



Department of Solid Waste
County of La Crosse, Wisconsin

6500 State Road 16
La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601
Telephone: (608) 785-9572 • Fax: (608) 785-6160
www.co.la-crosse.wi.us



August 24, 2016

Mayor Tim Kabat
La Crosse City Hall
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear Mayor Kabat:

I am happy to respond to your recent inquiry regarding La Crosse County's current efforts and future strategies to reduce solid waste and increase the amount of recycling county-wide.

As solid waste professionals, we are passionate about waste reduction and recycling. As a matter of policy and in practice, the County supports Wisconsin's Solid Waste Reduction, Reuse, Recycling, Composting, and Resource Recovery Policy (WI Stat § 287.05), which states "that maximum solid waste reduction, reuse, recycling, composting and resource recovery is in the best interest of the state in order to protect public health, to protect the quality of the natural environment and to conserve resources and energy."

More importantly, La Crosse County via the Solid Waste Department has led and continues to lead a wide range of programs to encourage waste reduction, to process and reuse materials delivered to our facilities and to divert materials from the landfill.

It is important to note that diversion from the landfill and beneficial reuse undertaken by the County are different from but equally important to curbside recycling. Both contribute to a reduction in the amount of material landfilled. We fully support the efforts of the County's municipalities such as La Crosse and Onalaska, which are the state-designated Responsible Units (RUs) for solid waste and recycling including curbside recycling.

While the County is not a designated RU, and receives no state funds for recycling education or programs, we gladly invest in a multitude of waste reduction, diversion and material reuse initiatives that complement your curbside recycling efforts. In short, we proactively plan for and manage the materials that are collected by municipality-contracted haulers and delivered to our facilities, as directed by County Ordinance Chapter 15.07. Details on these initiatives, and other programs offered by La Crosse County are included below.

Collaboration

In 2010, La Crosse County initiated and completed a Solid Waste and Recycling Collection Evaluation. Based on this County supported report, the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska had the necessary data to establish very successful single stream recycling programs. We applaud the success of these programs, despite the fact that the resulting reduction in materials delivered to County facilities reduced our overall Solid Waste Department revenue. Our support for La Crosse and Onalaska is further evidenced

by our recent successful nomination of the cities for an Excellence in Recycling Award from the Associated Recyclers of Wisconsin (AROW).

Operations

Xcel Energy

Municipal solid waste delivered to Xcel Energy's French Island facility is beneficially reused as boiler fuel rather than being landfilled. Previous contract conditions only required Xcel to convert 66 percent of delivered material into boiler fuel. However in 2014, the County initiated contract modifications that have resulted in incentives for Xcel Energy to process up to 80 percent of delivered materials for use as boiler fuel. Xcel estimates refuse derived fuel supplies enough energy to power nearly 10,000 homes annually.

In addition, the County and Xcel have worked together to recover ferrous and non-ferrous metals from the waste stream delivered by municipal haulers to the French Island facility. More than 800,000 pounds of this material has been recovered for recycling by a contracted vendor.

HHM facility

The County's permanent Household Hazardous Materials (HHM) facility received over 425 tons of material in 2015. Of that amount, approximately 77 percent (more than 325 tons) was recycled for other uses. Keeping these hazardous materials out of the landfill is a high priority in order to remove them from long-term storage in unsecured residential and business settings, to maintain the strong environmental performance of the landfill, and to provide residents with an environmentally sound alternative for disposal.

In addition, the Product Reuse Room at the Landfill site provides access to good, unused, or slightly used items brought to the facility. These materials are free to customers although donations are accepted. In 2014, the program made available 29 tons of reusable material. Data collected from Reuse Room customers showed roughly 45 percent were residents of the City of La Crosse.

Other Landfill Diversion Programs

A designated area at the Landfill site allows the Department to separate clean wood, shingles, clean concrete, asphalt and yard waste, and to process these materials for beneficial reuse as described below:

Shingles Recycling

The Department accepts clean shingles delivered to the landfill site. The landfill operator grinds the shingles to specification for re-use. Currently the ground shingles are sold to Mathy Construction for use in asphalt production.

Clean Wood Waste Recycling

The Department accepts clean wood such as pallets (with nails), crates, and tree trunks and branches. The clean wood is ground by the landfill operator who provides these wood chips to Xcel for use as a supplemental fuel at the French Island generating facility.

Aggregate recycling

Concrete and asphalt volumes fluctuate based on the construction activity in the area. The Department has a designated area to store used concrete and asphalt generated from nearby construction projects. The Highway Department is required to periodically grind the material for re-use.

Yard Waste Recycling

The Department partners with Green Earth Composting, a division of Dummer Family Farms. All yard waste received at the Landfill is stored on a processing pad until it is transported to Green Earth where it is mixed with other materials including some food waste, clean sheetrock waste, leaves, cow manure, and other organics to produce an excellent soil amendment.

Partnerships

Dynamic Recycling

The County accepts electronic (e-waste) at the HHM facility, and provides Dynamic Recycling with this waste for its rapidly growing business. Dynamic adheres to a no-landfill policy, which ensures that all the electronic devices they receive are recycled to the fullest potential.

Habitat for Humanity ReStore

Materials that fit the mission of the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, but are delivered to the Landfill are reclaimed from the containers and transported by Landfill staff to the ReStore for sale. Through this donation process tons of materials are diverted from the landfill each year. The ReStore is located off Highway 16 across from the La Crosse County Landfill.

Community Outreach

The Solid Waste Department maintains a robust and diverse community outreach program. Outreach, including waste reduction, reuse and recycling educational information, is prepared and disseminated through a variety of means including the Solid Waste Department web page, social media (Facebook), news releases, tours and presentations to dozens of local organizations. In addition, the Department holds an annual meeting each spring which is open to the public.

The Solid Waste Department also conducts regular meetings with the municipalities' contracted haulers. These meetings are structured to share information, provide guidance and support the haulers efforts to fulfill their contractual obligations to deliver the right waste to the right facility in accordance with County Ordinance Chapter 15.07.

Additional Information Regarding Landfilling

Specific to your question regarding the materials delivered to the landfill, the County maintains detailed information on landfill tonnages. Between 2008 and 2010, deliveries dropped from 111,191 tons to 66,844 tons, due to a downturn in the regional economy driven by the national recession. More recently, tonnages increased 60 percent over the 5-year period 2010 through 2014. The increases can be attributed to three primary factors: 1) An uptick in the regional economy 2) A hauler rebate agreement with Waste Management to deliver municipal solid waste to the County and 3) Scheduled maintenance at Xcel's WTE facility which caused all collected materials to be delivered to the Landfill for a short time.

Creation of solid waste is tied to population and economic activity. Typically, more people and more economic activity leads to higher volumes of solid waste requiring management. Based on population projections it is estimated that waste generation within the current contracted communities will increase by over 17,000 tons annually by 2030. Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission projections show an increase of 29,579 tons of MSW generated annually by 2034. This figure includes other counties outside the current La Crosse regional disposal system.

Beyond waste generated by residential growth, the rapid rise in commercial construction (and related demolition) drives additional volume to our facilities. In recent years, as the local economy has rebounded, the amount of construction and demolition waste delivered to the landfill has far exceeded

volumes in previous years. As noted above, we work diligently to divert reusable construction and demolition materials delivered to the Landfill for other beneficial uses.

It appears that total solid waste generation in the La Crosse regional disposal system has been and will continue to increase in the future. Despite this clear trend of increasing waste generation, the County will continue to proactively offer services and programs that promote waste reduction, divert reusable materials delivered by municipalities' contracted haulers to our facilities and manage all materials in a sustainable manner. In addition, the County is committed to maintaining its status as Wisconsin's only publicly-owned landfill to participate in the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources' Green Tier environmental excellence program.

The Solid Waste Department continues to work hard to support more sustainable waste management in the La Crosse area. The Household Hazardous Materials program is very important to this mission. We look forward to your support of the HHM program.

Please feel free to contact me with additional questions or comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry A. Koch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Henry A. Koch, PE

Solid Waste Director, La Crosse County

Attachment: La Crosse County Disposal System Environmental Policy