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# RETHINKING SOLID WASTE

## CLOSING THE GAP ON ZERO WASTE

We've come a long way!

In 2003, Regional District of Nanaimo residents and businesses sent 477 kg of waste per capita to the landfill and diverted 57 per cent of our waste to recycling facilities. Today we dispose of 348 kg per capita and divert 68 per cent of our waste. Your efforts are moving the RDN closer to "Zero Waste", the long-term vision that the RDN Board of Directors set as its target a dozen years ago.

ZeroWaste

*The RDN has one of the lowest disposal rates and highest diversion rates of any region in Canada, but there's still room to improve.*

With that in mind, we're updating our Solid Waste Management Plan to identify ways to further increase waste diversion and dispose of what remains in an effective, economical and environmentally responsible manner.

### WHY THE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW PROCESS MATTERS

The Solid Waste Management Plan determines how we will reduce, reuse, recycle, compost and dispose of our leftover waste for the next 10 to 20 years. The BC Ministry of Environment approved the current Plan in 2005. At the time, the plan's Zero Waste programs included introducing curbside food waste collection, commercial food waste diversion, and landfill bans on wood waste and other materials.

The benefits of a plan focused on Zero Waste go beyond saving resources, conserving valuable landfill capacity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Directing what would otherwise be landfilled waste to local recycling and composting facilities sustains 190 local jobs and generates more than \$17 million for local businesses.



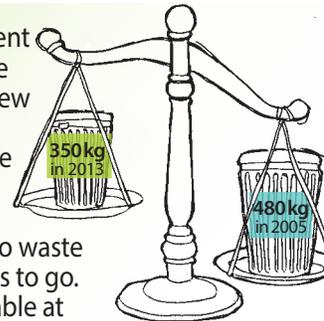
## Tell us what you think.

To assist with developing the plan and identifying key issues, you are invited to **COMPLETE AN ONLINE SURVEY** at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca)

**Deadline April 14th.**

## Moving beyond 68 per cent diversion

The Solid Waste Management Plan Review is a three-stage process. **Stage 1** was a review of our existing system for managing solid waste in the RDN. It confirmed that we are indeed progressing down the path towards zero waste but that we still have a ways to go. The **Stage 1** report is available at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca).



**Stage 2** is underway. This is an opportunity to explore innovative ways to manage discarded items that can't be diverted yet, and to look at new ideas for reducing, reusing, recycling and composting waste to increase waste diversion beyond 70 per cent. We will also be analyzing our current solid waste management system to identify areas for improvement. We will examine the potential to extend the life of the region's landfill beyond its current 20-year capacity.

**Stage 3** of the SWMP Review will offer extensive opportunities for public input, and information on a variety of approaches to further reduce waste and work with the community to set a new waste diversion target for the region.

## THE WASTE COMPOSITION STUDY – HOW OUR GARBAGE HAS CHANGED SINCE 2004

A hands-on analysis has revealed that RDN residents are doing a great job of reducing the amount of garbage that ends up in the Regional Landfill. Now that we're off to a good start, there's plenty of room to improve.

In 2012 a team of experts updated the 2004 study that looked at what waste was going into the Regional Landfill. The 2004 study identified food waste as the largest source of material entering the landfill, and prompted the introduction of region-wide curbside food waste collection and a ban on landfill disposal of food waste from the institutional, commercial and industrial sector.

The 2012 study revealed that by using the Green Bin curbside program and sticking to the ban on commercial organic waste, RDN residents have reduced the amount of food waste disposed at the landfill by 19 per cent over the past eight years. Despite this improvement, the 2012 Waste Composition Study confirmed that food waste still remains the largest component of what we throw away—and we are still throwing away recyclable and compostable items.

We can improve by:

- **Diverting 34 per cent of garbage** through the residential Green Bin Program
- **Recycling 10 per cent of garbage** in the curbside program
- **Reusing or recycling the seven per cent of waste** that can be given to one of our local charity organizations.

**80%** residential waste diversion is achievable!

An 80 per cent residential waste diversion rate is possible if we resolve to use the curbside residential recycling and Green Bin programs to their fullest extent.

## A PERFECT STORM INFLUENCES FUTURE SOLID WASTE PLANNING

In 2014, there were three major events that impacted the RDN's existing system: wasteflow management, solid waste revenue shortfalls, and the Metro Vancouver Waste-to-Energy siting process.

### 1 Waste Flow Management

Starting in late 2013, staff noticed that some garbage haulers were bypassing RDN disposal facilities and hauling waste collected in the region to other jurisdictions for disposal. Given that the current disposal system is funded primarily from landfill tipping fees, garbage leaving the RDN system results in a shortfall of anticipated revenue to fund the regional disposal system. This means that the rest of the users, including businesses and residents, must pick up the extra costs. Private waste export also creates an uneven playing field for other waste haulers and the recycling industry.

This is also a significant issue in Metro Vancouver. As a result, MV drafted Bylaw 280 to require all residential, institutional and commercial garbage to be delivered to MV Regional Facilities. Given that the RDN was facing the same problem, in January 2014 the Board endorsed Metro Vancouver's development of a waste flow management strategy and sent a letter of support to the Minister of Environment. Although the minister rejected Bylaw 280, restricting waste export remains a possible option for the RDN and will be considered in the SWMP.

### 2 Solid Waste Revenue Shortfall

In 2013 and again in 2014 the RDN solid waste management service experienced significant tipping fee revenue shortfalls. As stated above, the RDN solid waste management service is funded primarily through tipping fees. This means that as more waste is diverted from disposal, tipping fee revenues are reduced.



During the implementation of the 2005 Plan, the financial impact of waste diversion (as a result of the commercial organics ban), the residential green bin program, and the wood waste disposal ban was anticipated and addressed through higher tipping fees. However, at some point this financial model becomes unsustainable. This is because high tipping fees drive more diversion and potentially private waste export which results in less revenue. This has resulted in less money for Zero Waste Programs, less money to fund transfer and disposal operations and less money for capital project reserve funds.

### 3 Metro Vancouver Waste-to-Energy Facility Siting Process

In 2014 there was considerable public interest in a proposal from the private sector to build a WTE facility at Duke Point. This proposal was in response to Metro Vancouver's Integrated Solid Waste and Resource Management Plan which includes the construction of new WTE facilities to handle residual waste from the MV region.

In response to public concerns, both the RDN and the City of Nanaimo opposed the project. The issue of WTE and incineration is top of mind for many in the community. The International Zero Waste Conference was held in Nanaimo in October 2014 in large part due to opposition to incineration in the region. Public participation in that event confirmed continued support for Zero Waste and community economic development rather than energy from waste.

### Solid Waste Issues Highlighted

There have been several RDN sponsored events to discuss issues and opportunities during Stage 1 of the plan review process. The issues and opportunities identified in the various consultation events have been collated and are available for review on the RDN website. The following, in no specific order, provides a summary of the issues that will be considered in Stage 2 of the Plan review process:

### System Funding Model

As discussed, revenue shortfalls as a result of either additional diversion or private waste export are a serious threat to the financial sustainability of the residual waste disposal system. For local governments that have



achieved high diversion goals, the cost of success has been falling tipping fee revenue. To off-set this spiral some local

governments have raised taxes to supplement the loss from tipping fees. In response to private waste export, some local governments are investigating flow control to ensure that residual waste stays within the system.

Other local governments are looking at reducing tipping fees to discourage export. If the plan review results in additional diversion (i.e. the ongoing pursuit of zero waste), the current system funding model will need to be revised to ensure the maintenance of the infrastructure at the Regional Landfill.

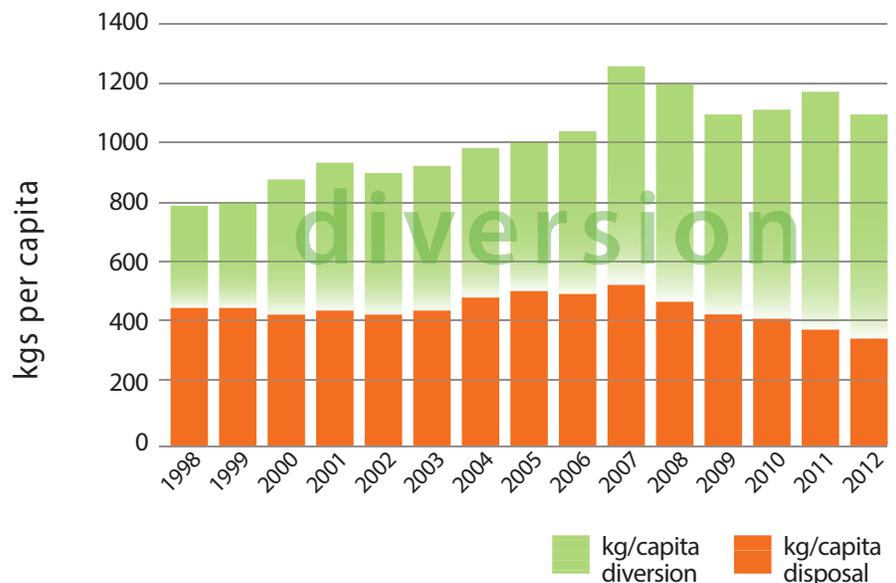
### Reduction

Waste generation is the sum of waste diversion plus waste disposal. Despite the RDN's success in increasing the amount of diversion, the overall quantity of solid waste generated has not decreased over time. The figure below shows per capita waste generation data from 1998 to 2012. This means that while RDN residents and businesses have been successful at recycling there is still more work needed to encourage reduction of the amount of materials being discarded.

### Diversion

While the RDN has an impressive diversion rate, there is still more material that could be diverted from disposal. A waste composition study completed in 2012 indicated that 35 per cent of the waste that is currently landfilled could be composted and 20 per cent could be recycled. Although the RDN has achieved a 68 per cent diversion target, additional policies and programs could increase this rate to 80 per cent or more which is consistent with the goal of zero waste. There are numerous ways to reach this goal, however as discussed above additional diversion cannot be entertained without consideration of future residual management options.

Per Capita Waste Generation 1998-2012



## SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATIONS PLAN APPROVED!

In February, the Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee voted to approve the new Consultation & Communications Plan for the Regional SWMP review process. Community consultation is a mandatory component of the

planning process and is critical to the creation of a plan that must be supported by the public. Consultation is carried out throughout the plan review process and the spectrum of consultation commonly begins with information sharing and develops into more active dialogue with the community stakeholders as options are considered.

### Spectrum of Consultation



The current plan review is intended to identify “what’s next” and chart the course for solid waste management for the coming years. The RDN is in the process of identifying issues and opportunities to help prepare foundational work required for Stage 2 of the SWMP review.

During Stage 2, stakeholders interested in finding out more about the region’s SWMP can watch for website updates, newsletters and public presentations. Interested individuals can also sign up to a SWMP email distribution list. During Stage 3 a range of activities intended to obtain feedback on the draft SWMP’s recommendations will be carried out including public open houses, online surveys, stakeholder meetings, and presentations to the public.

Consultation is a key element to the RDN SWMP Review process. This is a great opportunity for stakeholders to become more informed about our region’s SWMP and to provide valuable feedback that can help shape it in the future.

## TALKING TRASH

The RDN’s public Regional Solid Waste Advisory Committee will play a key role in the Solid Waste Management Plan Review. While this committee is not new, it has recently been modified to expand its representation. The group is composed of representatives from First Nations, the environmental and business community and the general public, as well as representatives from the RDN Board and other government agencies. As we move into Stage 2 of the review, this committee will act in the capacity of a public and technical advisory committee and will report to the RDN Board’s Regional Solid Waste Select Committee. The committee will also provide the RDN Board with feedback on public consultation activities, evaluate solid waste management options, and help engage the community in the review process.

As part of the review, the RDN is embarking on an extensive community consultation process to gather feedback about solid waste management. Here are some ways to participate in the plan review process:

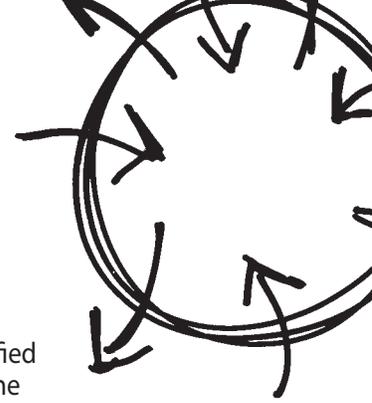
- **Complete the survey** at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca)
- **Visit the** Solid Waste and Recycling page at [www.rdn.bc.ca](http://www.rdn.bc.ca)

• **LIKE US on** 

• **FOLLOW US on** 

- **Stay tuned for details on the** public open houses and presentations on the draft plan.

Your input is valuable in creating a plan that will meet the region’s waste management needs in a sustainable manner. All comments will be presented to the committee and will be used to help develop recommendations to the Regional Board regarding future regional solid waste management programs and policies.



ZeroWaste

Making it Happen



#### CONTACT INFORMATION

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REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

