

2022 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 solid waste management services, delivery, 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. This report provides an update on the work completed to date on the long-term strategy, and some insights into the services provided over the past year.



2022 National Public Works Week Billboard

Customer Service

Programmes and Services

- Increased the number of days of curbside collection of leaf and yard waste in October and November to better manage increased seasonal volumes.
- Installed permanent outdoor lighting at the Rothsay Waste Facility to improve customer visibility and enhance security.
- Increased the number of part-time Site Assistants to improve traffic control and increase education opportunities during the week.

Quick Fact:

The County’s residential diversion rate has exceeded 50% for the second year in a row!

| Key Customer Service Statistics | 2021 | 2022 | % change |
|--|---------|---------|----------|
| number of calls and emails | 6,296 | 4,592 | -27.1% |
| number of customers at waste facilities | 232,155 | 230,617 | -0.7% |
| number of garbage curbside stops | 491,669 | 471,683 | -15.0% |
| number of garbage bags picked up at curbside | 715,835 | 661,846 | -7.5% |
| number of blue box curbside stops | 993,776 | 950,870 | -4.3% |
| number of green bin curbside stops * | 546,871 | 522,386 | -4.5% |

*collection began July 2020

Promotion and Education

- While in-person activities were limited in 2021, in 2022 SWS staff were able to get back into the community and hosted an educational booth at seven (7) different community events, in addition to maintaining the number of presentations given to community groups and classrooms (provided both virtually and in-person).
- SWS uses many different types of media and tools to educate residents about our services, programmes, and the environment. In addition to traditional print media, SWS also places ads on three local radio stations and on an electronic billboard located on Highway 6 in Guelph/Eramosa Township.

Keep it loose!

Please do not bag recyclables. Blue box materials need to be loose in order to be separated properly at the material recovery facility. Shredded paper is the only exception, and must be placed in a CLEAR plastic bag.

Reminder: Plastic bags and film plastics are not accepted for recycling in the County's blue box programme.

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County of Wellington
 SOLID WASTE SERVICES

County Page Ad – April 7, 2022 in Wellington Advertiser

Financial

| County Website – SWS Pages (unique visitors) | 2021 | 2022 | % change |
|---|-----------|-----------|----------|
| most visited in 2022 – hours and locations | 66,959 | 60,825 | -9.2% |
| second most visited in 2022 – leaf and yard waste | 41,235 | 34,172 | -17.1% |
| third most visited in 2022 – SWS home page | 25,411 | 21,186 | -16.6% |
| Recycle Coach * | | | |
| number of new subscribers | 3,891 | 2,112 | -45.7% |
| number of material searches | 42,375 | 12,744 | -69.9% |
| number of interactions | 1,354,137 | 1,846,410 | 36.4% |

*launched February 2020

- The tipping fee at County waste facilities was increased on January 1, 2022, bringing the fee more in-line with municipal comparators.
- The County's Roads Division provided staff and equipment to repair on-site road surfaces rather than using an external contractor.
- Reduced contractor expenditures by increasingly using County staff and equipment to complete landfill site earthworks projects, such as grading, applying cover material, and capping completed areas of the landfill.

Quick Fact:

There were a total of 1,201,036 collection reminders sent by the Recycle Coach waste app to County residents in 2022.

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.



Curbside set-out of all materials

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 of Waste Landfilled | 2021 | 2022 | % change |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| total tonnes disposed | 19,478.73 | 18,431.96 | -5.4 |

| County Diversion Programmes | 2021 | 2022 | % change |
|--|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| blue box recyclables | 6,244.95 | 6,174.16 | -1.1% |
| wood, brush, Christmas trees | 3,757.91 | 3,447.71 | -8.3% |
| green bin organics * | 2,842.69 | 2,755.53 | -3.1% |
| leaf and yard waste | 1,705.01 | 1,933.76 | 13.4% |
| scrap metal | 433.41 | 374.88 | -13.5% |
| Electronics | 113.68 | 93.05 | -18.1% |
| Tires | 133.23 | 62.62 | -53.0% |
| household hazardous waste | 305.83 | 259.87 | -15.0% |
| clothing and textiles | 17.04 | 19.80 | 16.2% |
| reuse centres (reopened March 2022) | 0.00 | 8.09 | |
| backyard composting (estimate) | 1,513.80 | 1,517.90 | 0.3% |
| total tonnes diverted from landfill | 17,067.54 | 16,647.37 | -2.5% |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| total diversion rate | 46.7% | 47.5% | 1.6% |
|-----------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|

- Phase I of the Riverstown Landfill Site was filled to its approved capacity in 2022 and an interim cap has been applied and seeded.
- The County provided roll-off bins and waived disposal tipping fees to support the spring clean-up efforts in the Townships of Mapleton and Puslinch.
- Phase II of the Riverstown Landfill Site is a fully engineered landfill site. It includes a leachate collection system to collect, test, and manage leachate in an environmentally responsible manner.
- Supported the Circular Innovation Council’s food waste collection and diversion pilot which serves the industrial, commercial and institutional sector. This innovative, award-winning pilot in the City of Guelph and County of Wellington has kept organic waste out of landfills, while also facilitating the rescue and distribution of edible food throughout our communities.

Quick Fact:

Again this year, the most commonly searched items in the Recycle Coach Look-Up Tool were Styrofoam containers and Styrofoam packaging inserts. Plastic bottles, jars, and jugs came in third.

Other Achievements and Activities

- The County received three awards (one silver and two bronze) from the Municipal Waste Association for innovative promotional and educational materials. The awards were in recognition for three very different promotions – the curbside collection schedule (print tool), a digital ad promoting the Recycle Coach app (online strategy), and the Waste Reduction Week promotions (campaign by a small municipality).
- For the second year in a row, the County of Wellington was selected as a Leader in Sustainability by Call2Recycle Canada, Inc. This award recognizes the County’s residents’ exceptional commitment to responsible battery recycling. A total of 10,081 kilograms (10.1 tonnes) of household batteries was collected through the County’s extensive battery collection programme in 2022.
- Arguably, the biggest achievement of SWS in 2022 was the opening of Phase II of the Riverstown Landfill Site. This project has been in development for more than a decade. This new phase of the landfill site is expected to provide up to 25 years of disposal capacity for County residents and businesses. With no new landfills having been developed in Ontario since 1999, this expansion puts the County in the enviable position to be able to manage its own waste for years to come.



First load of waste being deposited in Phase II

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. | ✓ | |





| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|---|---|---|-------------------|------------------|
| 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. | ✓ | |
| 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. | ✓ | |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|---|---|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 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. | ✓ | |
| 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. | ✓ | |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|---|---|---|-------------------|------------------|
| 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. | ✓ | |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|--|---|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 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. | | ➡ |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|---|---|---|-------------------|---|
| 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. | ✓ | |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------------------|---|
| 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 expand on current partnerships (for example with the Erin Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee). | |  |
| 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, and three more are planned in 2023. Additional outreach tools will continue to be explored. | |  |
| Spring clean-up support | Consider how the County can further support municipal spring clean-up days. | Each year the County sends a 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. Organics diversion will be explored in 2023. | |  |

| Topic | Task | Direction/Action | Status - Complete | Status - Ongoing |
|--------------------------|---|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 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. | ✓ | |



Riverstown Phase II Grand Opening – ribbon cutting