

KING COUNTY SOLID WASTE DIVISION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT



Per King County Code Sections 10.14.080 and 10.24.020



King County

Department of
Natural Resources and Parks
Solid Waste Division

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Message from the Director

Welcome to the 2022 King County Solid Waste Division's Annual Report. The past year was yet another busy one for the Solid Waste Division as we continued to provide the resources and services our customers and partners expect of us. This was marked by a new record high percentage of happy customers at our transfer stations. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the remarkable work of our more than 400 employees.

Over the last year, the Division has dedicated itself to advancing the region's waste prevention and reduction efforts. We continued to make progress on our Re+ program – the County's approach to creating a more sustainable and equitable solid waste system. Division staff have done incredible work alongside cities, community members, and local businesses and nonprofit organizations to advance Re+ goals. Our accomplishments include developing a community panel to help guide Re+ actions, launching multiple business innovation and grant programs, and partnering with cities to commit to implement Re+ goals in the future. 2023 will be another big year for Re+ as we continue to advance the County's waste prevention and environmental goals.

We've also maintained and enhanced other programs designed to keep reusable and recyclable materials out of our landfill. Programs like Green Schools and the Waste Reduction & Recycling Schools Program educate future generations of environmental stewards on recycling and reuse. We also worked with private partners on a plastic bag drop-off pilot to help promote more recycling options, and hosted several repair events to extend the life of certain reusable materials to keep them out of our landfill.

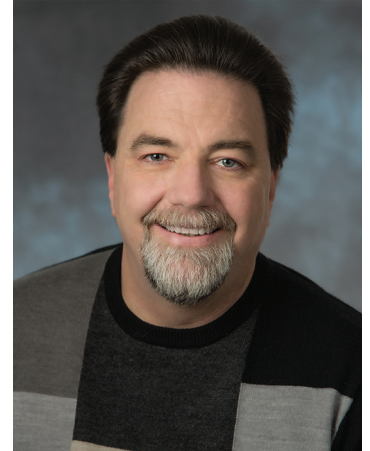
We continued to actively collaborate with our community partners, as was evident in progress made on our two new recycling and transfer stations and the publication of the final Environmental Impact Statement for the preferred alternative for future development at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. In 2022, we achieved the 100 percent design phase of the new South County Recycling and Transfer Station Project, which will replace the outdated Algona Transfer Station. We also continued in our efforts to engage the public, city partners, and community members in finding a new site for the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project, which will replace the aging Houghton Transfer Station.

While our operation continues to provide a cost-effective and environmentally responsible service, we did request an increase in our solid waste disposal fees in 2022. The Division enacted an increase that equates to an estimated 79 cents per month, to residential curbside collection bills in January 2023.

The rate reflects cost-saving measures to reduce operating expenditures and increases the discount rate for low-income customers, while supporting vital disposal and recycling programs, expanding services and modernizing facilities, and advancing climate neutrality goals. Revenue from the 2023 rate will allow us to continue essential services while supporting capital projects and programs crucial to environmental progress on climate change mitigation, recycling, and waste reduction efforts.

I am immensely proud of our employees and the Division for everything we've accomplished in the past year. In addition to our valued staff, our work wouldn't be possible without the support of our customers, partnering cities, advisory committees, the King County Executive, and the King County Council.

As we review our achievements, I am also reminded that we have more work ahead of us. As we move into 2023 and beyond, we'll continue to build on past successes while always looking ahead for new opportunities and meeting the challenges that come next.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. McLaughlin'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

About the Solid Waste Division

The Solid Waste Division (Division) of the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) is guided by King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan goal of consumption and materials management, as well as the Division's vision to achieve zero waste of resources and to enhance the environment through collaboration and innovation. The Division operates eight transfer stations, two rural drop boxes, and Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, the only operational landfill in the county. Solid Waste Division community partners include residents and business owners in unincorporated King County and 37 cities throughout the county, with the exception of Seattle and Milton, which are part of separate solid waste systems. The Solid Waste Division's mission is to deliver value to its customers and stakeholders, and to continuously improve waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

Waste Prevention and Recycling

Whether it is fostering the next generation of environmental stewards, encouraging customers to recycle more and recycle right, or working to divert recyclable materials away from the landfill, the Solid Waste Division is committed to enhancing waste prevention and recycling in King County.

Recycling tonnage drops, Division expands programs to recycling more

During 2022, for the period between January and November, curbside recycling collection decreased by five percent, or almost 14,000 tons, compared to the previous year. Food and yard waste collection dropped by about seven percent, or 12,000 tons. One reason for this decrease may be economic factors that reduced spending on disposable items.

Between January and November of 2022, curbside recycling collection decreased by five percent, or almost 14,000 tons, compared to the previous year. Food and yard waste collection dropped by about seven percent, or 12,000 tons. One reason for this decrease may be economic factors that reduced consumer spending on disposable items.

In this same time period, the Division collected 32,520 tons of recyclable material at its transfer stations and drop boxes, a five percent decrease compared to 2021. Yard waste continues to be the most recycled material, with 19,405 tons collected, followed by scrap metal (4,473 tons), cardboard (3,113 tons), and clean wood (2,340 tons).

In 2022, the Division continued its "Sort it Out" program, which encourages recycling by asking transfer station staff to proactively help customers sort their materials. The project is focused on helping customers recycle more scrap metal, yard waste, cardboard, and clean wood at facilities where those materials are accepted. This program led to the implementation of mattress recycling at the Bow Lake, Enumclaw, Factoria, Shoreline, and Vashon Island transfer stations with a new mattress handling fee, and the implementation of scrap metal recycling at the Houghton Transfer Station.



Designated bins for readily recyclable materials, such as scrap metal, make it easy for customers to sort it out and recycle more.

Waste less. Recycle right.

Desperdicia menos. Recicla bien.

Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan (CROP)

Contamination in the recycling stream from wet, soiled items, or items that are not recyclable, poses a major challenge to the efficient processing and marketability of recyclable materials in King County. As required by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), in 2021, the Division submitted a Contamination Reduction Outreach Plan (CROP) to outline a path forward on reducing contamination of recyclable materials collected in single-family, multi-family, drop-box, and commercial recycling programs within King County's solid waste service area.

An integral part of the CROP includes ongoing collaboration with local governments across the region and the state, as well as waste haulers, processors, regulators, industry groups, schools, community members, and non-profits to advance policies and practices that harmonize recycling programs and public messaging.

Waste Reduction & Recycling Schools Program

The Waste Reduction & Recycling (WRR) Schools Program provides students with the opportunity to learn and make choices that contribute to a more environmentally sustainable school, community, and planet through a school-wide assembly show and hands-on classroom workshops. In these workshops, students explore personal connections to natural resource use and are introduced to environmental justice concepts. The programs and services are available to schools in King County, outside of the city of Seattle, and are provided at no charge to the recipient.

The WRR Schools Program scheduled and performed at 29 assemblies, 11 elementary classroom workshops, and 245 secondary classroom workshops during the 2021-22 school year. In 2022, there was an increased demand for the Assembly Program, Elementary and Secondary Classroom Workshops, and additional instructional opportunities outside the normal academic calendar. In response to these needs, the WRR Schools Program will assess capacity and pilot summer school programming in 2023.

More schools continue to "go green" than ever

Throughout 2022, the Green Schools Program assisted K-12 schools and school districts to engage students and staff in waste reduction, recycling, composting, and other conservation strategies in their schools, homes, and communities. As the year progressed, demand for assistance increased as schools sought to resume waste prevention, recycling, and composting, which had been paused during the COVID-19 pandemic. From August to December 2022, the program assisted more schools than it had during the 2021-2022 school year, and provided schools with information, recommendations, and resources to start or expand recycling practices. The program also conducted 10 Green School's kick-offs via Zoom, each tailored for schools in different school districts. The kick-offs included a program overview and focused on best practices for reducing waste and recycling in schools. These events were attended by staff members from 25 percent of the schools participating in the program. As of December 2022, the program has assisted 339 K-12 schools spread throughout 17 school districts, in 35 cities and unincorporated



When placed in curbside recycling bins, plastic bags become tangled at recycling facilities. Consumers can reduce contamination by bringing plastic bags to a takeback location or putting them in the garbage.



An example of the milk dispensers tested in a pilot at an Auburn School District elementary school

areas. The 339 schools include 13 schools which joined the program in 2022 and represent 69 percent of K-12 schools in King County outside Seattle.

The program also partnered with the Auburn School District and City of Auburn to pilot milk dispensers in an elementary school, with the milk dispensers and durable, reusable cups replacing single-use milk cartons.

Green Building Ordinance is unanimously approved by Council

In March 2022, the King County Council unanimously approved the Green Building Ordinance (GBO) update that increases the County's green building project standards, adding certification requirements for its capital projects and easing restrictions that were hindering higher green building certifications for County projects. The Ordinance was the collective work of the Division's Green Building Team, Seattle-King County Public Health, King County Metro Transit, and other agencies involved in sustainability programs.

This Ordinance seeks to educate King County staff and the public about green building practices and to promote and encourage green building community-wide through regional partnerships and code development efforts that support sustainable development. This policy continues the County's 20-year track record of green building policies and practices. These practices foster energy and water efficiency, renewable energy production, reduction of carbon emissions, diversion of materials from landfills, improved stormwater management, utility cost savings, use of healthy building materials, habitat restoration, and integration of equity and social justice.

King County promotes plastic bag drop-off pilot

In spring 2022, the Solid Waste Division partnered with private industry, local retailers, and Seattle Public Utilities to promote a plastic bag drop-off program at several local independent grocery stores. The pilot offered an easy way for the public to dispose of plastic bags and wraps that are not accepted in curbside bins so they could be recycled into new products, boosting public confidence in local recycling systems. The pilot resulted in the collection of approximately 25 tons of plastic bags and wraps, 95 percent of which could be recycled. The results of the pilot project show the potential for County residents to reduce the amount of plastic taken to the landfill.

Repair events save the day

Rebounding after closures due to the pandemic, King County held seven free community repair events in 2022, in Auburn, Bothell, Kent, Pacific, Redmond, and Shoreline. At these waste reduction and resource conservation events, skilled "fixers" and sewing experts from a variety of communities and cultures repaired and mended the public's small household and personal items. The program partnered with the Chinese American Little Masters Club and Indian American Community Services, two large, Bellevue-based regional community non-profits. Since its inception in 2016, the community repair program has held a total of 74 events across 26 King County cities and communities outside of Seattle. More than 3,000 items have been worked on, and most have been fixed.

Construction and demolition waste recycling

One in three truckloads of solid waste generated in King County consists of construction and demolition debris (C&D). King County requires that readily recyclable C&D materials be recycled, which furthers the Division's zero waste of resources goal and carbon emissions reduction efforts. Since the C&D Ordinance was passed in 2015, the number of designated facilities that handle C&D materials for recycling has increased from one to ten. The Division's C&D management program is funded by a fee of \$4.25 per ton, which applies only to C&D that is landfilled to further incentivize recycling. This fee has been unchanged since 1993. Fees are collected in a dedicated fund that covers expenses related to C&D management.

The majority of C&D material generated in King County in 2022 was processed for recycling. It is estimated that 78 percent of the C&D materials generated in King County is diverted from landfills, then recycled. The Division is actively working to repurpose wood for better uses such as new building materials.

Approximately 184,736 tons of C&D waste was landfilled by companies participating in the County-designated C&D facilities program in 2022, generating \$785,130 in revenues. Due to a delay in reporting by Ecology, 2022 C&D recycling data for King County is not yet available.

The Division began working with cities in King County to support the adoption of C&D-related code templates addressing reuse and recycling of building materials, exterior structure lead removal, and deconstruction.

The C&D program provided funds to the Division's Re+ grant program, which allowed for C&D-related grant proposals to be considered and funded.

The C&D Waste Enforcement Lead continues to conduct routine enforcement operations and coordinates with other area agencies to ensure compliance with solid waste disposal requirements and designated facility agreements. The C&D Waste Enforcement Lead generates weekly demolition permit searches and visits approximately 60 sites per month. This effort is geared to educate and inform contractors and permittees on disposal requirements. The C&D Waste Enforcement Lead conducts quarterly inspections at all C&D transfer stations to ensure compliance with designated facility agreements and Title 10 of the King County Code.

Designated recyclables in King County

As specified in the Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, King County's list of designated recyclables is defined and updated by the Washington State Department of Ecology's annual statewide survey of materials that have been recycled in Washington. Designated recyclables in King County include:

- Carpet and pads
- Clean wood
- Construction and demolition debris
- Electronics
- Furniture
- Glass
- Metal
- Moderate risk waste (all-purpose cleaners, batteries, pesticides, used motor oil)
- Organics
- Other materials (latex paint, toner and ink cartridges, photographic film, tires)
- Paper
- Plastic



Approximately 184,736 tons of C&D waste was disposed in 2022, generating \$785,130 in revenues.



Paper, plastic, metal cans, and glass are the most well-known recyclables, in King County.



Transfer Stations

Providing customers with safe, efficient, and responsible waste disposal and recycling is a key service of the Solid Waste Division. In 2022, the Division continued to modernize its transfer station system.

Progress continues on updating the transfer system in south and northeast King County

In 2022, the Division made progress on the design of its South County Recycling and Transfer Station Project which should replace the aging Algona Transfer Station by 2026. The Division also continued the siting process for the Northeast County Recycling and Transfer Station Project intended to replace the 60-year-old Houghton Transfer Station in Kirkland by 2029. Both facilities will be designed to meet modern standards and offer better access to improved waste disposal and comprehensive recycling services.

South County Recycling and Transfer Station (SCRTS) Project Design Completion

Designed with the environment in mind, the new South County station will offer a full array of recycling services currently not available at the Algona station. These include convenient hazardous waste disposal for households and qualifying businesses. Also included are green building features, and improvements to nearby creeks and wetlands, as well as public art and other community benefits.

King County will keep the existing Algona Transfer Station open throughout construction of the new facility. In 2022, the project team reached final design and is now soliciting bids for construction contractors. Groundbreaking is expected to be in summer of 2023 and the new station is scheduled for completion in 2026.

Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project Goes into Environmental Review

The Division also continued its effort to engage the public in finding a site for the planned Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station Project. In 2022, a siting advisory group consisting of 21 members that represent local businesses, community groups, schools, non-profits, and environmental interests, as well as the cities of Woodinville, Redmond, Kirkland, and unincorporated King County, met twice. The group's purpose is to make sure community interests and values are considered by the technical team working to identify a feasible location for the station and help inform which sites should be further studied in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In July, the Division identified two sites in Kirkland and one in Woodinville as potential locations, as well as a no-action alternative. The public was invited to submit comments on the scope of an environmental impact statement in November, and the final EIS is set to be published in spring 2024. The new station is expected to be operational in 2029.



The Division is modernizing its services to include increased recycling options in areas of King County that are underserved. Pictured is a conceptual design of the South County Recycling and Transfer Station coming to Algona in 2026.



The Solid Waste Division worked with local installer Western Solar to build the new array – a connected network of 348 solar panels – on previously unused land next to the Vashon transfer station.



The Haz Waste Program makes disposal of many types of hazardous materials easy for customers.

Vashon Transfer Station goes carbon neutral with new solar project

In June, the installation of a solar array at the Vashon Recycling and Transfer Station was completed. This solar array will generate about 172,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity per year, enough to power 24 single-family homes. In addition to the solar panels, the transfer station has implemented features to reduce energy use, such as more efficient roadway lights, a new heating and air conditioning system in the scale house, and an auto-shutdown feature for the station's giant trash compactor, all of which support the Division's carbon-neutral goals. Combined with these new features, the electricity generated from the solar array is designed to offset the energy of running the transfer station on an annual basis. The solar panels are expected to provide carbon neutral power for at least 25 years.

More than 1.5 million pounds of hazardous waste safely collected

Properly disposing of hazardous products that contain toxic, corrosive, flammable, or reactive ingredients can be challenging. The Haz Waste Program provides convenient hazardous waste collection services for residents at the Factoria Recycling and Transfer Station, an Auburn-based Wastemobile, and a roving Wastemobile that travels throughout the County.

The Haz Waste Program makes disposal easy for many types of hazardous materials, such as cleaning products, motor oil, and pesticides. In 2022, the three hazardous waste facilities served 37,558 residents and 303 small businesses. More than 1.7 million pounds of hazardous materials were safely disposed of in 2022, protecting both the environment and public health. Notably, the Factoria hazardous waste facility donated nearly 14,000 pounds of low-toxicity cleaning and automotive products to Habitat for Humanity.



Cedar Hills Regional Landfill

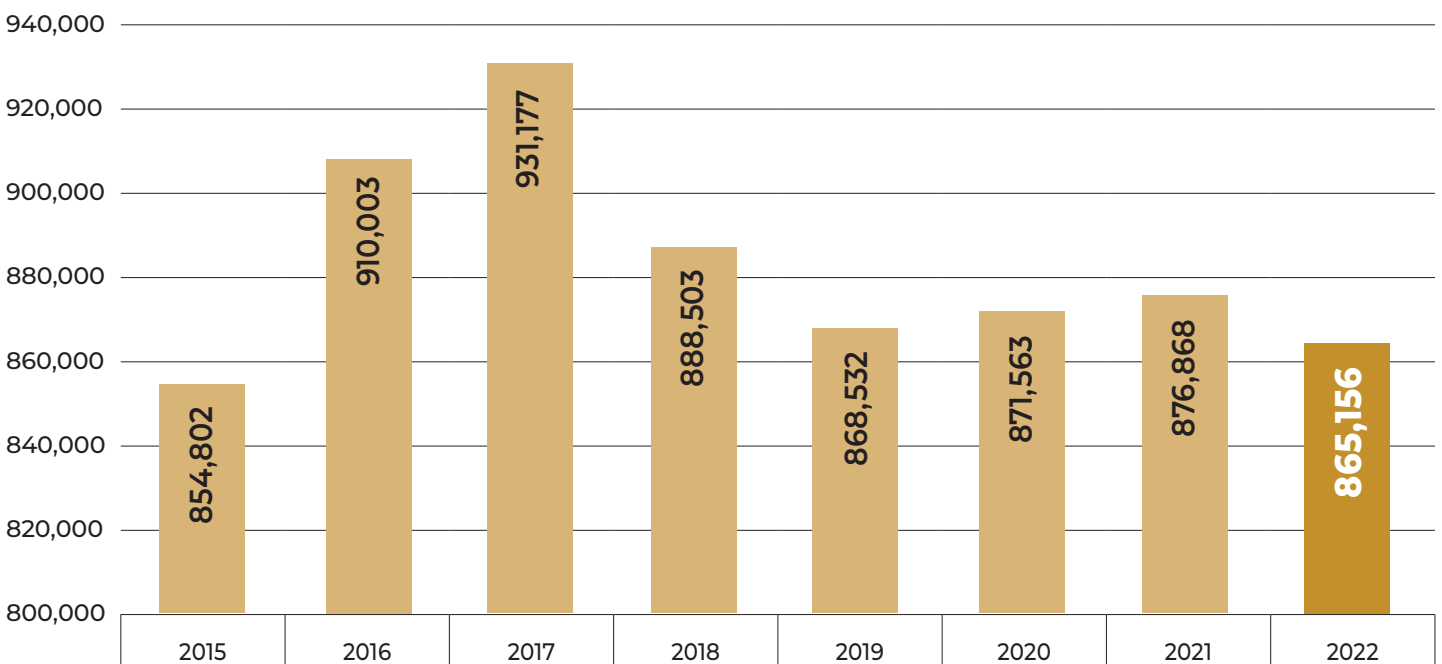
The Cedar Hills Regional Landfill has been in operation since the 1960s and is the last operating landfill in King County. Every day, more than 100 trucks deliver tons of garbage to the landfill for final disposal. Area 8 is the current active area of the landfill, with the rest of the 920 acres devoted to administrative facilities and reclaimed landfill areas. An onsite gas-processing facility, operated by Bio Energy Washington (BEW), collects and purifies landfill gas so it can be sold as a renewable energy source. The system is capable of producing enough natural gas each year to meet the needs of up to 36,000 homes in King County or to substitute for the energy use of 11.2 million gallons of diesel fuel.

Disposal amounts decrease slightly

In 2022, 865,156 tons of garbage were disposed of at the landfill, representing a one percent decrease compared to 2021. About 80 percent (693,027 tons) of waste tonnage came from commercially collected garbage, with self-haul tonnage accounting for the remaining 20 percent (172,129 tons).

The Bow Lake Recycling and Transfer Station continues to be the busiest facility, collecting 265,158 tons of garbage in 2022, followed by the Algona Transfer Station (148,686 tons), the Factoria Transfer Station (144,984 tons), and the Houghton Recycling and Transfer Station (128,084 tons).

TONS DISPOSED AT CEDAR HILLS



Long-term planning to maximize landfill capacity

The Division advanced plans to extend the life of the landfill for an additional 10 years beyond 2028, as outlined in the Final 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan. These plans include relocating support facilities, such as office spaces and maintenance buildings currently located at the landfill, to build more disposal capacity at the Cedar Hills site.

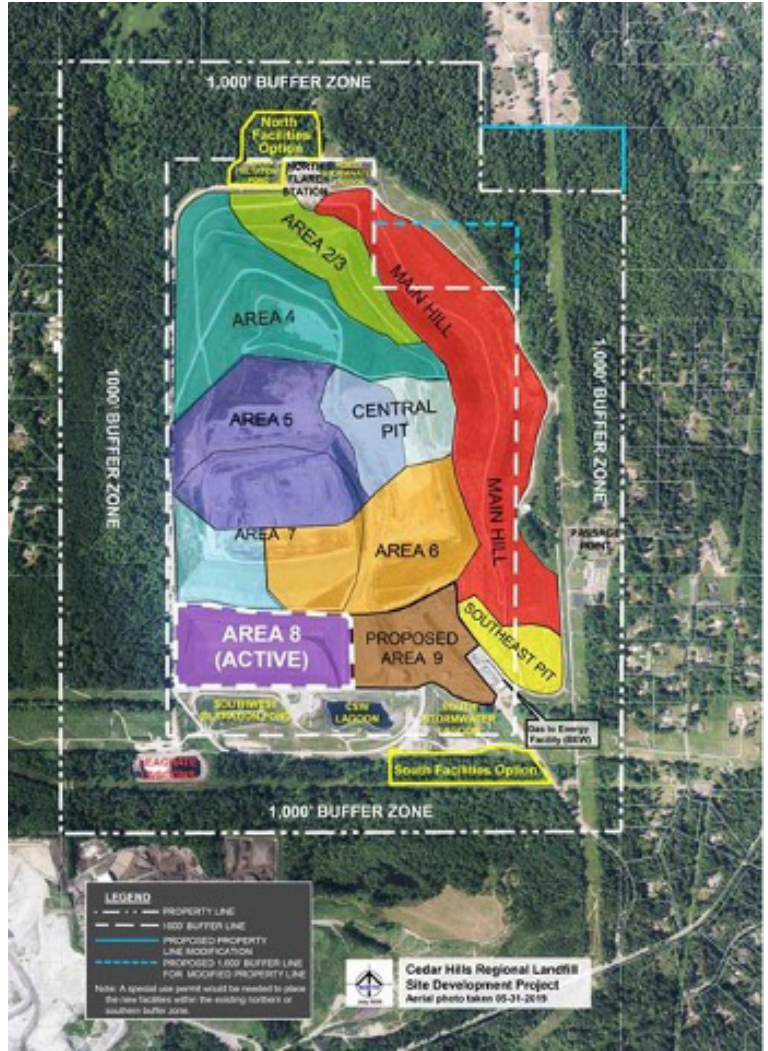
In March 2020, the Division published a final EIS identifying its preferred alternative to permanently relocate support facilities to the southeast corner of the landfill property. The EIS also invited the public to provide comments on the draft proposal. In November, leadership identified its preferred alternative for landfill development, which entails:

- no additional landfilling in the Main Hill and Southeast Pit areas,
- landfilling in the southern portion of Areas 2/3, 4, and the Central Pit up to 788 feet,
- landfilling in Areas 5 and 6 up to 788 feet,
- no additional landfilling in Area 7, which is currently at 788 feet,
- landfilling in Area 8 to no more than 830 feet,
- new Area 9 development in the southeast area and landfilling to no more than 830 feet, and
- pursuing a Special Use Permit to place the new support facilities within the existing southern buffer zone.

The move provides a longer planning period for future disposal options once the landfill closes. Landfilling is currently the most cost-effective option with the fewest environmental impacts, and offers a reliable local disposal option that does not require rail export.

Landfill gas-to-energy provides revenue

The Division contracts with the private entity BioEnergy Washington (BEW) to process landfill gas into pipeline-quality natural gas for sale to the marketplace. The purified landfill gas displaces fossil fuel-based natural gas and is used to power the facility and for vehicle transportation. The Division also sells the renewable attributes, “green credits,” that reflect the environmental benefit of putting the landfill gas to a productive use. From January through November, the Division earned \$3.9 million from gas it delivered to BEW, plus about \$5.25 million it made by selling renewable attributes associated with that gas.



The 2020 Cedar Hills Regional Landfill Site Development Plan and Facilities Relocation Project seeks to ensure that there is adequate disposal capacity at the landfill to continue accepting garbage beyond 2028.



The onsite Bio Energy Washington facility processes landfill gas into a renewable energy source.



Tours resume at the landfill

As COVID restrictions eased, the Division was able to revive its popular tour program at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, giving neighbors and community members an opportunity to meet and talk to employees about waste disposal and environmental commitments. The landfill features 417 acres of natural space that is home to deer, elk, native plants and flowers, and an apiary for pollinators.



Equity and Social Justice

Following the lead of Executive Dow Constantine, the Division is committed to advancing equity and social justice (ESJ) for both its employees and customers.

Cleanup LIFT continues to make services more equitable

To make services more equitable for customers and to advance ESJ goals in King County, the Division implemented a low-income discount program called Cleanup LIFT, a discounted disposal fee for lower-income customers who bring their garbage and recycling materials to a King County disposal facility. The \$15 fee charged represents a 50 percent discount from the standard minimum disposal fee. The program recorded 17,969 transactions during 2022, accounting for about a 20 percent increase in program use since 2021. Overall, the program saved customers approximately \$250,000 in 2022, providing financial relief to the County's most financially vulnerable customers.



Creating a more equitable work environment

In 2022, the Division continued its ESJ work both internally and in the communities it serves. This year, the Division hired two new ESJ Program Managers. Their work will focus on the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) program; building and strengthening trust and relationships with frontline communities in King County; and managing relationships with community-based organizations, ESJ consultants, multicultural media organizations, and others to work toward outcomes outlined in the County's ESJ plans and policies. ESJ Program Managers will provide expertise, training, and consultation for ESJ charettes and other CIP-related functions.

Incorporating Equity and Social Justice into capital projects

To ensure capital projects are bid, designed, constructed, and operated equitably, the Division has developed an Equity Impact Review for all capital projects and programs. The review process identifies the potential benefits and impacts of a project and the necessary community outreach to help better understand and mitigate those impacts.

The Division has developed an ESJ Management Plan that closely follows the ESJ Sustainability Scorecard. This is a rating system for sustainability of capital projects that includes equity as a key consideration.

The Division also conducts demographic analyses as part of the ESJ Management Plan and Equity Impact Review processes. These analyses factor in race, income, English proficiency, and several other considerations in the area impacted by a project. This data helps the Division understand how different projects impact various communities and how best to reach those communities.

Equity reviews often result in actions to mitigate of impacts of projects and programs. Examples of project-related ESJ actions include job training and apprenticeships, community-led restoration projects, improvements to nearby hiking and biking trails, and amenities, such as public meeting space for County-related activities.

Green jobs training as part of the SCRTS project

As one of the ESJ efforts for the SCRTS capital project, the Division partnered with Duwamish Infrastructure Restoration Training Corps (DIRT Corps), an organization that provides green apprenticeship programs and environmental education for adults. The partnership provided an eight-week training program for 15 participants in the SCRTS service area and surrounding communities. The collaboration with DIRT Corps lays the foundation for future ESJ practices by providing opportunities for women and members of underrepresented communities to connect to environmental professions.

The work done by DIRT Corps has helped remove approximately 2,000 square feet of herbaceous targeted weeds at Teufel Park, a restoration project on the Green River managed by King County River and Floodplain Management, a section of DNRP's Water and Land Resources Division. Some other results include onsite restoration training, which was held in the SCRTS service area, and observation of installation demonstrations of green building technology, such as rainwater collection systems.

Division increases outreach to Spanish speaking communities

The Facilitadores de Reciclaje is a partnership between King County and community volunteers to provide Spanish-language recycling, compost, and waste prevention information and outreach. They represent the Division at various community outreach activities and events aimed at the Spanish-speaking population. In 2022, the group adjusted to the new hybrid world by participating in two virtual workshops and two in-person events, reaching more than 710 community members.



DIRT Corps trainees participating in onsite restoration training at the South County Recycling and Transfer Station project in Algona and targeting weeds at Fenster Nature Park in Auburn.





Planning

The Solid Waste Division works with its 37 partnering cities, two advisory committees, the King County Council, and community members to ensure it is delivering value and the utmost in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

New solid waste disposal rate supports essential services, invests in environmental goals

The Division will enact a rate increase of 9.6 percent, or 79 cents per month, to residential curbside collection bills in January 2023. The rate reflects cost-saving measures to reduce operating expenditures and increases the discount rate for low-income customers, while supporting vital disposal and recycling programs, expanding services, modernizing facilities, and advancing climate neutrality goals.

New minimum disposal fees will change from \$24.64 per vehicle to \$26.98 per vehicle, and from \$154.02 per ton to \$168.68 per ton. Increased discounts for qualifying low-income customers through the Cleanup LIFT program will also coincide with the change, rising from \$14 to \$15 per transaction. Yard and wood waste fees will also increase from a minimum of \$16 per vehicle to a minimum of \$18 per vehicle, and from \$100 per ton to \$115 per ton. The mattress-handling fee of \$30 per item will remain consistent to cover the cost associated with disposal or recycling of these large, bulky items.

Revenue from the 2023 rate will allow the Division to continue essential services while supporting capital projects and programs crucial to environmental progress on climate change mitigation, recycling, and waste reduction efforts.

Continued progress on Re+ and zero waste goals

The Division has formally committed to reducing waste and greenhouse gas emissions of its solid waste system through the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (Comp Plan), Strategic Climate Action Plan, and King County Code. Most importantly, the Comp Plan defines King County's goal to keep the 70 percent of collected materials with economic value out of the landfill. Re+ is the Division's plan to reach these goals, representing a major shift away from a 20th-century approach to solid waste management through prioritizing waste reduction, recycling, and reuse. Re+ also prioritizes bringing together diverse communities to create a more equitable, waste-free King County.

In 2022, the Division made progress on Re+ goals. A community panel reflecting diverse voices was seated in the spring, and the Division held numerous briefings with city partners and interest groups. A strategic plan outlining Re+ goals and actions was completed in November, and a program launch to build public and media awareness was set for early 2023. In 2022, King County also participated in efforts to gain approval for the statewide Organics Management Law, which supports Re+ goals such as food waste diversion for businesses, and expanded funding for composting programs throughout the state. Re+ is an ongoing effort, with more actions planned in the coming years



NextCycle Washington and Re+ Circular Economy Grants

As part of Re+, the Division also supported grant and businesses development programs to support small businesses, non-profit organizations, and city partners to build and implement projects that expand waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Sixteen Washington-based projects were selected for the NextCycle Washington accelerator program. Selected projects will receive technical training and business development support. The Division also selected 14 King County projects for the Re+ Circular Economy Grant program. Grants provide funding to support innovative waste prevention projects of local businesses, non-profits, and city governments.

New safety measures implemented across the County

In May, safety measures went into effect prohibiting vehicles that are 25 feet or longer at King County's Algona, Houghton, and Renton solid waste transfer stations. Customers with longer vehicles can drop off materials at the Bow Lake, Factoria, Enumclaw, and Shoreline recycling and transfer stations.

The safety improvements are necessary because concrete barriers installed at the Algona, Houghton, and Renton stations to keep customers outside the fall hazard area have reduced the length of the disposal stalls. Large vehicles do not have enough room to safely maneuver inside these older, smaller stations, which increases the risk of accidents and injuries to workers and customers.

A 30-foot vehicle restriction is already in place at the Algona, Houghton, and Renton stations. Commercial haulers under contract to collect municipal waste will be exempt from the new restrictions. The Bow Lake, Factoria, Enumclaw, and Shoreline stations offer more services and can accommodate larger vehicles. They also offer discounted fees for recycling, including yard waste disposal.



Vehicles measuring 25 feet or more are no longer allowed at King County's Algona, Renton, and Houghton transfer stations.

King County helps with regional rail service challenges

Rail service interruptions posed numerous issues for neighboring jurisdictions that export garbage and recycling to distant landfills. The Division worked on extensive planning efforts to manage the ripple effect of these impacts on its system and aided Snohomish County when its transfer stations were unable to process garbage. A tonnage offset will occur in 2023 to recover King County's loaned landfill capacity.

Solid Waste Division rolled out its first heavy-duty all-electric vehicle at Kenworth Plant in Renton

The Division celebrated the roll-out of a battery-electric heavy-duty truck, kickstarting a new market for a zero-emissions vehicle. The electrification of heavy-duty trucks is a critical step to reducing on-the-road greenhouse gas emissions, pollutants, and noise. The Division is proud to be one of the first waste management agencies in North America to operate a Class 8 battery-electric truck, which will haul waste from the Enumclaw Recycling and Transfer Station to the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill. King County Ordinance 19052 set a goal that 50 percent of its fleet of heavy-duty trucks will be electric by 2038, contributing to the County's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its operations by 80 percent by 2030. Transitioning to heavy-duty trucks powered by electricity at a regionwide scale has the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Solid Waste Division is one of the first waste management agencies in North America to operate a Class 8 battery-electric truck, with this one being built by Kenworth Truck Co.

Lower Duwamish habitat improvement project

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve the environment, the Division led a project that removed 2,000 toxic creosote-treated pilings from the Harbor Island shoreline. Once removed, the pilings were safely disposed of at Roosevelt Regional Landfill in southeastern Washington. This work has positive effects on water quality and aquatic habitat in the area and builds on other successful habitat restoration efforts undertaken by the Wastewater Treatment Division and other King County partners.



King County's Solid Waste Division is removing a derelict timber dock and its toxic, creosote-coated pilings from Harbor Island

Rate restructure provides greater stability

The rates charged by the Division are an investment in programs to reduce waste, increase recycling, and continue to responsibly and cost-effectively manage the disposal of garbage for 37 partner cities and 1.5 million people daily.

The Division currently derives about 90 percent of its revenue from the basic fee to dispose of garbage at the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill, which is contrary to the Division's Re+ goals to increase waste prevention and diversion, and efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as called for in County policy directives. As the Division advances toward its Re+ goals, garbage tonnage will decrease significantly. This means that, as recycling rates increase, the Division's revenue will decline, which is an unsustainable business model.

In March of 2022, the King County Council passed a new rate structure that included a fixed annual charge to commercial waste haulers to provide a stable revenue source independent of the amount of waste tonnage. The new rate structure with the fixed annual charge will be implemented in January 2024. Last year, the Division worked with three pilot cities (Redmond, Kent, and Maple Valley) and the three major haulers to develop template language for contracts in preparation for the rate restructure. This work will help provide guidance to smaller cities updating their hauler contracts.



2023 Outlook

Looking ahead to 2023, the Solid Waste Division will continue to strive for excellence in waste prevention, resource recovery, and waste disposal.

Rate proposal and rate restructure

The Division is currently working with its advisory committees and the King County Executive Office to develop rate proposals for 2023 and 2024. These rate proposals will continue to support current services and make progress on Division goals, such as Re+ and carbon neutrality, and Comp Plan commitments, such as building the South County Recycling and Transfer Station, the Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station, and expanding the life of Cedar Hills Regional Landfill.



Actively engaging customers helps encourage and increase recycling participation.

Comprehensive plan updates

In 2023, the Division will work with its solid waste advisory committees to update the 2019 Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, notably, the chapters on sustainable materials management, landfill management, solid waste disposal, and solid waste system financing. A consultant will be hired in 2023 to analyze and compare various long-term disposal options for disposing of waste once Cedar Hills Regional Landfill closes.

Capital projects progress

In 2023, the Division will continue work on the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill Site Development Plan and Relocation Project and pursue a Special Use Permit to locate the new facilities within the existing northern or southern buffer zone. If approved, buildings will be relocated and main landfill support facilities will be built in the south buffer zone, including, but not limited to, the scale and scalehouse, truck wash, heavy equipment maintenance facility, some tractor and trailer parking, the truck maintenance building, employee parking, office space, and laboratory space.

The Northeast Recycling and Transfer Station project team will evaluate the potential environmental and community impacts to three potential sites and one no-action alternative. A draft Environmental Impact Statement is set for publication in the fall. After a contractor is chosen, construction for the South County Recycling and Transfer Station project will begin in summer 2023.

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Department of
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Solid Waste Division

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