

From the Director



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Executive Director

This year has brought many challenges and changes to our nation, and many more will be forthcoming before we see the financial crisis that is gripping our communities abate. The ideal solutions should be innovative and carry long-term, positive benefits; they need to represent sustainable, environmentally sound opportunities for change that protect our dwindling resources. Waste – of any kind – can no longer be tolerated, let alone embraced as a viable practice.

The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District's commitment to *zero waste* holds considerable promise for reinventing the local economies of our member cities and towns. Waste reduction saves individuals and organizations money and resources as it protects the environment. Reuse and recycling are proven to save money, create jobs, and improve local economic development.

The groundbreaking U.S. Recycling Economic Information (REI)* Study, commissioned in part by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), concludes that, "As a driver of economic activity, the recycling industry compares favorably to other key industries, such as automobile manufacturing and mining." Perhaps more importantly, this same study notes that "...recycling far outpaces the waste management industry because recycling adds value to materials, contributing to a growing labor force. ...recycling provides a large number of jobs that generally pay above the average national wage."

Rural communities face additional challenges to developing strong economic models in reducing and diverting waste due to a lack of economy of scale, the distance to industry, and the cost to transport over long distances. Thus, program development requires vision and innovation that suits the particular region's strengths.

The CVSWMD is in its fifth year of developing new models for zero waste programming. During the past few years, our priorities have been to reduce the costs of existing programming and to create a sustainable model for food scrap diversion to composting. Our success validates the attributes touted by the REI study, particularly in regard to our organics work.

In the Bradford area, we've mentored a small farmer who is accepting food scraps for composting and who will complete the transition to self-sufficient hauling in Janu-

ary 2009. Our Capitol region collection program has saved businesses, schools, and institutions money and created new jobs – some within the District organization and some at the farm receiving the material. The farm has also benefitted by generating revenue from the sale of compost made in part from the food scraps collected via the District program. We will continue to expand our food scrap diversion program until all businesses, schools, and institutions in our 22 member municipalities have the opportunity to divert these materials from the landfill.

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We now need to expand our efforts to additional materials and begin to develop new endeavors and enterprises, with an emphasis on stabilizing District revenue to keep per capita member costs low and increasing local economic benefits.

The CVSWMD board and staff will begin this process in calendar year 2009 with a January retreat, followed by a one-year research and planning process designed to identify current waste materials in the region and opportunities for increasing local reduction, reuse, and recycling. We will bring a zero waste perspective to this work, seeking “best and highest possible uses” for the materials, environmentally sound practices and technologies, and the creation or integration of endeavors into sustainable systems—all with a strong emphasis on developing *local* opportunities.

We look forward to serving as a positive influence on economic and social change in our region in the coming year!

* The U.S. Recycling Economic Information (REI) Study was commissioned by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and numerous states through a cooperative agreement with the National Recycling Coalition (NRC).

The multi-year REI project utilizes the best available data from 1997-1999. The national study was accomplished through a comprehensive analysis of both existing economic data and reasonable estimates based on targeted surveys of recycling businesses and sophisticated economic modeling. The study allows for sound economic comparisons across different regions and states in the country and establishes an important benchmark of the economic impact of recycling and reuse.