



DATE: August 13, 2020
TO: Planning Committee/Recycling Board
FROM: Meghan Starkey, Senior Management Analyst
SUBJECT: Recycling Plan Update

SUMMARY

Measure D, the county charter amendment which established the Recycling Board, mandated that the Recycling Board create and periodically update a Recycling Plan to plan, fund, and implement a comprehensive source reduction and recycling program. The current Recycling Plan extends through 2020, and is therefore in need of an update. At the August meeting of the Recycling Board, staff will review the requirements of the Recycling Plan, provide additional background, and discuss updating the Recycling Board goal as per Measure D.

DISCUSSION

Measure D requires that the Recycling Board set a date to reduce, recycle and compost at least 75% by weight, of all discarded materials generated within Alameda County and, as necessary to the establishment of sustainable discarded material practices, shall subsequently establish a date (or dates) to reduce, recycle, and compost further quantities of discarded materials. The current date to achieve the 75% goal is 2020. While the County has made significant progress at preventing and diverting waste, the most recent estimated countywide diversion rate is less than 70%.

Despite robust recycling and organics collection programs, extensive infrastructure, mandatory requirements, and sophisticated franchise contract provisions, both diversion rates and per capita disposal have remained relatively flat for nearly 10 years, while gross landfill tonnages have begun to increase after years of steady declines. The requirements of SB 1383, the short lived climate pollutant legislation will likely, if successful, provide the final push to get Alameda County to the total 75% diversion by weight goal. Regardless of what exact percent diversion is possible, however, both the data and the experiences of Alameda County jurisdictions and service providers suggest that the county is reaching the limits of an approach that relies on post-consumption collection and processing.

The WMA set a sweeping goal in the recent update to the Countywide Element of the Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan. Goal 1 of the CoIWMP addresses the Agency's legal requirements to maintain at least 15 years of landfill capacity. Under this Goal, Objective 1-3 explains that if the Agency, and therefore Alameda County, are fully successful in its programs there

would no longer be a need for landfills, as we move towards a circular economy. In contrast to the 'take-make-waste' linear model, a circular economy is regenerative by design and aims to eliminate waste and gradually decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources. While this is aspirational, it is the ultimate result of minimizing waste produced while maximizing materials diverted. Staff is therefore bringing “landfill obsolescence” for discussion as the post-75% goal.

Required elements of the Recycling Plan, and their current status, appear in the table below.

Requirement	Status
Source Reduction Program to minimize the generation of refuse	StopWaste and member agencies have multiple source reduction initiatives in place; see Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan (CoIWMP) and the Agency Annual Budget. Examples include: Food Waste Reduction, Reusable Food Ware, and Reusable Bag Ordinance projects.
Residential Recycling Programs to provide each Alameda County residence with curbside pick-up of recyclable materials	All jurisdictions provide residential curbside programs; see CoIWMP for details.
Commercial Recycling Programs to reduce the refuse disposal costs of businesses and government agencies	All jurisdictions provide commercial recycling programs; see CoIWMP for details.
An Alameda County-wide Recycled Product Market Development Program to create and strengthen stable markets for recycled materials	StopWaste has several market development projects; see Agency Annual Budget. Examples include: Compost and Mulch, Packaging, and Building Services and Partnerships Projects.
A Recycled Product Purchase Preference Program to further encourage recycled materials markets by maximizing the amount of recycled products purchased by County government agencies.	The County government has a Green Purchasing Program, partially funded by Measure D. For over ten years, agency staff has worked with the County General Services Agency to not only increase environmentally preferable purchases directly by the County, but to also work with local purchasing officials to instill environmentally preferable procurement policies and tools, such as bid specifications and shared purchasing contracts.

The Recycling Plan incorporates all Alameda County recycling programs, whether funded by Measure D or not.

At the meeting, staff will present background and context for updating the Recycling Plan (including a summary of the recently adopted Countywide Element of the Countywide Integrated Waste Management Plan), progress towards the 75% goal since 1990, and a proposal for a new goal and date for beyond 75%.

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only.