

TOOL 3. SETTING LOCAL DIVERSION RATE GOALS

INTRODUCTION

A recycling goal serves as a numerical expression of a public policy objective. People don't recover materials for recycling just because some local, state or federal government agency has set a goal (Lynch, 1996). People are motivated to recycle for a variety of reasons - to solve the problem of solid waste, extend the life of the local landfill, conserve natural resources and in some cases, for financial gain. While goal setting may not be a key reason for most people to participate in recycling it does give us something concrete to work towards.

Without goals, it is unclear what is achievable and what, if any progress is being made. When local governments or states set a goal and then measure the amount of recycling being done, they can document progress and make necessary changes if progress is not occurring. Additionally, a goal symbolically demonstrates a commitment to recovering materials for recycling.

IMPORTANCE OF GOAL SETTING

A goal gives us an objective to work towards and improve our current status. In order to know if we are achieving a goal we need to measure our efforts. In the case of diversion goals we need to determine the amount of material that is being diverted from the landfill either by waste reduction, recycling or a combination of the two. In order to do this it is necessary to know 1)how much solid waste are we currently generating 2)how much of that solid waste is being kept out of the landfill through recycling activities and 3)how much has waste generation been reduced through waste (source) reduction activities.

- **The public is motivated to recycle for a variety of reasons**

- **Without goals, it is unclear what is achievable or what progress is being made**

A baseline must be established for the average amount of solid waste going into the landfill on a daily or weekly basis. Determining these amounts is discussed later in: Establishing a Local Recycling Goal.

CURRENT NATIONAL AND STATES GOALS

Currently, 45 states have some form of recycling or waste reduction goal (Heumann, 1996). Established goal rates range from a low of 10 percent in Alaska to 50 percent in more than a dozen states. Some states have mandated goals while others are strictly voluntary.

Currently, the national recycling rate is approximately 25 percent. Twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have recycling rate goals of 40-50 percent to be reached by the late 1990's or the year 2000. The state with the highest recycling goal is Rhode Island at 70 percent, currently they are at a recycling rate of 24 percent.

Minnesota has a two-tiered recycling rate goal. They have designated 50 percent recycling to be met by 1996 for the seven counties in the Minneapolis/ St. Paul metropolitan area and a 35 percent recycling rate goal for the state's rural counties. They reached 47 percent in the urban area and 35 percent in the rural counties in 1994.

Closer to home, the states surrounding Wyoming vary in their recycling/waste reduction goals:

Colorado — 50% goal by the year 2000; announced by Governor Romer "reduce amount of material going into Colorado landfills by half - by the year 2000." The current rate of recycling in Colorado is unknown.

Idaho — No goal established

Montana — 25% by 1996

Nebraska — 25% by 1996; 40% by 1999; 50% by 2002. Currently, Nebraska has a recycling rate of 12% and an additional 8% diversion rate through composting.

•Forty-five states have some form of recycling or waste reduction goal.

•The national recycling rate is approximately 25 percent.

South Dakota — 25% by mid-1996; 50% by mid 2001. Current rate of recycling is 30%.

Utah — No goal established

These states also vary in their approach to goal rate setting. For example, Colorado's goal is a suggestion from the Governor, whereas in states like Montana and Nebraska, the goal rate is given in legislative statute.

It is sometimes noted that the current rate of recycling in Wyoming is about 3 percent of the total waste stream. However, the source for this figure is unknown. In order to obtain a more accurate assessment it will be necessary for communities to track both the amount of material being landfilled and the amount being recycled and composted. To obtain a total statewide figure, it will be necessary for a state government entity, like DEQ, or some other interested entity (nonprofit waste association for example) to compile all local waste diversion figures.

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL RECYCLING/DIVERSION GOAL

As mentioned earlier, in order to know if a goal is being achieved, it is necessary to know 1)the amount of solid waste currently being generated 2)the amount of that solid waste being diverted through recycling and composting and 3)how much has waste generation been reduced through waste (source) reduction activities.

This figure can be determined or estimated by:

- Weighing the solid waste as it comes into the landfill and recording that information in a log book.
- Estimating tonnage by looking at the current operating permit for the landfill to find out what is documented for amount of waste going into the landfill.

• States vary in their approach to goal rate setting

• To obtain a total statewide recycling rate, it will be necessary for a state government entity or some other interested entity to compile all local waste diversion figures.

- Estimating daily tonnage by multiplying the number of people using the landfill (population of service area) times 7 lbs/person/day. Nationally, this figure is lower but in Wyoming most landfills accept construction/demolition material and other non-MSW waste which increases the overall pounds/person/day.

After calculating a baseline figure for solid waste going into the landfill, the next step is to determine rate of recycling. Many communities have some idea of the amount of material being recycled. The amount of material in tons or pounds is typically listed on a bill of lading prior to trucking the recyclables to brokers or end markets. If the amount is unknown prior to shipping, then the broker or processor will often provide the amount on an invoice when paying for recyclables.

When communities ship materials to ARK Recycling in Laramie for example, the amount of material may be noted in several places. First, some communities list the amount on the bill of lading prior to shipping. When ARK receives recyclables, the type and amount (in pounds) of material is noted on an Incoming Commodity Sheet. When paying a community for the materials, ARK lists the amount on an invoice as dollars/ton paid.

An examination of Tool 2—Solid Waste Management Program Reviews shows that the entity managing land disposal of waste is not necessarily the same entity providing recycling in the community. In these circumstances, determining waste diversion rates will require communication between all entities responsible for managing the solid waste.

- **After calculating a baseline figure for solid waste going into the landfill, the next step is to determine the recycling rate.**

State Goal Rate

The Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality has set a voluntary recycling rate of 25 percent for the year 2005. If composting of yard debris is included in the total recycling rate it is reasonable to expect a recycling rate of 35 percent by the year 2005. The 25 percent goal rate was selected based on:

- recycling rates/goals established in other rural states and western states
- the current national rate of recycling
- the recycling infrastructure that currently exists in Wyoming
- current market trends for recyclables
- the public's desire to participate in recycling (currently, 73 percent of all Americans recycle)
- the desire of the state to establish an optimistic yet reasonable goal.

Selecting a Local Goal Rate

Local communities are invited to adopt the state goal or establish their own. Some objectives to consider when setting a local goal rate may include:

- No net growth in the amount of waste being landfilled. This would require an ever increasing tonnage for material diverted from the landfill either through recycling/composting or waste reduction as the population of the community increases. For example, if a community of 10,000 people was generating 12,500 tons of MSW per year in 1995 and the population grew to 10,800 by 2001 then a corresponding amount of MSW would be an additional 1,297 tons of MSW /year in 2001. No net growth in the amount of

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- **Local communities are invited to adopt the state goal or establish their own.**

- **Population growth must be considered when establishing future recycling goals.**

material being landfilled would then require that this additional waste be reduced through waste reduction, recycling and/or composting.

- Select goal rates based on the practicality of local recycling options and marketing opportunities. This may be one goal rate or multiple goal rates based on the commodities being diverted from the landfill. For example, in a community with access to most recycling markets a local goal rate may be set at 25 percent of all municipal solid waste. However, another community may have access to paper and aluminum markets but cannot process or afford to ship glass to a distant market - therefore, a rate of recycling for paper and aluminum can be established while glass may not be included or may be set lower.

Most, if not all, Wyoming communities should look at community compost programs—an efficient and usually economical method of managing yard trimmings in the waste stream. Including diversion of yard trimming through composting programs into the local goal rate will help achieve that rate as well as significantly boost the amount of waste diverted from the local landfill.

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- **Wyoming communities should look at community compost programs.**