



DATE: December 12, 2019

TO: Programs & Administration Committee
Planning Committee/Recycling Board

FROM: Meghan Starkey, Senior Management Analyst
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SUBJECT: Countywide Element Update: Goals, Objectives and Policies

SUMMARY

Thirty years ago, pursuant to state law, the Alameda County Waste Management Authority adopted a Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan (CoIWMP). Staff is in the process of a comprehensive update of the CoIWMP's Countywide Element, and at the December 12 meeting will present a draft of the goals, objectives and policies for board members review and input.

DISCUSSION

Pursuant to the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939) the State requires that each county adopt a CoIWMP, which serves as a roadmap to approaching countywide challenges, is the guiding document for designing programs to address solid waste and recycling issues, and where we plan for regional landfill needs. A CoIWMP consists of several elements: a Source Reduction and Recycling Element, a Household Hazardous Waste Element, a Non-Disposal Facility Element, a Summary Plan and a Siting Element. Local jurisdictions are responsible for the development and maintenance of the first three elements. The Summary Plan and Siting Element are combined and referred to collectively as the "Countywide Element," and are the responsibility of the WMA.

Since its original adoption, the Countywide Element has gone through many small and large revisions, including conformance findings for most solid waste facilities, factual updates, integration of the Recycling Board and the 75% diversion goal, various other numeric diversion goals, and programs and policies developed as part of three major strategic planning processes. Significant current and emerging issues and state laws aren't fully addressed in the plan, resulting in a document that is in need of a comprehensive update. Staff is in the process of drafting this update, reframing the structure and clarifying the goals/objectives/policies, with the aim of making it a document that's responsive to current challenges, internally consistent, appropriate to our role, and specific enough to provide meaningful guidance.

The chapter containing the goals, objectives, and policies is the keystone of the document in terms of guiding agency actions and spending. Any action the WMA takes – whether approving a facility as consistent with the CoIWMP or deciding to spend money on one type of program as opposed to another – needs to support the goals, objectives, and policies in the Countywide Element. This chapter is where the WMA will define the broad statements of the desired state of waste and materials management (goals), more specific details on what that state will look like (objectives), and the policies that direct what the agency will do to advance that state.

The proposed draft of goals and objectives is attached. At the meeting, the additional layer of draft policies will be presented as well for review and discussion by the Committee.

There are a number of policy decisions that the Board needs to make when considering the updated goals and objectives:

1. Should the WMA continue to hold/purchase land as future reserve landfill capacity and/or for a possible recycling facility development under public ownership?

In the early 1990's, the WMA started purchasing land in the Altamont hills to provide member agencies with a cost-effective, publicly controlled landfill alternative and a potential compost facility. A portion of the land has been placed under a conservation easement. When we are nearing at least 15 years of permitted landfill capacity (we currently have approximately 30 years), we will evaluate the need to develop additional landfill capacity. The current document states that the WMA could acquire additional land in the area from willing sellers.

Staff Recommendation: Keep the land until such time that we need landfill capacity. In the meantime, continue to use the land for projects that help implement CoIWMP objectives, such as using compost application for carbon farming.

2. What numerical goal do we need to include in the plan?

Numerical goals and measurement are essential, since they shape major policy choices, guide specific program decisions, and can be used to evaluate the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of programs. The current Countywide Element contains multiple and sometimes conflicting numeric goals, ranging from 75% waste reduction by 2010, to less than 10% of readily recyclable materials in the landfill by 2020, to multiple specific numeric targets by material type and/or business types. While the broader, more ambitious goals (especially the 75% goal) have resonated with the public and jump started redesign of our solid waste infrastructure, the actual measurement protocols for these goals have been fraught with error and uncertainty. More importantly, these systems are unable to provide meaningful policy guidance or evaluation of programs.

Staff Recommendation: Keep 75% diversion as an aspirational goal, but use a systems approach to strive towards it. The ultimate goal will be landfill obsolescence, with specific and narrower targets that are useful for policy and program development. Recognizing that many external variables influence progress towards overarching goals, the WMA will focus its metrics primarily on setting measurable outcomes and evaluating program effectiveness.

3. Do we continue to require the conformance finding process for *all* facilities within the county?

State law requires landfills and other solid waste disposal facilities to be reviewed for conformity with the ColWMP. The current ColWMP requires that we apply the conformity review process for most all facilities within the county (e.g., transfer stations, composting facilities, etc.).

Staff Recommendation: Only conduct the conformance finding process for solid waste facilities that require a Full Solid Waste Facility Permit from CalRecycle for the following reasons:

- The current process is not effective. By the time staff receives an application, the local jurisdiction/lead agency has already performed the environmental review of the project. We could have more impact if we become involved early on by submitting comments and recommending mitigation measures or conditions as part of the lead agency's CEQA process.
- It is a "passive" way of advancing our objectives. We only have the opportunity to review one project at a time. If there are specific issues that we want to influence countywide, it's more efficient to do it via policy/ordinance as we have been doing with plant debris ban, mandatory recycling and reusable bags.
- It is not legally required. CalRecycle only requires us to conduct a conformity review process on disposal facilities. When a "non-disposal" facility (such as compost facility, transfer station, C&D facility) is proposed, it is the local jurisdiction's responsibility to amend its Non-Disposal Facility Element (NDFE). The Countywide Element must include basic information on all solid waste facilities in a county, including recycling and composting facilities. We would administratively amend the Countywide Element to include a description of a non-disposal facility when the local jurisdiction submits its updated NDFE.

RECOMMENDATION

Review the attached document and issues listed above, provide input and give direction to staff.

Attachment A: DRAFT Proposed Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1: SUFFICIENT DISPOSAL CAPACITY FOR ALAMEDA COUNTY DISCARDS

Managing discards and minimizing landfill impacts consistent with waste reduction objectives.

- Objective 1: Alameda County jurisdictions have a minimum of 15 years of disposal capacity available.
- Objective 2: Negative environmental impacts of landfills are mitigated.
- Objective 3: Landfills become obsolete as a means of managing materials, replaced by continuous material flows that rely upon minimal inputs of non-renewable resources, elimination of waste through redesign of products and systems, and effective recovery of materials.
- Objective 4: Goals and targets are rooted in a systems perspective, using measurement responsibly and appropriately to ensure effective program implementation and use of funds, while advancing systemic changes which are difficult to measure.

GOAL 2: SUFFICIENT AND ROBUST RECYCLING, COMPOSTING, AND REUSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Maximizing positive environmental benefits by balancing a high volume of recovery with related considerations: quality of commodities, operating impacts of facilities, and other environmental impacts of programs and policies.

- Objective 1: Member Agencies have efficient, adequate, and environmentally sound infrastructure for managing recycling, organics, and other discards.
- Objective 2: Direct and indirect environmental impacts of facilities and related transportation are kept to a minimum.
- Objective 3: Member Agencies and processing facilities have reliable markets for commodities produced, including new markets or other beneficial uses.
- Objective 4: Materials processed at facilities have minimal contamination, both from the source and post processing, and end products are suitable for their intended use.
- Objective 5: Facilities are managed and periodically upgraded, and/or new facilities developed, to maximize both the recovery of materials and the value of end products.

GOAL 3: PRODUCE, CONSUME, AND MANAGE MATERIALS RESPONSIBLY

Shifting from managing discards to reducing consumption, managing materials at their highest and best use, and addressing environmental impacts across the full life cycle of materials and products.

- Objective 1: Prioritize waste reduction and prevention projects that have beneficial climate impacts.
- Objective 2: Influence production and consumer demand by incentivizing and promoting the use of materials that are beneficial to human health and the environment.

GOAL 4: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ACTION

Informing and engaging the public in waste reduction activities.

- Objective 1: Member agencies and the public are informed of WMA activities and notable waste reduction topics.
- Objective 2: Alameda County residents, schools and businesses have easy access to information on how to reuse, repair, recycle, and -- when needed -- dispose of an item.
- Objective 3: The public in Alameda County is educated and motivated to take action and adopt positive waste reduction habits aligned with StopWaste priorities.

GOAL 5: REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

Addressing regional, State, and federal issues and developing programs in partnership with member agencies, the private sector, and other key stakeholders.

- Objective 1: As a Joint Powers Authority of Alameda County, maintain organizational structures for inter-jurisdictional cooperation.
- Objective 2: Develop shared positions and policy, demonstrating leadership related to local, regional, State and federal legislation and regulation.
- Objective 3: Provide opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas among member agencies and other organizations working, affecting or serving Alameda County.

GOAL 6: VIABLE FUNDING

Managing revenues and expenditures to implement countywide priority programs and facilities to achieve the goals outlined in the CoIWMP.

- Objective 1: Maintain consistent funding for WMA programs and facilities.
- Objective 2: Distribute equitable costs and benefits.