

## **Gustavus Disposal & Recycling Center (DRC) Quarterly Staff Report**

**Paul Berry, DRC Manager/ Operator**

**Monday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

My last quarterly report was during the August 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and my next scheduled quarterly report is during the February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 General Meeting.

### **Operations and management**

Winter at the DRC has its pluses and minuses. On the good side there is less waste per day to deal with. The big guy, Glacier Bay Lodge & Tours has long been closed for the winter and most of the other smaller businesses utilizing our facility have closed down or scaled back for winter so now typically the DRC receives 700 to 1,400 pounds per day of operation rather than four or five times that amount. This is the time of year for planning and office work (and it is a good time to take a break and be a tourist somewhere else).

On the bad side there is no assistant operator working with me so more and more recyclables pile up waiting to be baled. Due to all the seasonal rain and the fact that our skid-steer loader (Bobcat) uses tracks the ground gets very muddy especially in the food waste composting yard. This is ironic because I put the tracks on the Bobcat so I can do work in the mud – a bad feedback loop.

During the last week of October six old fiberglass boats from the Salmon River Boat Harbor along with some other bulky items from the DRC were loaded on one of Frontier Freight's trailers for transport and disposal at Capital Disposal in Juneau. This is an example of Gustavus exporting non-recyclable waste. This shipment represented items that can be shipped on the ferry and were items that would have consumed a lot of airspace and been very difficult for the DRC to effectively landfill.

One of the challenges facing the DRC and every other recycler in America right now is the fact that markets for our recycle commodities; aluminum cans, mixed paper, scrap metal, plastic etc. are very poor. The value of these materials has been declining for the past year+ after declining a lot from record highs right before the recession hit in 2008 – 9. The prices paid for recyclable materials is down 30% – 60%.

I am still working on the FY15 Annual Report of Waste Processing, Income & Expenses. Hopefully by the next reporting cycle...

### **2015 to 2020 ADEC Permit renewal – the final chapter**

The City's five year solid waste permit renewal with ADEC was issued on August 21<sup>st</sup> and is in effect through September 1, 2020. Of significance in this permit renewal are:

Mandated improvements to the DRC's entry sign. I will be submitting purchase order(s) this quarter for new entry signs with the information required. The color scheme for signs at the DRC is green letters on a white background. This compliments the white letters on green background for the City's Marine Facility signs in the Salmon River Boat Harbor.

Changes in the Gustavus [groundwater] monitoring plan. Background: the DRC has four active groundwater monitoring test wells on the property. Two are upstream (of the facility) test wells between State Dock Road and the DRC and two are downstream test wells close to the Salmon River Boat Harbor. All of these wells have been regularly sampled since the early 1990s. The current sampling frequency for each well is once every three years.

The previous protocol was to sample the two upstream wells in the fall and then the two downstream wells in the following spring. Sampling upstream was during the period of high

precipitation (fall) and during a monthly high-high tide window. Sampling the downstream wells was during the period of low precipitation (spring) and during a low-low tide window. With the amended plan the sampling events include both an upstream and down stream test well during the same event so that the effect on the groundwater flowing under the facility can be better observed. When upstream and downstream sampling events were at separate times it was harder to see this effect. I most recently sampled using the new protocol on Wednesday October 28<sup>th</sup>. The results should be known by my next report.

Finally, with this permit renewal was the removal of the stipulation that there be no expansion of the facility to the east or south of the original 1994 fenced in area. I requested this change as my previous reports have stated and I heard no objects to this request. As part of the City's SWMP planning process I believe the City needs maximum flexibility as to how to develop the facility over the long term. How the DRC looks from State Dock Road and adjacent properties is always something I have always taken seriously and will continue to do so for as long as I work at the DRC.

### **Community Chest**

We are transitioning into the winter time mode where the summer's accumulation is sorted and purged (as well as the on-going daily donations...). Items are sorted into what is re-salable, what is best exported to the Hoonah Thrift Store or The Glory Hole and Amazing Book Store in Juneau and finally what items are to be recycled or landfilled at the DRC. Betsy Lesh is our leader in this process and she has a lot of good help that we are all indebted to.

Since my last report the volunteers operating the front desk have been:

Monday evenings (though August): Mary Costner & Sandy Hancock; Wednesdays: Annie Mackovjak, Mary Williams & Betsy; Saturdays: Liz Vanderzanden, Judy Brakel, Annie, Betsy, Karen Milligan & Jo Nerger. We were also blessed with the help of Momma at the front desk on Saturday October 31<sup>st</sup>. Other volunteers include: Artemis Bona Dea, Laurie Ross, Kelly Vandenburg, Julie Howel, Joan Williams, Becky King, Deb Johnson, Meadow Brook, Kim Ney, Bonnie ?, KT Mattingley & Brenda Tencate (my apologies if I overlooked your name). In fiscal year 2015 the volunteers at the Chest logged more than 727 hours. Thank you all again.

Thanks to Jozee Archambault and (the former) Wings Airlines for flying over 40 boxes of clothing last summer to the Hoonah Thrift Store. Thanks too to Kim Ney for hauling several boxes of books to the Amazing Book Store in Juneau and several boxes of clothing to the Glory Hole.

A note to the Community at large – please do not bring boxes of books to the Chest. A few books okay but not boxes. Just in the past month the DRC has processed over 400 pounds of books from the Chest. Boxes of books are a no-income burden for our thrift store. I can help you decide what should go to the Amazing Book Store in Juneau and what should go to the DRC for recycling (we do recycle books but shipping makes it expensive). The Chest does not have much room to display books and many titles are dated - no one buys 5-10 year old dictionaries, encyclopedias, text books and the like. Unfortunately the Chest does not have the room to be a good book museum or library.

### **Regional issues: Southeast Alaska Solid Waste Authority (SEASWA), Juneau**

There have been no SEASWA meetings since I last wrote.

The Cooperative Recycling Agreement (or whatever it will hopefully be called) with the City & Borough of Juneau:

Nothing formal has been adopted by either party and we are still in the pilot project phase of this proposal (please read my last report for some background). In late September the DRC shipped 14 bales to Capital Disposal's recycling facility in Juneau. This facility is operated by Waste Management under contract with CBJ. The bales we shipped were the summer accumulation of certain materials (in pounds: 5,862 cardboard, 686 HDPE, 5,774 mixed paper & 1,027 PETE). The hope of this project is that the City will save money by shipping with CBJ. As I mentioned earlier prices for recycled materials are very depressed so it is not so much a question of how much \$ we get from CBJ for this but rather how much \$ we owe them (overall our shipping is greater than the value of these materials). The numbers for the pilot shipment haven't come in yet.

### **Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP)**

Not much development on paper with this project. In the summer and fall I have to be more of an operator than a manager so this project takes a back seat but I am always thinking about it. As we move into winter and I have a little bit more time for planning issues I will work on the SWMP more. The DRC functions but it needs a lot of improvement. Planning is the carrot that I hold in front of myself to give me hope. Projects related to the SWMP are included in the list below.

### **Capital Projects**

The DRC is in need of significant and important facility improvements so it can better serve the public and be a safe and efficient place for the Operator to work. A good time to take a look at Capital Projects is with the start of a new council year and with preparation for fiscal year 2017.

Integrated with the on-going SWMP process I am focusing on seven main areas of improvement for the DRC:

(this list is very similar as to what I wrote out in my last report)

Priority 1/ immediate

- Creation of a circular drive through driveway. I am proposing a traffic loop through an area which is now a mound of dirt and bale storage. Traffic redirection is a matter of public safety & operator efficiency. *Project has a scoping document as part of the Materials Storage areas project. However, this document needs to be updated.*
- Landfill mound building. It is fairly easy to dig a pit and throw trash in it but successfully building a stable mound of waste and dirt that properly sheds rainwater and takes landfill gas generation into account is a more complex project. It will require engineering/ consulting to insure a logical layout and use, maximum efficiency in the use of cover soil and to insure stability as it grows. The initial step in this process is for the City to put out an RFP/RFQ for a topographic survey of the landfill to determine existing heights and to have a baseline for volume calculations. The staff of the Kenai Peninsula Borough were very helpful in this matter by sharing a copy of their RFQ for survey and volume calculations for two of their remote landfills. *Project has no scoping document or work plan at this point in time.*
- Materials Storage areas for both pre-processing (bins) and post-processing (bales). This project would involve developing the area between the landfill fence and Boat Harbor Road to replace the storage which is now occurring inside the fence on top of previously deposited waste. Storage and waste landfilling need to be separated to increase efficiency and to promote grading of the landfill site. *Project has a scoping document from the current fiscal year. Current scoping document needs to be updated*
- Maintenance of the Community Chest building. Some exterior shingles need to be replaced, the oil tank re-painted, some window repairs and repair of the wooden fence.

*No planning document for this project exists at this time.*

## Priority 2

- Composting improvements – during periods of high rainfall the composting yard is going to become filled with ankle deep mud that requires use of the Bobcat tracks just to do the work of composting. This area needs a hardened surface and means for controlling runoff. The Quonset is approaching it's 10 year lifespan and will need replacement or refurbishment. *Project is documented in the 2014 Solid Waste Plan/ scoping document*
- Main Building replacement – this is about having enough room for people, their waste and for the Operator(s) to do his or hers job without being in the public's workspace. It is about having year-round running water, a small, heated scale house booth for the Operator (for writing on log forms and computer terminal work in the winter) *No actual plans exist at the current time aside from some aerial view sketches*
- Baler upgrade: Our current trash baler is undersized for the work being required of it and it is nearly 20 years old. The larger CRAM-A-LOT baler could be used for trash but would need to be reconfigured for efficient feeding and cleaning. As part of the SWMP process I plan on specifying a baler that would be more suitable to our operation. Materials compaction is a central operation for landfilling waste and for exporting recyclables. *No scoping document for main baler replacement at this time*

Not wanting to wait 5 or more years to fix the above situation a possible short-term approach to fixing the too small baler issue is to reconfigure our tipping floor so that either baler can be used for baling waste. This would take significant re-arranging within the main building but help relieve some issues while planning for a bigger building and larger baler go forward.

There are the other perennial projects: Skid-steer replacement, a Household Hazardous Waste storage unit and the purchase of a truck for waste hauling and a trailer for transporting the skid-steer loader.

## **Education and training proposals**

I would also like to propose as a part of the planning and SWMP process that I take a 3 – 5 day hands-on training class in composting. I would arrange this class to coincide with a site visit to one or more composting facilities that are working with food waste. I am not looking for a training credential so much as I am looking for skills and lessons learned at other facilities for the improvement of our facility. So far candidate facilities are in California, South Carolina and Florida.

I would also like to propose taking a fact finding trip to Petersburg during the coming spring or fall shoulder season to learn first-hand about their baling and shipping facilities. Again, I feel that lessons learned at other facilities can be used in our SWMP planning process.

*Report compiled by PNB on November 9, 2015*