RECYCLING IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

Recycling is an important part of our future and a key component to becoming a sustainable community. However, just like the trash we generate, there is a price tag to appropriately handle the recycled materials generated. In order for either of these services to be provided, a revenue source must be in place similar to all other user funded enterprises. In Government, this revenue comes primarily from two sources, taxes charged to all residents in the County regardless of whether or not they use the service, and direct fee charges to the users of a specific service such as solid waste disposal, water and wastewater, and recycling, all of which are in Enterprise Funds.

The recycling program has always been subsidized through solid waste fees, as is the yard waste program and discount rate permits. The fees being collected at the landfill through issuance of solid waste disposal permits were no longer sufficient in FY13 to continue to pay for the recycling services that were previously included, with the landfill losing tonnage and a substantial amount of revenue. Therefore, an additional revenue source had to be used to pay for the service. This meant the Commissioners had to choose from options of eliminating the recycling program, eliminating a program in the General Fund for tax dollars to pay for the expense, increasing the fees associated with trash disposal to pay for recycling (meaning that those who buy a permit still would subsidize the program for all who use the service), or develop a reasonable fee for actual users of the recycling program similar to fees charged by most municipalities providing the service. After reviewing the pros and cons of each alternative, the Commissioners decided that most fair and equitable method was to have the users of the service pay for the service provided. Remember, to simply include the fee as part of the solid waste disposal permit would require the permit fee to go up enough to fund the program for ALL that were using recycling dumpsters. Those individuals not purchasing the solid waste disposal permit many times describe the recycling program as being "free", when in fact it is simply paid for by others. In fact, the consensus of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee was that the fee for the solid waste disposal permit would need to be raised to $200 if other steps were not taken.

Therefore implementation of the permit fee for recycling is a result of the County Solid Waste budget being unable to continue to support an open recycling bin program, and a fee being instituted to recover associated costs from those actually using the recycling dumpsters. It should be again noted that a fee paid for by the citizens for recycling services is not an uncommon practice. Seven of the nine municipalities in the County charge their residents a recycling fee to provide a curbside service in their community. The remaining two

municipality's residents may contract with a recycling service in their municipality for curbside recycling, and many pay on their own for the convenience of curbside pickup at a rate higher than $36 per year.

In review of our recycling data from the Maryland Department of the Environment annual report over the past five years (2006 to 2010), the County has increased the recycling rate from 28.88% to 42.25%. The estimated recycling rate in Washington County for 2011 is 40% based on the reports received to date. However, we anticipate this number to increase and surpass 2010 as we receive additional reports from the commercial companies which provide recycling services in the County, and which have not reported to MDE as of this date. Final numbers from MDE for the 2011 annual report are expected this fall.

In addition, we expect that to continue to increase given that our recycling program yields the following statistics for 2011/2012:

Estimated number using drop box program in 2011 (based on EPA data)	-	5,086
Estimated tonnage from out-of-State/non-recyclables/commercial in open bins – 10%. Remaining 2011 users for comparison to permit program	-	**4,577**
Estimated number of new County curbside recycling accounts activated	-	2,800
Include Municipal households with *new* curbside programs – est. 50%	-	1,131
Note: many households were drop box users and now have curbside service Number of current 2012 drop box recycling permits sold as of 7/9/2012 (976 of which also purchased solid waste disposal permits)	-	<u>1,171</u>
Total estimated 2012 households recycling	-	**5,102**

While the number of permits may increase/municipal residents may decrease/etc, the total number of comparable tons valued for recycled material is anticipated to grow to exceed previous program expectations, and is already estimated to exceed previous amounts. Since the out-of-State/non-recyclables are now removed from the waste stream, and other programs are in place to facilitate recycling goals, the program will be cheaper overall for the County. It will also be cheaper for the individual recycler to actually purchase the recycling permit vs. the previous method of including the cost as part of the solid waste disposal permit, where some pay for all to have the privilege.

The County is also continuing to provide several non-fee residential recycling services. At all County drop off centers including the 40 West Landfill, residents may drop off small

rechargeable batteries, used motor oil, and used antifreeze.   In addition to these services, at the 40 West Landfill only, residents may drop off block Styrofoam, auto batteries, used vegetable oil, plastic grocery bags, and clean plastic wrap. The plastic grocery bags and clean plastic wrap recycling are a new addition to the program in 2012. Additionally, County staff has been working with many local agencies to assist them with finding new outlets for their recyclable materials and provide them resources for recyclable materials that they may be able to use. County staff will continue to expand these programs, review new recycling opportunities for residents, and provide educational programs to schools and through community events.

Residents can also go to the County website and look at the Solid Waste page for any new updates to our programs. Please visit us online at http://www.washco-md.net or call 240-313-2796 for information about programs provided in our County.

The County Commissioners and staff appreciate your concerns with the recycling program, appreciate you taking the time to provide us with your comments, and appreciate you taking the time to read ours.

Additional information:

- A list of the towns and how they offer recycling (i.e. part of tax base, trash rate, etc.)

    Hagerstown   – Line item on water bill
    Williamsport   – Included on water bill as trash rate
    Clear Spring   – Included in their taxes
    Smithsburg   – Included on water & sewer bill as trash rate
    Boonsboro   – Included in utility bill as trash rate
    Sharpsburg   – Residents can contract with Town's waste hauler at their own discretion
    Funkstown   – Residents can contract with Town's waste hauler at their own discretion
    Hancock   – Started curbside recycling July 1, 2012, billing through water/sewer bill
    Keedysville   – Recycling is included in general taxes along with trash pickup

- A list of known companies which are currently offering curbside recycling in the County:

    ARC of Washington County
    Republic Services (Allied Waste)
    Waste Management Inc.
    Apple Valley Waste
    Hoppers
    Paul Apple
    Sandy Goltz
    Peck's Refuse
    Shepherdhill
    Dippy's Trash Service
    Peake's Hauling
    Two Guys Hauling
    Abraham Boyd

- Additional available programs:

Phone Book recycling
Cardboard
Styrofoam
Vegetable oil recycling
Motor oil/antifreeze
Plastic bag & shrink wrap recycling
Magazines
Fluorescent tubes
Propane tank options
Battery options
Scrap metal