

## What This Plan Covers

This Plan is intended to help protect and preserve human health, environmental quality, and natural resources by guiding solid and moderate risk waste efforts and decisions in Snohomish County between 1999 and 2005, and influencing them further into the future. The Plan does not detail the solid waste related activities which will be undertaken by local government, but instead discusses the types of activities necessary if solid waste generated within the county is to be managed in a safe and economical manner. This document is divided into four sections:

### Section

- 1** Introduction
- 2** Six-Year Plan which describes what is to be accomplished between 1999 and 2005
- 3** Twenty-Year Plan which presents the mission and goals for solid waste management within the county
- 4** Background section

Throughout this Plan the term “the system” is used to denote the Snohomish County Solid Waste Management System. The system refers to a number of integrated solid waste management facilities and activities undertaken by the Snohomish County Public Works Department, Solid Waste Management Division, and financed by a self-supporting enterprise fund. The facilities are operated and activities undertaken in order to fulfill the responsibilities delegated to Snohomish County under Washington law, the mutual responsibilities assumed by the County and its 19 cities and towns under the terms of their interlocal agreements, and the responsibilities arising from this Plan.

## Things Change

The first section of this document discusses why governmental solid waste management has changed considerably in the last decade, particularly in Snohomish County. Such changes demand flexibility on the part of this Plan and the system, particularly in relation to:

- funding—the system must be concerned with the long-term financial stability of its solid waste management operations;
- increased regional and interagency cooperation—solutions to solid waste related problems are often more effective, and sometimes only effective, if implemented on a regional, multi-county basis, or multi-agency basis;

- recognition of the role of the private sector—those system functions which are uniquely governmental responsibilities need to be defined, and other programs may, in certain circumstances, be advantageously delegated to the private sector;
- regulatory environment—programs must be designed and managed with consideration of how the economic system will respond, and take into account that voluntary self compliance on the part of business people will often be in their own self-interest;
- functions and organizational structure of the system—these have changed over time, and are likely to do so in the future.

System waste management activities are currently organized around two separate plans: the Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, and the Moderate Risk Waste Management Plan (MRW Plan). The MRW Plan covers household hazardous waste as well as hazardous waste generated in small quantities by businesses. This Comprehensive Plan is intended to begin the consolidation of the two plans. As with the case of earlier comprehensive plan updates, this Plan is meant to update the 1993 MRW Plan, but not to replace it.

## Mission Statement

A mission for solid waste management activities in Snohomish county was developed early in the development of this update. This mission is:

**To protect people, the environment, and natural resources by preventing, reducing, and solving problems associated with Snohomish county solid and moderate risk wastes.**

## Goals

Based on this mission, the following goals were developed:

- 1** To reduce, or prevent where possible, the generation of solid and moderate risk wastes and their associated problems through service-oriented, cost-effective actions where prevention or reduction will protect human health, safety and environmental quality.
- 2** To solve problems related to solid and moderate risk waste through service-oriented actions that protect human health and safety, and environmental quality.
- 3** To provide necessary support for the other two goals using service-oriented, cost-effective actions.

## Plan Organization

The Twenty-Year Plan, presented in the third section of this document, is a compilation of the tasks necessary to accomplish these three goals. The Six-Year Plan, presented in the second section, are those tasks which must be accomplished relatively quickly. The reason they must be accomplished more quickly is because they will help resolve an existing significant issue confronting the system.

## Six-Year Plan

Early in the planning process, a considerable amount of time was spent identifying these significant issues. These issues and the tasks designed to resolve them are summarized below. All of these tasks will be undertaken within the first six years of this Plan's implementation.

- financial integrity of the system—the system has certain solid waste related obligations which must be fulfilled regardless of the amount of waste which comes to system facilities, or even if the existing system disappears or is fundamentally altered. To address this issue, the system will continue to strive for economic efficiency in its operations, and to formally assess long term financial obligations, issues, and possible solutions. The results of this assessment will be presented to SWAC and the County Council for their consideration.
- ongoing planning/public policy decision-making mechanism—this Plan must be kept current, which requires future decisions to be made in an intelligent and timely manner. An important component of this update was the development of a plan modification and revision mechanism. The mechanism permits deviating from the Six-Year Plan by dropping activities, or by undertaking activities from the Twenty-Year Plan after notification to SWAC, all cities and towns, and DOE, followed by a County Council vote.
- moderate risk wastes—the Snohomish County Moderate Risk Waste Management Plan left a number of important issues unresolved. Progress made in resolving these is discussed in this Plan and, where possible, future directions are outlined and future activities are described. In particular, the Six-Year Plan calls for the system and the Snohomish Health District to continue their cooperative efforts in education regarding pollution prevention and safe disposal. It intends for the District to continue its compliance activities, and for the system to continue its efforts to make it convenient and economical for residents and small quantity generators to dispose of moderate risk wastes.
- waste prevention—while the wisdom of recycling is generally accepted, it would be even more advantageous to, where practical, avoid producing waste in the first place. This Plan calls for continuing to develop and implement programs designed to prevent waste and pollution, largely in coordination with recycling and other programs.

- recycling—This Plan calls for a re-examination of the current 50 % recycling goal, but until that reexamination is complete, for the goal to remain at 50 %. In terms of programs necessary to meet the goal, several years ago the system undertook the Recycling Potential Assessment, which resulted in the design of a number of recycling programs and projects. There are two main thrusts to these programs: a continuation of system’s existing educational efforts, and a series of coordinated programs designed to optimize private sector recycling efforts. The precise mix of programs and projects, which will be undertaken, will depend on the re-evaluation of the recycling goal.
- solid waste system capacity—When the 2001 edition of this Plan was published, there was considerable uncertainty concerning what future facilities would exist, and where they would be located. That edition contained extensive discussion and analysis on shortfalls in system capacity, and options to deal with this shortfall. Since 2001 the Airport Road Recycling and Transfer Station has been built to replace the Everett Recycling and Transfer Station, and the Southwest Station is in the process of being rebuilt, with opening scheduled for fall 2004. Each of these stations has far more capacity than the stations they replaced, and as a result the system is expected to have enough capacity for the next 20 years.

One question which still needs to be addressed is the status of the Temporary Transfer and Recycling Station. That station has served as a temporary replacement while other facilities are closed temporarily. While serving in this capacity minimal external impacts have been observed.

The eastern portion of the County has and is expected to continue to see relatively rapid population growth. While the two new stations provide enough capacity to serve this population, the inconvenience and cost of having to travel to those facilities could be significant. As a result, the system will have to decide how to best serve this area, and the permanent use of TRTS will be one option examined. Proper permits would be acquired and extensive public involvement and input sought prior to any change in the present status of TRTS, or any construction of new facilities.

While not encouraging the privatization of new or existing facilities, this Plan recognizes that privatization may occur, and if in furtherance of system goals, may even be desirable. As a result, the Plan contains a policy regarding private solid waste handling facilities. The Plan presents the general purposes of the policy, and requires that a private facility be designed to further these goals before it is permitted. In addition, before a facility is permitted the owner and/or operator of the facility must negotiate a contract, and the required elements of this contract are described in the Plan.

The Plan recognizes that additional MRW, recyclable, and solid waste transfer capabilities will be necessary. The Plan commits the system to develop and implement planning processes to address these needs, and further commits that these processes will include public involvement and environmental assessment elements, and consideration of the proposed facility's impact upon waste prevention and recycling activities.

- illegal dumping/other enforcement issues—the questions of how much regulation there should be, who will adopt the regulations, and who will enforce the regulations, need to be addressed. This Plan represents a departure from prior plans in that the system commits to working with other agencies and jurisdictions to address the illegal dumping issue, possibly in a leadership role, by initially working together to assess roles and responsibilities.

This Plan identifies several issues, which do not have “stand alone” solutions, but rather will be solved by activities associated with other issues identified in this Plan. For instance, when the system assesses waste generation patterns to plan for additional solid waste handling capacity, it should also examine the need for and ability to site related waste and recyclable facilities. The following are the issues, which lack “stand alone” solutions:

- identifying the need for and siting disposal/recycling facilities—as with the case of many essential public facilities, some means of ensuring that necessary facilities can be built is essential.
- special wastes—opportunities for disposing wastes which require special handling and/or disposal, because of their hazardous nature, or their physical qualities, must be available.
- content of disposed material—there are still things being disposed of with solid waste which shouldn't, such as household and small quantity generator moderate risk wastes, and recyclables.
- waste import/ regional implications—the current County law which prohibits out-of-county waste from being disposed of at system facilities needs reexamination in light of increased need for regionwide cooperation and planning.

Finally, in addition to the activities designed to resolve a particular issue, some activities called for in the Six-Year Plan support the resolution of all issues, or are basic to accomplishing the mission of the system. These activities include compliance and environmental protection activities undertaken by the Snohomish Health District as well as by the system, communicating and coordination with appropriate parties, collecting and analyzing necessary data, and evaluating the system's activities in order to improve them.

