strongest end-use markets for recyclable material in the nation; diverting their feedstocks of paper, plastics, metals, glass and compostable material out of the state's landfills creates far more jobs than continuing to bury them. As DCA has pointed out in recent years, Georgia collectively pays more than \$100 million annually to bury materials worth an estimated \$250 million to local industry. At the same time, Georgia markets for these materials must pay to import these same feedstocks from across North America; local collection would be far cheaper for them.

In many ways, improving and promoting Georgia's recycling and organics collection and processing infrastructure is basic economic development. For example:

Georgia's Paper Industry:

- Recycles almost 8% of all the paper consumed in the United States
- Includes 16 paper mills using recycled content, 9 relying exclusively on recycled fiber

Plastic Beverage Containers (PET)

- A third of all #1 plastic bottles recycled in N. America get turned into carpet in Georgia

Aluminum Recycling

- Novelis, one of the largest aluminum recyclers in the world, processes used beverage cans in Greensboro GA, with its North American headquarters located in Atlanta

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