

Funding for expansion project will be sought again

Number of topics on table for Solid Waste

This year, 2014, has been and continues to be a critical year for Polk County Solid Waste. Some of the issues include:

- Contracts for solid waste with our partner counties expire on Dec. 31, 2014. Extensions are being secured for 2015 and beyond.

- Contracts for hauling solid waste and recyclable materials between our facilities also expire at the end of the year, as do the steam contracts for our partner businesses in the Fosston Industrial Park.

Costs for equipment, fuel, utilities and labor continue to increase for all areas of solid waste management. This is resulting in tip fees around the region either increasing, or possibly increasing after the end of their existing contracts.

However, Polk County has instead reduced the tip fee for 2015 in anticipation of securing additional waste from our partner counties. The tip fee for municipal solid waste (MSW) is set to decrease from \$72.50 per ton to \$65.00 per ton in 2015.

Missed out on funding

Polk County was unsuccessful in securing funding for its expansion project from the 2014 Legislature.

The county had submitted a request for funding for a comprehensive, shovel-ready regional project to benefit public and private regional entities alike in both the areas of solid waste and recycling.

The expansion project for which funding was sought included:

- State monies to help defray costs related to expansion of the waste processing infrastructure at the Resource Recovery Facility (Incinerator) in Fosston;

- The addition of a larger boiler to supply steam to steam customers;

- The addition of waste processing and composting equipment at the Landfill complex near Gentilly;

- Construction of a new transfer station in Bemidji and other smaller modifications which support our regional system.

These changes would have allowed Polk and its partner counties to increase recycling rates, decrease recycling costs, reduce the total volume of waste going to landfills, extract more recyclables from the waste stream prior to disposal, allow for expanded composting opportunities, and provide the infrastructure necessary to continue our partnerships well into the future.

Will try again

Polk County, on behalf of the counties of Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomon, Norman and Polk, intends to seek funding for this project again in the 2015 legislative session.

Discussions on a 2015 funding opportunity have begun on the Senate side, and will begin on the House side following the upcoming elections.

Also of note —

PaintCare — A statewide initiative to have the manufacturers of architectural paint pay for the management of unwanted paint was set to be implemented by state law earlier this summer.

The intent of the PaintCare law was to provide a more convenient opportunity for the consumer to deposit this unwanted paint, and to reduce/eliminate the financial burden on local governments

for providing this service currently.

Unfortunately, PaintCare has been unable to comply with the legal requirements to implement that program as required by law, and the future of this program in Minnesota is in jeopardy should compliance not be achieved in the near future.

Source Separated Organic Material (SSOM) Compost — The 2014 Legislature did establish SSOM composting targets for Minnesota counties. SSOM is that portion of the waste stream that is comprised of organic materials (fruits, vegetables, clean/non-recyclable paper products, etc.).

These requirements are in place in the 7-county metro area but are not required statewide at this time. It should be noted that county solid waste plans across the state are required to have addressed the composting of SSOM.

It would be reasonable to believe that the metro composting requirement would be expanded to non-metro areas at some future date.

Commercial Recycling — The 2014 Legislature did establish a requirement for commercial entities to recycle.

Entities generating more than 4 cubic yards of waste per week are required to recycle. This requirement is in effect in the 7-county metro area and not required statewide. Again, it would be one of those requirements that may be expanded to all areas of Minnesota at some future date. — **Jon Steiner, Environmental Services administrator**