

Municipal Solid Waste Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)¹ Case Study

Unity, New Hampshire²

Population: 1,530

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

The town of Unity is located in a rural area in west central New Hampshire, south of Claremont. Unity operated its own landfill until it was full and had to close in 2008. In the early 1990's with concern growing over how fast the landfill was filling up, a group of volunteers started a recycling program. With support for the recycling program increasing, the Town approved funding for a 26 x 40 recycling building to be built by volunteers adjacent to the landfill. The recycling center opened to the public in July 1997 and offered a heated space for the collection and processing of recyclables. With landfill closure approaching in the mid-2000's, the Selectboard was concerned about the cost of setting up and operating a transfer station and asked the Recycling Committee to recommend the most economical way to proceed. Members of the Recycling Committee learned of the success that Canterbury, New Hampshire had had with Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) and recommended it as a way to reduce the cost to Unity taxpayers of operating the new transfer station. The Recycling Committee developed a PAYT fact sheet and a question and answer write-up that they handed out at the recycling center in the weeks leading up to the 2008 Town Meeting. The voters approved both the PAYT system and funding for the transfer station. The transfer station and PAYT system went into operation on August 1st that summer.

Today, at least half of the Town's residents bring their trash and sorted recyclables to the transfer station. Households that do not use the transfer station typically contract directly with a private hauler for curbside pick-up. Recycling at the transfer station is free, and the fee for a 33 gallon bag of trash is \$2. Unity requires that residents use specific bags purchased by the Town and sold to residents at the transfer station. To ensure that only Unity residents access the transfer station, a free vehicle permit sticker must be obtained from the Town Office. The transfer station is open Wednesday afternoon and all day on Saturday. In 2013, the transfer station reported receiving 167 tons of residential solid waste and 76 tons of recyclables. Unity did not measure the quantity of solid waste disposed of in the landfill and therefore, cannot determine changes. Town officials are pleased with their PAYT system and did not notice an increase in illegal disposal.

Results:

- Fees collected from bag sales, combined with the income generated from recyclables, typically cover approximately 75 percent of the cost to operate the transfer station, including labor, hauling and disposal.

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¹ Also known as: variable rate pricing, unit-based pricing (UBP), and save-money-and-reduce-trash (SMART).

² Information in the case study is based on correspondence with Vanessa Keith, Unity Transfer Station Manager, and data obtained from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services.

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.