
To: Patty, Daley, Michele White, Kari Parcell
Barnstable County/Cape Cod Commission

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From: Debra Darby, Tetra Tech

Date: May 26, 2021

Subject: Barnstable County MSW Diversion Options for Recyclable, Reusable and Hard to Dispose Waste Materials; Task 2 – Waste Diversion Focus Group Summary

INTRODUCTION

Working with Barnstable County (the County), the Project Team identified stakeholders for the Waste Diversion Focus Group meeting. An agenda was prepared, and a set of in-depth interview questions were developed to understand and explore various options for managing the specific components of the solid waste stream. The intent of the Waste Diversion Focus Group was to gain insights from the participants on the options for recyclable, reusable and hard to dispose waste materials on Cape Cod and the Islands of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

The Waste Diversion Focus Group Meeting was conducted virtually on Thursday April 29, 2021 from 12:30pm-2pm. The Host participants included Patty Daley and Michele White with the Cape Cod Commission (CCC), Kari Parcell, MassDEP Municipal Assistance Coordinator/Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, Debra Darby with Tetra Tech, Brad Kelly and Eugenia Manwelyan with GBB. The technical component of the meeting was run by David Still and observed by Sarah Colvin, both with CCC.

The Waste Diversion Focus Group participants included members of municipal recycling committees and local environmental groups. The names of focus group attendees and their affiliation are listed below:

1. Carol Ewing, Yarmouth Recycling Committee
2. Paul Hebert, Barnstable Town Councilor
3. Graeme Durovich, Nantucket Recycling Coordinator
4. Mary Ryther, Falmouth Recycling Coordinator
5. Thomas Jung, Provincetown Recycling Committee/Recycling Rules
6. Amy Wolff, Truro Recycling Committee
7. Michele Kyrimes, Dennis Recycling Committee
8. Gary Senecal, Eastham Recycling Committee
9. Chris Powicki, Cape Cod Chapter, Sierra Club
10. Lydia Vivante, Wellfleet Recycling Committee
11. Janet Williams, Cape Cod Climate Collaborative
12. Andrew Gottlieb, Association to Preserve Cape Cod

FOCUS GROUP MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Gather feedback on perception and efficacy of current/local waste reduction programs.
- Identify barriers and challenges to supporting waste reduction and discuss criteria to prioritize solutions.
- Discuss waste reduction best practices.

KEY DISCUSSION OUTCOMES AND CONSENSUS REACHED

Need to Improve Recycling in Public Spaces

The responses to the Barnstable County Waste Diversion pre-meeting survey question, “what is your general perception of the convenience of recycling in your town”, indicated participants agreed that recycling is generally quite convenient at home and at work, and is much more inconvenient in public spaces.

Public Outreach and Education

Even among the focus group participants, who are committed to recycling and sustainability, there were significant gaps in knowledge about recycling programs and opportunities, as well as successes in neighboring communities. While there was a consensus among the focus group members about recycling guidelines needing to be published by the individual towns, group members also noted that the recycling guidelines were often difficult to find (*on their town’s website*), not easy to access online, and not always up to date.

Seasonality is Critical

Cape Cod residents are aware of the seasonal population shifts within their municipalities. However, with the specific analysis shown in the slides provided to the focus group regarding MSW generation per month, with 13 of the 15 transfer stations reporting monthly tonnages, the obvious seasonal fluctuations between the summer and winter seasons was shown. The MSW doubled in tonnage between May through September while increasing year to year, from 2017 to 2020. It became clear to the participants that a solid waste management infrastructure should be designed and implemented with these waste flow variations in mind.

Transparency

Throughout Cape Cod and Islands, residents have varying degrees of confidence and understanding in what happens to their recyclables that are dropped off at their Town Transfer Station recycling center.

Celebrating and Replicating Successes

While the municipalities are each different and have varying degrees of public engagement pertaining to recycling, there are several local initiatives that may be scaled up and replicated. *As an example, Nantucket’s textile recycling program*, might be replicated in most other towns as all the Transfer Stations and municipalities have textile collection bins. As noted during one of the breakout rooms, Nantucket held three events at 4-hours each, during which time the Town collected a total 15.6 tons of textiles. This is one example of a recycling program that could be replicated in other towns.

ACTION ITEMS AND BEST PRACTICES

The Waste Diversion Focus Group meeting presented the following action items and best practices with recommendations for consideration. From the Waste Diversion Pre-Meeting Survey and during the Focus Group discussion, the Project Team collected feedback on the perception and efficacy of current/local waste reduction programs. This feedback is incorporated in the statements below.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

- With the seasonal fluctuations of MSW tonnage between the summer and winter seasons, the Waste Diversion Focus Group participants agreed that the County should consider a solid waste management infrastructure to manage these waste flow variations.

- There was a consensus among the Waste Diversion Focus Group members about the need for consistent recycling guidelines published by the individual towns. The recycling guidelines were often difficult to find (*on their town's website*), not easy to access online, and not always up to date.
- In addition to the MassDEP list of banned materials, and the proposed amendments to 310 CMR 19.000 that would add mattresses and textiles to the list of materials banned from disposal in Massachusetts, and lowering the threshold for commercial food materials to one-half a ton per week, the County should consider waste reduction efforts such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) requirements, while also incentivizing reuse in order to minimize the need for recycling.
- Many towns already have bans on certain materials including single-use plastics, Styrofoam, and plastic water bottles. Recommend for the County to develop a list of the Towns' material bans and conduct research on the successes and effectiveness of these bans.
- The Waste Diversion Focus Group participants requested that the monthly seasonal MSW generation data be shared with each municipality. Participants indicated they have not seen monthly data before, that the information is insightful and could be shared during public presentations and activities.
- From the responses to the Barnstable County Waste Diversion pre-meeting survey question, "*How can your town make reuse, recycling and waste prevention more accessible*", several initiatives were identified for the Cape. These include the following recommendations:
 - Textiles and food scraps recycling should be a major component of the municipal solid waste management system.
 - Mandate food scraps recycling (*as an example, the Town of Hamilton MA*), and build a County-wide commercial (industrial) composting infrastructure.
 - Public space recycling should be a Cape Cod program.
 - Institute policies that reduce use of plastics.
 - Consider long-term promotion of sustainability by fostering practices of reduce and reuse.
 - Improve electronic waste (E-Waste) recycling. Recommend a strategy for managing e-waste aggregation, the collection and pick-up with selected vendor(s) and require transparent communications on the end-of-life deposition of the e-waste materials.
- County should consider a broad-based coalition focused on reuse, recycling, and waste prevention. A recommendation is for the County to support a permanent Swap Shop system. The Waste Diversion Focus Group participants fully supported the idea of a permanent Swap Shop indicated by the 100% positive response rate to the pre-meeting survey question, "*Would you utilize a permanent Swap Shop*".
- Several questions were asked during the breakout session. Follow up is required on the following questions about Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and Universal Recycling.
 - "*Why won't HHW events take e-waste?*"
 - "*Why is there not more access to battery recycling outside of rechargeable batteries?*"
 - "*What is R2 Certification?*"
- The County could assist the Town Transfer Stations on developing a consistent Transfer Station permit fee structure to include fees for seasonal or short-term visitors to help promote recycling across Cape Cod and Islands.

REGIONAL ORGANICS INFRASTRUCTURE

- During one of the breakout sessions, a participant indicated that his/her town Transfer Station maintains three (3) barrels for food scraps collection. These bins fill up quickly and it could be that the bins are undersized to service the community. Recommend an evaluation of the town's food waste collection system based on population and potential food waste tonnage. The results of this evaluation could present an opportunity to engage all Cape Cod municipalities in the discussion of organics recycling and the need for a local or regional organics management infrastructure.
- Recommend a county-wide public outreach effort to educate full-time and seasonal residents on the benefits of compost use and the application of compost on lawns, gardens, and public spaces. This outreach effort can also educate residents on how to source separate food waste at home, or at commercial food service venues, to manage odors, collection, contamination, and more.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Barnstable County should create public outreach materials targeted specifically for seasonal residents and visitors. The primary message should be consistent and educate the seasonal population to adjust their recycling habits to conform to local regulations and recycling opportunities. Individual Towns can leverage the County generated public outreach materials with preapproved content that can be customized with Town logos and contact information.
- One barrier and challenge to supporting waste reduction is that Cape Cod municipalities have varying degrees of public engagement pertaining to recycling, and there are several local initiatives that could be scaled up and replicated. Recommend the County support and develop recycling programs that are scalable and repeatable across all municipalities and communicate the successes of these efforts. A county-wide public outreach effort throughout Cape Cod and Islands can build confidence for residents to understand that the recyclables they dropped off at Town Transfer Station recycling centers are properly recycled.

Discussion of waste reduction best practices included a recommendation for the County to develop consistent messaging on recycling for the various components collected at the Transfer Stations. This could include case studies with vendors about how the recyclables are managed and brought back into the market. The public outreach effort should also be designed to respond to the need to increase and improve access to the recycling infrastructure in public spaces.

BEST PRACTICES

- Of the 15 Cape Cod towns, 13 have municipal bans and 7 have commercial bans on single-use water bottles. There is a concern for access to refillable water bottle stations, refillable and recyclable/reusable water bottles. The County should consider a regional effort for mapping the water bottle filling stations across Cape Cod, similar to the Town of Concord MA that installed water bottle filling stations near parks and athletic fields.
- Town of Brewster's program "Drink Brewster Tap" in conjunction with the water bottle ban. The Town ran several advertisements with well-known members of the community, including social media ads running twice per week for 6 months. The County should consider this type of public service campaign as part of a water bottle filling station plan.

- In addition to support drinking local water, the Community (at-large) should also be educated about alternatives to containers and products with PFOS/PFAS. The County should consider a feasibility study about food packaging containers.

NEXT STEPS

- Several of the recommendations in the Action Items and Best Practices section present ideas for programs that the County should consider including public outreach activities. These could be beneficial toward improving reuse, recycling and waste diversion on Cape Cod and Islands.
- The Waste Diversion Focus Group participants had questions about Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) and electronics recycling. Responses to these questions should be followed up with the participants.
- Several Waste Diversion Focus Group participants requested their municipal data on MSW generation that showed the seasonal fluctuation. A response to this request can include the specific slide that shows the monthly seasonal MSW generation data and the municipality's monthly raw data.