

The county of Santa Cruz and the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville have begun a study of future garbage disposal options. Future disposal options under consideration include a new landfill in Santa Cruz County, transfer of refuse to landfills in other communities outside of Santa Cruz County, composting, and emerging waste conversion technologies. This on-going process includes identifying and studying various sites across our county for construction of these facilities. These studies are being conducted by the Santa Cruz County Department of Public Works, under direction of the Integrated Waste Management Local Task Force.

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY...

What do we do when our landfill is full?

The County's Buena Vista Landfill has less than 16 years of life remaining. With our landfill filling up and landfill space across the state declining, it is time to start looking for a solution to our garbage disposal needs for the next generation. State law also requires that counties and cities with less than 15 years of landfill space must begin looking for garbage disposal solutions.

Now is the time to begin planning for new disposal and recycling facilities in our County to meet our community's future needs. The County of Santa Cruz and the Cities of Scotts Valley, Capitola, Santa Cruz, and Watsonville have joined together to look at a variety of options for handling our community's garbage disposal and recycling needs in the future. While running out of landfill space in 16 years seems like a long time, new landfill projects in California are now taking anywhere from 10 years to 15 years to complete.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO MAKE OUR LANDFILLS LAST AS LONG AS POSSIBLE?

The County and Cities are now recycling between 48% and 66% of all garbage created in our community. The County's Buena Vista Landfill was built in 1985 and had an estimated life of 20 years. Through a variety of recycling programs and outstanding public participation in these programs, the life of the Buena Vista Landfill has been extended for an additional 15 years. We will continue to find new and innovative ways to improve recycling and reduce garbage, but we also have to be responsible and plan for the eventual closure of our existing landfills.

WHAT OTHER OPTIONS ARE THERE BESIDES A NEW LANDFILL IN OUR COMMUNITY?

In addition to new landfill sites, the County and Cities are looking at other ways to handle our future garbage, including transferring garbage to an out-of-county landfill. An integrated waste management system to handle our future garbage may also feature non-disposal components such as large-scale composting or waste conversion technologies. However, there will always be a need for landfill disposal capacity, whether large or small and whether local or out-of-county. Any out-of-county option will require a new local transfer station.

WHERE CAN WE TRANSFER OUR GARBAGE OUT-OF-COUNTY?

We have begun the process of looking for large capacity landfills with extra space that may be willing to sign long-term agreements to handle our garbage in the future. However, many large landfills with extra space are located out-of-state or at distances that would require transferring our garbage by train.

WHAT ARE WASTE CONVERSION TECHNOLOGIES?

Waste can be converted into less harmful materials and reduced in volume through a variety of biological, chemical or heat processes. These processes can produce marketable end-products to help reduce costs, such as renewable energy or compost. Most of these technologies are new and still undergoing testing for large-scale application, but will hopefully provide us with new options for handling our garbage in the future, contingent on environmental and cost impacts.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS FOR CHOOSING OUR FUTURE GARBAGE DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING PROGRAMS?

The first step is to locate a number of potentially suitable sites within our County for each of the three types of garbage management options being considered: landfill, garbage transfer station, and compost or waste conversion facility. To complete this first step, the County and Cities formed a Disposal Site Citizen's Advisory Group to evaluate possible locations all across the county for each of these garbage management options. This group is composed of citizens appointed by our elected officials from each of the supervisorial districts in the County, each of the Cities, and special interest groups.

The Advisory Group has completed its study and submitted its first report to the city-county Local Task Force on possible landfill disposal sites. These sites are now being evaluated by the Local Task Force. A report on transfer station and compost/waste conversion sites is also being completed.

Once a number of possibly suitable sites for each of these options have been found, the second step will be to hire environmental specialists and engineers to conduct on-site studies and further review each site's suitability as a landfill, transfer station, compost or waste conversion facility. In addition, cost-benefit and system efficiency analyses will be prepared to compare the various options.

The third step will be a series of public forums to provide more information on the options being considered and to receive public comments on the proposed sites and options. Once the decisions have been made on which option(s) and site(s) to pursue, the final step will be completing environmental impact reports on the selected sites and issuing permits for development and construction.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

Meetings of the Local Task Force are open to the public. Background information on the study, information about specific locations under consideration by the Task Force, and Task Force meeting agendas are available at the [Integrated Waste Management Local Task Force link](#).

Starting in late-2004, a series of public forums will be held in neighborhoods throughout the County to seek public input on garbage management options and possible facility sites. We will gather public input through these meetings and provide it to our elected officials to assist them in making the necessary decisions on the best garbage management solution for our community. You will also have opportunities to speak at formal public hearings scheduled to discuss many of the issues related to future garbage management programs.

The study on future garbage management options and the publication of this public information brochure is a joint effort of the cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville, and the County of Santa Cruz, under the direction of the Santa Cruz County Integrated Waste Management Local Task Force.

For more information, call the Santa Cruz County Department of
Public Works at 454-2160.