

01 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this overview is to briefly outline the content of the State Guide Plan Element: *Solid Waste 2038*. For the full plan please see:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/statewideplanning/land/solidwaste.php>

Section 23-19-11(6) of the General Laws calls for adoption of a comprehensive solid waste management plan containing the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation's (RIRRC) Statewide Resource Recovery System Development Plan. The original solid waste management plan was first adopted by the State Planning Council, as Element 171 of the State Guide Plan, on November 14, 1996. It was then updated in 2007. **This plan updates and replaces the 2007 plan and was adopted by State Planning Council on May 14, 2015.**

The Plan was developed with guidance from an advisory committee of stakeholders. This plan ensures that Rhode Island has a comprehensive and coordinated plan to provide cost effective and environmentally compliant waste management and recycling services for residents, businesses, and municipalities. It serves as the long-range policy and program guidance document for RIRRC and other State agencies. It functions as the Statewide Resource Recovery System Development Plan containing 20-year projections of waste generation, recycling, and disposal compared with capacity. It guides the activities of the Department of Environmental Management and serves as the State Solid Waste Management Plan as required by the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, as amended. It serves as the Solid Waste Management Element of the State Guide Plan that in turn guides municipal comprehensive community plans.

02 VISION STATEMENT:

In 2038, responsibility for sound solid waste management is shared. We all understand that each of us has a role to play. We have made strides in reducing the amount of waste each of us generates as individuals, we have implemented statewide Pay As You Throw, and every community uses automated collections with 95-gallon carts for recyclables for curb side collections. Our landfill is nearing closure and our recycling facility is at the end of its useful life. The next stage of sustainable waste management is upon us, and difficult decisions must be made.

To be truly sustainable, RI must invest in full-scale residential composting facilities. We must make organics, management a top statewide priority. We must continue to invest in manufacturing processes that use recyclables as feedstock and provide long-term, high-quality jobs. We must implement the best state of the art technologies and public policy practice to maximize the remaining years of the central landfill, increase the remaining usefulness of the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF), and begin the transition to the solid waste management practices that will take the State into the 22nd century.

03 ISSUES ADDRESSED

This Plan addresses 3 strategic issues in priority order:

- Issue 1: How should the system be funded?
- Issue 2: What new programs are needed to increase landfill life?
- Issue 3: What is the best post-Central Landfill disposal option?

Issue #1 Funding: How should the system be funded and what is the structure to set pricing?

This Plan recommends several options to stabilize municipal pricing for the long-term management of Rhode Island's solid waste. One thing is clear-the municipal tip fee must increase. This plan recommends increasing the rate to match the regional (New England) market. This level of increase would fund disposal operations, incentivize more recycling, and allow investment in programs to reduce sold waste. It would bring financial stability to the Corporation for the short- to medium-term, and potentially reduce solid waste volumes, possibly extending landfill life for five years. Municipalities would have the ability to determine at the local level how to best manage the fee increase. To some, this may mean increasing taxes. Others may choose to absorb the increase by decreasing service. Some may implement a local version of Pay as You Throw (PAYT) or implement fees for hard-to-handle items like appliances or furniture. All will need to manage the additional costs in a way that is right for their community. A different option to consider may be a statewide PAYT program, to fund Rhode Island's solid waste disposal system. PAYT is a best industry practice for paying for household waste disposal costs, and is used extensively through the US with outstanding results in reducing solid waste, increasing recycling, and funding operations and programs. Essentially, the waste generator (household) pays directly for the trash they produce through the purchase and use of program specific trash bags. The fewer bags that are used, the less they pay, just as with other utilities. This option could provide the longest extension of landfill life - approximately 15 years – and the longest financial stability for the Corporation.

Issue #2 New Programs: What is the overall strategy to further reduce solid waste and extend the life of the Landfill?

In order to achieve meaningful increases in landfill life, new programs would need to be funded and implemented as soon as possible. Landfill capacity is finite, and like time, once used is lost. Two programs, PAYT and centralizing responsibility for all municipal recycling collection services with RIRRC, are unique opportunities for a small state like Rhode Island. Centralized administration of PAYT would facilitate standardization of best industry practices, including the use of uniform large carts for recycling, every other week collection of recyclables, and the opportunity to use more sophisticated collection data to improve effectiveness and enforcement. If these new programs are implemented and combined with existing ones, Rhode Island would instantly become a national leader in municipal recycling systems and services. The commercial Sector represents 450,000 tons annually or 60% of the solid waste volume disposed at RIRRC.

In addition to the above key programs and with the funding solution in place, a menu of existing and new recycling programs should be implemented, especially programs that target underperforming municipalities and schools, expand public outreach using social media, support food waste diversion efforts, and promote the expansion of Producer Responsibility programs. All of these programs will further reduce solid waste disposed and help extend landfill life.

Issue #3 What Happens when the Central Landfill closes in 2038?

Very soon, Rhode Island will need to decide the State's best disposal option to replace the Central Landfill. The recommendation for the new disposal system will be included in the next update of this Plan. If the recommended action requires construction of a processing facility, we should expect 5 – 10 years will be needed for permitting and construction. That brings the expected planning timeline to 10 - 15 years, making it 2025 at the earliest before RI sees the new disposal option or options fully functional. It will be critical to have some modest overlap of systems, so that there is continuity of service.

04 GOALS

The goals of the Plan resulted from an evaluation of issues by the Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee. Responsibility for addressing these issues is shared by RIRRC, DEM, Public Works Departments, and others. Pertinent information from various stakeholders regarding each of these sectors was brought to bear in defining the issues, developing goals, and recommending the strategies that comprise the Implementation Matrix. Issues from the previous SGP Element adopted in 2007 were reviewed and updated, consolidated, or removed – depending upon whether they were a continuing concern or had been acted upon. Specific goals and strategies were proposed to implement the Plan as developed by the Advisory Committee, recommended by the Technical Committee and were finally approved by the State Planning Council. This plan describes the path to the 22nd century, using the following goals:

Goal 1: Adopt stable, long-term funding mechanisms that provide sufficient revenue for state, regional, and local programs while providing incentives for increased waste reduction and diversion.

Goal 2: Reduce the amount of Rhode Island generated solid waste requiring disposal through increased source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting.

Goal 3: Manage the solid waste that ultimately must be disposed in an efficient, equitable, safe and environmentally protective manner, consistent with the statutory solid waste hierarchy.

Goal 4: Communicate proactively plan priorities and processes to municipal officials and planners for incorporation into local guidance documents.

Goal 5: Identify the research and analysis that should be undertaken over the near term (3 years) in order to make informed decisions on the facilities and waste management strategies that will serve Rhode Island leading up to and beyond the final closing of the Johnston Landfill.

05 STRATEGIES: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

This Plan recommends the continuation, with some expansion, of existing efforts to address the immediate needs of reducing the amount of solid waste landfilled in Rhode Island. To achieve those goals, the Plan proposes:

First, that RIRRC recommends a new municipal tipping fee of \$65 per ton of disposed waste for household managed refuse in order to normalize disposal fees to the regional average, and adequately fund operations and programs for the near future. This new fee would take effect July 1, 2017.

Second, RIRRC should offer municipalities the option of a centrally managed statewide PAYT system for household managed refuse in order to address both the need to incent residential waste reduction and to fund the system long-term. This option would allow municipalities to avoid the \$65/ton tip fee for bagged trash, and could provide an “excess revenue rebate” to the participating municipalities. .

In terms of the long-range system of facilities for reducing and managing wastes, this Plan calls for significant research and analysis of alternatives to be undertaken in the next four

years. The goal of this work is to provide the information needed so that the next update of this Plan can recommend the most appropriate path for managing solid wastes once the existing landfill is exhausted. The specific recommendations, schedule, target dates, and responsible parties are contained in the Implementation Matrix. The four action types are:

- Program (P)
- Study (S)
- Regulation (R), and
- Legislation (L)

Responsible parties are:

- RIRRC – Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation
- DEM – Department of Environmental Management
- DOP – Division of Planning
- MUNI – Municipalities

For more information on the purpose of State Guide Plan Elements in general and to see the rest of the ***State Guide Plan Overview*** see:

<http://www.planning.ri.gov/planning/overview/index.php>