

2021 Solid Waste Services Annual Report

The Solid Waste Services (SWS) Division’s goal is to provide a safe, convenient and cost-effective service to County of Wellington residents while protecting the air, water and land through environmentally sound practices. SWS provides waste management services and planning with a focus on:

- Excellent customer service
- Effective and efficient financial management
- Environmental stewardship

SWS operations, services and programmes are evaluated on an on-going basis to attempt to identify and implement efficiencies and improvements wherever possible. To support those efforts, SWS staff worked with County Council to develop a long-term strategy which was completed in 2020 and provides a framework for decisions regarding solid waste services in the County.



2021 National Public Works Week Billboard

Customer Service

Programmes and Services

- The online ordering system and home delivery of user pay garbage bags developed in response to COVID restrictions continued with a total of 478 deliveries made in 2021.
- To improve debit and credit machine reliability, switched to LTE internet service at three more of the County’s waste facilities.
- The wood drop-off area at the Belwood waste facility was paved to make it more convenient for customers to use, while being easier for staff to keep tidy.

Quick Fact:

In 2021, 46.7% of all waste managed by Wellington County Solid Waste Services was diverted from landfill.

Key Customer Service Statistics	2020	2021	% change
number of calls and emails	8,379	6,296	-24.9%
number of customers at waste facilities	182,351	232,155	27.3%
number of garbage curbside stops	543,619	491,669	-9.6%
number of garbage bags picked up at curbside	843,685	715,835	-15.2%
number of blue box curbside stops	934,728	993,776	6.3%
number of green bin curbside stops	225,007 *	546,871	143.0%

*collection began July 2020

Promotion and Education

- In 2021, the County was very pleased to be awarded a Gold Award for a “Campaign by a Small Municipality” (up to 50,000 households) by the Municipal Waste Association. This award-winning campaign supported the successful roll-out of the County’s new and enhanced curbside collection services, including the launch of the green bin organics collection programme.
- While in-person activities were limited, staff gave many virtual school presentations, reaching over 1,300 students. This format has proven very popular and will be continuing in future years.
- A pilot project to test an internal radio broadcast education system was set up at the Belwood waste facility to provide customers with a new opportunity to learn about site services and answer frequently asked questions while they were on site.



Cover of Curbside Collection Brochure

County Website – SWS Pages (unique visitors)	2020	2021	% change
most visited in 2021 – hours and locations	63,992	66,959	4.6%
second most visited in 2021 – leaf and yard waste	20,296	41,235	103.2%
third most visited in 2021 – SWS home page	38,168	25,411	-33.4%
Recycle Coach *			
number of users	19,259	28,842	49.8%
number of material searches	23,806	42,375	78.0%
number of interactions	585,655	1,354,137	131.2%

*launched February 2020

Financial

- The tipping fee at County waste facilities was increased on January 1, 2021. This increase led to increased revenues which helped offset operating costs and brought the County’s tipping fees in line with other municipal comparators.
- Rather than selling an older backhoe at auction, staff began utilizing it at the Belwood waste facility to improve compaction in bins. This resulted in savings by using our own staff and equipment compared to contracting out this service. There was a further benefit of improving pay-loads in each bin which reduced the frequency bins needed to be hauled to their final destination for disposal or further processing.
- Cost-savings for springtime driveway and lot sweeping at four waste facilities were realized with support from the County’s Roads Division.

Quick Fact:

The County received \$1.28 million from the sale of blue box materials in 2021.

Environmental Stewardship

As part of the County’s commitment to protect and enhance the natural environment, the SWS Division looks to our “Green Strategy”. Staff and Council endeavour to incorporate “Green Principles” into all areas of waste management decisions and actions.

The core green principles are:

- To protect and enhance the natural environment.
- To reduce the carbon footprint of our operations.
- To practice a “Life Cycle” approach.



Wildflowers at the Aberfoyle Closed Landfill

All operations are assessed and tracked over time with an aim of:

- Reducing negative environmental impacts created in providing services.
- Reducing the carbon footprint created in providing services.
- Improving life cycle performance through reduction, reuse and recycling practices.
- Enhancing environmental health.

Tonnes Landfilled	2020	2021	% change
total tonnes disposed	18,918.33	19,478.73	3.0%

County Diversion Programmes	2020	2021	% change
blue box recyclables	5,918.64	6,244.95	5.5%
wood, brush, Christmas trees	3,469.45	3,757.91	8.3%
green bin organics *	1,156.95	2,842.69	145.7%
leaf and yard waste	1,287.30	1,705.01	32.4%
scrap metal	421.91	433.41	2.7%
electronics	114.5	113.68	-0.7%
tires	151.40	133.23	-12.0%
household hazardous waste	252.66	305.83	21.0%
clothing and textiles	11.74	17.04	45.2%
reuse centres (temporarily closed Mar 2020)	2.05	0.00	-100.0%
backyard composting (estimate)	1,510.70	1,513.80	0.2%
total tonnes diverted from landfill	14,297.30	17,067.54	19.4%

*collection began July 2020

- The County and the City of Guelph continue to collaborate to create the first technology-enabled circular food economy. In November 2021, a pilot project with the Circular Innovation Council was launched to assist local businesses divert food waste from landfill. Forty-five businesses and institutions signed up at the start of the project, and more continue to be added each month.
- The SWS Division is making our closed landfill sites eco-friendlier by reducing grass mowing where appropriate, and planting more trees, bushes and wildflowers.
- The outdoor scalehouse lighting at all County waste facilities was changed to LED lighting to improve visibility and reduce energy usage.
- Leaf and yard waste diversion was expanded at curbside and at all County waste facilities from April through early December. A total of 1,705.01 metric tonnes of yard waste was diverted through this service, an increase of 32.5% over 2020.

Quick Fact:

The most commonly searched items in Recycle Coach were: Styrofoam containers, Styrofoam packaging inserts, and household batteries.

Other Achievements and Activities

- The County’s Engineering Services Department was honoured to once again receive a National Public Works Week (NPWW) Award from the Canadian Public Works Association. This national award recognized the County as the top Canadian municipality with a population over 100,000 in providing the best NPWW programme. Staff recognition and promotion to educate residents on the critical role public works plays in the day-to-day life of our community, were the mainstays of NPWW at the County in 2021.
- The County of Wellington was named a 2021 Leader in Sustainability by Call2Recycle Canada, Inc. This award recognized the County’s residents’ exceptional commitment to battery recycling. Through the many convenient drop-off locations available, an impressive 10,140 kilograms (10.14 tonnes) of household batteries was collected throughout the County programme in 2021, making it one of the Call2Recycle’s top-performing partners.
- In October, County staff conducted a campaign to promote Waste Reduction Week. In addition to presentations and advertising to educate County residents on the importance of waste reduction while encouraging the adoption of more environmentally conscious choices, the campaign included a special building and “monster” lighting at the Wellington County Museum and Archives.



Waste Reduction Week Lighting

SWS Strategy

At the request of the local municipalities, the County of Wellington accepted responsibility for all waste management services from its seven member municipalities in 2001. Over the intervening years, many changes have been made to the waste services and programmes provided to County residents.

In 2015, County Council directed SWS staff to undertake a review of waste services to help focus the planning of the future of waste management and diversion services in the County. The goal of this project was to provide the County with a long term strategy for all its waste operations and services, and how they are provided.

Staff and Committee developed the framework and broad outline of the Strategy. Guiding principles, goals and priorities were established to provide direction for the Strategy. These principles reflect a balance of customer service, economic considerations, and environmental stewardship.





The SWS Strategy was completed in 2020 and a final report was submitted to County Council in January 2021. The following table provides a summary of the decisions made, actions taken, and plans moving forward. Projects are continually re-evaluated and modified depending upon the County and Division priorities, and will be implemented as time and resources allow. For more information, the Strategy Report Summary is available on the County’s website at www.wellington.ca/sws-strategy.





Topic	Task	Direction/Action	Status - Complete	Status - Ongoing
Group A - Provision of Curbside Services Topics				
Rural curbside collection	Evaluate feasibility, options and desire for expansion of rural curbside collection of garbage and recyclables.	Expanded rural curbside collection to all seven member municipalities.	✓	
Curbside user fee	Evaluate the appropriate fee(s) for curbside garbage collection.	Standardized user fees for garbage bags collected at curbside and dropped off at waste facilities at \$2 each.	✓	
Single stream vs. two stream recycling	Cost-benefit analysis of the two collection and processing methods.	Maintain two-stream recycling for blue box materials.	✓	
Cart collection	Seek opportunities to increase diversion through multi-residential and Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sectors. Also consider carts for household use.	Maintain current containers for waste and recyclables collection. Continue to look for opportunities for additional diversion in multi-residential and ICI sectors such as the Circular Innovation Council pilot programme.	✓	
Bulky item collection	Determine if bulky collection at curbside is desirable and in what circumstances it could be appropriate.	Maintain bulky item drop-off at waste facilities.	✓	

Topic	Task	Direction/Action	Status - Complete	Status - Ongoing
Organics collection	Evaluate feasibility of an organics programme and/or leaf and yard waste collection.	Established organics green bin collection and leaf and yard waste collection in new curbside collection contract. Implemented July 2020.	✓	
User Pay bag improvement	Assess opportunities to improve User Pay bags or whether to switch to a tag based system. Consider container system including use of garbage boxes.	Continue using stamped user pay bags for curbside garbage collection.	✓	
Additional recyclable materials added to programme	Research whether markets exist to expand the number of acceptable items in the blue box programme.	Deferred until Waste-Free Ontario Act determines which recyclable materials are to be included in the future Blue Box Programme Plan.	✓	
Collections and processing contracts – timing, length, best practices	Research how to best craft the curbside collections contracts in order to achieve maximum cost-effectiveness and flexibility.	After extending the curbside collection contract for three years, a new contract was tendered and awarded in June 2019, and began in July 2020.	✓	
Group B - Future of Waste Disposal Topics				
Riverstown expansion (i.e. Phase III)	Feasibility analysis of a Phase III expansion on Riverstown lands.	The expansion of the Riverstown landfill site is the current preferred option for meeting Wellington County's future waste management needs.	✓	
Other landfill siting	Pending results of above, the County may need to consider siting a new landfill in the future.	No new landfill site search required at this time as the expansion of the Riverstown landfill site is the current preferred option for meeting Wellington County's future waste management needs.	✓	

Topic	Task	Direction/Action	Status - Complete	Status - Ongoing
Landfill mining	Cost-benefit analysis of landfill mining. Weigh cost of mining against estimated increase in landfill capacity.	Landfill mining operations will not be undertaken at this time and may be revisited at a future date.	✓	
Buffer land acquisition	Evaluate if there is a need to consider acquiring buffer lands around active or closed landfills. Determine if the County should have a policy on the subject.	That the current policy be unchanged allowing County staff to explore opportunities to acquire buffer property where appropriate.	✓	
Landfill operations	Evaluate closure and leachate treatment options for Phase I and Phase II, respectively, of the Riverstown landfill.	The Riverstown landfill's Phase I will be at capacity in 2022. The County is undertaking an Environmental Assessment to determine leachate treatment method.		➡
Use of closed landfill properties	Develop a long-term plan for use of closed landfill sites. Explore naturalization or educational opportunities.	Naturalization of closed landfills continues and pollinator food sources will be planted where possible. Pollinator friendly plantings have been established at four of the 16 closed sites, with more sites in the plans in coming years.		➡
Explore technologies for managing waste	Assess alternative and emerging technologies (i.e. Energy from Waste, gasification, "Dirty MRFs") in order to determine if any are viable options for the County.	The expansion of the Riverstown landfill site is the current preferred option for meeting Wellington County's future waste management needs and alternative technologies may be revisited at a future date.	✓	
Mandatory recycling	Determine the usefulness and desirability of material specific landfill bans or graduated fees in order to increase diversion.	No mandatory recycling policies will be established and they may be revisited at a future date.	✓	

Group C - Waste Facility Optimization Topics				
Optimal number and location of waste facilities	Analyze site trends and usage and determine number and location of waste facilities, in order to balance operating costs, customer service and meeting diversion targets.	The current complement of six waste facilities will continue at the current locations.	✓	
Vision of how to use waste facilities	Assess the best use of existing waste facilities. To be utilized as they are now, or re-oriented to be “Diversion Centres”?	Waste facilities will be re-oriented as diversion centres to fully maximize landfill diversion opportunities.		↻
Explore additional materials that can be managed at sites	Cost-benefit analysis of collecting and diverting various materials such as leaf and yard waste, shingles, drywall, plastic bags, mattresses, carpets, etc.	Leaf and yard waste is now collected at all six waste facilities from April through November. Additional diversion opportunities will continue to be explored as space and markets allow.		↻
Hours and days of operation	Determine the preferred hours and days of operation, in order to balance operating costs, customer service and operational considerations.	A survey was conducted in August 2018 of site customers. Decision to maintain current hours and days of operation at all waste facilities.	✓	
User fee for bagged waste at sites	Evaluate the appropriate fee for bagged waste at waste facilities.	Standardized user fees for garbage bags collected at curbside and dropped off at waste facilities at \$2 each.	✓	
Fee options	Evaluate fee structures; minimum fees, surcharges for unsorted loads, cost per tonne, removing tipping fees on diversion materials (brush, scrap metal, etc.)	The current fee structure of charging a tipping fee on all materials that do not fall under a provincial diversion funding programme will continue, with no minimum fee applied at this time. The waste tipping fee has been increased to the average of neighbouring municipalities and will continue to increase towards full cost recovery.	✓	

Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) site diversion programmes	Investigate opportunities to support the ICI sector in increasing diversion.	SWS staff will work with the ICI sector to assist in identifying opportunities to increase diversion, and have partnered with the Circular Innovation Council on a unique pilot project which is providing businesses and institutions with expanded organics composting opportunities.		
Group D - Independent Topics				
Involvement in regional waste management systems	Consider opportunities to realize efficiencies through partnerships (e.g., Energy from Waste, Material Recovery Facilities, landfills, collections).	SWS staff have, and will continue to work with neighbouring municipalities to identify opportunities for partnerships and collaboration to increase efficiencies and diversion.		
Co-operative contract procurement	Assess benefits of maximizing buying power through collaborative purchasing practices.	SWS staff work with the County's Purchasing staff to identify opportunities for collaborative purchasing. For example, in 2020 the County piggy-backed on the Region of Waterloo's green bin supply contract.		
Master Composter programme	Examine how the programme can be enhanced in order to increase composting by Wellington residents.	A Food Waste Management Strategy has been implemented and a green bin programme established to divert more organics from landfill in addition to continuing the backyard composter subsidization programme. Additional efforts may include demonstration gardens at waste facilities and recruiting volunteers to assist residents with at-home composting.		

Education on reducing food waste	Devise a plan to initiate a promotions and education campaign on reducing food waste.	A baseline residential food waste survey has been completed and work is ongoing to further enhance food waste reduction and diversion through interventions and education.		
Partnering with various groups	Develop a plan to partner with community groups (i.e. Universities, horticultural groups, other County departments) to improve organics management practices.	The County has partnered with the City of Guelph on the Smart Cities Our Food Future project working towards reducing food waste and loss in both the residential and ICI sectors.		
Tours and presentations	Explore opportunities to expand outreach to schools and community groups.	A Programmes Coordinator position was filled in November 2019 and is now working on promotion, education, and engagement with County residents and schools.	✓	
Meeting outreach Green Strategy initiatives	Review the Green Strategy outreach initiatives and revise as necessary. Plan to achieve objectives.	SWS staff will continue to fulfill engagement commitments and the new Programmes Coordinator will assist with this work.	✓	
Partnerships	Seek out partnerships with schools and Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations to expand awareness and achieve objectives.	SWS staff will continue to explore partnership opportunities and the new Programmes Coordinator will assist with that work.		
New outreach tools	Develop new tools and/or technologies to engage the public on waste reduction and diversion.	The Recycle Coach waste app was launched in early 2020. Two animated YouTube videos were released in 2020. The new Programmes Coordinator and SWS staff will continue to explore and develop new outreach tools.		

Spring clean-up support	Consider how the County can further support municipal spring clean-up days.	The County will send an annual reminder to its member municipalities advising that municipally organized spring clean-up events can be supported with rolloff bins, waived tipping fees and promotional support.	✓	
Earth Day or other event days	Consider if there are event days to hold that would be beneficial and desirable in the communities.	SWS will enhance promotion and support of official environmental event days.		➡
Special Event recycling	Consider options for providing recycling support to special events held in the County.	SWS will take a more active approach and seek out special event organizers to provide information on recycling services available and will consider developing waste diversion and reduction standards for all special events in the future.		➡
Setting goals or targets	Consider setting diversion targets or long term goals (i.e. “Zero Waste”) for the County to work towards.	The County recommitted its goal to meet the capture rate target of 85% of all acceptable blue box materials, and will strive for continual improvements in performance for all waste management programmes and services.	✓	



National Public Works Association Award Presentation at County Council