Maine State Planning Office
Waste Management & Recycling Program
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July 2008

WASTE BYTES!

Newsletter of the Maine State Planning Office, Waste Management and Recycling Program

Recycling Surges in Southern Maine

Recycling in Maine received quite a publicity boost recently, as the Portland Press Herald ran a front page article on May 31st detailing the explosion in recycling occurring in eco-maine communities in southern Maine.

eco-maine, a waste management company that is owned by 21 southern Maine communities, introduced a single sort recycling system last May that is believed to be largely responsible for the dramatic increase in recycling rates. As of April, the average eco-maine town was recycling 21% waste more than the previous year. Towns like Scarborough and Hollis that also introduced curbside recycling in the past year have seen much greater increases, with their recycling volumes up 62.7 and 155%, respectively.

Last year, eco-maine purchased state of the art machinery that automatically sorts recyclables into their various groups through the use of optical sorters, magnets, and other screen separators. This technology enabled the shift to single sort recycling, which allows businesses and residents to place all their recyclable materials in one bin, greatly improving the convenience of recycling.

According to the Press Herald, the increase in recycling is anticipated to produce a surplus of close to one million dollars for the year for ecomaine, with individual municipalities saving thousands on trash disposal fees as well.

Given the current economic slowdown and high gas prices, it is more important than ever to recycle, as the significant savings realized by towns and businesses in southern Maine illustrate. For towns that have curbside recycling, a single sort system can save money by significantly reducing the time it takes to complete an average pickup route, thereby lowering the amount of fuel and work time needed. On top of that, for both curbside and drop-off programs, increased recycling rates mean that towns pay less money to transport and dispose of trash.

eco-maine's recent success should bring home to Mainers the fact that recycling is not only environmentally beneficial, but economically beneficial as well. Single sort or not, increasing recycling will help towns and businesses save money on fuel and disposal expenses at a time when it is sorely needed.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Welcome!

The Waste Management and Recycling Program would like to welcome each and everyone interested in or directly involved in the reduction of Maine's Waste Stream – be it their own personal waste stream, their community efforts, their regional successes, or the guidance of the State.

In the State Planning Office, just as in the entire state, there have been changes in the players, as well as the programs. The State Planning Office's Waste Management and Recycling Program is still administered by George MacDonald.

The Senior Planner on the Team is Sam Morris, who at one time or another, has offered assistance with every aspect of the program from policy to the last official dumpster dive. Rhonda Cartlidge is still with us with the infamous voice of the official program reception. Jetta Antonakos has survived the first year in her Planner position. Bruce White focuses his energy on overseeing the Maine Recycles Week program and is gearing up for this year's event, which is the 10th Anniversary of Maine Recycles Week. We are located on the 3rd floor of the State Planning Office, at 184 State Street in Augusta. Should you be in the area, stop by and visit, share and take advantage of the various publications and posters we have on hand.

The team has always been fortunate with college interns and this year is no exception. Nick Miller, who lives in Edgecomb and will be a senior this fall at Wesleyan University in Connecticut has joined us for 12 weeks to exercise his writing skills and investigate the ins-and-out of state government.

With the major work of reports and plans, Jody Harris of the Director's Team still offers her assistance (who remembers when she served as acting director of the Maine Waste Management Agency when it was disbanded and in part brought to the SPO?) By the way Hank looks good and relaxed, he seems to have settled into his life of retirement at the Vaughan Family Foundation properties in Hallowell. Sam and Rhonda are less relaxed as they have risen to the challenge of bringing the 2007 data together and getting that information out to the communities.

What's in a Name?

When the Waste Management and Recycling Team first thought about giving up the paper copy of the "Recycle This! Newsletter" and going electronic, it was quickly recognized that a new title would be needed. After all, recycling an electronic copy is a bit of a misnomer, despite the ubiquitous "recycling bins" on Microsoft Windows desktops.

In fact, the whole beauty of an electronic version is that it doesn't need to be recycled—there is simply no waste to dispose of in the first place. New titles that were considered early on included "Forward This Newsletter" and "Recycling Bytes."

In the end, however, "Waste Bytes!" was deemed more appropriate since we didn't want our audience to get the idea that we think recycling "bites."

That being said, we have not yet fully settled on this title, so please get back to us with feedback. Your input is much appreciated!

As a final opening note, we encourage our readers to forward this to anyone you know who might be interested, and we also encourage libraries to add this to their e-mail newsletter lists.

Recycling the Old Cony High

Maine's Capital City of Augusta is one of the few cities or towns in the state that is divided by a river. There are times when topics or issues may span the banks, while at other times the Kennebec may appear to be more like a barrier or wall.

When a landmark is endangered, it is hard to see anything positive in planning the decisions related to the structure. It is hard at times to even imagine landmarks, so prominent in a community, coming down. At first, the proposed demolition of the abandoned Cony High School in Augusta to make room for a new Hannaford grocery store brought little attention. Then, after the realization that change would happen, Hannaford's stated that their goal was to recycle 99% of the demolition debris that would be generated by removing the majority of the former Cony High School.

Cony High School was thought of as one of the few flatiron buildings in Maine. The building was constructed in 1880 with additions built in 1930 and 1965. In planning the demolition for the new supermarket, priorities could easily be identified by the sections. When the public became involved, the gym of Cony was given special attention for reuse in the community. The other additions were connected by a single enclosed and elevated walkway with utility conduits suspended beneath. Following many hearings and even a court challenge, the walkway was cut like a ribbon and demolition soon began.

The initial recycling effort was deceptive. Perhaps because of the delays due to hearings and concerns of the neighbors, a.k.a., Cony or ChizzerWhizzel Alum, it was hard to see that anything was happening at all. There was word of one company working on the project and this may have been the early removal of wire, vents, lockers and furniture. When the actual deconstruction began it was again discrete and yet very impressive. First the softball field and dugouts were taken out to leave open space in the rear. This allowed for the buildings to be scooped out from the back with the exposed walls serving as a barrier and buffer to the public. ENVIRON was subcontracted by Sergeant Construction for the big work.

Like all successful recycling projects, work was characterized by a very methodical and organized process; in this case, three or four excavators, materials handlers and shovels. An excavator would take a chunk out of the

building and drop it close by. As the scoops of materials were passed from shovel to claw and finally to a large shear, it became recognizable that like piles of materials were forming with the help of manual labor.

The complete project was a pleasure to watch. The contractors dampened the debris, reducing dust, by using misting machines and water trucks. From our conversation with Megan Halsted of Hannaford, it was clear there was excitement in achieving a recycling level of approximately 95% of materials being recycled. We salute Hannaford as well for doing their part in going for the GREEN.

C&D Recycling for Beginners

The recent demolition of the old Cony High School in Augusta and Hannaford's associated pledge to recycle 99% of materials generated in the process have brought the issue of construction and demolition (C&D) recycling to the fore in Maine.

C&D debris, which includes all waste produced in the construction, demolition, or renovation of buildings and infrastructure, is an important but often overlooked source of recyclable materials. According to EPA estimates, the vast majority of C&D debris falls into three main categories: concrete and mixed rubble (40-50%), wood (20-30%), and drywall (5-15%).

Fortunately, all of these materials can be recycled and put to good use. Concrete debris can be recycled into new concrete or aggregate materials and gravel, while recycled wood can be used to create plastic-wood composite products, mulch, and can be used in new construction projects or if clean, processed into a fuel for biomass boilers.

Although somewhat more difficult to recycle than concrete and wood, there is an increasing realization that recycling drywall can also be worthwhile. Gypsum, which is by far the largest component in drywall, can be recycled and used to create new drywall, cement, and fertilizer. While the gypsum first must be separated from the rest of the drywall, this is certainly preferable to simply landfilling the whole substance as waste.

Despite the moniker "construction and demolition" materials, debris from new construction actually constitutes the smallest portion of the C&D waste stream, with debris from renovation projects producing far greater quantities. According to the EPA, demolition produces close to 50% of C&D debris, with renovation producing more than 40%, and new construction therefore producing at most 10% of C&D waste. Whether building a new house, knocking down an old one, or renovating one that already exists, there are ample opportunities to recycle.

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Many transfer stations in Maine accept C&D debris, so recycling these materials is often convenient. Not only does recycling C&D debris save the energy and resources needed to produce new materials, it also has the potential to save individuals or businesses money by avoiding the costs of disposal in a landfill.

If recycling C&D debris is not possible in your town, consider reusing the materials personally or selling the materials to a private salvage company. Remember, reuse of materials is always preferable to recycling since it avoids the manufacturing costs needed to create a new product. As with all recyclable materials, the three 'R's apply: first reduce, then reuse, then recycle.

Of course, where further reducing or reusing is not possible, recycling is by far the best option. Whether C&D debris or newspapers and milk jugs, be sure to recycle your unwanted waste. By doing so, you are not only helping the environment, you are also helping yourself by providing affordable resources that become raw materials that are then turned into products we all use and enjoy.

MAINE ME RECYCLES