

# INTRODUCTION

“The developed world continues to pollute the environment and add to the depletion of the world’s resources by burning and burying resources as waste. Furthermore, inefficient and improper methods of managing solid and hazardous waste result in scenic blights, hazards to public health, cause pollution of air and water resources, increase the numbers of rodents and vectors of disease, have an adverse affect on land values, create public nuisances, and otherwise interfere with proper community life and development.”

---State of Vermont, Act 78.  
An Act Relating to Solid Waste

## CVSWMD PHILOSOPHY

Consideration and planning for solid waste management, and especially diversion and disposal, need only occur to the extent that we (meaning all those living and working in the CVSWMD communities) generate waste. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the average American’s consumerism results in the generation of approximately 4.6 pounds of waste material per person, per day<sup>1</sup>. Using population data from 1999, the 58,798 people who lived in our communities generate 49,361 tons of garbage each year.

We do not know for certain what the *actual* generation rate is for CVSWMD communities. We do, however, know that 37,731 tons of garbage - or 3.5 pounds per person - were landfilled from our cities and towns between July 1, 1999 and June 30, 2000. This total reflects the amount left after all efforts in our region to reduce waste, reuse items and divert materials for other beneficial uses through redemption, recycling, and composting. This would suggest that we are

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<sup>1</sup> Generation rate from EPA information for 1999.

at or near a 25% diversion rate, if we compared our actual tonnage to the total arrived at by using the EPA's generation rate. By the year 2005, the State of Vermont wants 50% of our waste to be diverted from landfill. This means that this plan must design a system for solid waste management in our region that can realistically double the current effort being expended by our citizens and businesses.

We would suggest, however, that the State's goal, and the assumptions that contribute to the thought process resulting in the establishment of all of the state's solid waste management goals, pre-supposes significant generation of waste. Disposal issues, therefore, drive the solid waste strategy. This is why so much time and effort are expended to analyze, question and manage the amount of waste that is being produced. Issues such as disposal capacity, cost to dispose, methods for storing and trucking solid and hazardous waste, and consideration of items to ban from land disposal begin to drive all other actions. It is in this realm that diversion programs and efforts take precedence. Because we are focused on managing *waste* instead of managing *resources*, diversion attracts our attention and garners the most effort, despite a waste management hierarchy that includes other options and elevates waste reduction and reuse higher in its list of priorities.

We respectively take the position that diversion is not the cure for disposal concerns - it is only a treatment for the symptoms of consumerism. What is needed instead is a dramatic shift in emphasis to waste prevention and resource management. Success in this area will proportionately reduce our need to manage the diversion and disposal of waste. The time, effort, money and resources presently devoted to all the tasks associated with moving discarded materials from the generator to some end use or holding area that must then also be managed in perpetuity is diminished or even perhaps eliminated. The environmental risks and impacts that are considered, legislated, managed, and monitored are also diminished or eliminated. The emphasis shifts dramatically from the somewhat negative undertaking of dealing with society's ever-increasing pile of unwanted items to the pro-active and rewarding effort of producing less environmental and personal harm.

The CVSWMD does not wish to be at odds with the State of Vermont in philosophy or practice. However, at this juncture and point in our development, it seems logical to assume a different management posture. We wish to set as our standard goals of eliminating wastefulness and managing resources in lieu of managing the habitual discards of social behavior - namely consumerism and reliance on chemical products - that we deem to be at odds with the health and well being of our communities.

Recognizing this, the CVSWMD intends to follow in the footsteps of those progressive communities and regions elsewhere in the United States that are diminishing their waste by managing according to a *zero waste philosophy*. The first Zero Waste Plan was created in 1992 by the Del Norte Solid Waste Management Authority located in Crescent City, California. This term – *zero waste philosophy* – refers to a shift in the way we think about what we typically discard as waste from that of being useless to seeing them as a resource for some other enterprise. This transition - from accepting the inevitability of trash to that of viewing discarded material, as a resource that has value and should be managed - will require a transition for board, staff and member communities. While on the surface this change might appear to be a simple shift of perspective, it will require several years of adjustment. The comprehensive nature of its implications will require examination and alterations in more than just mental attitude. We expect, based upon other community efforts of this type, that our own endeavors in policies and practices in programming, funding, infrastructure, legislation, enforcement and other critical areas will be dramatically altered.

**From the Del Norte Zero Waste Plan -**

*What then, does Zero Waste mean? In nature, Zero Waste is just the way things work. In a functioning ecosystem, the wastes of one set of creatures are the food or habitat for others. Zero Waste is an approach which applies and integrates the lessons from natural systems, industrial ecology, pollution prevention...into a municipal approach towards managing discards.*

**Fig. 1**

Once a Zero Waste approach is embraced and integrated into our organization, we expect our Solid Waste Implementation Plan to change significantly. Meanwhile, the organization will accept diversion and disposal as necessary components of solid waste planning. In this Plan, we will take the first step towards zero waste by emphasizing all other management options over those of diversion and especially disposal. The results are reflected in the document that follows.

## **WHY PLAN?**

Vermont law places responsibility for the management of solid waste clearly on municipalities and dictates the requirement for solid waste planning.

**24 V.S.A. 2202a Sec.3 subsection (c)(1) states:**...each municipality, as defined in 24 V.S.A. 4303(4), shall join or participate in a solid waste management district organized pursuant to 24 V.S.A. chapter 121...or shall join a regional planning commission or participate in a regional planning commission's planning effort for purposes of solid waste planning.

Fig. 2

Municipalities may act independently, may participate in solid waste districts, or may join in partnership with other municipalities through inter-local agreements to meet these requirements.

Act 78 requires the state of Vermont to develop and maintain a solid waste plan. The State's first Plan was published in 1989. A Revised Version was issued in draft in January 2001, and became effective November 1, 2001. The State Solid Waste Plan guides municipal solid waste planning, establishing the benchmarks and goals that municipalities (independently or cooperatively) must achieve in 10-year cycles.

By law, municipalities need to adopt solid waste implementation plans conforming with the State Plan. Therefore, the revision of the state plan carries with it an obligation that all municipal or district plans be revised in order to remain consistent. An 18-month period beginning November 1, 2001 and ending May 1, 2003 is the timeframe allowed for this process. Our Plan must describe how we will meet the priorities of Title 10 V.S.A. Section 6604(a)(1). These are clearly identified in the State Plan, in Section 2: Pages 38 – 42.

Solid waste district plans must also meet a statutory requirement to be in conformance with local and regional plans. The CVSWMD periodically requests Board Supervisors review their local plans for consistency and to report to the District any revisions being made to local plans so that we may maintain conformance. Likewise, we make contact with and review the local plans of member communities whenever we are considering amendments to or revising the District Plan. Currently, the District's Zero Waste philosophy may not be in conformance with Section 7 (Utilities and Facilities) of the Orange Town Plan, and the District is committed to working with that community to revise the local plan to achieve conformance.

## **DEVELOPING THE PLAN**

The following describes key components of the process employed to arrive at this plan.

- The CVSWMD executive director reviewed all relevant guidance documents and submitted a Plan outline to the CVSWMD Executive Board that was accepted as the guide for completing work on this document.
- A skilled facilitator was hired to assist the CVSWMD board of supervisors (board) and staff in key deliberations throughout the process. During the process, other consultants and researchers were hired to assist staff and the board with critical or technical issues.
- A procedure whereby staff met in mini-retreats on key issues and then generated information for the board to consider was employed. This allowed our organization to move through many policy issues without necessitating a difficult schedule of extra meetings for our volunteer board members. It also offered interested parties outside our organization an opportunity to review materials prior to their being discussed in open meetings. Public comment could then be offered relevant to the topic being discussed.
- The board and staff met in two half-day retreats to review the Mission Statement and Guiding Principles for the organization. These two products guide staff work. The discussions at the retreats offered staff insight into board ideas, intentions and vision for where our organization should go.
- June through December 2002 the board received draft versions of critical components and/or entire chapters of the Plan. Comments by the public and the board were integrated into the final draft.
- An aggressive public participation plan was created and presented to the board. The District sought to identify as many occasions and methods for participation as possible.
- Six official public hearings on the completed draft Plan are part of the review process.
- The board will review the Responsiveness Summary prior to deciding on final changes to the Plan document.
- The adopted Plan is to be submitted to the Agency of Natural Resources in May 2003.

Member communities of the CVSWMD belong to three different regional planning organizations.

<p>The following listing shows each of our member communities Planning Commission affiliations.</p>
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Fig. 3

Central Vermont Regional Planning District	Northeastern Vermont Development Association Regional Planning District	Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission
Barre City	Hardwick	Bradford
Barre Town	Walden	Chelsea
Berlin		Strafford
Cabot		Tunbridge
Calais		
E. Montpelier		
Marshfield		
Middlesex		
Montpelier		
Northfield		
Orange		
Plainfield		
Roxbury		
Washington		
Williamstown		
Woodbury		

**PLAN ADOPTION & IMPLEMENTATION**

At least six public hearings will be held throughout the District to solicit comments on the draft Plan. (See the detailed Public Participation Plan in the next section for a description of the many opportunities for input in addition to these public hearings.) The director and staff will prepare a Responsiveness Summary; this is a document in which all comments offered will be identified and options for District action indicated. (The Responsiveness Summary is included in the Appendix of this document, Item # 2.) The board of supervisors will review this information and, in a regular board meeting, discuss and decide upon revisions (if any) to the draft Plan. The board must adopt the Solid Waste Implementation Plan by a formal vote. This adopted version will be sent to the State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources, Solid Waste Division for review, comment and approval. ANR must receive our Plan for review by May 1, 2003. There is no defined time period for their review. It is possible that ANR may ask the District to provide additional information and/or clarify portions of our Plan. Any substantive changes to the formally adopted Plan will necessitate an opportunity for public input and a board vote to authorize the changes.

How will this Plan remain relevant in a quickly changing industry, economy and region? The CVSWMD maintains ongoing planning and evaluation of all endeavors through its Program Oversight Committee – a standing committee of the board. Further, annual review of a budget and workplan allows the board of supervisors to not only look at the cost of programming, but to question need and viability.

Staff, working in conjunction with the members of the Program Oversight Committee, develop five-year programmatic plans. This work is reported to the full board at each meeting of the board of supervisors so that input and deliberation may occur throughout the process, and not just at the presentation of a programmatic plan. These five-year program plans contain detailed descriptions of each District undertaking, including goal statements, identification of targeted audiences, estimated start-up and maintenance budgets, timeframe for initiation and anticipated duration of programming, and a clear definition of how the program will be evaluated. Since all work on this supplementary planning document is accomplished in open sessions of committees and the board, there are ongoing opportunities for public input. Program initiatives are derived from the broad philosophies and goals set out in our Solid Waste Implementation Plan.

The Financial Oversight Committee works with staff to produce a budget each year. This budget is created to support a particular year in the five-year programmatic plan. It includes revisions to any programming that may come as a result of evaluations, new developments or unforeseen issues that pre-empt our small staff's ability to devote time to a particular program. Within this process, another group of board members have the opportunity to scrutinize the workplan for relevancy, efficiency and effectiveness in relationship to the amount of money and staff time being allocated to each. Issues and questions that may arise in regard to these aspects of our work can be brought to the board during the budget deliberations and resolved. And, the presentation of a final budget affords one more opportunity for this type of scrutiny.

In addition, our communities are mailed a draft budget and workplan each year no later than December 15. Selectboards, board supervisors and town clerks receive this document. As with all our meetings, the budget process is open to public participation.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Thomas Jefferson once said, "*The will of the people is the only legitimate foundation of any government, and to protect its free expression should be our first objective.*"

The CVSWMD is a government entity, and recognizes that the only way it can represent its member communities is to seek the input of the people who comprise our cities and towns. This Plan, District policies, practices and initiatives must all be derived from listening to and taking into consideration the will of the people in our region, and blending that with the board and staff expertise and knowledge of solid waste issues, requirements deliberations and the decision-making process.

Since the Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) expresses the District's vision for this region and will guide all solid waste activity for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that this input is actively sought throughout the creation and honing of this Plan. As a result, the District commits to creating the following goals and opportunities for public participation in our planning process.

### **GOALS**

- 1) Encourage a respectful atmosphere in which differing opinions may be expressed and honestly considered.
- 2) Invite expert resources to engage in brainstorming and dialogue with staff and/or board members on critical issues and specific program areas prior to drafting sections of the plan.
- 3) Create ongoing opportunities for public comment during the planning process, not just at the point of draft document review.
- 4) Ensure an opportunity for public review of every aspect of this Plan prior to its submittal to the state.

### **THE PROCESS**

#### **RESPECTING DIFFERENT OPINIONS**

- SWIP Meetings will be widely publicized through a variety of means in order to attract diverse audiences and interests.
- All meetings of the District Board will include an opportunity for public comment on the SWIP in order that board supervisors may hear and question those expressing opinions and perspectives.

- Individuals chairing District meetings will follow the District rules for public participation, providing a process that allows as many individuals to speak as possible within the set amount of time and ensures that each person speaking is able to be heard and treated fairly regardless of their opinion or perspective. (A copy of these rules is available upon request from the District and is found in the Appendix to this Plan).
- When significant opposition is voiced to a District position, the District will consider inviting those who can best represent this perspective to discuss the matter in detail with members of our organization. The purpose will be to better understand the reasons for the difference and to ask whether the District's position is in the region's best interest.
- All viable input will be documented. It will be noted in the Plan and/or in the responsiveness summary<sup>1</sup> to the draft Plan with a clear indication of how the District responded.

#### INVITE EXPERT RESOURCES TO ENGAGE IN BRAINSTORMING AND DIALOGUE

- When possible, and prior to drafting different sections of the plan, the District will invite or engage expert resources in dialogue with the staff and board so that program considerations may be broadened.
- If the District does not have experience in a given area or with a particular issue, staff will seek out consultants and/or contractors to advise the organization on various options to consider.

#### ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- The District seeks participation from its constituents and will attempt to clearly identify and publicize opportunities for input on the Plan. On agendas, public notices and in publicity, wording will clearly identify a relevant item as a SWIP issue. This will also be true of our regularly published monthly meeting agendas.
- All regular board meetings have a *Public Comment* agenda item, and agendas are posted in member communities and advertised through local newspapers. The *Public Comment* agenda item will note an opportunity for input on the SWIP.

<sup>1</sup> The responsiveness summary for the Plan will consist of a listing of each comment received on the Plan document followed by an explanation of what action the District is taking in response to those comments. Similar comments may be grouped together followed by one answer.

- During the *Announcement* period of each board meeting, the Director or Chairperson will verbally relay information about upcoming dates, times, locations and subject matter of SWIP meetings. Since the board meeting is televised via community access cable, this information will be broadcast to viewers.
- For those issues with a clear constituent group (for instance, haulers), the District will attempt to schedule at least one meeting with these individuals in order to encourage direct dialogue with the affected group.
- Although the state requires that at least two (2) public hearings be held on the draft Plan, the CVSWMD will conduct at least six (6), given the size and geography of the region we serve.

<p><b>ENSURE THAT ALL PORTIONS OF THE PLAN CAN BE REVIEWED</b></p>
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- The District will use its web site – [www.cvswwmd.org](http://www.cvswwmd.org) – to post all draft sections of the Plan as they become available to encourage the most public comment possible. Readers will be able to submit comment as the Plan is developed as well as at the series of public hearings to be held once the comprehensive document is available in draft form. All comments, no matter when they are submitted, will be included in the District’s responsiveness summary to be published at the close of public hearings on the draft Plan.
- An Executive Summary of the Plan, complete with a schedule of the dates, times and locations of the Draft Plan hearings will be published in the newspaper(s) and posted on our web site. Copies will be mailed to board supervisors, all selectboard and council members, state representatives, and other who request SWIP mailings.

**ANTICIPATED TIMEFRAMES**

- January - December 2002 - RETREATS, DIALOGUE, INPUT AND DRAFTING OF INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS
- MARCH 2003- DRAFT OF ENTIRE PLAN PREPARED FOR BOARD REVIEW
- March 2003 - PUBLIC HEARINGS, PREPARATION OF RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS
- April & May 2003 - BOARD CONSIDERATION OF COMMENT AND ADOPTION OF FINAL PLAN
- May 2003 - SUBMITTAL TO STATE OF DRAFT PLAN