

# The Waterboro Recycler

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## STUDY ON SUCCESS OF “PAY AS YOU THROW” PROGRAMS IN MAINE

This study was conducted through the Maine State Planning Office to determine if the municipalities currently using the program felt they were successful.

Eighty towns and cities were used as a data base for this study and the first step was to develop a survey for the municipalities to answer; only eight questions were asked:

1. What is your town's unit price for stickers or bags?
2. When did your town implement a program?
3. Does your town use a Drop-off MSW program?
4. Is Curbside a service that is not provided by your town, but is available to residents via a private hauler, for which they to pay them - selves?
5. What motivated your town for switching to this system?
6. How was the fee established?

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## REDUCE – REUSE - RECYCLE



### WATERBORO RECYCLES

CARDBOARD – PAPERBOARD – FOOD BOXES  
PACKAGING BOXES – NEWSPAPER – BOOKS  
JUNK MAIL – OFFICE PAPER – MAGAZINES  
SHREDDED PAPER – CATALOGS – BAGS  
USED MOTOR OIL - ANTIFREEZE  
#1 THROUGH #7 PLASTICS – GIFT WRAP  
ALUMINUM FOIL AND FOOD CONTAINERS  
RINSED TIN CANS – EMPTY AEROSOL CANS  
METAL ITEMS – STEEL – BRASS  
ALUMINUM – TIN - COPPER  
RINSED GLASS JARS & BOTTLES – CHINA  
RETURNABLE & NON- RETURNABLE  
BOTTLES & CANS  
UNBAGGED GRASS – LEAVES – HAY  
NON WOODY PLANTS – MANURE – SAW DUST  
PORCELAIN FIXTURES – BRICKS – CEMENT  
CONCRETE & PATIO BLOCKS – CHIMNEY TILES  
RECHARGABLE BATTERIES – CELL PHONES

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7. Towards what does the town's fees generated from this program go? What does this generated revenue pay for?

8. In regards to adoption of a PAYT system, the ability of the program to defray/defer costs, and the ability of the program to help increase recycling rates, do you feel that your towns program has been successful?

Of the 80 municipalities contacted to provide documentation about their current system, 64 could provide complete information about their program. Of the 64 towns available to be interviewed, 49 had data that was suitable for analysis; 16 towns were determined as having incomplete records, many were missing 3 or more years of data. These 16 towns were not used because gaps in data made it difficult to accurately determine trends. Towns that had a limited number of annual tonnages available prior to and following the implementation of their program were not chosen because what data was available was questionable due to the amount of tonnage produced by the towns.

The general trend, of the towns studied, was a sharp to gradual decrease in Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) tonnage over time, correlating to a sharp to gradual increase in recycling tonnage. Success is considered, for the purposes of these variables, to be defined as, a steady increase in recycling and a steady decline in MSW 3 to 7 years following the implementation of the program. 75.4% of the towns studied, saw a prolonged increase in recycling

Of the 49 programs used in data analysis, 39 saw a decrease in MSW the year after the implementation of the program and conversely, 75.4% saw a prolonged increase in recycling in their municipality. In some towns this positive trend appears to reverse, 3 to 7 years following the implementation. Municipalities most often saw their tonnage plateau between 5 and 10 years after implementing the program. Once recycling and MSW tonnages leveled out, towns rarely saw their tonnages change or fluctuate in any way.

When answering the question about motivation for switching their solid waste programs the motivations that were assumed were not always the motivations that were ranked as a primary reason for switching. The motivations as being most important for towns include: revenue for the town and off-setting costs of running a MSW operation, increasing recycling rates, pay for additional services, and making people more aware of recycling. Of the motivations listed above, revenue and costs ranked as a primary motivator, increased recycling rates was next followed by making people aware of recycling and paying for other services ranked last. Some other motivations were noted in individual facilities: the towns landfill or dump was closed, or their town was opening a new facility; only a hand-full specifically mentioned to reduce taxes.

The participating towns were also asked the question, what have been your towns primary concerns and problems following implementation? 44.6% of the towns reported that there had been neither problems while implementing and running a new program. 20% of the towns cited concerns over illegal dumping by the roadside or in the woods and most stated that this problem never came to fruition. 4.6% of the towns were concerned about educating the public; this was surprising since educating residents is often considered one of the largest undertakings of a recycling program. 15.3% of the towns reported that resident acceptance and adoption was both a concern and a problem.

The three most common methods used to determine sticker or bag fees were: picking an arbitrary figure, using the total operating costs covered by disposing of MSW and just considering tipping fees and hauling costs associated with the disposal of MSW. Upon rationalizing the methods used, calculations were assumed, 41% of the towns: used an arbitrary figure, calculate MSW tonnage generated divided by the number of bags ranked second and using tipping and hauling fees divided by the average number of bags generated annually placed third. For the most part the 41% found these educated guesses proved correct.

The towns responded in basically four different ways as to how the revenues were used; 32.3% of the towns used fees generated directly towards transfer station operational costs, 15.3% used the revenues to directly off-set disposal costs and tipping fees and ranked fourth overall, second or 21.5% of the towns studied put revenue into the general fund, a general fund and matching funds through transfer station operational expenses is very common; another method includes funds going directly to private haulers.

Findings from the study recommend that towns should consider increases to the bag or sticker fees every 3-5 years to maintain ongoing success and thus avoiding residents growing apathic to the incentive. Towns having the most success began an education program about 6 months prior to the implementation of the "pay as you throw" system. 82.8% of the municipalities stated their program was successful at generating enough revenue to see a great savings in MSW disposal costs; some towns reported over 50% savings while many more saw budgets cut by at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup>. One-third to one-half of Waterboro's MSW would be very impressive!

This is an overview of a 30-page report done as a Summer Intern Project for Maine's Waste Management & Recycling Program.

## BEING GREEN PUTS MORE GREEN IN YOUR POCKET

Shut off lights – walk around your house and see the lights that are on and unnecessary

Get off mailing lists – get rid of junk mail

Put your monitor to sleep at night

Printing – use the economy or draft mode you'll be amazed at how much ink you will save

Batteries – purchase and use recyclable batteries

Curb phantom electricity – turn off those charges when not in use – shut off everything and watch your electric meter spin

Light bulbs – replace incandescent bulbs buy compact fluorescent bulbs uses 66% less energy

Tires – proper inflation improved gas mileage

Hot water – set your hot water heater at 103 degrees saves 10% on electric bill

Laundry – wash and rinse in cold water- save energy and your cloths will last longer too

Paper products – out with paper or Styrofoam cups and plates

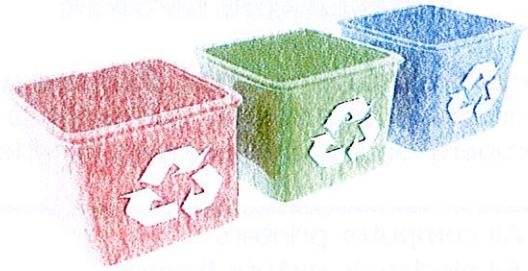
Appliances – purchase energy star appliances save energy and check on tax credits

Thermostat – program your thermostat to lower temperature when your not home

Recycle – Going to the transfer station – why not recycle it's the right thing to do & will lower your taxes

Trips – Plan your trips – save unnecessary travel do it all in the same day

Make these small adjustments in your life and lower your carbon footprint



## SINGLE SORT RECYCLING

Since the Town of Waterboro Selectmen voted to go to Single Stream Recycling our recycling rate has not increased as we hoped it would increase, why?

1. Some recyclers, for some reason, don't like that they no longer need to separate their recycling. I can assure these folks that single sort recycling is separated but instead of you doing it the equipment at Ecomaine sorts it. Waterboro is a part owner in Ecomaine, where all household trash and recycling ends up.
2. The world has been in a serious recession for the past couple of years; one of the industries that have suffered badly is the solid waste industry. Consumers just aren't replacing items and have cut discretionary spending to the bone therefore all recycling materials are not readily available. The good side of this equation is that demolition debris's, items that have to be disposed of in a landfill, are down in some cases nearly fifty percent.
- 3.

### On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, voters will be asked to vote on Question 2

“Do you want to cut the rate of the municipal excise tax by an average of 55% on motor vehicles less than six years old and exempt hybrid and other alternative-energy and highly fuel-efficient motor vehicles from sales tax and three years of excise tax.?”

Approximately 70% of all Maine vehicles currently registered would see no change in their excise tax.

Reducing Waterboro's excise tax income an estimated \$550,000.00 a year will significantly increase everyone's taxes if the town continues, as in past years, to vote and spend the excise tax on road repair, road rebuilding, plowing and salting town roads. If this passes it will require more significant expenditure reductions, much of which could only be accomplished by eliminating services and positions, including positions in municipal services as Police, Fire, Public Works and the Transfer Station.

Vote to conserve the town's excise tax income to be spent on keeping roads safe for our vehicles and school buses.

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The last legislative session produced more electronic waste that by law needs to be properly disposed of and gets recycled.

- ❖ All computer printers
- ❖ All electronic picture frames
- ❖ Any item that has a LED screen such as hand held computer games, digital cameras and camcorders

These items should be kept separate and should NOT be included in your household waste.

The State of Maine is a leader in Universal Waste legislation and recycling, the above items have been added to an already long list that includes televisions, computers, laptops, monitors, PCB ballasts, all mercury containing items and fluorescent lamps. Children and older folks can develop serious health issues when overexposed to mercury.

### When is Your Household Waste

#### Not Trash & Other Issues

Trash is not trash when it can be recycled. Two thirds of your household waste, including food and yard waste, can be recycled. Removing food and yard waste (a separate form of recycling) from your household waste (HHW) results in 60% recyclables left in your wastebasket.

It is important to remember and act on the fact that recycled materials cost less to process than standard HHW thus saving the town (Taxpayers) money.

Where does Waterboro rank in recycling and reducing trash disposal costs? The national recycling rate is about 32%. From fiscal year 7-1-08 to 6-30-09 the average recycling rate of the 20 ownership towns that contract with Ecomaine was 27.66%, Waterboro's average was 15.79%. Waterboro's recycling rate is currently 12% and rates 16<sup>th</sup> out of the 20 participating towns. This is not a very good effort considering the number of Waterboro taxpayers who use the transfer station of which only a small core group faithfully recycle. Many taxpayers throw bag after bag, every week, in the household waste without regard to the excessive costs that are incurred by doing so.

1. Recycling HHW reduces the cost of processing trash
2. Recycling reduces the amount of HHW we haul to Ecomaine at \$88.00 a ton plus shipped costs
3. Recycling is good for everyone & the environment

How many ways can one state that recycling costs less, saves money and benefits everyone including Mother Nature.

Recycling cost savings fact: for every 1% of trash recycled and removed from HHW saves the town (Taxpayers) \$2,500.00 in disposal and trucking cost.

The individuals who continually recycle every week save the transfer station budget about \$30,000.00 a year. A 36% to 48% recycling rate would reduce the budget \$90,000.00 to \$120,000.00, this would significantly reduce taxes. This would result in a big savings by a small (serious) effort on the part of many individuals. Teamwork pays off .....it always has and it always will. Are the people of Waterboro a "team type" town when it comes to recycling?

Historically all solid waste expense is voted on as one big article in the warrant at town meeting; this also includes the transfer station expenses for dealing with all other non-household waste materials. All taxpayers share equally the cost associated with solid waste disposal and hides the fact that one person may generate one bag a week while another may generate several bags a week; therefore there is no equity in a system that charges every taxpayer the same when in fact every taxpayer's usage is different. In addition seasonal residents use the facility much less than year-round residents but are taxed the same and some may only rarely use the facility. This issue needs to be addressed and corrected.

Over the years many improvements have been made to the transfer station/recycling facility with an eye to making the facility more user friendly with better access to all areas for disposing of everything from HHW to backyard waste. In March 2009 the board of selectmen voted to change the recycling method to single-stream recycling where by all recyclables from your HHW could be mixed together in the former cardboard only compactor. Change is sometimes confusing and the location of this compactor is not ideal at the present time but single-stream recycling has made recycling easier, less time consuming, eliminates multiple containers, it's just plain simpler.

Nationwide results of single-stream recycling systems has shown a 3% increase in recycling; Waterboro's results has shown a 3% decrease. Go figure!

The Selectmen and Transfer Station/Recycling Committee are in the process of reassessing the current system. The objective is to significantly increase the recycling rate to 35% to 40% and lower overall cost associated with HHW disposal in a more equitable manner.

This is a local issue that needs to be addressed by as many individuals as possible. Unlike so many issues in the world today where we are at the mercy of others outside of our town, we can work together to increase recycling and lower the cost of trash disposal. Please share your ideas, needs and wants when at the transfer station, email us at [www/Waterboro-maine.gov](http://www/Waterboro-maine.gov), come to a Transfer Station Committee meeting on the fourth Monday of every month at 6 pm in the Old town hall annex, or attend a selectmen's meeting on Tuesday night at 6 pm.

Together we can improve our present trash system.

David C. Woodsome  
Chairman

Waterboro Transfer / Recycling Center Committee

**REDUCE – REUSE - RECYCLE**