

**LWVSD UNITS, EVERY MEMBER TOOL, APRIL, 2004**  
**“SLIM DOWN YOUR WASTE”**

**State Law**

“The Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (known as AB 939 or the IWMA) was enacted by the California Legislature to reduce dependence on landfilling of solid waste, and to ensure an effective and coordinated approach to safe management of all solid waste generated within the state. The IWMA established a hierarchy of preferred waste management practices: 1) Source Reduction (Waste Prevention), to reduce the amount of waste generated at its source; 2) Recycling (or Reuse) and Composting; 3) Transformation (composting); and 4) Disposal by landfilling. The IWMA required disposal of waste by the local jurisdictions to be cut by...50 percent by 2000. Waste disposal levels from the year 1990 were used as the base...” (“Integrated Waste Management Plan 2003 Amendment”, County of San Diego)

**Implementation**

The implementation of the IWMA is a coordinated effort of the cities and the County, as required by state statute. There are two advisory committees: The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of city representatives for solid waste management, and the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) made up of citizens, organizations, and recycling companies. The League of Women Voters is represented on the CAC. The County of San Diego is responsible for waste management in unincorporated areas of the County and for regional reports. It also sets goals for local governments. In reality, the County does not feel it can mandate the local governments beyond the state law of 50 percent reduction and recycling rate. In 1996, the County sold its landfills to the private sector, which reduced its role in waste management. The private sector now largely decides when and where to add facilities such as plants manufacturing items out of recycled stock, composting, transfer stations, and landfills. However, there is a very strict and lengthy permit process that occurs. Military and Native American properties are regulated by the Federal Government and do not have to comply with state law. They are encouraged to reach the same goals, however.

Each jurisdiction in the County is responsible for its own integrated solid waste management planning, implementation, monitoring, public information, budgeting and enforcement. In some cases, jurisdictions have designated franchised haulers to do this work and have outsourced to other organizations and companies.

The City of San Diego is unique in that it does not directly charge residential customers for waste services. The City owns one landfill at Miramar and charges dumping fees as well as operates a recycling center (with repayment of CRV fees), composting, and a hazardous waste collection drop-off. Because there is no charge to residential customers, the City cannot set fees (variable rate pricing) to encourage recycling. San Diego City has not yet reached the 50% recycling goal mandated by the state for the year 2000, but because they are making a good effort, they have not yet been fined. Each year each community/city writes an annual plan which describes how they are going to reach and maintain their goal. Currently, San Diego recycles 44% (down from 48%) of its waste stream. According to an article in *E Magazine* (3/04), recycling rates are holding steady or going down now because the amount of reusable or recyclable materials is increasing but more of it is being put in the trash, rather than in the recycle bin. In 2001, San Diego created 5,322 tons or 7,900 cubic yards of solid waste per day or 1,883,931 tons or 2,799,239 cubic yards per year.

### **Source Reduction in the City of San Diego**

The City of San Diego operates or encourages the following source reductions:

- Backyard composting
- Kelp processing
- On site processing of Construction and Demolition (C & D) debris
- Review of state packaging requirements
- Unwanted Mail Program
- Waste Audits (evaluation of what is disposed of)
- Waste Exchange/Material Exchange Programs  
(targeted materials are white goods/kitchen and laundry appliances, salvageable composite, furniture, textiles, yard and wood waste)

### **Recycling Programs in the City of San Diego**

- Christmas trees
- Commercial & Industrial (C & D)
- Schools
- Community clean-up
- Drop off/buy back centers in parks and grocery store parking lots
- Military
- Multifamily (limited)
- Offices
- Curbside pickup of greens and recyclables  
(targeted materials are newspaper, mixed paper, office paper, cardboard, chip board, plastic #1 & #2, glass, metals, yard waste, wood, manure, and C & D)  
(targeted special waste includes sludge, medical, white goods/kitchen and laundry appliances, and vehicle abatement)

### **Other Recycling Programs**

- Thrift shops and resale shops
- Garage sales and rummage sales
- Take back offers by stores (eg. printer cartridges, fluorescent bulbs, tires)
- Habitat for Humanity Restore at 10222 San Diego Mission Rd. (appliances, toilets, cabinets, tile pieces, doors & windows, light fixtures, etc.)
- Salvation Army and other collection and distribution centers
- Kelly Paper and other office supply stores sell post-consumer recycled paper
- Composting your greens and food scraps at home (see handout)
- Buy smart – with less packaging, larger volumes, only what you need

### **Reaching for Zero Waste**

There are four barriers to reaching zero waste, according to the GRRN website:

1. Government subsidies favor extraction and waste such as logging, mining, and waste disposal industries as well as businesses that compete directly with resource conserving enterprises
2. “Most of the high cost of waste is hidden, giving wasting industries an invisible competitive advantage. Product prices usually do not reflect their full environmental costs such as damage

to ecosystems, loss of habitat and biodiversity, production of greenhouse gases, toxic pollution, health problems, and harm to recreation industries.”

3. “Manufacturers’ choices determine how a product will impact the environment – whether to use virgin or recycled materials, whether to design for reuse or recyclability, what packaging to use, how costly it will be to recycle, whether to sell or lease the product, etc.”
4. Changing existing viewpoints and practices is slow.

### **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Programs in the City of San Diego**

Certain materials cannot, by state law, be dumped in a landfill. They must be treated carefully and disposed of properly, if they cannot be reused. They fall into four categories: toxic, flammable, corrosive, and reactive. These include wet paint, paint thinners and turpentine, stains and varnishes, paint and furniture strippers and removers, motor oil, grease, antifreeze, waxes and polishes, aerosols, cleaning products, pool chemicals, dry cell and automotive batteries, adhesives and glues, pesticides, garden chemicals, solvents, electronics (cell phones, televisions, computer monitors, video cameras, printer cartridges), small animal poisons and baits, moth and flea repellants, mercury thermostats or thermometers, propane tanks and other compressed gas cylinders, and fluorescent light bulbs. These materials can be taken to Miramar Landfill on Saturday mornings. Periodically, there is a special or temporary collection event for residents. Sometimes these special collections are for one type of item – tires, motor oil, paint, or electronics. Landfill loads are periodically checked to be sure they do not contain HHW.

Consumers should be careful to only purchase the amount of these materials that they will use up in the short term. Moving companies will not take them in vans either. There are alternative, less toxic or dangerous chemicals that can do the job quite well (handout). Neighbors, friends, or families can share products as well.

Improperly disposed HHW may leach into the groundwater or flow to receiving waters via storm drains and cause health and safety risks. Landfills can leach over time and sometimes are lined with plastic to prevent drinking water contamination. Special landfills handle HHW that cannot be reused, but over ninety percent is either reused or recycled. Market development for hazardous and recyclable materials is an important aspect of the positive economics of recycling.

### **Non-Disposal Facilities**

There are various types of operations which are not landfills. They include:

- Material Recovery/Processing/Transfer Facilities (MRF’s) where waste is sorted and bundled to be sent to a recycling plant anywhere including overseas
- Recycling Center where co-mingled recyclable waste is sorted
- Transfer Station where waste is brought in from a large area and bundled for long-distance hauling. The transfer station network in San Diego County has a permitted throughput of about 3 million tons per year, with about 2 million tons of the capacity currently being used.
- Composting and Mulching Facility which turns and “cooks” compost until it can be used as soil supplement (much of San Diego’s compost is used for landfill cover. Each day, the material dumped in a landfill has to be covered by dirt or compost.)

### **Miramar Landfill**

Miramar Landfill is owned by the U.S. Navy (because it is on Navy land) and operated by the City of San Diego. It is located at the intersection of Hwy. 52 and Convoy St. in Kearny Mesa. The remaining capacity of this landfill is 13 million tons or 21 million cubic yards. Using current disposal projections and assuming the permitted limits on the rate of waste dumped is not changed, Miramar Landfill will be full to its permitted amount in 2011 to 2013. The City is beginning to work on obtaining a permit to build it up higher to extend its life from three to ten years. It also has an agreement with Allied Waste to use their landfills at a fixed rate once Miramar is filled.

### **County Landfills**

There are two other large landfills in San Diego County – Sycamore Canyon Landfill which is north of Mission Trails Regional Park near Santee and is owned and operated by Allied Waste Industries. They are in the process of asking for both a vertical and horizontal staged expansion to triple their daily waste receipt. Of course, expanding a landfill also means more truck traffic, among other things. The other landfill is called Otay Landfill and is also owned and operated by Allied. It is located in Chula Vista.

### **Future Landfills**

Gregory Canyon Landfill has been conceptually approved by the voters, but has yet to be permitted. The CAC believes that no more landfill space is needed because source reduction and recycling can increase to keep pace with the population growth. Cities like San Francisco are recycling 75% of their waste. In Europe, they are composting food waste commercially and making fuel for vehicles.

The cities in the county who have not met the 50% goal for recycling say they will do so by 2005. Many of them do not seem interested in obtaining a higher goal. The County is now doing a study to determine whether permitting, building, and operating a landfill is more or less costly than recycling. The two targets are increasing composting and C & D diversion. In 2001, the region disposed of approximately 300,000 tons of C & D material at the Miramar Landfill. If a mixed C & D processing facility were to be sited in the region, the amount of solid waste disposed could be reduced by at least 10%. C & D waste is increasing due to low interest rates and the fires last Fall. The City of San Diego is planning to add the separation of C & D at the Miramar Landfill, but they decided that it should be voluntary, not mandatory. There is a ready market for recycled C & D in Mexico. Another option is to haul waste out of the county. Currently, some neighboring states have no limit on the amount of waste they accept. Exported waste also goes to Orange County.

The City of San Diego could also collect more recyclables from large buildings; they need to allow for collection containers in the design of such buildings, however. They are expanding food waste collection from institutions. There are rumors of the City charging for recycling, but they would defeat the purpose as long as disposal of trash is free. The City also plans to meet their 50% diversion goal by:

- increasing curbside participation through a marketing campaign
- expanding the greenery collection program
- working with State and Federal government offices to expand their recycling efforts
- working with commercial and industrial facilities to increase recycling
- working with Metro Waste Water for biosolids diversion
- working with the City School District to promote school recycling at 46 middle and high schools
- increased education, especially in the schools