

# **Municipal Solid Waste Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT)<sup>1</sup> Case Study**

**Vernon, Vermont<sup>2</sup>**

**Population: 2,206**

**Prepared by: The Northeast Waste Management Officials' Association (NEWMOA)<sup>3</sup>**

The Town of Vernon is located in the rural southeast corner of Vermont on the border with both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Vernon is a member of the Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD)<sup>4</sup>, which provides 24/7 drop-off recycling bins at the Town highway garage. Vernon is the home of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, which announced in 2013 its intent to close by January 2015. Vernon town leaders knew they would need to make town-wide spending cuts to compensate for the loss of the tax payments the Town receives from the plant. An option they considered was PAYT for their residential trash service. Act 148, Vermont's Universal Recycling Law of 2012 requires that all towns implement PAYT by July 1, 2015. Vernon leaders decided to ask the voters to approve implementing PAYT a year earlier, starting July 1, 2014. The new PAYT system was approved by the 2014 Town Meeting.

For many years, Vernon paid for a contractor to provide weekly curbside pickup of trash for residents. In 2013, this service cost the Town \$134,435. In addition to the 24/7 drop-off bins for source-separated recyclables provided by WSWMD, the curbside trash contractor, Triple T Trucking, has maintained drop-off bins for organic material that they send to a local farm for composting.

To implement PAYT, Vernon established a Recycling Committee, which decided that all residents must purchase special bags for their trash. The bags are sold at the Town offices and a local store. Fees were designed to cover all the costs associated with trash and recycling and are \$2.00 for 15-gallon bags and \$3.00 for 30-gallon bags. When PAYT for trash began July 1, 2014, Vernon added single stream curbside pickup of recyclables on an every-other-week schedule for the first two months, and in September started weekly collection of recyclables. The 24/7 source separated recyclables and organics drop-off bins are also still available. An additional organics bin was added to meet the increased demand to divert that material from disposal.

Results (continued on side 2):

- The amount of trash disposed was cut by more than half: from approximately 195 tons for the 3rd Quarter of 2013 to 86 tons for the 3rd Quarter of 2014.

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

<sup>2</sup> The information in the case study is based on correspondence with Robert Spencer, Executive Director, WSWMD.

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.newmoa.org).

<sup>4</sup> WSWMD provides solid waste education and recycling management for its member towns.

- The amount of recycling collected doubled: from approximately 28 tons in the 3rd Quarter of 2013 to 57 tons for the 3rd Quarter of 2014.
- The cost of contracting with Triple T for trash, recycling and organics services is nearly offset 100 percent by the bag sale fees. Bag sales generated over \$27,000 in revenue during the 3rd Quarter of 2014.
- Triple T Trucking voluntarily added weekly recycling collection at no extra charge because they had so much less trash to collect.
- Town leaders are very satisfied with the new system and report it is working well. Vernon has not experienced an increase in illegal dumping.

*This material is based on work supported by the Utilities Program, United States Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the view of the Utilities Program.*