



Memorandum

MONTEREY REGIONAL WASTE MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

DATE: August 10, 2007
 TO: General Manager
 FROM: Public Education and Recycling Manager
 SUBJECT: Report on Public Education and Litter Activities

Reviewed by [Signature] Date 8/10/07
 General Manager
 for WMD

BACKGROUND

The following is an update on recent staff activity.

Waste Sorting Following Laguna Seca Moto GP Event

The Moto GP is the largest event held annually at Laguna Seca attracting some 150,000 attendees over the three-days of racing. In an effort to survey the effectiveness of recycling at this year's event, District staff invited Monterey County staff to assist in conducting a waste assessment of incoming refuse on the Monday following the event (July 23). Two County staff joined the two District public education staff along with support from Material Recovery Facility (MRF) staff to complete this project. Incoming refuse from the Moto GP was staged in the MRF over the weekend and on Monday. From an approximately 20,000-lb pile of event refuse, a 1,600-lb representative sample was taken. Staff then sorted this waste to capture California Redemption Value (CRV) beverage containers. It was quickly apparent that the incoming refuse contained a high percentage of CRV recyclables. The 1,600-lb sample yielded a total of 500 lbs of CRV for a total of 31% of the sample.

On July 25th, in an effort to capture additional CRV material from the event, the MRF Manager Harry Hunzic conducted a test run on approximately 28,000 lbs of the refuse (37% of the total event waste received) of which approximately 62% was refuse and the rest (38%) was CRV containers and cardboard. The MRF does not routinely run this type of refuse over the sort line due to the high percentage of food waste in the load and it takes a lot of work to clear the sort line before and after such a test in order to obtain accurate data. A special thank you is extended to the MRF laborers on the sort line who did a fine job of diverting the recyclable material.

In discussion with County staff, several challenges were identified to coordinating recycling outreach at Laguna Seca events including: two agencies are involved in producing events (County Parks and SCRAMP), and the County Department of Environmental Health presently does not have adequate staff and financial resources to provide the oversight, support and assistance during events that is a key ingredient in the success of special event recycling. Under our current Department of Conservation (DOC) special event recycling grant, Ecology Action will be developing a special event recycling resource kit which will serve as a valuable recycling planning tool for event organizers. Grant funding permitting, Ecology Action will be implementing an expanded special event recycling program next year which will include the Moto GP event. Notice on our expanded special event recycling grant award is expected from the DOC in September.

Litter Report

The Litter Abatement Task Force (LATF) met on August 8th with 14 people in attendance. Reports were made on local efforts to reduce debris from entering storm drains, the success of the special event recycling grant, and recent plastic packaging bans and legislation.

Action items for next LATF meeting include:

- Obtain a determination from CalTrans as to whether the District is permitted to pick up litter along any stretch of Highway 1 where a major litter incident has occurred and would this also pertain to on-and-off ramps.
- Research was requested on alternatives to plastic utensils, plates and cups, for restaurant use, such as products made from cornstarch, etc.
- The City of Monterey is contemplating a ban on plastic bags and ban on the use of plastic foam (Styrofoam) take-out packaging use in restaurants and will report at the next meeting.
- A report on the effectiveness of local smoking bans on public beaches to reduce cigarette butt litter.
- An update on the State Water Board decision on storm drain runoff expected in September.

The next meeting of the LATF will be held on November 14, 2007.

New District Signage and Appearance

A new sign has gone up on the front of the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) building to better identify the facility for incoming customers. A second sign was installed near the drive up door to identify the materials that are accepted at the Facility and provide additional program information. The graphic look of the signs was developed to be consistent with our new 2007 Disposal Fee and HHW brochures.

District Public Education Coordinator Kimberle Herring has been working with the Site Crew to redesign the entrance and exhibits in the Small Planet Education Garden. The front of the garden now sports a new fence made entirely of salvaged wood from Last Chance Mercantile. The improvements underway will enhance the learning experience for our school children visitors this fall. Thanks to the Site Crew for providing the labor for this project while juggling their other varied responsibilities.

Upcoming Events – Monterey County Fair

Public Education staff is planning a two-part outreach strategy at this year's Monterey County Fair. On opening day Tuesday August 14th, which is also "Kids Day", we will have our educational bus, Traveling Education Display (T.E.D), on display with a variety of new and interactive exhibits inside. Based on experience at community events with the bus over the last year, portions of the interior have been modified to include new experiences for children such as drawers that can be opened to reveal recyclable materials which they can identify and place in the proper bin. A new cabinet will showcase an actual worm bin with glass sides to demystify what happens inside. To maximize staff resources and to focus our outreach on the day with most children in attendance, T.E.D will be on exhibit on "Kids Day" only. In addition, staff will install a landscape display to promote home composting as a waste reduction strategy while also showcasing the recycled compost and wood chip products the District has available which will be on display for the duration of the Fair from August 14–19.

MRWMD in the News

The August 9th edition of the Monterey County Weekly includes an interview with William Merry and a profile of the District. A copy of the article is attached.


Jeff Lindenthal

Attachment



August 9-15, 2007



Digging It: William Merry (left) and Jeff Lindenthal take pride in their operation. —Kera Abraham

A Complete Dump

EXPLORING THE AMAZING MARINA WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITY.

Aug 09, 2007

By Kera Abraham

Two miles north of Marina, on 475 acres surrounded by farmland and pasture, the Monterey Regional Waste Management District deals with mountains of the Peninsula's trash. And it does a good job of it: The District keeps winning awards for its programs in landfill gas use, composting, resource recovery, and overall awesomeness. I drive out there one afternoon to see what makes it so special.

I'm greeted by Jeff Lindenthal, the District's public education and recycling manager, a tall, angular guy sporting a Live Strong wristband. He introduces me to General Manager William Merry, a 25-year District vet who directs its 140 employees.

In his office, Merry shows me a photo from the early 1900s of a man dumping waste down a chute directly into the Monterey Bay. Others burned their trash or left it out for hogs and birds to eat. Those were the days before landfills – and before plastic.

Today the Peninsula's trash is worse in terms of quantity and composition. In terms of recovery, though, it is far better. Private companies haul curbside recycling to facilities in Castroville and Ryan Ranch. And District employees rifle through the solid waste from commercial dumpsters, construction sites, and individual trash loads that people pay \$43 per ton to dump here. (Residential trash heads straight to the landfill.)

They scavenge re-usable goods with vulture-like efficiency. Refrigerators are freed of their toxic parts and shredded for their metal. Pieces of lumber are salvaged for re-use; other wood scraps are chipped into mulch. Piles of tires are ground into crumb rubber for playgrounds; concrete chunks are crushed into small particles for foundations and roads. Furniture, appliances and other useful stuff is yanked and sold super-cheap at the District's on-site store, Last Chance Mercantile, which pulled in \$620,000 last fiscal year.

The managers show me this month's scrap metal pile, a mound of steel, tin and copper three times my height – a crow's nirvana. Merry tells me that this is lucrative stuff, bringing in a half million dollars a year. A contractor hauls it to San Francisco, where it's shredded, separated, shipped to China, melted and reconstituted into new products.

At the Materials Recovery Facility (in District jargon, the MRF, or "Mirf"), four workers in orange vests pick recyclables out of trash spread over a conveyor belt moving at about 30 feet per minute. One worker targets concrete; another picks out wood; a third goes for metal.

Next, we visit the place where the flow goes: the landfill, which doubles as a seagull conference center. The birds swarm the area, scattering only when a bulldozer heaves up behind them, capping the day's trash with dirt.

Not even the landfill is without its re-use value. The District harnesses the methane produced by degrading organic matter – a gas similar to what you emit after eating beans. No joke: methane is a greenhouse gas 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide. It's also a powerful fuel. The District's four-megawatt gas-to-energy plant supplies enough electricity to power the entire facility and still sell juice back to the grid to the tune of \$1.5 million per year.

Back in Merry's truck, we loop past the Small Planet Garden, an organic educational site for schoolkids, and head toward the compost area leased by Sun-Land Garden Products. The company's employees mash two parts of the District's ground-up yard waste with one part mushroom manure and lay out the mixture in neat brown rows, turning it regularly and monitoring its temperature as it degrades. The end product is a rich, locally produced compost sold at Orchard Supply Hardware.

We approach a pile whose thermometer reads 140 degrees. Merry plunges his fist into the brown fluff, pulls it out and sniffs it with satisfaction. It smells faintly of ammonia.

The tour draws to a close, and I hurry to Last Chance. I buy a \$5 pea-green velour chair, a \$2 side-table, and a \$4 sack of Sun-Land compost.

Wrestling the chair into my car, I reflect on the District's award-winning salvaging efforts. The cumulative effect is the diversion of 60 percent of the Peninsula's waste from the landfill – well above the 50 percent per city required under a 1989 state law. A bill now before the Senate would jack up that percentage to 75 by 2020, a rate that Lindenthal imagines could only be achieved by mandating recycling.

All told, there's room for improvement, but it's clear why District management is pleased with itself. "A lot of what we do isn't fancy," Merry says. "But add it up, and it makes sense."