

State and Local Waste Planning

In 1988, the King County Solid Waste Division conducted an environmental impact study thoroughly examining the costs and benefits of several solid waste management options. Based on the findings in the environmental impact analysis, the King County Council established a goal of reducing and recycling 65 percent of our wastes by the year 2000 and reevaluating the need to construct a waste incinerator facility as part of King County's solid waste system.

With this directive, and in compliance with state laws, the King County Solid Waste Division developed a Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. This plan called for development of waste reduction and recycling programs and outlined plans for the future development of King County's solid waste disposal facilities.

At the same time that King County developed its 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the Washington State Legislature passed the "Waste Not Washington Act," which established priorities and program goals for solid waste management on a state level and set a statewide recycling goal of 50 percent by 1995. It placed much of the responsibility for achieving this goal on city and county governments. Although significant progress was made toward this goal, it has not yet been met: the state recycling rate was 33 percent in 1999, 38 percent in 2003, and 43 percent in 2006.

It soon became clear that it is difficult to measure accurately the two different activities of waste reduction and recycling with a single, combined numerical goal. First, it is difficult to quantify waste that is never generated

when successful reduction programs are implemented. Second, the amount of waste being recycled has not been well documented among the many different agencies and private companies that handle it. In 1995, the King County Council replaced the single, numerical goal with a two-tiered goal. The first component is a mission: to divert as much material as possible from disposal in a manner that reduces the overall costs of solid waste management to county residents and businesses, conserves resources, protects the environment, and strengthens the county's economy (King County Code 10.22.035). The second component is a more comprehensive and understandable method for measuring our progress in attaining this mission, including specific targets for residential and business recycling and disposal, as well as measures of the success of specific programs.

In 1996, Governor Lowry commissioned the Washington State "Future of Recycling" Study, in which members of the recycling industry, government officials, business leaders, representatives of environmental organizations, and members of labor unions participated in a series of meetings to evaluate the accomplishments of the recycling industry to date and determine the future direction of state recycling policy. Among many other findings and recommendations, the study's Task Force recommended that the state commit itself to achieving a sustainable environment and economy by the year 2020. Eliminating waste is a key foundation of sustainability and should be the goal of Washington's integrated solid waste



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management strategy. The study's vision called for eliminating or minimizing waste, minimizing the lifecycle impacts of products and packaging, and recycling materials that are not reused.

Under Governor Locke, the Washington State Department of Ecology updated its State Solid Waste Management Plan for the first time since 1991, following the passage of the Waste Not Washington Act. The Beyond Waste Plan, released in November 2004, provides guidance for reducing the use of toxic substances, decreasing waste generation, increasing recycling, and properly managing

any remaining wastes. The Beyond Waste vision states, "We can transition to a society where waste is viewed as inefficient, and where most wastes and toxic substances have been eliminated. This will contribute to economic, social, and environmental vitality."

In 2004, King County adopted a Zero Waste of Resources 2030 policy with the goal of minimizing disposal of all materials that have economic value. The new King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan currently under development has set a single family recycling target of 45 percent by 2015 (not including yard waste) for each city and unincorporated areas.