

# County of Santa Barbara Solid Waste Reduction Report

SEPTEMBER 2024

Compiled by the Collection and Materials Management (CMM) Team of the  
Public Works Department's Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division

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# County of Santa Barbara Solid Waste Reduction Report

## September 2024

### 1. Introduction

This report summarizes national, state, and local solid waste generation and disposal trends and highlights Santa Barbara County's (County's) existing programs and potential new initiatives to reduce the amount of waste ending up in local landfills.

The report is authored by staff in the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division (RRWMD) of the County's Public Works Department (Department). RRWMD provides local residents and businesses with cost effective, innovative, and environmentally sound solutions for managing the community's waste, with a strong emphasis on educating and engaging community members to actively participate in efforts that benefit our local environment. RRWMD is honored to have been recognized as a waste reduction leader at the state and national level and to have received several prestigious awards, including both a gold and silver Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) Excellence Award for Integrated Waste Management, a Merit Award from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo).

In writing this report, RRWMD received valuable input from colleagues in other County departments, including the General Services Department and Community Services Department. Waste reduction is a collaborative effort that will require ongoing participation among various County departments and the community.

### 2. Background

Santa Barbara County is a diverse region that hosts many industries, state and federal facilities, major colleges and universities, a booming agricultural economy, multiple international tourism destinations, and various public and private amenities that service the hundreds of thousands of residents who live and work here. These sectors help our region thrive but also produce a significant amount of waste that the County and local municipalities are responsible for managing.

While the County embraces this responsibility, it should be noted that the County, like other local jurisdictions, has little control over which products enter the local market. Each year, manufacturers introduce products that contain new chemicals or compositions, which can make recycling them in our current system difficult and costly. Examples of these products include plastic packaging, textiles, certain types of building materials, household medical devices, and e-bike batteries to name a few. Some of these products may improve efficiencies or be sustainable in other ways, but the disposal challenges associated with them are pervasive.

To help manage the various new products that enter the market, the County promotes product stewardship and extended producer responsibility (EPR) initiatives. As described in later sections of this report, EPR initiatives include legislative actions and programs that place the end-of-life responsibility for products on the manufacturer or producer of those products. The State of California has existing product stewardship laws for paint, carpet, mattresses, medications, and home-generated sharps.

EPR legislation and programs are the future of solid waste management practices. Not only do these programs reduce the cost burden on local governments, but they also encourage producers to incorporate green design principles into their products. Given that 70-90% of a product's carbon footprint results from material production, manufacturers play a pivotal role in sustainability and waste reduction (UN Global Compact, 2022; Greenhouse Gas Protocol, 2022). Avoiding virgin production activities by incorporating recycled content results in the most significant waste and emissions reductions (when current production levels are maintained).

In the absence of EPR programs for the majority of products on the market, the County will continue to bear responsibility for safely operating solid waste collection, recycling, and disposal programs. As described throughout this report, the tenet of source reduction (the first "R" in the "Three R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle") will always be the highest goal.

### **Waste Generation Trends**

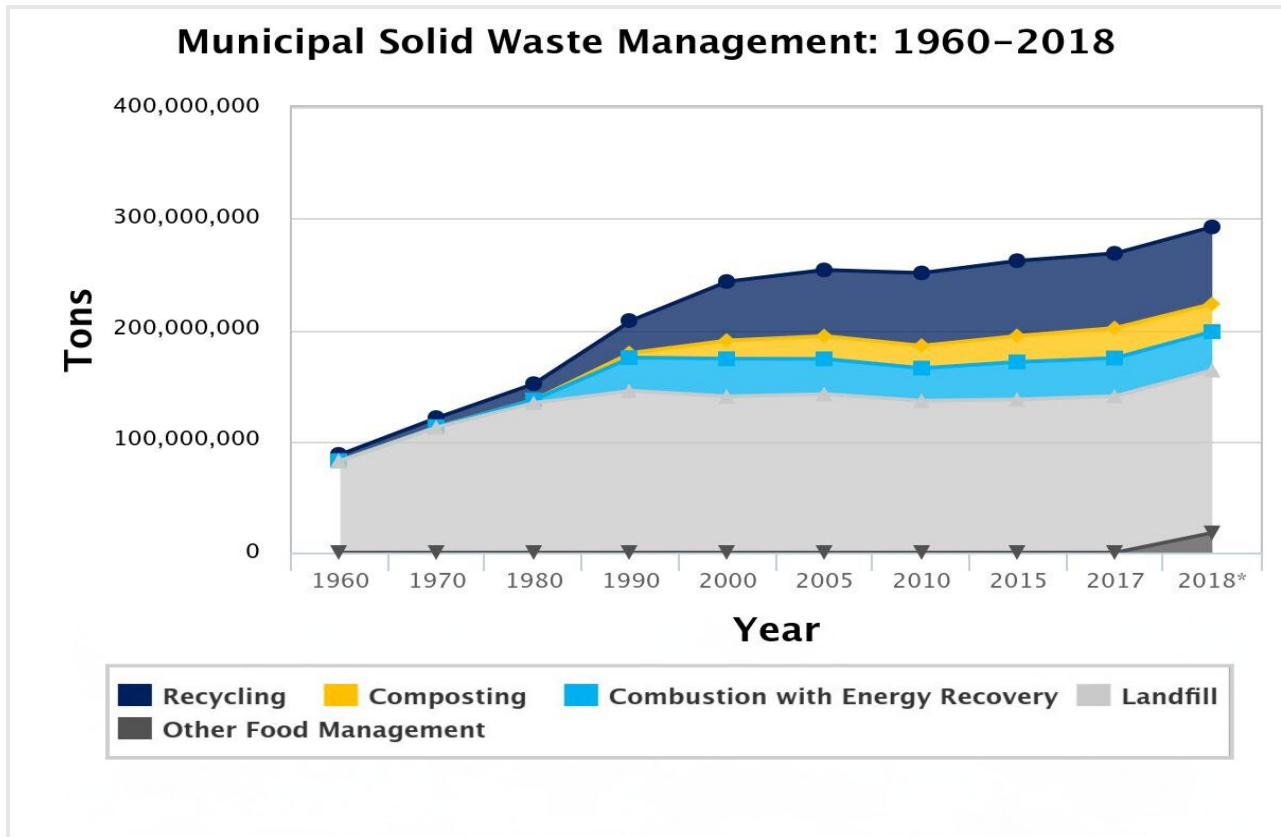
To provide context on the County's waste generation trends, the following section summarizes national and statewide waste generation and landfilling data over time. It is important to note that landfilling is just one segment of a waste cycle that begins with waste generation. Waste generation numbers are calculated by the weight or volume of materials entering the waste stream prior to being diverted towards landfilling, recycling, composting, or combustion. Overall, waste generation has risen steadily in the past several decades, whereas landfilling has decreased proportionally as municipal recycling and composting programs have become more common.

#### Nationally

National waste generation has increased steadily since recordkeeping began in 1960. In 2018 (the most recent year on record), the total amount of waste generated was approximately 292.4 million tons, with a per-capita waste generation rate of 4.9 pounds per person per day. For comparison, 208.3 million tons of waste were generated nationally in 1990, which was 40% less than in 2018.

Of the 292.4 million tons of waste generated nationally in 2018, about 146.1 million tons (50%) were landfilled, 69 million tons (23.5%) were recycled (with the majority of those recyclables (67%) being paper and paperboard), 34.6 million tons (12%) were combusted with energy recovery, 25 million tons (8.5%) were composted, and 17.7 million tons (6%) fell into the "other food management" category, which includes animal feed, co-digestion/anaerobic digestion, bio-based materials/biochemical processing, donation, land application, and sewer/wastewater treatment (US EPA, 2018).

The graph on the following page illustrates the increase in total waste generated in the United States from 1960 to 2018, as well as how the waste was managed.



Above: Graph showing the increase in total waste generated in the United States from 1960 to 2018 (Source: EPA.gov).

Statewide

In 2022, Californians generated an estimated 76 million tons of waste. 53% of this waste (roughly 40.5 million tons) was disposed of in landfills, which is a marked increase compared with waste disposal figures a decade earlier (CalRecycle, 2024a). In 2012, 29.3 million tons of waste were either disposed of in landfills or used as alternative daily cover, alternative intermediate cover, or waste tire derived fuel (CalRecycle, 2024b). Of the 76 million tons generated in 2022, 14.8% was exported as recycling, while 25.8% was diverted via domestic recycling, composting, mulching, source reduction, and anaerobic digestion (CalRecycle, 2022). The State’s per capita disposal rate in 2022 was 6.3 pounds.

Locally

Santa Barbara County’s per capita disposal rate in 2023 was 5.97 pounds, falling below the State’s most recently published average. Despite the lower disposal rate, the County has been grappling with a continual rise in its waste generation figures. In the Tajiguas Landfill service area, waste generation has increased to an estimated 11.89 pounds per person per day in 2023, up from an estimated 9 pounds per person per day in 2021. This increase parallels waste generation trends seen in other affluent and tourism-heavy regions like Marin and Monterey Counties.

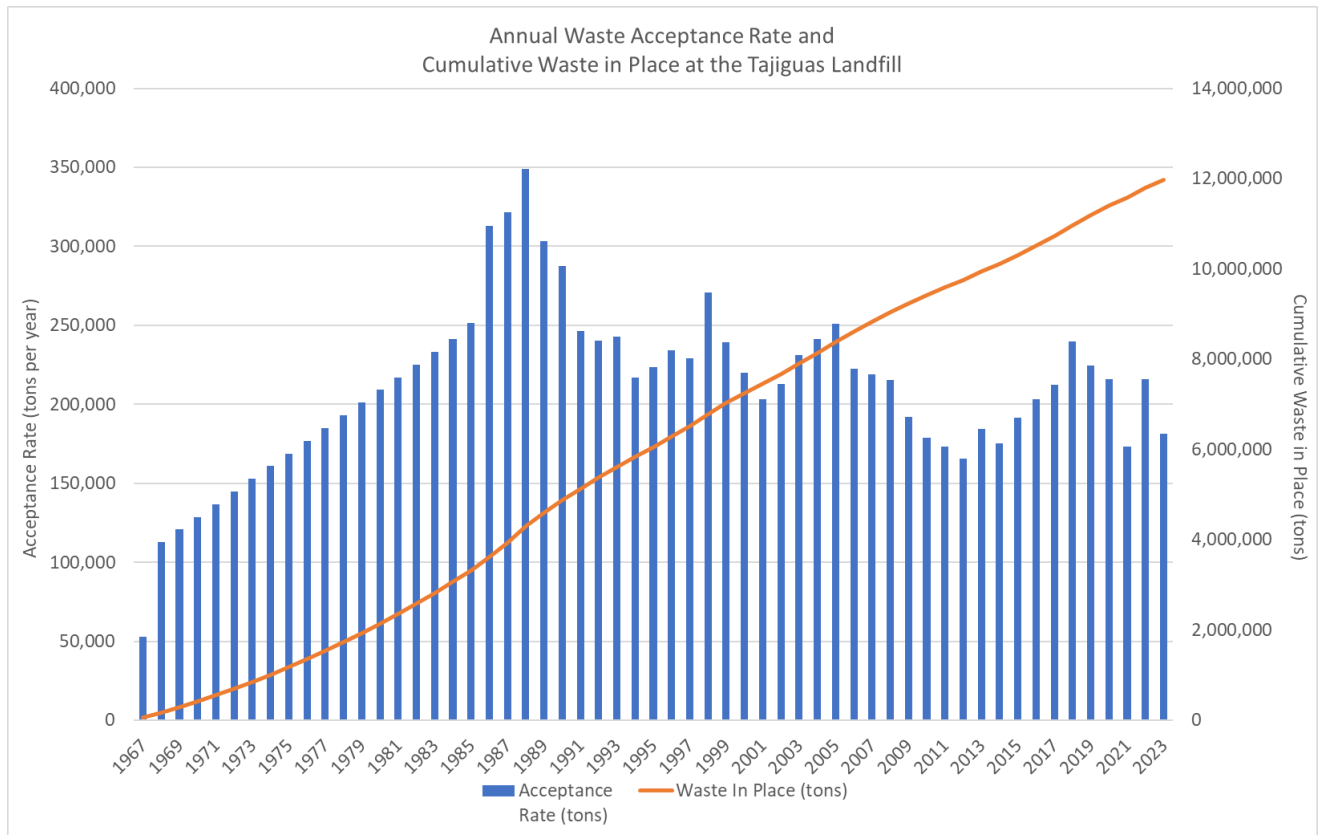
While much of this waste is recycled or composted, a significant amount must still be landfilled. To address this, the Tajiguas Landfill is currently undergoing a capacity increase project. The project will

provide an additional 6.1 million cubic yards of capacity and is projected to increase the landfill's lifespan to 2038. In the northern part of the County, the City of Santa Maria is also increasing capacity at its existing regional landfill and is in the process of constructing its new Los Flores Landfill near the unincorporated community of Orcutt.

To further increase diversion, the County recently constructed the state-of-the-art ReSource Center consisting of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), Anaerobic Digestion Facility (ADF), and Compost Management Unit (CMU). The ReSource Center separates organics from municipal solid waste (MSW) and processes recyclables from both source-separated comingled loads (blue bin recyclables) and mixed MSW streams. With this new technology, up to 60% of waste discarded in the trash will be diverted from landfill disposal once the facility is fully operational (scheduled for March of 2025).

The chart below illustrates the tons of MSW accepted for burial at the Tajiguas Landfill since 1967 when the facility opened. The blue lines indicate the weight in tons of MSW sent to the landfill each year, while the red line shows the increase in accumulated MSW over time. For example, 50,000 tons of MSW were collected in 1967, and by 1978 the landfill had accumulated a total of 2 million tons of MSW.

When the ReSource Center opened in 2021, the tons of MSW sent to the landfill dipped significantly. Due to operational challenges in 2022, the landfilled tons increased again in 2022; however, the tonnage fell in 2023. The landfilled tonnages are projected to continue decreasing as the ReSource Center becomes fully operational.

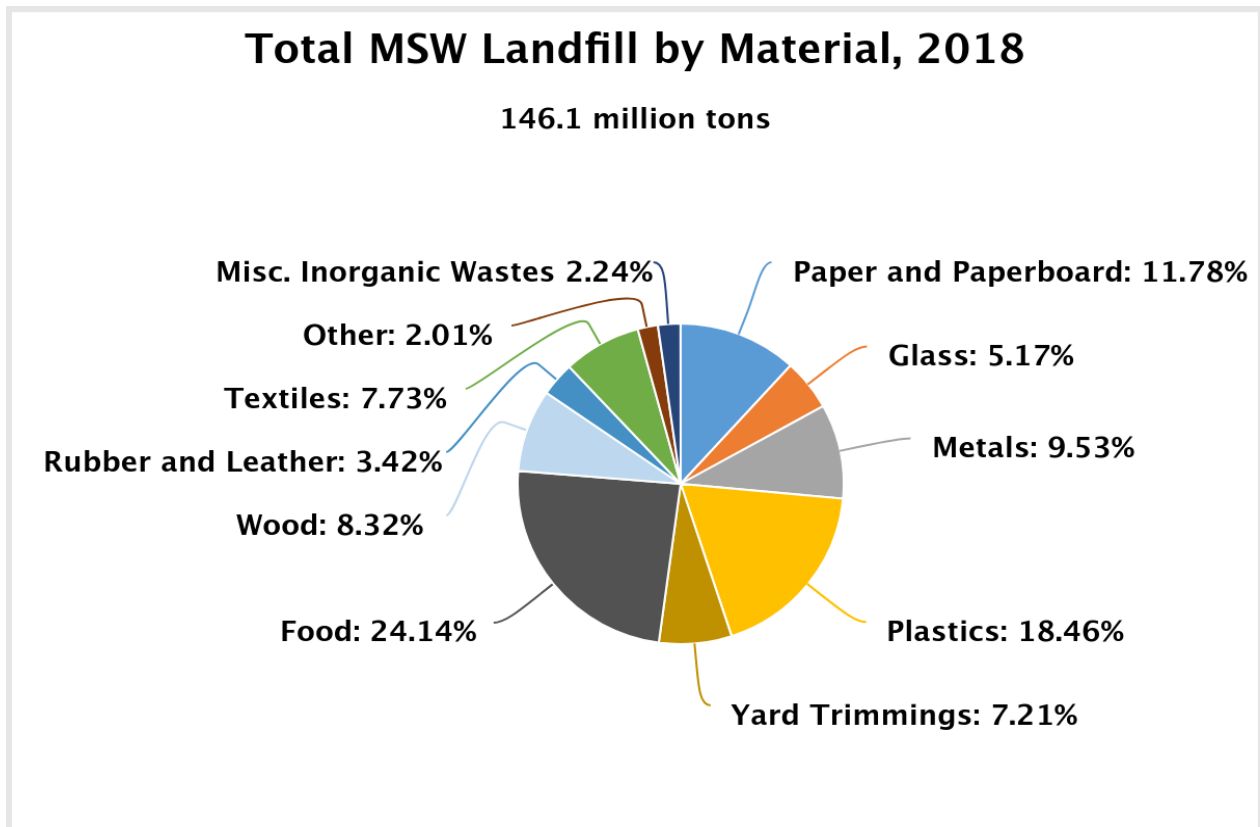


Above: Graph showing the annual tonnage of waste buried at the Tajiguas Landfill ("Acceptance Rate") from 1967 to 2023, as well as the cumulative amount of waste buried over time ("Cumulative Waste in Place").

## Composition of MSW

According to the EPA, national landfilling of waste has decreased from 94% of the amount generated in 1960 to 50% of the amount generated in 2018. Recycling and composting rates have increased from just over 6% of MSW generated in 1960 to 32.1% in 2018.

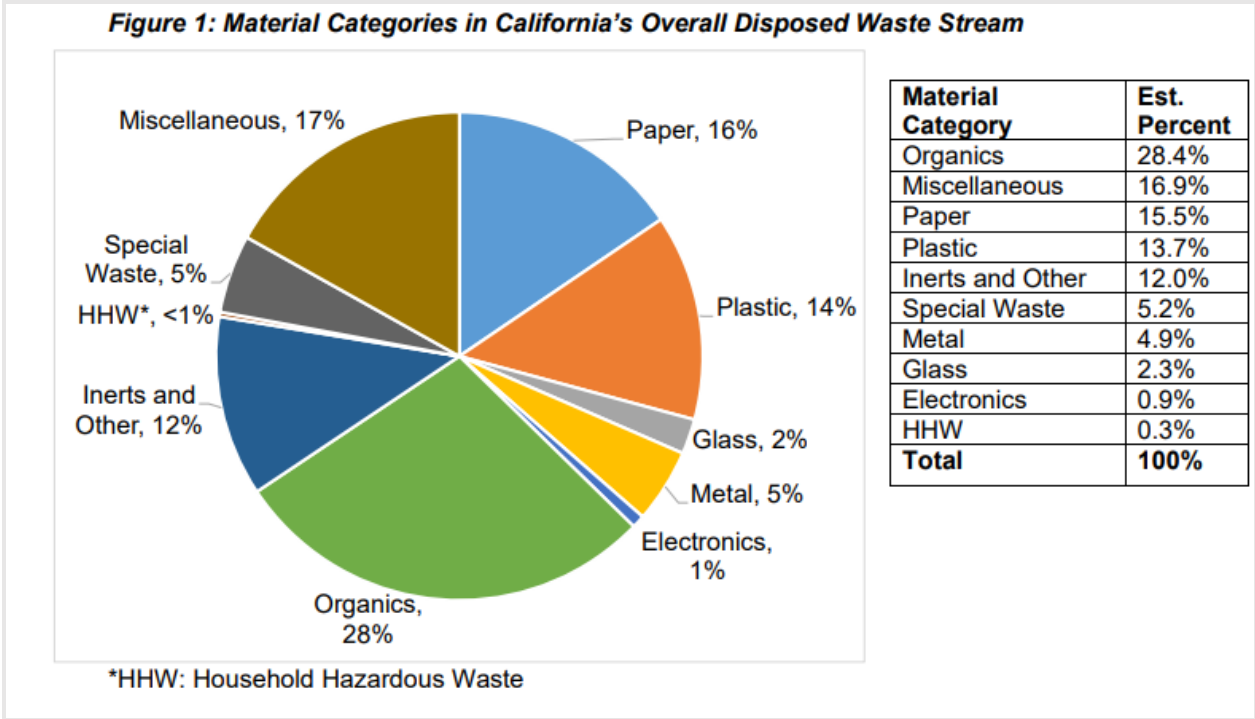
In total, 146.1 million tons of waste were landfilled nationwide in 2018, with food making up the largest component at roughly 24%. Plastics accounted for over 18%, paper products made up about 12%, and rubber, leather, and textiles comprised over 11%. Other materials (e.g. metals, wood, yard trimmings, glass, and miscellaneous inorganic wastes) accounted for less than 10% each.



Above: Chart showing the proportions of various waste streams at the national level (EPA, 2018).

In 2021, the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) conducted a study with Cascadia Consulting Group to characterize and quantify the disposed waste stream for commercial, residential, and self-haul generators in California. The study found that organic materials were the largest single category at 28%, followed by miscellaneous materials at 17%, paper at 15.5%, and plastic at 13.7% (CalRecycle, 2024c).





Above: Chart outlining the proportions of the various waste streams studied by CalRecycle and Cascadia Consulting as part of their 2021 California Waste Characterization Study (CalRecycle, 2024c).

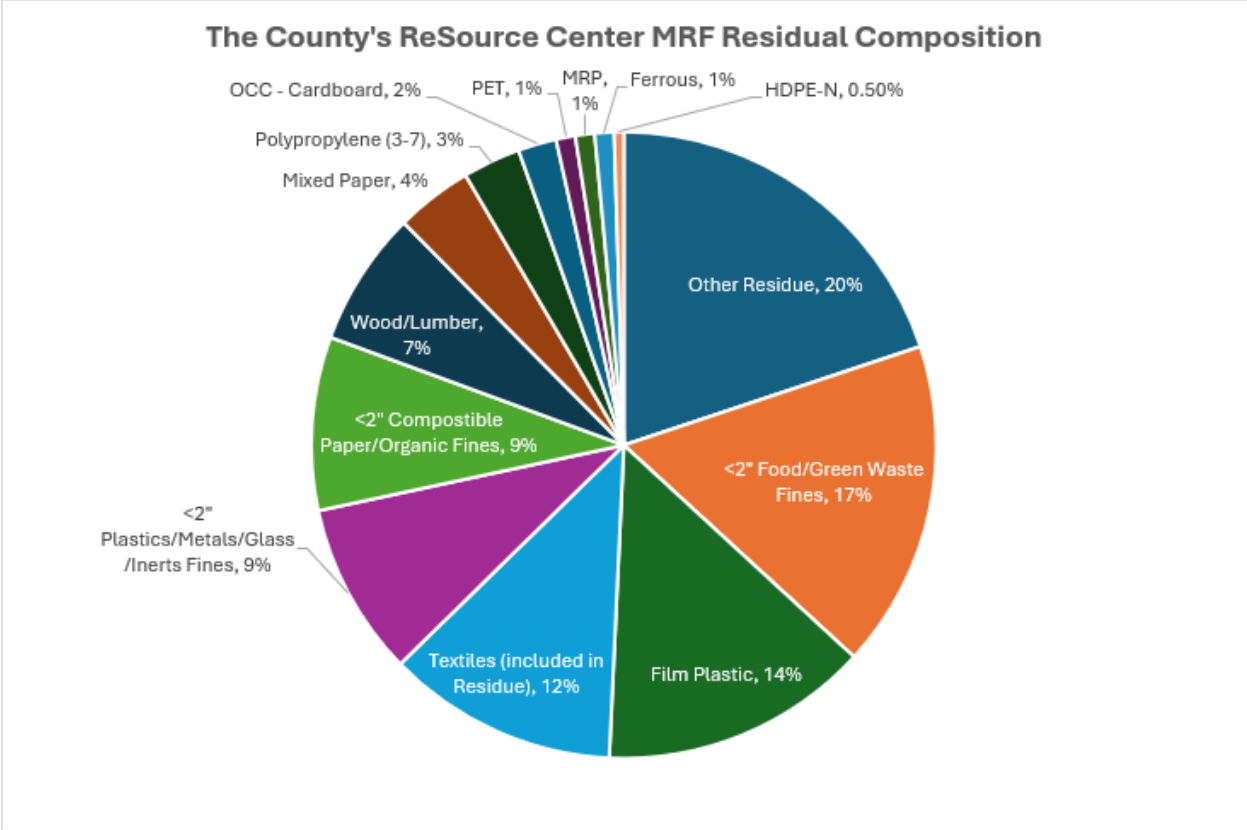
**ReSource Center**

Approximately 60% of MSW, consisting of organics and recyclables, can be diverted from the waste stream at the County’s ReSource Center MRF. In a waste characterization study conducted in December 2022, the unrecoverable, or “residual,” waste was categorized and quantified.

The largest portion of residual consisted of “fines” smaller than two inches. “Fines” are created during processing when materials such as aggregates, metals, plastics, paper, and wood are separated, which can create a very fine material with soil- or sand-like consistency. The “fines” were categorized into three main groups: 1) food and green waste, representing 17% of the residual; 2) compostable paper and organics, representing 9%; and 3) plastics, metals, glass, and inert materials, representing 9%.

The next largest category of residual, "other/residue," consisted of unidentifiable materials and comprised 20% of the sample. More recognizable residual materials included film plastic (14%), textiles (12%), wood/lumber (7%), mixed paper (4%), and plastics numbered 3-7 (3%). Markets for unrecognizable, potentially contaminated, and low-quality commodities remain poor, as these materials are harder to sell and recycle. Other material categories contributed minimally.

The chart on the next page visually depicts the percentage of each residual type.



Above: Chart representing the County's ReSource Center MRF residual destined for landfill disposal in December 2022. These materials cannot be recovered for recycling or composting.

**3. Waste Diversion Programs**

RRWMD operates numerous programs that significantly reduce the amount of waste disposed in landfills. Please see below for brief descriptions of these programs.

**Residential Source-Separated Recycling and Organic Waste Recycling Programs**

ReSource Center Wasteshed

For many decades, local residents have had the opportunity to participate in source-separated curbside recycling and yard waste collection programs. The yard waste program allows residents to place items such as flowers, plants, grass, leaves, and small branches into their curbside green containers. The County processes this yard waste by grinding it into mulch, which is then distributed locally for agricultural, landscaping, and gardening uses.

The countywide source-separated recycling program accepts clean and dry recyclables, including plastic bottles, rigid plastics larger than six inches, dry paper and cardboard, metals, and glass. To ensure effective recycling, residents are advised to place any materials that are not clean and dry in the trash. On the South Coast and in the Cuyama and Santa Ynez Valleys, residential food scraps and soiled paper products are collected in trash carts and delivered to the County's ReSource Center. While many

jurisdictions in California separate this organic material at the source, recovering organics from the trash can significantly boost diversion rates, potentially doubling the amount.

Senate Bill (SB) 1383 is a California law that aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and organic waste disposal. The law requires a reduction in landfilled organic waste through the collection and recycling of organic material; the recovery of edible food; and procurement of recovered organic waste products. To comply with SB 1383, the County must prove that the ReSource Center qualifies as a High Diversion Organic Waste Processing Facility (HDOWPF). This designation currently requires the facility to meet or exceed a 50% annual average recovery rate for mixed waste organic content. The rate increases to 75% starting in 2025. Once processed, the recovered organics are converted into compost and clean energy, providing valuable benefits to the community.

Residents can also self-haul organic waste to various sites and/or participate in the County's Backyard Composting Program (described on page 14), which provides tools and resources for composting organic materials on-site.

#### Unincorporated North County Wasteshed

As in other parts of the County, residents in the unincorporated Lompoc and Santa Maria Valleys participate in source-separated recycling for clean and dry recyclables, and the list of acceptable materials is the same.

The collection of organic waste, however, differs. All types of organic waste, including yard waste, food scraps, and wet paper products, are collected in a single curbside cart. To encourage participation, residents are provided with free kitchen pails, making it easier to collect and transfer food scraps. Participation is optional for residents in certain rural, low-population areas. Collected organics are composted at a commercial facility and used to benefit local agriculture.

Residents also have the option to self-haul organic waste to various sites and/or participate in the County's Backyard Composting Program.

#### **Commercial Source-Separated Recycling and Organic Waste Recycling Programs**

Like residential customers in the unincorporated areas of the County, commercial customers have access to recycling and organic waste programs that help divert material from the landfill. In almost all cases, recycling and organic waste services are less expensive than trash service, which incentivizes businesses to divert their recyclable material while saving on their monthly bill.

Various state laws and local ordinances establish recycling requirements for commercial customers. The County carefully tracks customers' compliance with the help of a software program called FileMaker Pro. A brief summary of the relevant regulations is provided below:

- **Mandatory Commercial Recycling Ordinance** – In 2003 the County passed an ordinance that requires all businesses to divert recyclable materials from landfill disposal. Details about the ordinance can be found online at <https://lessismore.org/materials/274-mandatory-commercial-recycling-program/>.

- Mandatory Commercial Recycling Law (AB 341) – In 2011 the State of California passed a law requiring businesses that generate four (4) or more cubic yards of waste and multi-family units of five (5) or more to divert recyclable materials from landfill disposal. Information is available online at <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial>.
- Mandatory Commercial Organics Recycling Law (AB 1826) – In 2016 the State of California passed a law requiring businesses that generate two (2) or more cubic yards of waste or multi-family units of five (5) or more to divert organic materials from landfill disposal. Details are available online at <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/recycle/commercial/organics>.
- Short Lived Climate Pollutant Law (SB 1383) – In 2018 the State of California passed a law that requires all residents, businesses, and multi-family units to divert organic materials from landfill disposal. More information is available online at <https://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/organics/slcp>.

County staff regularly track businesses' compliance and perform in-person outreach to inform businesses of their requirements and how to sign up for additional services with their hauler. If businesses believe they should be waived from a particular law or regulation, they can apply for an exemption evaluation online at [www.LessIsMore.org/exemptions](http://www.LessIsMore.org/exemptions). Businesses that do not receive an exemption and who choose not to subscribe to recycling services may be subject to a non-recycling surcharge (20% of their trash service).

#### ReSource Center Wasteshed

In the ReSource Center service area, participation in the yard waste and food waste programs is voluntary since all trash in this region goes to the ReSource Center where organics are pulled from the trash and composted onsite. All commercial customers in this region are currently compliant with state laws AB 1826 and SB 1383. However, large generators of food waste, such as restaurants and grocery stores, are still highly encouraged to participate in the food scraps collection program, as food waste services are always cheaper than trash. Additionally, the program helps create higher quality compost at the ReSource Center.

Approximately 67 commercial customers in the unincorporated area currently take advantage of the source-separated food scraps collection program, and the County regularly performs in-person outreach to recruit additional participants. The latest broad outreach conducted by the County included a mailer sent to all commercial customers in this region informing them about the County's ReSource Center capabilities and their subsequent compliance under SB 1383. The mailer also included an advertisement to join the voluntary food scraps collection program.

#### Unincorporated North County Wasteshed

Like businesses in the ReSource Center service area, commercial customers in the unincorporated Lompoc and Santa Maria Valleys have access to source-separated recycling and organics collection service; however, in this region, yard waste and food waste can be commingled in one container, as all organic waste is processed at Engel & Gray's composting facility in Santa Maria. Because trash generated in these regions does not go to the County's ReSource Center and instead goes to either the Lompoc Landfill or Santa Maria Landfill, all organic waste (including yard waste and food waste) must be source-separated in order to be diverted from the landfill. In this region, if a customer is subject to AB 1826 and/or SB 1383, participation in mixed organics services is mandatory.

In early 2023, Waste Management, the franchised hauler at the time, conducted a universal enrollment effort which automatically enrolled customers that were not in compliance with the appropriate waste service. This resulted in many more customers achieving compliance with AB 341, AB 1826, and SB 1383; however, due to the large scope of the effort, some customers were mistakenly not included. County staff continues to perform in-person outreach to help remaining businesses achieve compliance. The latest broad outreach conducted by the County included a mailer sent to all commercial customers in this region informing them about their new requirements under SB 1383.

## **Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center Programs**

### *Household Hazardous Waste Collection Program*

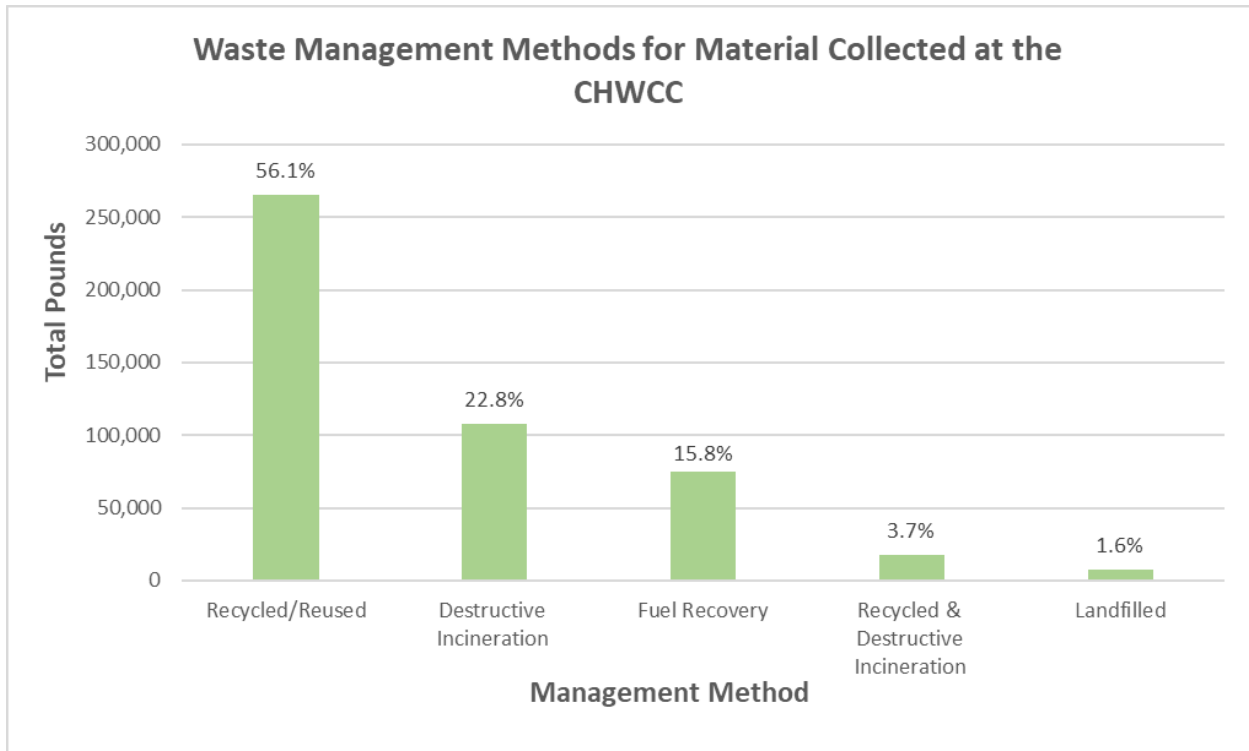
The Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center (CHWCC), located on the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) campus, is a joint partnership between the County and the University, as well as the cities of Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Solvang. The household program is available on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and on Sundays from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Program participation continues to be strong; in FY 2023/24, 7,703 residents utilized the CHWCC to properly dispose of potentially harmful materials that cannot be put in the trash.

### *CESQG Collection Program*

The CHWCC also hosts a Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generator (CESQG) program. CESQGs are businesses that generate 220 pounds or less of hazardous waste per month. CESQGs from Goleta, Santa Barbara, Solvang, and the unincorporated area are able to utilize the CHWCC on Fridays by appointment. The CESQG program served 184 businesses during FY 2023/24.

Between the household and CESQG collection programs, 473,194 pounds of hazardous waste was collected during FY 2023/24. All collected waste is hauled off site, and all final endpoints are tracked to ensure responsible disposal. During FY 2023/24, only 2% of the total hazardous waste received at the CHWCC was landfilled (using a specially permitted facility out of county). No hazardous waste received at the CHWCC is disposed of at local landfills.

The majority of collected waste (56%) is either recycled or reused, and 47% is incinerated, 16% of which is blended into a fuel source for use in incinerators (“Fuel Recovery” in the chart on the following page). Aerosols, which represent 3.7% of the waste stream and are included as “Recycled and Destructive Incineration” in the chart on the following page, are able to be recycled for scrap metal before the contents of the aerosol can are incinerated.



Above: Graph showing waste management methods for material collected at the Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center during FY 2023/24. A total of 75.6% of the hazardous waste stream is able to be recycled or reused in some manner. These percentages fluctuate very slightly from year to year but remain largely the same.

Materials Reuse Program

To reduce the disposal of still usable products, the CHWCC also operates a Materials Reuse Program. When residents and businesses bring in usable items like paint, cleaning chemicals, gardening supplies, and other common household products, the items are added to dedicated materials reuse cabinets onsite. Other members of the public are then able to take the items from the cabinets during operating hours. Since the program’s inception, over 14,485 pounds of reusable hazardous waste has been diverted from disposal.

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection Events**

Due to the remoteness of some areas of the County, RRWMD holds household hazardous waste (HHW) collection events to ensure that all community members have easy access to HHW disposal opportunities. Two annual events are held in the Santa Ynez Valley (one in April and one in October), and one event is held each October in New Cuyama. In 2023, 63,893 pounds of hazardous waste was collected at these events, including electronic waste, paint, motor oil, fertilizers, batteries, and other common household products.

Santa Ynez Valley

The Santa Ynez Valley events are held at the County’s Santa Ynez Valley Recycling and Transfer Station (SYVRTS) and are available to residents in the City of Solvang and the North County unincorporated area,

including the communities of Santa Ynez, Los Olivos, Los Alamos, and Ballard. Over the years, participation has ranged from 180 to 402 vehicles per event. RRWMD promotes the events via direct mail to residents, flyers around town, banners, and print and radio advertisements.

### Cuyama Valley

The Cuyama Valley events serve the unincorporated communities of New Cuyama and Ventucopa and are held at the County's New Cuyama Transfer Station. These events are much smaller than the ones held at SYVRTS but nonetheless help divert a significant amount of hazardous waste from landfill disposal. Participation ranges from 16 to 32 vehicles per event.

### **Backyard Composting Program**

To encourage composting as close to home as possible, the County coordinates a Backyard Composting Program for local residents. RRWMD sells composting bins at a discounted price at four locations throughout the County. On average, approximately 120 bins are sold each year. Additionally, staff distributes an informational guide titled *Composting ABC's* and offers educational workshops and attends community events where residents can learn about home composting systems.

### **Mulch Program**

A majority of the yard waste that is collected through the County's curbside green waste recycling program is processed into mulch that is then made available for reuse by the community, including commercial as well as residential customers. Customers include households, schools, non-profit organizations, churches, and businesses. Additionally, since March 2021, some of the County's mulch has been used during the compost curing process at the ReSource Center's Anaerobic Digestion Facility and Compost Management Unit. During FY 2022-23, 7,380 tons of mulch were delivered from SYVRTS, 9,281 tons of mulch were delivered from the South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station (SCRTS), and 255 tons of mulch were delivered from Tajiguas to a total of 4,425 customers in the program.

### **Edible Food Recovery Program**

Under SB 1383, local jurisdictions are required to establish edible food recovery programs to capture usable food that would otherwise be landfilled. Edible food waste generators are separated into two categories, Tier 1 and Tier 2. Tier 1 generators were required to have a donation program in place by January 1, 2022, and Tier 2 generators were required to have a program in place beginning January 1, 2024.

The graphic on the following page shows the types of businesses that fall into each tier.

# Commercial Edible Food Generators

## Tier 1

January 1, 2022

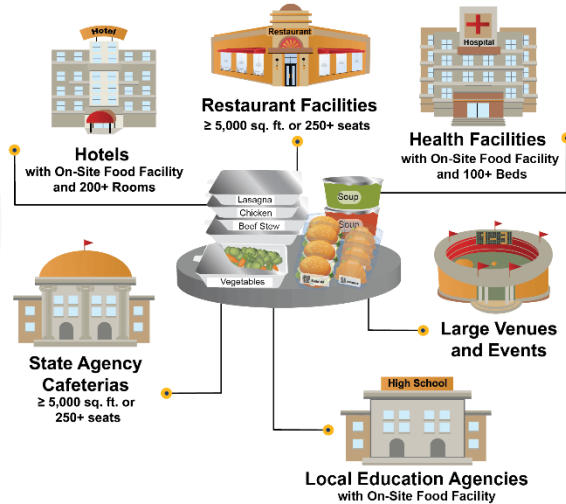
Tier one businesses typically have more produce, fresh grocery, and shelf-stable foods to donate.



## Tier 2

January 1, 2024

Tier two businesses typically have more prepared foods to donate, which often require more careful handling to meet food safety requirements (e.g. time and temperature controls).



Above: A graphic created by CalRecycle to illustrate the commercial business categories that are required to donate edible food under SB 1383. (Source: CalRecycle, 2024d)

With the understanding that food recovery expands beyond jurisdictional boundaries, in 2022 RRWMD partnered with the cities of Buellton, Carpinteria, Goleta, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, and Solvang to establish a local food recovery network called the Santa Barbara County Regional SB 1383 Food Recovery Plan. The network connects businesses and non-profits, creates outreach materials and food recovery tools, and implements a thriving food recovery network in the County.

The goals of the network include:

- Recovering the maximum amount of edible food to help feed our local Santa Barbara County residents
- Helping businesses interpret the regulations and gain a full understanding of their responsibilities under SB 1383
- Supporting local non-profits in their role with SB 1383, helping them build capacity to recover more food, and assisting in finding donors that meet the specific needs for their organization
- Creating useful tools and informational materials to help businesses and non-profits
- Streamlining data collection through shared technology resources
- Monitoring the region's compliance and supporting partner jurisdictions
- Researching grant opportunities to help build food recovery infrastructure
- Connecting with other local government departments to create a holistic food recovery network
- Encouraging residents and businesses to reduce food waste by providing shopping tips, sharing composting resources, and more



## **Construction Waste Recycling Program**

Construction waste often contains recyclable materials, including heavy and bulky items like concrete, bricks, metals, glass, and lumber, as well as salvaged building components such as doors, appliances, fixtures, hardware, and windows. For over a decade, RRWMD has collaborated with the County's Planning and Development Department to advance the reuse and recycling of construction and demolition debris (C&D) in accordance with the California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen).

CALGreen mandates that new residential and non-residential construction, demolition, and certain renovation projects recycle or salvage at least 65 percent of the non-hazardous construction and demolition debris generated. This requirement is anticipated to increase to 75 percent in the future. All development projects in the County must include a Solid Waste Management Plan to meet these recycling requirements. Additionally, companies hauling construction waste in the County's unincorporated areas must have a permit and are required to recycle the majority of the materials they collect.

The County's transfer stations, as well as MarBorg's C&D recovery facility, accept many of these materials from roll-off services and self-haulers. Financial incentives are available to encourage the source separation of these materials. Large private companies also run extensive reuse and recycling programs, often reusing materials within their operations and thus not sending them to local solid waste facilities.

Through these recycling initiatives, it is estimated that our community currently recycles over 75 percent of its construction waste.

## **Electronic Waste Recycling Program**

Electronic waste, or "e-waste", includes all devices that require electricity to operate. If it plugs in, charges up, or takes batteries, it is considered e-waste when no longer usable. Electronic devices often contain valuable and rare metals, as well as chemicals that can be harmful to humans, animals, and the environment. To safely collect and recycle e-waste, the County operates drop-off locations at each of its transfer stations and requires its franchised hauler to collect e-waste at curbside via the bulky item collection program. Numerous local retailers also collect e-waste.

When promoting e-waste recycling, RRWMD always suggests donation or repair first. Furthermore, the County's contracted electronics recycler prioritizes repair and resale for all suitable devices (after personal data has been removed).

## **Battery Recycling Program**

Because household batteries are one of the most common types of household hazardous waste (HHW), RRWMD and local city partners provide numerous options for their safe collection and recycling. Residents can drop off batteries at HHW facilities and events throughout the County or can have their hauler collect batteries at curbside by placing them in a plastic bag and putting them on top of their recycling cart on collection day. In the unincorporated area, individuals that live in multi-family housing

units can request a battery bucket to use for collecting batteries in communal areas. MarBorg will then collect and recycle the batteries.

In addition to small household batteries, multiple outlets exist for the collection and recycling of automotive batteries. Auto batteries are accepted at HHW facilities and events; the County's transfer stations; MarBorg's "ABOP" facilities (that collect antifreeze, batteries, used motor oil, and paint); and at various auto parts stores and service centers.

Battery recycling is so important that in 2022 RRWMD applied for and received a \$50,000 grant to promote battery recycling throughout the region. As a result of increased education efforts, the number of battery-related fires at the County's ReSource Center decreased by almost 50%.

### **Used Oil Recycling Program**

Funded by an annual grant from CalRecycle, RRWMD coordinates a regional motor oil and oil filter recycling program that includes the following activities:

- Providing signage, educational materials, and technical support to local certified collection centers, particularly those that experience illegal dumping
- Purchasing and providing free do-it-yourself used oil collection containers to community members
- Conducting outreach and education regarding the safe disposal of used oil and filters
- Partnering with an organization to provide used oil recycling lessons to local English as a Second Language (ESL) students throughout the County (most recently expanded to the Cuyama Valley)
- Reporting on used oil collection activities and data

Statewide and locally, the amount of used oil and filters collected from do-it-yourselfers has been declining in recent years. A few contributing factors include longer oil change intervals for newer vehicles; increased use of longer-lasting synthetic oils; the growing popularity of electric cars that don't require oil changes; and more individuals choosing to have their vehicles professionally serviced. Nonetheless, local certified centers and hazardous waste collection facilities continue to receive significant volumes of oil and filters on an annual basis.

### **Home-Generated Sharps and Household Medication Collection Programs**

In collaboration with the Public Health Department, RRWMD operates programs for the safe collection and disposal of home-generated sharps and household medications. Both of these waste streams pose health and safety risks and are not acceptable in the trash.

The home-generated sharps program began over two decades ago to provide the community with a convenient way to dispose of needles, lancets, and other medical sharps. Residents can pick up free collection containers at the County's Public Health clinics and dispose of full containers at the same locations. Additionally, per the County's franchise agreements, MarBorg offers free mail-back containers to customers in the unincorporated area. The containers are delivered to customers' homes and include pre-paid postage so the users can mail them to the disposal facility once full.

For household medications, the County passed an EPR ordinance in 2016 that requires the producers of medications sold in the County to create, fund, and manage a program for the safe collection and disposal of their products. Two years later in 2018, SB 212 was signed into law, requiring a similar program statewide.

Two separate stewardship organizations, MED-Project and The Drug Takeback Solutions Foundation, are responsible for implementing SB 212 in the County. Together, these organizations operate 47 medication drop-off kiosks throughout the County. Locations include CVS, Rite Aid, Save-On Pharmacy, the Public Health Department's health care centers, independent pharmacies, and law enforcement offices.

### **Mattress Recycling Program**

Another product stewardship program operating locally is the Mattress Recycling Council's (MRC's) Bye Bye Mattress Program, which includes free drop-off locations for mattresses and box springs. In 2023 the County entered into a new contract with MRC. In exchange for serving as a mattress collection site at the South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station, the County receives \$2.25 per mattress collected to help offset collection costs. Mattresses are also collected for free through MarBorg's bulky item collection program. Thanks to these programs, mattresses and box springs are diverted from landfills and used to make new products such as carpet padding, insulation, filters, and mulch.

### **Carpet Recycling Program**

In 2021 the County began partnering with the Carpet America Recovery Effort (CARE), the organization that administers California's carpet stewardship program (per AB 2398). By serving as a collection site at the South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station, the County can offer discounted carpet rates to the public (over 50% lower than the general trash rate). Carpet is made from various plastic fibers that can be recycled into plastic pellets used to create decking, auto parts, new carpet, and more. Wall-to-wall carpet, carpet squares, and carpet pads are all recyclable.

### **Bulky Item Collection Program**

In partnership with the County's franchised hauler, RRWMD offers a free Bulky Item Collection Program for residential customers. Single-family residential customers are eligible for up to four (4) free bulky item collections per year, and multi-family residential dwellings are entitled to one (1) free annual collection per residential unit. Bulky items include mattresses, furniture, appliances, large electronics, and more. Through this program, residents have an easy and convenient option to dispose of these materials responsibly. During FY 2023/24, approximately 9,833 bulky item pick-ups were conducted.

### **Textiles Recovery Program**

In 2019, the County partnered with MarBorg, and the local company Textile Waste Solutions, to serve as a textiles collection location. Up until recently, residents were able to drop off clean textiles at the South

Coast Recycling and Transfer Station and MarBorg's David Love Place facility in Goleta. In FY 2022/23, approximately 23 tons of textiles were collected through this program. In Summer 2024, the program was temporarily paused to allow time to find a new recycling vendor. More information about these changes is included in *Section 7: Potential New or Expanded Initiatives* on page 28.

### **Recycling Market Development Zone (RMDZ) Program**

The County is a member of the Santa Barbara Regional Recycling Market Development Zone, one of 39 zones in California. The other local participants include the cities of Buellton, Goleta, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, and Santa Maria. The RMDZ program encourages the development of new products created from recycled feedstock and assists businesses with improving the way that products are manufactured and packaged to prevent or reduce waste. The Zone Administrator helps businesses apply for low-interest RMDZ loans, assists with identifying recycling sites, provides support with zoning and permitting, and assists with outreach and marketing. Most recently, the Zone Administrator assisted a start-up that aims to recycle agricultural plastic, a large and currently landfilled waste stream in the County, particularly in the northern region. More information on this effort is provided on page 29.

### **Green Business Program**

RRWMD has been an active participant and supporter of the Green Business Program of Santa Barbara County since 2016 (and prior to that, a participant in the regional Green Awards Program). Under this program, businesses are offered incentives and assistance to implement actions that protect, preserve, and improve the environment and that go above and beyond their compliance with applicable regulations. Areas of attention include solid waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, water conservation, pollution prevention, wastewater, environmentally preferable purchasing, and transportation. Approximately 80 businesses within the County are either certified or in the process of recertifying.

### **Code Enforcement Program**

RRWMD's Refuse Inspectors are on the front line of responding to illegal dumping and enforcing County Code Chapter 17 (relating to solid waste) and Chapter 23 (relating to abandoned vehicles). Illegal dump sites can pollute waterways, impact animal habitats, create hazards for humans, and negatively impact tourism. Upon identifying a violation, the Refuse Inspectors utilize various tools to achieve compliance, ranging from voluntary correction notices to imposing civil penalties of up to \$25,000 per day. RRWMD strives to work cooperatively with offenders and emphasizes education over punitive actions.

### **Facilities**

#### *ReSource Center*

The County's ReSource Center is a cutting-edge waste management facility that plays a crucial role in boosting our community's recycling efforts, while significantly reducing local greenhouse gas emissions

and generating valuable resources such as green energy and compost. Utilizing advanced waste sorting and processing technologies, the facility currently diverts over 20% of additional organics and recyclables from participating communities' trash cans and is projected to divert up to 60% once fully operational. Full operations of the facility are scheduled to occur in March of 2025.

The ReSource Center is a crucial component of the County's and participating cities' compliance with state mandates (such as SB 1383) to reduce organic waste from being landfilled. The facility also helps mitigate the overall environmental impact of our community's waste.

The ReSource Center processes trash and recyclables from commercial and residential customers across the region, including the cities of Buellton, Goleta, Santa Barbara, and Solvang, as well as UCSB and the unincorporated regions of the Cuyama Valley, Santa Ynez Valley, and South Coast. The facility also processes the City of Lompoc's recyclables.

The ReSource Center's Materials Recovery Facility is operated by MarBorg Recovery, while the Anaerobic Digestion Facility and Compost Management Unit are operated by the County. Both facilities are County-owned and are located on the same site as the Tajiguas Landfill.

#### Recycling and Transfer Stations

The County operates four transfer stations strategically located throughout the region: The South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station, the Santa Ynez Valley Recycling and Transfer Station, the New Cuyama Transfer Station, and the Ventucopa Transfer Station. These facilities serve as key collection and consolidation points for much of the community's non-hazardous waste.

The transfer stations handle waste from commercial roll-off containers, as well as material brought in by residents and small, non-franchised haulers (such as landscapers). They accept a variety of items, including bulky waste, mattresses, construction and demolition debris, electronic devices, wood and yard waste, commingled recyclables, batteries, and tires.

#### Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center

For over 30 years, the Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center (CHWCC) has served as a collection site for hazardous waste generated from local residents and businesses. Located on the UCSB campus, the facility is designed to be able to collect, store, and then ship paints, aerosols, solvents, batteries, automotive fluids, gardening chemicals, fluorescent bulbs, and other types of hazardous waste. Four full-time staff members are trained to handle, measure, organize, and pack the hazardous waste, and part-time student workers assist them on Saturdays and Sundays during the residential collection program. The CHWCC continues to be paramount to the effort of preventing hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous waste from ending up in local landfills.

#### **4. Waste Reduction Outreach and Education**

To promote the numerous waste reduction programs and facilities available to the community, RRWMD has an extensive outreach and education program, the components of which are described below.

## **LessIsMore.org Website**

RRWMD created, maintains, updates, and funds the regional waste reduction website [www.LessIsMore.org](http://www.LessIsMore.org). The website is a one-stop shop for local residents to find out how to source, reduce, reuse, and recycle hundreds of different items. The site consists of informational pages, material pages, locations, articles, and events. Videos, image libraries, blog posts, news articles, and links to various external resources are included throughout the site.

Locations that accept items for reuse, recycling, or disposal are split into the following categories to aid in navigating the website:

- All of Santa Barbara County
- Carpinteria Area
- Santa Barbara Area
- Goleta & UCSB Area
- Santa Ynez Valley
- Lompoc Valley & Vandenberg Space Force Base
- Santa Maria Valley
- Cuyama Valley
- Outside Santa Barbara County

The primary sections of LessIsMore.org include the home page, which provides an overview of RRWMD, staff contacts, articles, and events; the “Recycle” section, which provides detailed recycling information for over 85 items; the “Reduce & Reuse” section, which provides waste reduction and reuse tips; the “ReSource Center” section, which provides an overview of the ReSource Center and includes numerous infographics, videos, image libraries, and a tour sign-up portal; the “Organics” section, which provides information about the County’s mulch program, SB 1383 implementation, backyard composting, vermicomposting, green waste recycling, and edible food recovery; the “Hazardous Waste” section, which provides information about the proper disposal of paints, solvents, batteries, and other hazardous wastes; the “Electronics” section, which provides reuse and recycling information for items like computers, TVs, cell phones, printers, and other electronic devices; the “Trash” section, which provides information about local waste haulers and County facilities, as well as the history of trash; and the “Clean-Ups” section, which provides information on Coastal Clean-Up Day, bulky item collection, and illegal dumping.

During FY 2023/24, LessIsMore.org had 98,000 users and 178,000 page views, with 55% of users accessing the site via a mobile device.

## **Less Is More Waste Reduction Guide**

While LessIsMore.org is the most up-to-date local waste reduction resource, RRWMD also publishes a physical guidebook that contains similar information. The heart of the *Less Is More Guide* (“Guide”) is

the “A-Z” section that provides recycling or disposal details for nearly every material listed on LessIsMore.org. While the *Guide* has been a popular resource over the years, staff is currently working on a project to modernize it and make it more useful. The *Guide* will soon transition to a calendar format with helpful tips to keep residents engaged with waste reduction efforts year-round.

### **ReView E-Newsletter**

On the first of each month, RRWMD sends out a waste management e-newsletter to over 15,000 local subscribers. The newsletter, called the ReView, features two brief articles related to waste reduction and recycling. Some examples of past topics include the County's free food scraps kitchen pails, limiting the use of single-use plastics, reducing contamination in the recycling bin, and the change in waste haulers in the North County. ReView topics typically coincide with related campaigns or events.

### **School Education**

RRWMD has several programs to educate students about source reduction, recycling, and composting. Two contracted environmental education organizations, Explore Ecology and Science Discovery, provide in-person and virtual waste reduction programs to schools in the unincorporated area. Last year, 6,193 students were able to take advantage of these lessons.

Additionally, Explore Ecology recently began offering in-person student field trips to the ReSource Center and Tajiguas Landfill. During FY 2023-24, approximately 1,000 students in grades 4-6 visited the facilities.

### **Facility Tours**

In addition to the student field trips provided by Explore Ecology, RRWMD staff offer regular facility tours and field trips to both adults and students. Tours of the Tajiguas Landfill have been offered for over a decade, and tours of the state-of-the-art ReSource Center began in 2021. Additionally, staff conduct tours at the South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station. These tours are promoted through events, on LessIsMore.org, and via community partners. The adult tours attract roughly 500 participants annually.

During these tours, staff explain the processes involved in local waste management systems and the technical aspects of the facilities. Staff also provide practical advice on waste prevention, reuse, and recycling. Educational materials in both English and Spanish are distributed to enhance learning. RRWMD is currently producing a video version of the tour to increase accessibility. The video will be available in English and Spanish and promoted via social media outlets and on LessIsMore.org.

### **Hauler Newsletters**

The County's hauler, MarBorg Industries, distributes bi-annual newsletters to both residential and commercial customers. Newsletters are provided electronically for customers signed up for paperless billing, or physically for those who elect to receive paper bills. Residential newsletters are typically distributed in the spring and fall/winter, and commercial newsletters are typically distributed in the summer and winter. RRWMD staff works closely with MarBorg on the content.

Residential newsletters provide information on topics such as local and upcoming events, battery recycling, paper shredding days, hazardous waste disposal, free bulky item pick-ups, electronic waste recycling, and organic waste collection. Commercial newsletters provide information on similar topics but with a business-oriented focus, and they also include a local green business spotlight.

Additionally, MarBorg sends an annual Customer Resource Guide to residential customers. The resource guide covers all waste programming available to residential customers, including regular curbside trash, recycling, and yard waste or mixed organics services; information on local waste facilities; and a list of where residents can self-haul certain materials. The information is also available on MarBorg's website.

## **Social Media**

RRWMD coordinates with the Department's Public Information Officer to post waste management content on relevant social media pages. Posts are published in conjunction with current campaigns and events, or to announce program updates.

## **Community Events**

RRWMD participates in several community events every year, including the Santa Barbara Earth Day Festival, Farm Day in Santa Maria, PEP's Touch a Truck Event in Santa Barbara, and the Division's household hazardous waste collection events in Santa Ynez and New Cuyama, among others. These events provide a great opportunity for staff to interact with the public, answer questions about where their waste goes, promote LessIsMore.org, and distribute food scraps pails and informational pamphlets on the County's waste reduction programs. RRWMD also distributes reusable beeswax food wrappers as a prize for spinning the "wheel of waste" and answering a question (right or wrong) about whether or not the type of item they land on is recyclable. This has been a great way to engage community members and get them thinking about where their waste goes.

## **Annual Campaigns**

### *Electronic Waste Recycling*

Each year in the late winter and early spring, RRWMD works with local media outlets to run an electronic waste recycling campaign. The campaign reminds community members that e-waste should never go in the trash, and print advertisements typically include the locations of e-waste drop-off locations. In 2024, the campaign instructed community members to tape any cords on their electronics to the devices themselves to help prevent tripping hazards for County staff. Along with print and radio ads, RRWMD includes blog posts on LessIsMore.org and posts content on social media outlets.

### *Food Waste Reduction*

In the spring, RRWMD runs various ads throughout the County focusing on food waste reduction. While most of RRWMD's food recovery outreach is focused on the business sector, this campaign targets



residents. Print, radio and online ads offer helpful tips on food waste reduction. The print ads also include interactive games like word searches and infographics.

### Organics Recycling

With the implementation of SB 1383, RRWMD has increased efforts to educate residents and businesses about the new organics collection programs in the North County and to highlight the existing organics diversion initiatives in the ReSource Center service area. The annual educational campaign utilizes a variety of channels, including the monthly ReView e-newsletter; bill inserts and mailers; waste hauler newsletters; distribution of kitchen pails at community events; and tours and presentations conducted by RRWMD staff. Outreach efforts are coordinated with the County's city partners to ensure a unified and consistent message regionally.

### Used Oil Recycling

Funded by an annual grant from CalRecycle, RRWMD runs oil and filter recycling ads each spring. The print, radio, television, and web ads remind do-it-yourselfers that used oil and filters should never be placed in the trash and must instead be taken to a local collection center. The ads list the collection centers in the respective region.

### America Recycles Day

America Recycles Day occurs annually on November 15. RRWMD has a dedicated budget to promote this occasion via radio, print, online, and social media ads. The ads typically depict items that are recyclable in residential blue bins and provide tips on recycling.

### Christmas Tree Recycling and Holiday Waste Reduction

Each January, RRWMD runs print, radio, television, and social media advertisements promoting the recycling of Christmas trees. The ads provide instructions on how to prepare Christmas trees for curbside collection and provide the dates and times of free pick-up and drop-off. In 2024, RRWMD widened the holiday tree campaign to a general sustainability message. Waste reduction tips were included in the monthly ReView, on LessIsMore.org, and on social media.

### Household Hazardous Waste Collection

RRWMD coordinates annual educational campaigns to spread awareness about hazardous waste disposal at the CHWCC. The campaigns include print advertisements with a "spring cleaning" theme, television and radio ads, online media, distribution of flyers, tabling at public events, displaying of information on County websites, inclusion of articles in waste hauler newsletters, and the use of social media outlets. All literature is translated into Spanish to reach the local Spanish-speaking population. Program brochures are also distributed to retail sites and property managers. The County has historically also offered a tour of the CHWCC in collaboration with the annual Creek Week celebration in September. Additionally, RRWMD runs ads and distributes mailers to promote the hazardous waste collection events held in the Santa Ynez and Cuyama Valleys.

## Additional Campaigns

### Battery Recycling

RRWMD recently received a \$50,000 grant from CalRecycle to promote battery recycling locally. The multi-media campaign focused on the fire risk of improperly disposed batteries and included infographics tailored to the County's various battery recycling programs. Occurring primarily in the late winter and early spring of 2023, the campaign had a noticeable impact on the incidents of fires at the ReSource Center MRF. Between June 2022 and February 2023, the MRF averaged 1.8 fires per month. By the end of April 2023, the MRF was averaging only 1.0 fires per month, equating to a 44% decrease during the sample period.

### Bulky Item Collection

In June 2023, RRWMD sent a mailer to all single-family and multi-family residents in the unincorporated South Coast area to remind them about the free bulky item collection program available to them. Staff hopes that reminders like these will help limit public dumping, as bulky items such as mattresses, furniture, and bagged trash are often encountered at illegal dump sites. In its outreach, RRWMD targets only one region at a time to avoid overwhelming the hauler with too many bulky item pick-up requests all at once.

### Mulch Program

In August 2023, RRWMD conducted a campaign to garner increased interest in the County's mulch program. Staff created and sent out mailers to potential customers, including those with large properties and those who have paid for mulch deliveries in the past, in the hopes of motivating them to schedule mulch deliveries at a discounted price. Previous campaigns included ads in local publications, press releases, and website posts.

## 5. May 2024 Community Waste Reduction Survey



To gauge local residents' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors regarding waste reduction activities and current waste management practices, the County released an online survey in May 2024. The survey included twenty (20) waste-related questions and four (4) demographic questions. The survey was available on LessIsMore.org and publicized in the May 2024 ReView and on social media. The County received over 400 responses to the survey, with more than half of respondents residing in the South County and a majority (81%) falling within the 55 years and over demographic. Overall, convenience emerged as the biggest motivating factor for residents' waste reduction efforts, followed by cost savings (ranked second) and environmental factors (ranked third); however, South County residents were slightly more likely to consider environmental factors over cost savings.

With regards to food waste, most respondents indicated that expired foods and uneaten leftovers were the primary causes of food waste in their household, rather than over-buying. South County residents 55 years and older are the most likely to compost their food scraps at home, while North County residents rely on their curbside organics pick-up program. Younger respondents (34 years and under) recorded the highest responses of throwing food away. Overall, only 11% of respondents selected food as the type of waste most frequently discarded in their household.

When it comes to waste reduction activities, recycling was selected as the method most commonly practiced at home. Methods that require more effort (e.g. shopping plastic-free or in bulk) were far less popular. 89% of respondents reported that they always separate their recyclables from the trash; 10% reported that they separate very often; and 1% reported that they sometimes separate their recyclables. No respondents indicated that they never separate their recyclables.

When asked which actions have the most impact on reducing waste, younger respondents were more likely to select government regulations as the most impactful. Those aged 35 to 44 years old were more likely to believe that technological advancements have the most impact, while respondents aged 55 years and older were more likely to choose individual actions.

In terms of preferred education channels, South County residents are more likely to seek information about sustainability and waste reduction from environmental organizations or government websites, while North County residents primarily rely on the news and media outlets or sought no information at all. 67% of South County respondents indicated that they are aware of local waste reduction and recycling programs, whereas only 45% of North County respondents said that they are aware of these types of programs.

The survey results will help shape the County's future education and outreach strategies. While RRWMD currently utilizes numerous media outlets countywide, staff will explore additional outlets in the North County, where survey respondents indicated they rely more heavily on the media for waste reduction messaging. Additionally, staff will work with MarBorg Industries, the new franchised hauler in the North County unincorporated area, to increase engagement with residents in the region. In the South County, where respondents indicated they look to environmental organizations for sustainability and waste reduction information, staff will pursue increased collaboration with local non-profits. Countywide, staff will also work on further engaging younger generations, potentially through the use of social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, as well as through collaboration with local academic institutions and student groups.

## **6. Internal County Initiatives**

In addition to the waste reduction programs provided to the community, several County departments, as described on the following pages, participate in programs to reduce the generation of waste from County offices and facilities.

## **Green Business Program Certification**

County facilities are eligible to seek certification under the Santa Barbara County Green Business Program (described earlier). Certification is a great way to evaluate current operations and make improvements in areas of energy and water conservation, pollution prevention, waste management, toxics reduction, employee commute practices, and education.

RRWMD's Victoria Street office in Santa Barbara has been Green Business certified since 2016 and is currently working to achieve "Innovator" status. Innovator is the highest level of certification that the California Green Business Network offers. Businesses that achieve Innovator status must meet verifiable standards of sustainability, go above and beyond to combat climate change, and work towards social equity by providing additional employee benefits and community resources. The County's Water Agency recently reached this impressive Innovator level for its Victoria Street office and can serve as a model for other County offices.

The County's Human Resources building, the Air Pollution Control District building, the Association of Governments building, and the North County Public Works building are all Green Business certified, as is the County's franchised hauler, MarBorg Industries.

## **General Services Initiatives**

The General Services Department follows the guidelines set forth in the County's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy. The purpose of the policy is to ensure procurement of goods and services that reduce waste, or otherwise have a lower impact on human health and the environment than their common alternatives. Ways in which products or services can achieve this goal include conserving natural resources, materials, and energy; maximizing recyclability and/or recycled content; and reducing toxicity.

In addition to supporting waste reduction at the purchasing level, General Services manages surplus inventory for County buildings to prevent items that are no longer in use from going to the landfill. Surplus items range from furniture to electronic items to general office equipment. Computers, if not claimed by a County department, may be donated to the County Schools' "Computers for Families" program. Computers that are not needed or suitable may be donated to school programs and non-profits at the discretion of the Purchasing Manager. Only if an item is broken, no longer operable, not suitable for donation, or deemed as having no salvage value will it be recycled or disposed, at the discretion of the respective department and with the approval of the Chief Procurement Officer.

## **Community Services Department/Sustainability Division Initiatives**

Under the Sustainability Division's oversight, the County offers a "Reusable Party Pack" to help minimize waste at County events and meetings. This initiative is part of the Division's broader commitment to sustainability and waste reduction. The Reusable Party Pack includes a variety of items such as plates, bowls, coolers, glasses, mugs, cutlery, and cloth napkins. These supplies are available to check out to ensure that events and meetings can be conducted with minimal environmental impact. After use, employees are asked to wash and return the items to the designated storage area. All departments and

employees are encouraged to utilize the Reusable Party Packs. Not only does this program reduce single-use waste, but it also promotes a culture of environmental responsibility within the organization.

Additionally, the Sustainability Division recently launched a new lunch-and-learn series called "Climate Resilient SBC" designed to educate employees on the financial, environmental, and community advantages of climate action. As part of this initiative, RRWMD presented "Less Is More: Be a Food Forward Thinker," where 27 attendees discovered strategies to maximize food usage, save money, and cut down on food waste. The series also featured engaging sessions on topics such as "Shift Your Ride," "Clean Energy Home," "WaterWise," and "ReadySBC," all of which offered practical tips and insights for a more sustainable lifestyle.

### **Planning and Development Department Initiatives**

In 2023 RRWMD began participating in the Planning and Development (P&D) Department's Subdivision Development Review Committee (SDRC). The SDRC consists of various County departments and divisions that review proposed development projects and evaluate their compliance with relevant County Code. RRWMD is responsible for County Code Chapter 17 provisions which outline solid waste rules and regulations, and participation in the SDRC has allowed RRWMD to enforce the requirements of this Chapter and ensure future development are built in line with best waste management practices.

In light of recent state laws significantly streamlining the review of housing projects, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being pursued between P&D and the members of SDRC to formalize the review process and ensure projects are reviewed within the new stricter timelines. RRWMD is planning to sign on to this MOU and continue participation in the committee. It should be noted that not all prospective projects go through SDRC, and RRWMD is continuing to work with P&D to fill in any gaps.

Through participation in the SDRC, it has become clear that County-approved waste enclosure guidelines would not only benefit prospective project applicants but enable RRWMD to further outline best waste management design standards tailored to specific project types. Ideally this would result in improved project design for large new builds, particularly for multi-use commercial and multi-family projects. RRWMD will be working on creating enclosure guidelines during FY 2024/25.

### **Parks Department Initiatives**

The County's Parks Department participates in waste reduction through purchasing items in bulk (when available) and stocking compostable pet waste bags to minimize plastic waste. Additionally, the Parks Department ensures that wood chips are recycled into mulch. The department also strives to site recycling bins at as many parks as they can, taking budgetary factors and location into account.

## **7. Potential New or Expanded Initiatives**

Looking ahead to additional opportunities to reduce waste in our community, RRWMD has identified the following programs that have the potential to increase diversion.

## **Textiles Recovery**

Up until recently, the County partnered with MarBorg to serve as a textiles collection site. The collected textiles were processed by a company called Textile Waste Solutions and either downcycled into rags for use in the industrial sector or shipped overseas for reuse in developing countries. Due to the growing need for more sustainable and equitable environmental solutions, the County and MarBorg are currently vetting new potential partners with greater capability to close the loop on textile recycling through mechanical recycling into new fibers; reselling textiles that are still wearable and desirable; and downcycling what can't be used into rags, carpet underlay, or insulation lining. RRWMD hopes to finalize this partnership before the end of 2024.

Additionally, RRWMD hopes to partner with local second-hand stores to divert textiles that are either unsold or in too poor of condition to sell. Current estimates put the amount of textiles that can potentially be diverted from local second-hand stores in the range of 20 to 50 tons per month. These textiles are currently being managed by companies similar to Textile Waste Solutions and are either downcycled into rags or insulation or sent to developing countries. The goals of an expanded textiles recovery program are to manage the textiles domestically, sustainably, and ethically.

In April 2024, in collaboration with the County and the Santa Barbara RMDZ program, the California Product Stewardship Council hosted a textiles recycling workshop in Goleta. The workshop brought together upcyclers, waste haulers, recyclers, students, local government agencies, NGOs, designers, technical innovators, brand owners, and community members interested in the world of fibers. The workshop marked a shift in the mission to expand textile circularity locally and brought new enthusiasm to those invested in sustainability in the textiles industry.

During the event, Dr. Roland Geyer, a professor with the UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science & Management and a renowned expert on plastic pollution, shared insights on the impacts that products like textiles have on sustainability and the environment. Dr. Geyer underscored the need to focus efforts on repair activities first and foremost. Repair, in particular, supports sustainability efforts by not only reducing waste, but also by lowering emissions and supporting local economies through channeling funds towards services and labor instead of the manufacture of new goods. RRWMD has long promoted donating, repurposing, or recycling used textiles over landfilling them; however, as a result of Dr. Geyer's findings, RRWMD is increasing its promotion of repair and repurposing in public educational materials and during community outreach events.

## **Film Plastic Recycling**

With film plastics comprising 14% of the residual from the ReSource Center MRF, this waste stream is one that has garnered increased attention over the past few years. Most recently, a company named ENEVI is working to site an agricultural (ag) plastic recycling facility in the northern part of the county. The company has cleared the permitting stage and is now finalizing financing and awaiting approval from CalRecycle for an RMDZ loan. Once sited, the facility will be able to process between 6,000 and 10,000 metric tons of ag plastic annually. Much of the feedstock will originate from the Santa Maria Valley; however, the company will also actively recruit feedstock from other areas of the county, including the Tajiguas Landfill wasteshed. RRWMD staff have been communicating with ENEVI representatives, as well as the RMDZ administrator, regarding project updates.

On the South Coast, a smaller scale film plastic recycling program is already operational and is looking to expand. Operated by Ablitt's Fine Cleaners & Tailors' Planet Protector Program, the film plastic recycling drop-off program is currently available two days per week by appointment. A group of volunteers helps participants sort their film plastic, and any unacceptable items are returned to the participants for disposal as trash. The program accepts clean and dry retail bags, dry cleaner bags, plastic wrap (e.g. from paper towels, bathroom tissue, napkins, etc.), bread bags, bubble wrap, and air pillows. The collected film plastics are baled and sent for recycling to a company named Trex that uses the feedstock to manufacture eco-friendly composite decking.

Ablitt's is seeking to expand their film plastic recycling program and is currently researching additional venues to host their recycling events and store the plastic bales. The County could consider partnering with Ablitt's to provide space, if available.

In addition to these externally-operated film plastic recycling programs, RRWMD and MarBorg Recovery have been communicating with potential brokers regarding the marketing of film plastic bales produced from the comingled recycling line at the ReSource Center MRF. While contamination is a challenge, RRWMD and MarBorg Recovery are optimistic that these bales will soon have a viable market. In the interim, MarBorg Recovery is storing film plastic bales onsite.

## **8. Staff Recommendations**

To move the County above and beyond its already impressive status as a waste management leader in the State, staff recommends the following actions:

### **Continued Legislative Advocacy**

Ongoing support for product stewardship and other waste reduction legislation is critical to achieving source reduction; local governments alone can't solve the problem. Manufacturers hold the greatest waste reduction power with their ability to incorporate recycled-content feedstock into their products and their ability to design products to be more easily reused or recycled.

The County participates in and advocates for EPR by internally supporting or opposing proposed legislation and by supporting groups like the California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) and the Rural Counties Representatives of California (RCRC) that champion EPR programs and other legislative actions aimed at assisting local governments. In 2011, the County also formally adopted a resolution in support of EPR.

Key product stewardship legislation and additional waste reduction related bills that the County has supported this legislative session and should continue watching include SB 707 (Newman), which would create a product stewardship program for textiles; AB 2236 (Bauer-Kahan) and SB 1053 (Blakespear), which would close the loopholes in the State's existing plastic grocery bag ban; SB 1066 (Blakespear), which would create an extended producer responsibility program for pyrotechnic distress flares; SB 1143 (Allen), which would expand California's paint product stewardship program; and SB 1280 (Laird), which would phase out the sale of single-use one-pound propane cylinders and transition California to reusable cylinders.

### **Increased Certification of County Facilities Under the Green Business Program**

To decrease waste and increase the sustainability of County operations, staff recommends that additional County offices and facilities become certified under the Santa Barbara County Green Business Program (described on page 27). Currently, only a handful of offices are certified. By certifying additional facilities, the County can potentially reduce costs and also model the way for other agencies and businesses. RRWMD has been collaborating with the Green Business Program Coordinator and colleagues in the General Services Department and Community Services Department to create a plan for certifying more locations.



## 9. References

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