

## **2010 Annual Solid Waste Report – Executive Summary**

The Georgia Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Act of 1990 requires the Department of Community Affairs (DCA), with the cooperation of the Department of Natural Resources' Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA), to report annually on the state of solid waste management in Georgia. Per the Act, this FY 2010 report, covering the period of July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010, covers:

- the status of local and regional solid waste management planning in Georgia;
- the number and types of solid waste handling facilities in the state;
- the remaining capacity of each permitted solid waste handling facility;
- the number and types of solid waste grants and loans made to local governments;
- a compilation and analysis of solid waste management data provided by cities and counties through their completed Solid Waste Survey;
- a statement of progress achieved in meeting the goal established in subsection (c) of Code Section 12-8-21;
- a statement of progress achieved in solid waste management education;
- any revisions in the state solid waste management plan deemed necessary; and
- recommendations for improving the management of solid waste in Georgia.

This and previous reports are available online at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov), under 'Publications.'

Further, the Act requires DCA to report on the status of litter prevention and abatement in the state. The litter report shall include but not be limited to:

- An itemization of expenditures made from the Solid Waste Trust Fund for the prevention and abatement of litter;
- A compilation and analysis of litter prevention, collection, and enforcement efforts;
- An assessment of littering in the state;
- A statement of progress in achieving a litter prevention ethic; and
- Recommendations for improving litter abatement and prevention efforts.

This litter report is available online at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov), under Office of Environmental Management programs.

The Solid Waste Management Act requires all local governments to have, or be included in, a solid waste management plan that demonstrates adequate waste disposal capacity and collection capability for a 10-year period. Seventy-two (54) cities and twenty (18) counties did not have an approved plan at the end of FY 2010.

During FY 2010, 14.2 million tons of waste was sent to permitted Georgia disposal facilities. Most of this waste entered lined, monitored landfills operating under federal Subtitle D regulations. A small and dwindling percentage of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) entered unlined landfills that have been allowed to operate under their pre-Subtitle D permits. Construction and Demolition waste (C&D), a subset of MSW, generally goes to unlined landfills that are less expensive to operate.

The state continues to have an adequate supply of permitted disposal capacity with 37 years of remaining permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) disposal capacity and 43 years of remaining permitted Construction and Demolition (C&D) disposal capacity. Remaining capacity is highly variable; the same math applied to reduced disposal rates can effectively add many years capacity in a single year; it is important to keep in mind that disasters or policy changes can have just as dramatic effect in the opposite direction. It is important for the state and local governments to carefully monitor the remaining permitted disposal capacity throughout Georgia. In FY 2010 nearly half of the permitted disposal capacity in the state was contained in just 5 of the 102 active landfills. This concentration heightens the need to carefully monitor the financial assurances of these and all the disposal facilities in the state. Without proper financial assurance, the incredible costs of cleaning up abandoned, leaking landfills may fall to local governments and possibly the state.

This concentrated disposal capacity also emphasizes the need for quality local solid waste management planning. The Northeast Georgia region had gotten low on disposal capacity, and only through a controversial landfill expansion process did the region gain additional capacity. Demonstration of capacity and capacity assurance is highly dependent upon the permitting process and the time it takes for a solid waste handling permit to be issued. This process typically takes several years, during which time permits for surrounding facilities may lapse or private sector business arrangements to accept varying rates of material for disposal can greatly alter the projected life expectancy of existing landfills. (See section A [Disposal and Capacity](#) and section B [Per Capita Disposal](#) for more details)

The level and type of solid waste, recycling and yard trimmings collection services provided throughout the state varies greatly depending upon a community's size, density, and demographic profile. To track solid waste management trends, DCA administers an annual survey of all local governments in Georgia.

During FY 2010, 24 cities and 22 counties reported actively promoting waste minimization practices such as home composting or beneficial reuse of yard trimmings. During FY 2010, 298 cities and 45 counties reported collecting yard trimmings for diversion from MSW landfills. (See section C: [Solid Waste & Recycling Collection.](#))

The increasing use of inert landfills and transfer stations, for which no reporting requirements exist, should be monitored and addressed in local solid waste planning efforts. As the state implements the strategy for reducing the MSW disposal rate, efforts to quantify and address C&D waste reduction and solid waste from mining, agricultural, or silviculture operations or industrial processes or operations should be addressed.

Education efforts are essential to waste reduction efforts. [Keep Georgia Beautiful](#) continues supporting the waste reduction and education efforts of the 77 Keep America Beautiful affiliates in Georgia. As state grant funds that have historically helped local governments educate and enforce litter abatement efforts diminish, these local affiliates are struggling to find the necessary resources to keep their communities livable.

Another growing trend that needs to be carefully monitored is the amount of waste imported to Georgia for disposal and its potential impact on future disposal capacity and Georgia's environment. With statewide tipping fees far less than Northeastern states and Florida, Georgia landfills represent considerable cost-savings for companies moving large amounts of waste. Because the waste reduction goal specified in the Act includes all waste disposed in MSW landfills in Georgia, this out-of-state waste is included in the state's progress toward meeting the waste reduction goal, and undercuts waste reduction and recycling efforts undertaken by Georgians. On a per capita basis, 6.67 pounds of waste entered MSW landfills daily during FY 2010, and more than one pound/day of that came from outside Georgia's borders (See Section B [Per Capita Disposal](#).)

No SWTF dollars were allocated for scrap tire pile cleanups or local government grants during FY 2010, and GEFA issued no new loans for solid waste-related projects.

FY 2010 saw a third straight year with a significant reduction in the per-capita disposal rate. Since FY 2007 the amount of waste sent to MSW landfills for every Georgia resident fell nearly a pound, from 7.45 to 6.67 pounds per person, per day. While the economic recession has certainly had an impact upon disposal rates, it can also be fairly argued that the state's aggressive recycling programs and private-sector partnerships are beginning to have an effect. The collapse of the housing market, which hit Georgia especially hard, is revealed primarily in Construction and Waste disposal tonnages, rather than the MSW landfills that also saw declining tonnages. But to meet the goals outlined above, continued diligence, planning and funding will be needed.

Budget cuts have restricted DCA's role in solid waste management assistance to local governments. DCA's review of solid waste plans, as required by the Act, has been streamlined to accommodate these changes. However, for the reasons

outlined above and to implement the Act, the role of sound solid waste management planning cannot be overstated. Georgia has seen two legal cases with major implications for local governments and the quality of life of their citizens hinge on solid waste planning. Careful planning and resource stewardship has been proven many times over to be far less expensive than cleanups held after-the-fact.

In addition to cost savings for local governments, many of the policies that provide better stewardship of natural resources also benefit Georgia's economy. Georgia has among the strongest end-use markets for recyclable material in the nation; diverting their feedstocks of paper, plastics, metals, glass and compostable material out of the state's landfills creates far more jobs than continuing to bury them. As DCA has pointed out in recent years, Georgia collectively pays more than \$100 million annually to bury materials worth an estimated \$250 million to local industry. At the same time, Georgia markets for these materials must pay to import these same feedstocks from across North America; local collection would be far cheaper for them.

In many ways, improving and promoting Georgia's recycling and organics collection and processing infrastructure is basic economic development. For example:

Georgia's Paper Industry:

- Recycles almost 8% of all the paper consumed in the United States
- Includes 16 paper mills using recycled content, 9 relying exclusively on recycled fiber

Plastic Beverage Containers (PET)

- A third of all #1 plastic bottles recycled in N. America get turned into carpet in Georgia

Aluminum Recycling

- Novelis, one of the largest aluminum recyclers in the world, processes used beverage cans in Greensboro GA, with its North American headquarters located in Atlanta

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