

Gustavus Disposal & Recycling Center (DRC) Quarterly Staff Report
Paul Berry, DRC Manager/ Operator
Monday, August 12th, 2019

My last quarterly report was at the May 13th General Meeting. My next quarterly report is scheduled for the November 11th General Meeting.

Included in this report is the accompanying August 2019 Facility Statistics for Fiscal Years 2015 – 2019 (July 1st – June 30th) Five Year Comparison.

General Operations and Management

Labor

Staffing with the DRC labor pool (Pool) this summer depends on the day of the week: Tuesday is Paul Dzubay and Kenn Magowan, Thursday is Paul D and Jeff Irwin and Saturday is Kenn and Jeff. You'll notice that I am not one of the regular summer workers. As mentioned in my previous report, starting in FY20 my hours have been reduced and more hours have been added to the Pool. My work is now more focused on managing the DRC operation: coordinating recycling shipments, managing the composting operation, coordinating equipment repairs, building maintenance and facility planning.

This summer marks 25 years for me at the DRC. Back in July of 1994 I worked two, four hour days a week by myself. My duties included collecting fees (\$2.00 a bag), managing the burn pit, crushing glass and managing the aluminum can recycling program. Our landfill operation has changed a bit in that time...

As part of the succession planning for my position as DRC Manager I am proposing the creation of a new, regular, DRC Operator position. The Pool would go from the current five members down to two or three members. This change would not be an overall increase of hours at the DRC, rather it is a reorganization of hours and duties to ensure there is a year-round individual who is well versed in the operation of the DRC and is in a position to act as a temporary replacement for me during my absences and would be a candidate for replacing me when I am no longer working at the DRC. The Pool members or myself would act as a replacement for the DRC Operator during their absences and the Pool would provide 2nd person staffing for Saturdays and the summer season when two operators are needed. As a regular position the DRC Operator would know that they are expected to work for the City year round in a seasonal full-time, part-time capacity and as a regular employee they would receive the benefits of regular employment with the City. This change in benefits will incur additional expenses for the City because a regular employee is entitled to the health insurance stipend, paid time off and retirement whereas the temporary Pool members receive no such benefits. I know there is aversion within the community about the City creating new positions and I am willing to take the time to work out these concerns with the goal of the new position becoming part of the FY21 budget. If we want dependable staffing at the DRC and a good succession plan for the Manager position, two regular positions at the DRC is not an unreasonable request.

The compost scene

More food waste is being composted this year than in the past several years. I attribute this to growth in the community and the absence of the hog farming operation out at Rink Creek. I will cover the topic of replacing the Quonset later in this report under the Capital Project Summary section.

One of the challenges with composting more food waste is obtaining enough wood chips for the operation. In the past the Park provided most of our wood chips and once in a while the State would provide wood chips. However, neither of these sources are really providing any

this year so I am relying on sawdust from local sawmills. This is more expensive for our operation as the sawdust has to be hauled to the DRC. Because of its small particle size sawdust is a good source of carbon for the composting process but it does not provide porosity (porosity is defined as spaces in a material) which is necessary for keeping oxygen supplied to the compost pile. Currently I am able to use a mix of sawdust and “overs” (large wood chips, bones, etc. that have passed “over” the sifting screen of the compost sifter) to provide the composting process with both carbon and porosity but I will run out of overs as well. While the City did provide the DRC with funds for the purchase of a wood chipper attachment for our larger Bobcat loader, I have held off on this purchase because of additional costs that will occur with the new compost facility (Quonset replacement). Even with a wood chipper however the DRC will still need brush and tree limbs to chip and the DRC will have to pay for transporting the Bobcat to the brush and for getting the chips back to the DRC. These are the expenses of a viable composting operation especially one that is processing more material as time goes on. However, composting produces a useful soil amendment for the community and is more sustainable than attempting to burn food waste or dealing with the long term consequences coming from the direct burial of food waste.

Zender Group work

In June I did my first work as a trainer for the Zender Group as a part of their sustainable solid waste management class held in Anchorage. In that Class I met Jeromy Grant who works for the Hoonah Indian Association’s Environmental Office and to make a long story short on June 24th I had my first opportunity to go to Hoonah to see their solid waste operation in person and help Jeromy with Hoonah’s first e-waste collection event. Both Jeromy and I see ways that Gustavus & Hoonah could work together to improve our respective solid waste and recycling operations. Gustavus has successful recycling and composting programs that Hoonah could learn from and Hoonah has access to Alaska Marine Line’s barge service. It may be possible for the two communities to pool their recycling shipments together and lower transportation costs. There is a lot to look at and work out with these ideas but I am grateful to at last have a first hand understanding of Hoonah’s solid waste scene.

Community Chest

The Community Chest made over \$16,000 in the last fiscal year, a new record. This is a reflection of a town that likes thrift shopping and a very dedicated volunteer staff at the Chest. As always I am very indebted to Betsy Lesh’s committed volunteer work in managing the day to day operation at the Chest.

This summer, in order to better control the deliveries of junk to the Chest, Betsy and I have decided to keep the yard at the Chest closed except during the Chest’s hours of operation. This has reduced the volume of low quality donations but does present other challenges such as the need of additional volunteer staffing at the Chest to work with and screen deliveries of incoming donations, especially on Saturdays.

Since my last report our front desk volunteers have been - Saturdays: Judy Brakel, Annie Mackovjak, Vickie Bender & Betsy. Wednesdays: Catherine Anderson, Mary Williams, Vicki with additional support by Samantha (Sam) Courdain and Jo Nerger.

On Wednesdays, and on other days as well, there is sorting, purging and stocking. Since May our volunteers have been: Betsy, Ben Sadler, Carolyn Warren, Becky King, Cathy Martineau, Laura Ross, Kim Ney, Grace Berestecki, Annie, Joyce Lupro, Joyce Gallagher, Vikki Garrett, Katy Dighton, Carolyn Elder, Kim Ney, Joey Bosworth, Koren Bosworth and Sam (hopefully I didn't miss anybody).

Solid Waste Management and Facility Planing Process (“SWMP”)

I have been fortunate to have the support of our City Administrator, Tom Williams, as I put

more effort into completing this important solid waste planning document for the council. Yes, Tom and others would like to have had this report yesterday but this is a very challenging document for me as I would really like to see it cover all the aspects of our operation from careful descriptions of our building and equipment needs, to thorough descriptions of our recycling, composting and non-recyclable waste disposal programs – both existing and proposed. On top of this is are the overall diversion or “zero landfilling” goals, changes in personnel with increased efficiency and waste storage, changes in policy (user fee etc.) and a time-line for when these improvements are to occur. Then there needs to be site diagrams to show what the changes will look like and tables and graphs which demonstrate the increases in waste that our facility is attempting to accommodate. I am doing my best to work on this plan in a timely fashion but good work takes time. One of the primary focuses of the new plan will be replacing our current, undersized building with a larger building. Another important factor in the new plan is upgrading our waste baling operation. Currently, both of our waste handling balers are owned by the Park Service and are undersized for the amount of material that our facility is running through them. The current balers are hand-fed and in most cases it would be more efficient to have a large in-feed hopper on the baler that a small Bobcat loader would feed. The benefits of a larger, more efficient baler is that instead of taking a whole day to bale a given recyclable material it would take an hour or two and instead of producing a 600 pound bale we could produce a larger 1,000 bale. Like-wise when we are currently baling non-recyclable solid waste it takes 20 – 30 minutes to produce a 250- 350 pound bale and over the course of a busy summer day we will make five or six of these small bales. A larger, horizontal baler would instead make one, dense 1,600 pound bale. Our shipping costs would be reduced because we would have greater density for the materials in the shipping van and our waste mound would have a slightly extended life by having more compressed bales placed in it. With a larger building that has a lot more room to store waste, the Operator does not have to bale waste everyday but can allow the waste to accumulate for when there is enough waste to make a bale. A new building and a new baler will be expensive so there has to be careful justification of why and how these improvements will save \$ and space over time.

Capital Project Summaries

Community Chest Maintenance

This project is mostly replacing and upgrading the seriously rusted heating oil tank with a double wall UL-142 compliant tank similar to City Hall, the Library and the Fire Hall. The old tank has been removed, the new one is installed and ready for use.

Additionally there has been minor repairs in the main building such as: repairing and painting the floor and repairing and painting the exterior walls. The work is being done by a Pool member (Paul Dzubay), local contractors and volunteers.

Composting System/ Quonset replacement

Project description:

The objective of this project is to build a custom designed composting facility that is a 40' wide x 8' deep, ~12' high, shed roofed building constructed with a concrete lower portion and a wood framed upper portion. Each of the five 8' x 8' concrete bins that make up this building will have 4" PVC pipes embedded in the concrete that will feed air to two plenums in the floor. This will provide positive aeration to the bin. Air is supplied by central electric blower controlled by a timer and a temperature probe. Active air flow is not always necessary for our composting operation, however when we are processing a lot of material or material such as fish waste positive aeration is essential to avoid serious odor events. Each bin will have a set of double doors to provide access to the bin and provide for bird control when all the doors are closed. This building will be very durable and as I mentioned it will

be bird proof. It will have the capacity to compost more material than we currently do and in a fashion that is more efficient for the Operator than the system we currently have. As I mentioned it will also allow the DRC to take on the composting of fish waste – provided we can keep a steady supply of wood chips and sawdust coming ...

The new composting facility is to go where the Quonset currently is so prior to the construction of the Compost facility the Quonset building will need to be carefully disassembled with the intent of re-using the metal framing material for another project.

Project status:

Construction of the composting facility has been delayed due to the fact that the plans did not have an Alaska based engineer's stamp on them. This was not something I was aware of at the beginning of the project. Fortunately the City has entered into a purchase order agreement with Timberline Engineering (of Juneau) and Terra Construction and Design (of Gustavus, Matt Davis) to create one set of bid ready plans for the new composting facility. Because of this delay I decided to include water delivery system (cistern and/ or well) into the design of the project rather than have it as a poorly defined add-on as it originally was. One of the elements of this PO agreement is for the City to get an accurate estimate for what the construction of the project will cost. Currently, the time-line for completion of this agreement and the creation of the RFQ for construction would be November with construction of the facility in the spring of next year.

Inflow Storage and Household Waste Facility Storage Area Project

This is the area between the Small Boat Harbor Road and the Landfill fence that will be turned into a storage area for recyclables prior to their being baled or otherwise processed. Items that are currently being stored in a number of different areas far from the building that house the processing equipment. At this point an RFQ is being drafted that will hopefully be ready for Council review this fall.

Household Hazardous Waste Facility

This project is the purchase of a 20' long x 8' wide & 8' high container designed for household hazardous waste storage. The unit includes spill containment, ventilation, shelving, and signage. The proposed container will be fully-constructed at a facility in the lower 48 and is ready to use upon arrival in Gustavus. At this time I am going over the specifications and have been working on developing a list of at least three vendors that I will solicit quotes from. Shipping costs have changed since I last went over the costs for this project and I will need to insure that we can get the new facility here and set up within the project's budget.

The end, thank you.

Report compiled by paul.berry@gustavus-ak.gov

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