

## **In-depth analysis of Solid Waste Disposal District operations reveals options for saving money**

*By Andy Frey, Superintendent of Operations  
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The Fremont County Solid Waste Disposal District is a complex entity. It operates 21 facilities (landfills, bale stations, recycling centers, and transfer stations) in an area that has a population of about 42,000 people. For comparison, Natrona County has just one landfill and one transfer station to serve nearly twice the population of Fremont County.

Three years ago, the Fremont County Solid Waste Disposal District Board and management began taking a long-range, proactive view of their operations, anticipating future costs and regulatory requirements. Our regulatory agency, the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, has mandated the closure of the Lander Landfill in 2024. We need to prepare for this well ahead of time, as it will cost the District an expected \$6.2 for closure and post-closure care. To date, we have set aside \$2.6 million for our future closure and post-closure liabilities.

However, just focusing on the Lander Landfill closure is not enough. We need to become even more prepared when considering a 20-year view of the District's operations, which are impacted by a number of forces on our expenditures. The top three are personnel, equipment replacement, and future capital expenditures (which include infrastructure and closure of our other landfills).

The District has always taken a fiscally conservative approach to its long-term health. Fifty percent of the District's revenue comes from a 3-mil property tax (set by state statute), with the balance coming from disposal fees. Our current goal is to maintain – or even lower – disposal fees in the next twenty years. No other municipality (or utility company, for that matter) is doing that.

To assist in analyzing this complex project, the Board opted to engage the services of a team from Trihydro and HDR, both engineering firms with national expertise in planning, designing, and evaluating solid waste and recycling facilities. After conducting its research, the engineering team completed two reports: a 58-page review of the District's current practices and long-term projections, and a 63-page, in-depth analysis of various future alternatives, with funding projections for each for the next 20 years.

The engineering team's analysis showed that while the District has made some necessary changes in its operations, if additional changes weren't made, the result would be a deficit of more than \$16 million within 20 years.

At its April 21 meeting, the Board considered and voted on various options from the engineering team's recommendations to make the District more efficient, while maintaining a reasonable level of service to our customers.

In summary, here's what the Board approved, to be implemented on July 1, 2014, the start of our fiscal year:

*The steps below are anticipated to save the District \$10 million over the next twenty years.*

- Reduce the days of operation at the Lander Landfill, Sand Draw Landfill, and Riverton Bale Station from seven to five (Tuesday-Saturday).
- Reduce the days of operation at the Dubois Transfer Station and Landfill from five to three, and reduce the hours of operation. The new hours will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday, from 9 am until 4 pm (closed 1-2 pm).
- Only accept construction and demolition (C&D) waste at the Sand Draw Landfill.

*These steps will save the District \$6.2 million over the next twenty years.*

- Change the way we bury the garbage. This involves placing it in the landfill loose and then compacting it with waste compaction equipment, rather than baling the waste prior to placement in the landfill. Compacting waste in this manner is in line with the industry standards and saves landfill space.
- Divert all of the household trash (i.e. municipal solid waste) from the Riverton area to the Lander Landfill. This will maximize the available airspace within the boundary of the Lander Landfill prior to the state-mandated closure in 2024.
- Redesign the cover system on closed landfills.

After conducting an exhaustive analysis of our operations, we believe that these modest changes will allow us to operate with fiscal responsibility for the years ahead. While we cannot foresee all possibilities, we are confident that our current efforts will allow those in charge of the District twenty years from now to inherit a responsibly managed operation.