

2021

SOLID WASTE DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT



Per King County Code Sections 10.14.080 and 10.24.020



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

Contents

Message from the Director	1
About the Solid Waste Division.	2
Maintaining operations during the COVID-19 pandemic	2
Waste Prevention and Recycling	3
Transfer Stations.	7
Equity and Social Justice	10
Planning	11
2021 Outlook	13



Message from the Director

I am pleased to present the Solid Waste Division's 2021 Annual Report, which highlights our major achievements in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal. As we adjusted to the new norm of living through a pandemic, I cannot help but be proud of the work we accomplished and the objectives we met. All of this we accomplished while facing challenges head on and working together to get the right results. We were able to accomplish milestones in our continuing effort to modernize and expand our solid waste system and keep our operations going amid the challenges brought by COVID-19.

All throughout 2021, our 400-person strong organization went above and beyond expectations to provide exceptional customer service while dealing with the impacts of the emerging COVID-19 variants. Our employees followed Public Health safety guidelines to ensure that employees and customers were safe while essential services were performed. From following mask protocols to transitioning outreach events to digital formats, to the King County vaccine mandate, the Solid Waste Division was successful in avoiding COVID-19-related service disruptions or facility closures.

Over the last year, the division has worked tirelessly to keep the region's waste prevention and recycling efforts moving forward and this was on full display through the impressive daily work done by employees. With a special effort from our employees and stakeholders, we made huge strides in our "Recycle Right" and "Sort it Out" campaigns resulting in an increase of recyclables at our facilities. These recycling efforts were also matched with plans to reduce contamination in our recycling system, ranging from SWD-lead campaigns to the removal of plastic bags and wraps in recycling bins. The Division was honored to receive the 2021 "Recycler of the Year" award from the Washington State Recycling Association for its leadership in environmental outreach and communication.

Of course, our workforce is never more productive than when it is actively collaborating with our stakeholders, and this was evident in the building progress of our two new recycling and transfer stations. As part of our 2019 *Comprehensive Solid Waste Plan*, we have been actively working to modernize our transfer system to continue providing customers with improved waste disposal services. In 2021, the Solid Waste Division reached the 90 percent design phase of the new South County Recycling and Transfer Station Project that will

replace the outdated Algonia Transfer Station. During this time, we also continued in our efforts to engage the public and our stakeholders in finding a new site for the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project that will replace the aging Houghton Transfer Station.

The dedication and commitment to our waste prevention and recycling goals stretched far beyond our facilities, and into the "regular" work that is completed by our combined workforce. This work includes preparing for more landfill capacity; planning to increase rates in residential curbside collection bills and disposal fees; increasing recycling and diverting waste away from the landfill; supporting and recognizing schools that continued to "go green" in a virtual environment; ongoing efforts to advance Equity and Social Justice for customers and employees in our capitol projects and work environments; and so much more.

While this year brought many challenges, Solid Waste Division employees showed that we truly live our mission: *We bring the best people together to deliver value to our customers and stakeholders and continuously improve waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.*

It is a great privilege to serve people who care about our shared environment and who believe in our mission. Our work from this past year could not have been possible without the support of our customers, partnering cities, advisory committees, our valued staff, the King County Executive, and the King County Council.

Together, we will continue to build on our past successes while always looking ahead for new opportunities and meeting the challenges that come next.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. McLaughlin". The signature is stylized and fluid.

About the Solid Waste Division

The Solid Waste Division of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) is guided by the King County Strategic Plan goal of efficient, accountable regional and local government; King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan goal of consumption and materials management; and the Solid Waste Division's vision to achieve zero waste of resources and to enhance the environment through collaboration and innovation. The Division operates eight transfer stations, two rural drop boxes, and the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, the only operational landfill in the county. Solid Waste Division stakeholders include residents and business owners in unincorporated King County and 37 cities throughout the county (all except the cities of Seattle and Milton, which are part of separate solid waste systems). The Solid Waste Division's mission is to deliver value to its customers and stakeholders, and to continuously improve waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

Maintaining operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

Because solid waste disposal and recycling are essential services, the Solid Waste Division put several measures in place to keep employees and customers safe, and to ensure vital operations remained accessible to service-area customers amid the ongoing uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mask usage at county facilities remained a requirement for all employees and customers in accordance with state and county directives in 2021, and masks were provided to those who needed one. The Division followed guidance from Public Health -- Seattle & King County (Public Health) and re-opened self-haul stalls at its transfer stations that had been closed early in the pandemic as a precautionary measure to ensure social distancing.

King County announced that all of its employees would be required to comply with a vaccine mandate as a condition of employment, effective October 18, 2021.

To make vaccinations accessible and convenient for employees and their immediate family members, the Division hosted several on-site vaccine clinics at its transfer stations and at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill through the fall in partnership with Public Health. The Division's high compliance rate with the mandate meant no significant impacts to staffing or operations were experienced.

Employees in office positions formerly based at King Street Center in downtown Seattle continued adapting to permanent remote work requirements that were established in 2020 as part of DNRP's

"GreenWhereWeWork" initiative, which, in addition to the long-term goal of saving money, is helping to slow the spread of COVID-19 while protecting employees whose jobs necessitate that they be on-site. The Division's efforts to adjust to remote working included transitioning public meetings and outreach events to digital formats and cancelling all non-essential in-person gatherings. Due to the emergence of the Delta and Omicron COVID-19 variants, employees who were able to work remotely continued to do so as of the end of 2021.

By following strict safety protocols and Public Health guidelines, the Division successfully averted any COVID-19-related service disruptions or facility closures.



Signs around facilities reminding customers to wear masks.



Stand Together and Stay Apart to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

Waste Prevention and Recycling

Whether it is fostering the next generation of environmental stewards, encouraging customers to recycle more and recycle right, or working to divert recyclable materials away from the landfill, SWD is committed to enhancing waste prevention and recycling in King County.

Recycling collection increased by 1.5 percent

In 2021, the Division collected 35,340 tons of recyclable material at its transfer stations and drop boxes, a 1.5 percent increase compared to 2020. Yard waste continues to be the most recycled material, with 21,191 tons collected, followed by scrap metal (4,681 tons), cardboard (3,706 tons), and clean wood (2,526 tons).

In early 2021, the Division began its “Sort it Out” pilot for its recycling and transfer station employees, which takes a proactive role in helping customers sort their materials to increase recycling. The project is focused on helping customers recycle even more scrap metal, yard waste, cardboard, and clean wood at facilities in which those materials can be recycled and alerting customers to designated bins that make it convenient to recycle these types of materials.



Designated bins for readily recyclable materials, such as scrap metal, make it easy for customers to sort it out and recycle more.

Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan (CROP)

Contamination in the recycling stream from wet, soiled items, or items that are not recyclable, poses a major challenge to the efficient processing and marketability of recyclable materials in King County. In 2021, the Division submitted a Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan (CROP) to the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), which outlined a path forward on reducing contamination of recyclable materials collected in single-family, multi-family, drop-box, and commercial recycling programs within King County’s solid waste service area.

An integral part of the CROP entails ongoing collaboration with local governments across the region and the state, as well as waste haulers, processors, regulators, industry groups, schools, community members, and non-profits to advance policies and practices that harmonize recycling programs and public messaging.

Recycle Right Communications Consortium earns top state honors

The Recycle Right Communications Consortium, led by King County, was honored by the Washington State Recycling Association (WSRA) as “Recycler of the Year” in May 2021. WSRA’s Recycler of the Year awards spotlight individuals, businesses, government agencies, and community organizations that are making outstanding contributions to expand and strengthen recycling and waste prevention efforts. King County led the creation of the Consortium in 2018, following China’s ban on the import of recycled materials that exceeded its stringent contamination standards. Composed of communications professionals from cities within King County’s service area, as well as the City of Seattle, Ecology, Cedar Grove Compost, and commercial haulers, the Consortium has worked collaboratively for more than three years to reassure the public that recycling efforts are still environmentally and economically valuable. The Consortium also led development and execution of clear, consistent, and regionally unified messaging on how customers could contribute to successful recycling programs by making sure their materials were always empty, clean, and dry.

Ongoing Recycle Right campaigns

In 2021, the SWD-led Recycle Right Communications Consortium continued reinforcing its “Empty, Clean, and Dry” and “Compost Right” campaign messages that were developed and launched in 2019 and 2020. Information in English and Spanish was distributed to residents of cities and unincorporated areas through educational web content and social media outreach (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) to emphasize the customer’s role in making recycling successful. The program sought to reduce confusion on the part of customers about what can and cannot be placed in recycle bins by standardizing messaging to ensure that wet, soiled items do not contaminate clean recyclables. The Division maintained an online Recycle Right toolkit to share campaign materials with other agencies and jurisdictions, free of charge.

Still in Doubt? Throw it Out

In 2021, the “Empty, Clean, and Dry” campaign expanded in an effort to address contamination in recycling streams, and to raise awareness of the problems created when plastic bags, masks, gloves, and “tangles” such as garden hoses and cords, contribute to equipment problems at recycling facilities. The “Still in Doubt, Throw it Out” campaign was launched in October to emphasize how soiled and improper items tossed into the recycling bin could send an entire load of good materials to the landfill, and why the trash can is the best option when there is no time to research whether an item is recyclable. Videos ran for four weeks on Facebook, in English and Spanish, generating more than 2 million impressions as casual scrollers saw the message, and nearly 300,000 views of the actual video. The campaign also received media coverage in November and December from the Seattle Times, NPR-affiliate KNKX, and KING-5 News.

Removing plastic bags and wrap to reduce recycling contamination

King County stopped accepting plastic bags and wrap in curbside recycling bins effective January 1, 2020. In support of the statewide plastic bag ban that went into effect on October 1, 2021,

the Division revived its 2019-2020 “Keep ‘em OUT” education campaign that highlighted what types of plastic bags and film are accepted for recycling, how to find a takeback location, the importance of using reusable bags, and why these materials should never go into curbside recycling bins. Plastic bags are not only a source of pollution that threatens human health, wildlife, and the environment, they are also a major contaminant in Washington’s recycling system, clogging sorting machines and putting worker safety at risk. Reducing their use protects the state’s rivers and streams, helps recycling systems run more efficiently, and contributes to a growing culture of waste reduction and reuse. Bringing plastic bags and wrap to a drop-off location keeps bundled recyclables cleaner and easier to manufacture into new products.

Putting Out Extras

To help residential customers properly put out extra garbage, recycling, and food and yard waste for curbside pickup that won’t fit into bins, the Division led a “Putting Out Extras” campaign with language and icons haulers and cities could use on bill inserts, newsletters, and other digital/print materials. Securely closing container lids and keeping plastics and trash out of recycling and organics containers prevents contamination that ruins compost and recyclables for processors and manufacturers.



When placed in curbside recycling bins, plastic bags become tangled at recycling facilities. The better options are to bring them to a takeback location or put them in the garbage.

Accepting oil-based paint at hazardous waste sites

In 2021, the Division became a collector in the statewide paint product stewardship take-back program for oil-based paint collected at the Household Hazardous Waste facility at the Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station, and by the Wastemobile. The paint stewardship law signed in 2019 by Washington State Governor Jay Inslee (RCW 70A.515.040(1)(h) and RCW 70A.515.040(6)) that led to the new program took over 10 years to enact and was the result of years of collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including SWD, Ecology, King County's Haz Waste Program, the Product Stewardship Institute, the Northwest Product Stewardship Council, and Zero Waste Washington.

Schools continued to "go green" in virtual classrooms

The King County Green Schools Program assists K-12 student teams, schools, and school districts to engage students and employees in learning about resource conservation and taking steps to recycle, compost, reduce waste, and save energy and water in their schools, homes, and communities. As of December 2021, a total of 328 K-12 schools (65 percent of the K-12 schools in the County outside Seattle) and 14 school districts (77 percent of eligible districts) have received assistance.

In 2021, with input from schools and districts, the program completed a three-year strategic plan to increase program accessibility in racially and culturally diverse school communities. Rather than produce signage and materials in many languages, schools prefer image-centric signs because they work best and are readily understood by everyone. King County materials are available in alternate formats on request for people with disabilities. The program also revised its Best Practices Guides and school recognition criteria. Program staff served on a state advisory committee to help develop food waste reduction strategies pertaining to schools and prepared a report on how a school district can transition from single-use milk cartons to milk dispensers and reusable cups.

Despite school closures due to COVID, the program provided virtual waste tours, virtual student team meetings, a sustainability scavenger hunt via a mobile app, online gatherings to foster connections between program participants, and a podcast and webinars focused on food waste reduction, climate change, and



In 2021, the SWD began participating in the statewide paint product stewardship take-back program for oil-based paint.

environmental justice. The program [recognized 31 student teams](#) for activities, such as a conservation challenge involving at-home activities and using social media to engage students and staff in resource conservation.

Construction and demolition waste recycling

One in three truckloads of solid waste generated in King County consists of construction and demolition debris (C&D). King County Code Title 10 requires that readily recyclable C&D materials (metal, cardboard, wood, concrete, asphalt paving, brick, and drywall) be recycled, which furthers the Division's zero waste of resources goal and carbon emissions reduction efforts. Since the C&D Ordinance (Ordinance 18166) was passed in 2015, the number of designated facilities that handle C&D materials for recycling has increased from one to ten. The Division's C&D management program is funded by a fee of \$4.25 per ton, which applies only to C&D that is landfilled and further incentivizes recycling. This fee has been unchanged since 1993. The collected fees go into a dedicated fund that covers expenses related to C&D management.

2021 KING COUNTY SOLID WASTE DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT

Approximately 280,000 tons of C&D waste was landfilled by companies participating in the King County designated C&D facilities program in 2021, generating \$1.2 million in revenues. Due to a delay in reporting by Ecology, the most recent year's C&D recycling data for King County are not yet available.

The Solid Waste Division coordinated with the Regional Code Collaboration, which is a coalition of cities and counties across the Puget Sound Region that works together to share resources and expertise to develop codes, policies, and tools supporting sustainable business practices, to finalize C&D-related code templates for adoption by King County cities. Code language in the templates address reuse and recycling of building materials, exterior structure lead removal, and deconstruction. These templates will be used by cities and counties across the region to simplify legislation and facilitate consistent, standardized codes and permit processes across jurisdictions.

The Solid Waste Division's C&D grant program, funded by a \$4.25 per ton fee levied to disposers of C&D waste within King County, began in 2020, awarding \$470,000 in funding to four projects for the development of new recycling technologies. The grant program aims to enhance recycling of C&D materials and maximizing the recovery of C&D during demolition and processing. Grant recipients include Washington State University's Civil and Environmental Engineering Department for developing improved methods to recycle asphalt paving and concrete. Additionally, funds were allocated to private companies for improved facility deconstruction and wood extraction technologies.

In 2021, the C&D staff continued to conduct routine enforcement operations to ensure compliance with solid waste disposal requirements, as well as designated

facility agreements. In March 2021, staff successfully documented a load of C&D residual waste being transported to an unapproved landfill, which resulted in a citation being issued and successfully defended in Snohomish County. Additionally, in fall 2021, the Solid Waste Division successfully defended an appeal from a demolition contractor at the Ninth Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals for a flow-control violation that occurred in July 2020. Division staff visit approximately 50 demolition sites a month to inform contractors about disposal requirements and disseminate educational flyers on C&D disposal. The staff also conducts quarterly inspections at all C&D transfer stations to ensure compliance with designated facility agreements and Title 10.



While paper, plastic, metal cans and glass are the most well-known recyclables, many items can be [recycled](#) in King County.

Designated recyclables in King County

As specified in the *Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan*, King County's list of designated recyclables is defined and updated by the Washington State Department of Ecology's annual statewide survey of materials that have been recycled in Washington. Designated recyclables in King County include (see: kingcounty.gov/solid-waste-comp-plan, Page 96):

- Carpet and pads
- Clean wood
- Construction and demolition debris
- Electronics
- Furniture
- Glass
- Metal
- Moderate risk waste (all-purpose cleaners, batteries, pesticides, used motor oil)
- Organics
- Other materials (latex paint, toner and ink cartridges, photographic film, tires)
- Paper
- Plastic
- Gypsum



Approximately 280,000 tons of C&D waste was disposed in 2021, generating \$1.2 million in revenues.

Transfer Stations

Providing customers with safe, efficient, and responsible waste disposal and transfer is a key service of the Solid Waste Division. In 2021, the SWD continued its work to modernize its transfer system, as outlined below.

Progress continues on updating the transfer system in south and northeast King County

In 2021, the Division made progress on design of its South County Recycling and Transfer Station Project to replace the aging Algona Transfer Station by 2026. It continued the siting process for the Northeast County Recycling and Transfer Station Project to replace the 60-year-old Houghton Transfer Station in Kirkland by 2027. Each facility will be designed to meet modern standards and offer better access to improved waste disposal and comprehensive recycling services.

Designed with the environment in mind, the new South County station will offer a full array of recycling services currently not available at the Algona Transfer Station. These services include convenient hazardous waste disposal for households and qualifying businesses. Also included are green building features, improvements to nearby creeks and wetlands, as well as public art and other community benefits such as a multipurpose room designed for environmental education. King County will keep the existing Algona Transfer Station open throughout construction of the new facility. In 2021,

SWD reached the 90 percent design level for the Algona Transfer Station and is preparing a competitive process for a construction contractor expected to occur in 2022. Construction is expected to begin in 2023 and the new station is scheduled for completion in 2026, barring supply chain or other unexpected issues.

The Division also continued its effort to engage the public in finding a site for the planned Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project. A siting advisory group comprised of 28 members that represent local businesses, community groups, schools, nonprofits, and environmental interests, as well as the cities of Woodinville, Redmond, Kirkland, and unincorporated King County, met four times in 2021. The group's purpose is to make sure community interests and values are provided to the technical team working to identify a feasible location for the station. Feedback from this group will help inform which sites should be further studied in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS is set to be published in 2022 and construction is expected to begin in late 2025.



The Solid Waste Division is modernizing its services to include increased recycling options in areas of King County that are underserved.

More than 1.9 million pounds of hazardous waste safely collected

Properly disposing of hazardous products that contain toxic, corrosive, flammable, or reactive ingredients can be challenging. The Haz Waste Program provides convenient hazardous waste collection services – in addition to prevention and education resources – to residents and businesses in King County. In 2021, the Haz Waste Program supported the implementation of a new statewide program to help residents and businesses conveniently recycle leftover paint, stain, and varnish. A nonprofit organization, [PaintCare](#), manages the stewardship program. Nearly 69,000 gallons of oil-based paint were recycled in 2021 at King County collection sites.

The Haz Waste Program makes disposal of many types of hazardous materials, such as cleaning products, motor oil, and pesticides, easy for customers. The Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station and Wastemobile hazardous waste sites collected waste from 44,667 residents and 300 small businesses in 2021. Notably, attendance at traveling Wastemobile events increased by nearly 13 percent, compared to 2020, serving a total of



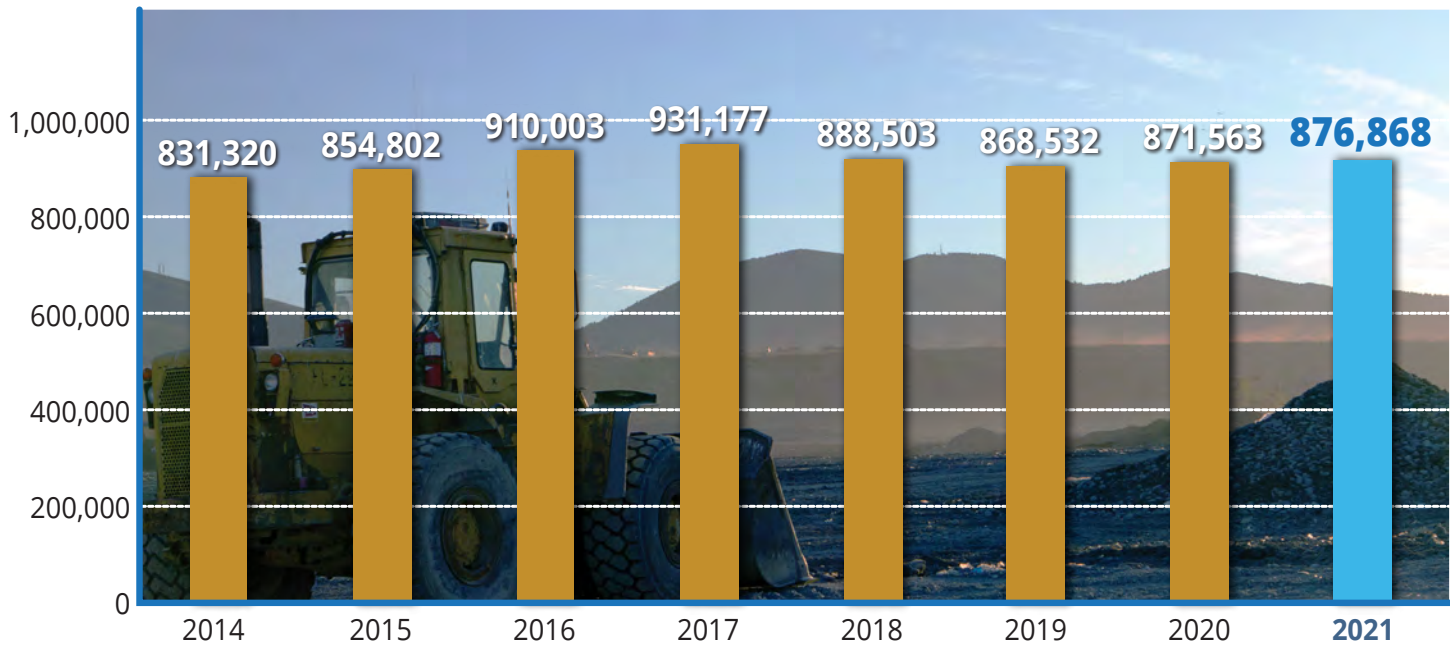
The Haz Waste Program makes disposal of many types of hazardous materials easy for customers.

13,769 customers in 2021 compared to 12,010 in 2020. More than 1.9 million pounds of hazardous materials were safely disposed of in 2021, protecting both the environment and public health.



The 2020 Site Development Plan and Facilities Relocation Project seeks to ensure that there is adequate disposal capacity at the landfill to continue accepting garbage beyond 2028.

Tons Disposed at Cedar Hills



Cedar Hills Regional Landfill

The Cedar Hills Regional Landfill has been in operation since the 1960s and is the last operating landfill in King County. Every day, more than 100 trucks deliver approximately 2,400 tons of garbage to the landfill for final disposal. The newly opened Area 8 is the current active area of the landfill, with the rest of the 920 acres devoted to reclaimed landfill areas and administrative facilities. An onsite gas-processing facility, operated by Bio Energy Washington (BEW), collects and purifies landfill gas so it can be sold as a renewable energy source. The system is capable of producing enough natural gas each year to meet the needs of up to 36,000 homes in King County or to substitute for the energy use of 11.2 million gallons of diesel fuel.

Disposal amounts

In 2021, 876,868 tons of garbage were disposed of at the landfill, representing a 1 percent increase, or about 7,700 more tons, compared to 2020 tonnage. During 2021, as businesses slowly started to open up again, commercially collected garbage from residential and non-residential sources grew by 23,081 tons (+3.6 percent). Self-Haul tonnage collected at transfer stations decreased by 5,400 tons (-2.7 percent). Regional Direct tonnage (residuals from the recycling centers) dropped by 7,800 tons (-24 percent).

The Bow Lake Recycling and Transfer Station continues to be the busiest facility, with 258,632 tons disposed there, followed by the Algona Transfer Station (152,438 tons), the Factoria Transfer Station (137,277 tons), and the Houghton Recycling and Transfer Station (134,710 tons).

Maximizing landfill capacity

The Cedar Hills Regional Landfill 2020 Site Development Plan and Facilities Relocation Project seeks to ensure there is adequate disposal capacity at the landfill to continue accepting garbage beyond 2028, as outlined in the [Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan](#). The project entails permanently moving support facilities, such as office spaces and maintenance buildings currently located at the landfill, so that these areas can be developed for garbage disposal. A final EIS that considers public comments on the draft proposal presented in 2020 is scheduled for publication in early 2022.

In 2021, many employees based at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill were relocated to interim office and warehouse spaces in Renton for the next five years to enable construction of new facilities needed to support operations. The decision to build the new structures was made because the existing buildings can no longer be repaired or updated.



The onsite Bio Energy Washington facility processes landfill gas into a renewable energy source.

Landfill gas-to-energy provides revenue

The Solid Waste Division contracts with the private entity BioEnergy Washington (BEW) to process landfill gas into pipeline-quality natural gas for sale to the marketplace. The purified landfill gas displaces fossil fuel-based natural gas and is used to power the facility and for

vehicle transportation. SWD also sells the renewable attributes – “green credits” that reflect the environmental benefit of putting the landfill gas to a productive use. From January through November, the Division earned \$3.1 million from gas it delivered to BEW, plus \$5.6 million it made by selling renewable attributes.

Equity and Social Justice

The Division is committed to advancing equity and social justice (ESJ) for its employees and customers.

Cleanup LIFT continues to make services more affordable

SWD implemented a low-income discount program called Cleanup LIFT in 2019 to make services more equitable for customers and to advance the ESJ goal of [pro-equity service delivery](#) in King County by reducing financial burdens to customers who spend a greater portion of their income on an essential service. This program offers a discounted disposal fee for lower-income customers who bring their garbage and recycling materials to a King County disposal facility.

King County residents who show their Provider One, EBT, or ORCA LIFT card are eligible to receive \$14 off the cost to dispose of recyclables, yard waste, and garbage. In 2021, the program had 14,888 transactions, saving customers almost \$180,000 and providing financial relief to the County’s most financially vulnerable customers. The number of 2021 transactions were triple the number of transactions that occurred in the inaugural year of 2019.



Incorporating equity and social justice into capital projects

To ensure capital projects are bid, designed, constructed, and operated equitably, the Division utilizes an ESJ Sustainability Scorecard that includes use of ESJ credits. The credits are used to track the implementation of pro-equity practices, processes, and outcomes throughout the capital project lifecycle. This new approach, coupled with an Equity Impact Review (EIR), is now coordinated and monitored by Division leadership, and is required going forward for all applicable new capital projects, with review required at every project milestone. This approach will ensure more diverse representation on the project and design teams, more opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and women-led contractors for project jobs, greater public participation in projects from frontline communities most impacted by climate change, and more apprenticeships for frontline communities. Lastly, with the new framework in place, the Division will be able to more quickly identify and resolve gaps in equity before they become embedded.

Examples of project-related ESJ actions include job training and apprenticeships during construction, with voluntary contractor goals related to hiring women and people of color, community-led restoration projects

that mitigate impacts of station operation, improvements to nearby hiking and biking trails, and amenities, such as accessible public meeting space for county-related activities and environmental education.

**STOP
RECYCLING
RACISM.**

**IT BELONGS IN
THE GARBAGE.**

*A Stop Recycling Racism Poster
was designed by SWD employees*

Creating a more equitable work environment

In 2021, the Division continued its efforts to create a more equitable work environment for its BIPOC employees. In September, the Division hired its first Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging manager to enhance the BIPOC employee experience, remove inequitable barriers to employment and advancement, and dismantle systemic racism. The activities of this position include targeted, consistent outreach efforts to BIPOC employees, ensuring a zero-tolerance policy regarding discrimination, harassment, and bullying; and analysis and elimination of discrepancies and inequities between similar positions and pay rates, among other actions.

Planning

The Solid Waste Division works with its 37 partnering cities, two advisory committees, the King County Council, and other stakeholders to ensure it is delivering value and the utmost in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal. The 37 cities King County serves are: Algona; Auburn; Beaux Arts; Bellevue; Black Diamond; Bothell; Burien; Carnation; Clyde Hill; Covington; Des Moines; Duvall; Enumclaw; Federal Way; Hunts Point; Issaquah; Kenmore; Kent; Kirkland; Lake Forest Park; Maple Valley; Medina; Mercer Island; Newcastle; Normandy Park; North Bend; Pacific; Redmond; Renton; Sammamish; SeaTac; Shoreline; Skykomish; Snoqualmie; Tukwila; Woodinville; and Yarrow Point. The service area also includes unincorporated communities.

New solid waste disposal rate supports essential services, invests in environmental goals

As approved by the Executive and the King County Council, the Division will enact an increase of 9.4 percent, or 71 cents per month, to residential curbside collection bills in January 2022, which is the first increase to solid waste fees since 2018. The rate reflects cost-saving measures to reduce operating expenditures and increases the discount rate for low-income customers, while supporting vital disposal and recycling programs, expanding services and modernizing facilities, and advancing climate neutrality goals.

New minimum disposal fees will change from \$22.53 per vehicle to \$24.64 per vehicle, and from \$140.82 per ton to \$154.02 per ton. Increased discounts for qualifying low-income customers through the Cleanup LIFT program will also coincide with the change, rising from \$12 to \$14 per transaction. Yard and wood waste fees will also increase from a minimum of \$12 per vehicle to a minimum of \$16 per vehicle, and from \$75 per ton to \$100 per ton. A mattress handling fee of \$30 per item will be instituted to cover the cost associated with disposal or recycling of these large, bulky items.

Revenue from the 2022 rate will allow SWD to continue essential services, support capital projects, and ensure continuation of programs crucial to protecting the environment. Revenue from the rate will also support efforts to fight climate change, increase recycling, and reduce waste.

Re+ (Formerly Zero Waste of Resources)

The formal adoption of King County's [2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan](#) (Comp Plan) by Ecology cleared the path for King County, through the Division and 37 partner cities, to modernize the solid waste transfer system and find new modes of garbage disposal after the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill reaches capacity, which is now estimated to be 2028.

Most importantly, the Solid Waste Comp Plan defines King County's goal to keep 70 percent of materials with economic value out of the landfill. Formerly called "Zero Waste of Resources by 2030," this initiative was rebranded in 2021 as "Re+." The name change represents a paradigm shift away from a 20th century model of waste management, which focused on buying or incinerating waste, toward a reimagined system in which resources go back into productive use, business takes a larger role in preventing waste, consumer products are designed to stay in use longer, local family-wage jobs are created in green manufacturing and recycled materials processing, and the waste and climate impacts generated by single-use throwaway items are greatly reduced.

During 2020-2021, a task force consisting of King County, partner cities, regional haulers, and community members met to discuss how to achieve zero waste of resources by 2030. The output from this task force was a list of Re+ actions to refine further with the MSWAC and SWAC into recommended actions King County and the region should pursue to increase recycling and divert waste. The task force also produced a proposed rate structure that addresses revenue disparities as

environmental efforts reduce revenues from garbage tipping fees. Initial phases will focus primarily on diverting food, paper, and plastics from the waste stream.

Solid Waste rate restructure

The rates charged by SWD are an investment in services and programs that reduce waste, increase recycling, and continue to responsibly and cost-effectively manage the disposal of garbage for 37 partner cities and 1.5 million people daily.

Expanding access to essential services that advance regional environmental goals is a priority. Yet the Division currently derives about 90 percent of its revenue from the basic fee to dispose of garbage at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill at a time when it is striving to increase the regional recycling rate, advance public education around waste reduction, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as called for in county policy directives. While these actions are publicly and environmentally beneficial, they also reduce the garbage tonnage the Division currently depends on as its primary revenue source, which is an unsustainable business model. A new rate structure is needed to help mitigate the impact of large increases in future rates on customers. An ordinance seeking to restructure the rate was transmitted to the King County Council in November 2021. This ordinance adds a fixed annual charge to commercial waste haulers that will provide a stable revenue source, independent of how much tonnage is brought in.



Over 70 percent of the waste sent to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill could have been repurposed. Re+ is about reducing the amount of garbage that needs to be managed by keeping materials in use longer and recovering economically valuable resources that now get buried in a landfill.



Actively engaging customers helps encourage and increase recycling participation.

2022 Outlook

Looking ahead to 2022, the Solid Waste Division will continue to strive for excellence in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

Rate proposal and rate restructure

The Division is currently working with MSWAC, SWAC, and the King County Executive Office to develop rate proposals for 2023 and 2024 for consideration by the King County Council. These rate proposals will ensure current service levels continue and enable progress to be made on work such as Re+ and carbon neutrality, and Solid Waste Comp Plan commitments, including building the South County Recycling and Transfer Station, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station, and expanding the life of the landfill.

Comprehensive plan updates

In 2022, the Division will engage with MSWAC and SWAC on how to update several chapters in the Comp Plan, notably the chapters on sustainable materials management, landfill management, solid waste disposal, and solid waste system financing.

Capital projects progress

In 2022, the Division will issue a Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill Site Development Plan and Relocation Project. The statement will reflect the comments received on the draft EIS and will identify a recommended, preferred alternative for maximizing landfill capacity at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. This will be followed by a decision by the Division Director in the Summer of 2022 on which landfill site development alternative studied in the environmental review will be chosen and a decision on where supported facilities will be relocated.

The South County Recycling and Transfer Station project will advertise for a contractor in preparation for construction in 2023. After considering input from the public and prospective host cities, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station project team plans to begin environmental review of site alternatives and plan for a public comment period in summer 2022.

2021

SOLID WASTE DIVISION

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