

Municipal Solid Waste Unit-based Pricing¹ Case Study

Newark, Vermont²
Population: 581

Prepared by: The Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA)³

The Town of Newark is a rural community located in northeast corner of Vermont between Lyndonville and Island Pond and is a member of the Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD).⁴ Most Newark residents use the local transfer station to drop-off their trash as well as sorted recyclables. For many years, there was a \$1 per-bag fee that was waived if the resident also brought recycling. But some residents were bringing one item to recycle and then throwing away their trash for free; people from other towns were bringing their trash; the four bag limit was not consistently enforced; and recyclables were getting thrown away.

In 2009, town officials proposed a Pay-Per-Throw system at Town Meeting, and it was soundly defeated. So they modified their strategy and tried again in 2013. The new proposal included having a contractor operate the transfer station and be paid only from the fees collected. This would remove the costs associated with staffing the transfer station from the town budget and create the incentive for the operator to consistently collect fees. The Selectmen presented their proposal at Town Meeting, and the proposed operator attended with his family to answer questions. This time, the Town Meeting passed the Pay-Per-Throw proposal.

Use of the transfer station is not limited to Newark residents. Fees are \$2 for up to 15 gallons; \$3 for up to 33 gallons, and \$5 for large “contractor” size bags or containers. The town does not require the use of a special bag. The transfer station contractor determines the size category and collects the fee. The transfer station is open on Saturdays mornings and throughout the day on Sundays.

Results:

- Newark’s Pay-Per-Throw system has cut the amount of trash disposed in half: 33.39 tons for the 4th Quarter of 2012 to 14.4 tons for the 4th Quarter of 2013;
- The cost of operating the transfer station, including recycling and disposal was removed from the town budget and significantly offset the need to raise taxes to cover other town expenses;
- Residents, who were initially against the Pay-Per-Throw system, have found that recycling is not that much trouble and their disposal costs are not overwhelming;
- Town leaders are very satisfied with the new system and report it is working well; and
- Newark officials have not noticed an increase in illegal dumping.

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¹ Also known as: Save Money and Reduce Trash (SMART), variable rate pricing, and pay-as-you-throw (PAYT).

² This case study is based on correspondence with Joan Bicknell, Newark Town Clerk, Mark Ellingwood, Newark Selectman, and information provided by NEKWMD.

³ NEWMOA is a non-profit, non-partisan interstate association whose membership is composed of the state environmental agency directors of the hazardous waste, solid waste, waste site cleanup, and pollution prevention programs in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Visit www.newmoa.org.

⁴NEKWMD provides recycling, composting, household hazardous waste management, and other solid waste services to its members.