

Pueblo County Solid Waste Study Final Report

Introduction

The Pueblo County Area Council of Governments (PACOG) serves a population of 162,000 living in 2,400 square miles of Pueblo County, Colorado. The majority of residents live in the centrally-located city of Pueblo and the Pueblo West Metropolitan District. The remaining populations live in rural and mountain towns, and unincorporated areas. The characteristics of the region include an urban center, industrial zones, open space, agricultural land, and forested mountainsides; all bisected by the Arkansas River, Fountain Creek, and Interstate 25.

Pueblo County has unique waste diversion challenges. The population density ranges from 9 to 1,200 persons per square mile, making waste and recycling collection inefficient and costly. Recycling opportunities are sporadic based on available funding, market prices, and proximity to processing facilities. Only two of the nine, private hauling companies doing business in Pueblo County offer curbside recycling services for a monthly fee. Currently, there is one operating landfill which is slated for closure in approximately 25 years.

Funds received from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's (CDPHE) Recycling Resources Economic Opportunity grants program enabled the first-ever waste audit in Pueblo County. This information will be used to provide important data, goal alignment, and action steps for the revisions to the ***Pueblo County Sustainability Plan (2012)***.

The following sections of this report and the attached appendices summarize the Pueblo County Solid Waste Study and provide the fulfilment of the final deliverables in Exhibit B of the Intergovernment Contract CT FAAA 201700003458 between CDPHE and the City of Fort Collins dated 2/16/2017.

Waste Audit Analysis

PACOG commissioned two seasonal waste audits at the Southside Landfill to document the materials that make up the disposed waste stream.

The report titled *Waste Characterization Study, Pueblo County 2017; Waste Characterization* provides the findings from the Pueblo County waste audit analysis.

The waste characterization found that over one-sixth (16%) of the waste stream consists of cardboard, plastics #1 & #2, and metal. These materials are all recoverable through a properly designed recycling system and all have a high economic value. Materials with existing recycling options in Pueblo County (although limited) account for over one-fifth (21%) of the waste being disposed.

Public Survey

For implementation of any recycling improvements, PACOG recognizes that government, public, and stakeholders must work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. Because of past challenges with

public engagement around the topic of recycling this study took a careful approach to soliciting input to establish a foundation of trust amongst the stakeholders.

During the summer/fall of 2017, more than 900 Pueblo County residents responded to a survey regarding their recycling habits and attitudes.

See *Waste Characterization Study, Pueblo County 2017; Survey Results* to read a summary report of the survey findings.

The “broad survey” was promoted widely by the Pueblo County Community Relations Department and resulted in coverage in newspapers, social media channels, and PACOG partner websites. Additionally, the mini-survey was conducted at the Pueblo Chile & Frijoles Festival with an audience of over 100,000 that passed by the booth.

Existing Infrastructure

RRS researched the current infrastructure for waste and recycling in Pueblo County and prepared a GAP analysis and score card. The gap analysis evaluated and graded the status quo for diversion in 6 key areas.

- Collection
- Processing
- End Markets
- Education and Outreach
- Supporting Policies
- Public Private Coordination

See report titled *Waste Characterization Study, Pueblo County 2017; GAP Analysis* for the complete report and appendix *Waste Characterization Study Appendix, Pueblo County 2017* for its appendices.

Future Infrastructure and Policy Needs

The results of the project are currently being used to evaluate both the County and regional infrastructure and policy needs for increased diversion. The project estimated that as much as 47,500 to 52,900 tons of materials could be recovered on an annual basis with a readily recoverable value of \$3.75M to \$4.18M. The waste composition study, gap analysis, and survey results are currently being used to conduct a regional hub and spoke feasibility analysis including the most cost-effective way to capture the available recyclables in the County. The analysis will outline the costs and diversion impacts of various infrastructure options, describe an optimized regional hub and spoke system, and lay out a pathway toward increased regional collaboration in the County. The results of the next step/ study are expected to be completed in Spring 2018. Once completed, they will be publicly available and be shared directly with RREO. The Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) feasibility analysis is expected to help Pueblo County prioritize investments in infrastructure and move the County closer to a regional recovery system.

Future Collaboration Efforts

The Waste Characterization Study will be presented at two public sessions in January 2017. PACOG will have a presentation by the consultants, RRS, with question and answer period. The Pueblo County

Sustainability Plan Action Team (SPAT) will have an extended meeting with a presentation of the Waste Characterization Study by RRS. SPAT will use this information to set achievable goals and an action plan that will be adopted in the Pueblo County Sustainability Plan. The report will be available to the public on the PACOG website with an announcement to local media outlets in January to coincide with the presentation to PACOG.

Next Steps

The Pueblo County Sustainability Plan Action Team has a concurrent grant project for a Materials Recovery Facility Study funded by the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). The report will be completed by RRS in mid-January 2018 and presented to the Action Team. Both the MRF Study and Waste Characterization Study will be used to inform the next steps of the Pueblo County Sustainability Plan.

Consultant Review

Resource Recycling Systems, Inc (RRS) was hired through a competitive process to provide consulting services to PACOG. The resulting report, titled *Waste Characterization Study, Pueblo County 2017*. The services and final report provided by RRS, under Senior Consultant Juri Freeman, met or exceeded the expectations of PACOG. Mr. Freeman and Principle David Stead, held an introductory meeting in Pueblo with the grant management team, met with stakeholders, and toured facilities. Mr. Freeman maintained a bi-monthly phone meeting schedule with the grant manager, continually shared data and report progress, and provided ample time for document review and feedback.

PACOG anticipates maintaining a relationship with RRS and will look forward to accepting proposals for future projects.