

REGIONAL WASTE SUBCOMMITTEE: MEETING #1

Meeting Date/Time: Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 10:00am-12:00pm

Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85498492404?pwd=oyHd8c8lbQUKLsumn1uEEKxRku6RKR.1>

Attendees

Subcommittee Members

Commissioner Kevin Cameron, Benton County
Tim Dooley, Association of Oregon Counties
Tom Egleston, Oregon Metro
Jessi Just, Heart of CARTM
Jeff Orlandini, Lane County
Amy Roth, Association of Oregon Recyclers
Commissioner Pat Malone, Benton County
Brian May, Marion County
Sean McGuire, Benton County
Bailey Payne, Benton County

Staff

Facilitator: Elizabeth Start, Start Consulting Group
Subject Matter Expert: Bryce Hesterman, RRS
Researcher: Allegra Starr, RRS

Notes

Key Takeaways

- Selected 3 main focus areas:
 1. Transfer station design for recovery
 2. Transfer network logistics/export
 3. Integrated mixed waste facilities
- Discussed adding regional waste authorities as potential 4th focus area
- Emphasized need for long-term planning (25+ years) and regional coordination
- Identified key success metrics: increased recovery rates, reduced environmental impacts, equitable/affordable solutions

Topics

Current Waste Flows and Landfill Capacity

- Reviewed Sankey diagram showing current regional waste flows
- Coffin Butte landfill projected to close by 2038 without expansion
- Short Mountain (Lane County) has 70+ year capacity but limited tonnage
- Out-of-region landfills (e.g. Columbia Ridge) have longer lifespans

Historical Waste Management Approaches

- 1960s-70s: Basic incineration, early source separation
- 1980s-90s: Waste-to-energy, refuse-derived fuel, mixed waste composting
- 2000s-2010s: Single-stream recycling, mechanical biological treatment
- 2020s: AI/robotics in MRFs, anaerobic digestion, biochar emerging

Focus Area: Transfer Station Design for Recovery

- Maximize recovery at existing material flow points
- Examples: Co-located eco-parks (Phoenix, Dane County)
- Consider space needs, staff training, technology upgrades

Focus Area: Transfer Network Logistics/Export

- Coordinate public/private transfer stations across region
- Explore intermodal transport options (rail, barge)
- Optimize routing to reduce costs/emissions

Focus Area: Integrated Mixed Waste Facilities

- Combine advanced MRF with anaerobic digestion
- Separate organics/inorganics for targeted processing
- Examples: Juno, Fulcrum Bioenergy projects

Potential Focus Area: Regional Waste Authorities

- Legal framework for multi-jurisdictional coordination
- Examples from Midwest (Michigan, Ohio)
- Complex to implement but could enable regional solutions

Defining Success Metrics

- Increased material recovery rates
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
- Equitable/affordable solutions for all communities
- Stable long-term (75+ year) waste management plan
- Demonstrated economic/environmental benefits

Ideas

- Developing a strong plan for intermodal transportation to move waste efficiently across the region
- Designing transfer stations to maximize recovery of materials before landfilling
- Coordinating a regional network of transfer stations to direct materials to the most appropriate processing facilities
- Exploring the feasibility of an integrated mixed waste processing facility to recover materials from the residual waste stream
- Considering the use of biochar to handle organic residuals from processing
- Evaluating the role of historical approaches like refuse-derived fuel, pyrolysis/gasification, and waste-to-energy
- Tracking success through metrics like recovery rates and greenhouse gas impacts
- Ensuring equity by treating waste as a resource that can benefit communities
- Establishing a regional waste authority to coordinate waste management across jurisdictions

Considerations

- Balancing cost/economics vs. environmental/sustainability goals
 - The cheapest option may be to simply landfill waste, but that doesn't align with the region's values around recovery and reducing impacts
 - Need to find the right balance between economic feasibility and environmental/climate benefits
- Coordinating across jurisdictions
 - Challenges with cities, counties, and other entities having different priorities and control over planning/zoning
 - Potential need for a regional waste authority to facilitate coordination and shared decision-making
- Phasing in solutions over time
 - Desire to see progress and "good news" in the near-term (e.g. 10 years) rather than long-term plans
 - Importance of communicating the plan and phased approach to the public to maintain confidence
- Accounting for future growth and capacity needs
 - Need to consider not just current waste volumes but projected future growth to ensure long-term sufficiency
 - Concern about repeatedly having to re-evaluate where to send waste if facilities fill up too quickly
- Leveraging existing infrastructure and expertise
 - Building on work already done, like Metro's system facilities planning
 - Tapping into RRS's experience with regional waste authorities in other parts of the country
- Focusing on the most promising focus areas first
 - Consensus to start by deeply exploring the top 3 focus areas (transfer station design, network/logistics, mixed waste processing) before potentially adding others

Questions

- What is the current top per year capacity of Coffin Butte landfill? (Asked by Amy Roth)
- What does "SLM" stand for in the "round trip distance" metric? (Asked by Bailey Payne)
- How can we factor in the current tonnage being sent to the different landfills, not just their total lifespans? (Suggested by Jeff Orlandini)
- Do we have projections for future growth in waste generation over the next 10 years? (Asked by Amy Roth)
- How can we balance the cheapest disposal option (landfilling) with the region's values around recovery and environmental impacts? (Discussed by Bryce Hesterman, Jeff Orlandini, Tom Egleston)
- What are the legal/jurisdictional challenges of coordinating across cities and counties, and how could a regional waste authority help address that? (Raised by Sean McGuire and discussed further)
- What are some successful examples of the different strategies being considered (e.g. transfer station design, mixed waste processing), and what were the key lessons learned? (Suggested by Amy Roth)

Action: Research and analysis

- Detailed data on the current capacity, tonnage, and lifespan of the different landfills in the region, including Coffin Butte, Short Mountain, and any out-of-region landfills being utilized
- Projections for future growth in waste generation over the next 10-20 years to understand how that will impact landfill capacity needs
- Case studies and examples of successful implementation of the different strategies being considered (e.g. transfer station design for recovery, integrated mixed waste processing facilities, use of biochar, refuse-derived fuel, etc.)
- Analysis of the legal, jurisdictional, and governance challenges of coordinating a regional waste management system across multiple cities and counties with potential models for a regional waste authority to address these challenges
- Evaluation of the environmental impacts (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions) and economic costs/benefits of the different strategies, to help balance those tradeoffs
- Assessment of the readiness and feasibility of implementing the different strategies, including political/community buy-in, availability of funding, and alignment with existing infrastructure and operations