

## Tompkins County Solid Waste Management Plan Executive Summary

Tompkins County has prepared a comprehensive, twenty-year Solid Waste Management Plan to comply with the requirements of the Solid Waste Management Act of 1988, as administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

The overall intent of the Solid Waste Management Plan is to divert waste from disposal through waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting, and household hazardous waste management.

Among other topics, the Plan includes the following:

- a description of past and current waste handling practices
- a comparison of alternative technologies available for managing waste
- an assessment of economic and environmental impacts
- an evaluation of institutional and financial arrangements for implementing solid waste technologies; and
- program recommendations for comprehensive integrated solid waste management.

Tompkins County has identified four major goals in its integrated solid waste management plan:

- To provide an environmentally sound, cost-effective disposal strategy for all non-recyclable waste over the 20-year planning period.
- To develop a waste reduction program which will result in a 10 percent waste reduction by 1997, per state guidelines
- To meet or exceed the 40 percent Statewide recycling goal by 1997.
- To extend the life of products and materials through maximizing opportunities for reuse in Tompkins County.

## Solid Waste Management Division Mission Statement

To manage the solid waste in Tompkins County in a manner that is environmentally sound, cost-effective, socially responsible and safe. This will be accomplished through coordinated administrative, operational and educational programs in reduction, reuse, recycling, composting and disposal.

The Solid Waste Management Plan details the following strategies for an integrated waste management system:

### **Waste Reduction:**

Tompkins County plans to encourage the reduction of the volume and toxicity of waste generated within its borders through a combination of strategies, including financial incentives, public education, and regulations. Specifically, waste reduction programs will include: point-of-purchase consumer outreach campaigns; quantity-based pricing for waste disposal; source reduction assistance for residential and commercial generators; procurement policies that give preference to the purchase of recycled goods; as well as, provision of composting assistance.

### **Reuse or Exchange:**

The county plans to encourage the reuse or using up of materials by educating the public about existing repair and reuse opportunities, and by assisting residents that have leftover or unwanted goods to find potential users, through a waste exchange program. The county also plans to evaluate options for establishing a reuse center.

With the goal of keeping valuable resources out of the waste stream, three exchange, reuse, or use-up alternatives are identified in the plan. These include:

- Public education about existing reuse efforts: provision of information on the many options that currently exist in the county for exchange of reusable goods.
- County-facilitated waste exchange: provision of a telephone-based exchange service that matches people that have leftovers, with potential users.
- An exchange facility, or reuse center, which provides a site to which goods may be brought and from which interested parties may obtain needed items.

**Recycling:**

Tompkins County's recycling program includes residential curbside collection, drop-off centers, and commercial recycling assistance.

The planned Recycling and Solid Waste Center will combine recycling and waste transfer operations under one roof. Recyclable materials will be sorted and processed prior to marketing, in accordance with relevant specifications. Remaining waste will be hauled to a permitted landfill. Once constructed, the plant will enable the efficient management of a maximum of 70,000 tons of material per year. The anticipated life span of this facility is a minimum of 20 years. The County has a five-year contract with a private company, New England CRInc to build and operate the facility.

The Recycling and Solid Waste Center is also designed to accept and process additional materials in the future, as end-markets become available. Potentially recyclable items that will be considered include: button batteries, pallets, used motor oil, and various plastics, such as polystyrene (PS), low density polyethylene (LDPE), and polypropylene (PP).

**The following materials may be handled at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center:**

- Aluminum cans, food containers and foil
- Batteries (lead-acid)
- Construction and demolition waste
- Corrugated cardboard
- Ferrous and non-ferrous scrap metal
- Glass food and beverage containers
- Newspaper
- Paper (high-grade and mixed)
- Paperboard (such as cereal and cracker boxes)
- Plastic Containers
- Telephone books
- Tin cans
- White goods (appliances)
- Yard waste

**Organic Waste Composting:**

Composting is the principle method for managing the organic portion of the County's waste stream. While the County currently operates an interim composting facility that opened in 1992, a permanent composting facility will be capable of processing all of the sewage sludge generated in Tompkins County, along with yard waste, food waste, clean wood, and some paper waste.

The preferred technologies being assessed for handling various organic components of the waste stream are backyard (residential) composting and large scale composting methods, such as windrow and in-vessel systems. Another important part of organic waste management will include research conducted to determine the most cost effective uses and markets for compost.

### **Household Hazardous Waste Management:**

Tompkins County has developed a practical household hazardous waste management program that encourages reduction in the volume and toxicity of hazardous materials that are generated by residents and businesses. The program promotes the following practices: the use of alternatives to hazardous products; decreased use and disposal; proper storage; using up or exchanging good-quality, legal materials; and appropriate disposal, or recycling of hazardous wastes.

The County is also committed to offering its residents a permanent, continuous management option for household hazardous waste. A permanent Household Hazardous Waste Center has been proposed at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center site to enable proper management of hazardous materials, such as paint, pesticides, used motor oil, solvents, and cleaning agents. This facility will serve only as a transfer station at which materials will be received, sorted, packed and temporarily stored, until they are transported by a licensed contractor to a permitted disposal site. The facility may be operated by the same or different operator as the Recycling and Solid Waste Center.

### **Disposal:**

Tompkins County has spent considerable time, resources, and money assessing cost-effective and environmentally appropriate solid waste disposal options. After a thorough evaluation of alternatives for long-term solid waste disposal, the County has decided to transport and dispose waste outside of County borders from 1994 to 1999. While the County has operated its own landfill for more than twenty years, developing the DR-7 landfill was deemed too costly at this time. The County has been able to increase public awareness of the true costs of disposal and the benefits of waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting through pay-as-you-go fees and new landfilling permits.

### **Financing and Legal Considerations In Waste Management:**

County coordination of solid waste management ensures the continuous, cost-effective, safe, and legal provision of facilities and programs needed by County residents and businesses, while guaranteeing compliance with state mandated reduction and recycling goals. Should the County decide to continue

to pursue private sector contracts for services, either the bidding process or a request for proposal procedure will be used.

The County is committed to providing an integrated solid waste management system at a reasonable cost. This commitment is embodied in a basic financing system that relies on full-cost pricing for disposal services and recycling operations. Tompkins County has chosen to use a combination of fee-for-service, tipping fees and annual fees. The County will also continue consideration of alternate methods for funding recycling costs.

The County currently has several laws and/or regulations in place for managing solid waste, including illegal dumping controls, flow control of solid waste, required hauler licensing, and mandatory source separation of recyclables.