

Problem Material: Plastic Bags

PowerPoint Presentation:

- No Plastic Bags
 - Video showed: Composite lumber is a large user of recycled bags.

Question formed from PowerPoint:

- What happens to plastic bags once they are collected at sites?

Discussion: Why is it a problem?

1. Laconia:

- Uses Casella which is zero sort recycling. Then, they take it to Belmont which hauls the materials to Massachusetts.
- Once they reach the processing facility plastic bags and films cover materials that pass through optical readers.
- Results are rising costs when bags contaminate waste
- Laconia has to pay two people each day to go through and sort out e-waste or other miscellaneous materials such as toilets.
- If recycling is too contaminated Casella would have to dump as trash and charge the transfer station
- Having an unattended transfer station, leads to noncompliance
- 40% of Laconia is not curbside collections however the residents have given a great response to the sites that are open 24/7.

2. Tufonboro:

- What kind of plastic bags are we talking about? Grocery bags or garbage bags?
- Tufonboro plastic bags go in trash not recycling
- No big issues of plastic bag contamination in recycling

3. Northfield:

- Transfer station pays vendor per ton and they get money back if the ton is not very contaminated
- People are very compliant, always being watched and guided at the transfer station

4. Ossipee:

- Residents at the transfer station will throw plastic bags into the recycling as soon as someone is not looking, becomes contaminated
- Staff have to pick bags out of the recycling
- Sell the plastics to a vendor (NRRA)
- Get a certain price for plastics, price depends on quality of plastic

5. Everyone:

- When plastic bags are taken out of the recycle stream they are thrown into the trash, there are no special recycling bins for the bags.

Questions Raised:

- Is there money to be made by sending bags to organizations such as Trex (Decking made from recycled film products)??
- Who's going to bale the bags if transfer stations do decide to send them somewhere for recycling?
- Where would transfer stations store the plastic bags?
- How many bales would they need to qualify for sending them to an organization or recycling plant?
 - That would create less room at a transfer station and they would have to add an extra machine for baling.

Facilities in this region that recycle bags: Hannaford's, Lowe's, and Walmart

Additional Questions:

- Why can't transfer stations do what these stores are doing?
- Could they collaborate with these stores?

What are communities currently doing?

- Tufonboro: *Idea* Collection box for bags! (Planet Aid or Planet Earth)
 - They come by and pick it up, take it off the transfer stations hands
- Laconia: 55-gallon drum for plastic bags, people just put trash in there.
 - Idea of putting a special top on a drum.
- Northfield: People are more concerned about recycling bags than getting rid of them.
- Tufonboro: Currently every household brings recyclables in a plastic bag. As residents exit the transfer station they will put the plastic bag in a container that is brought to a landfill.

Discussions of issues and ideas:

- Tax issue: Trash bags (in a box) bought at a store should have a tax put on them. The tax would put money towards environmental groups for cleanup.
- Environmental issue: because it's not biodegradable, wildlife faces problems. Get another stakeholder group involved to make a change. Wildlife activists could have a part in this
- Education Issue

- Towns don't make money after removal and containers to recycle plastic. Keeps it out of the waste stream.
- Removing plastic bags from recycle stream saves \$150/ton about \$250,000/year for all recycling. 22% diversion. Pay by the bag.
- Brad: economics of the thing. Small towns can put in so much effort for but have limited resources. Legislator is the way to go to make a real change. The stores possibly should be taxed when they buy bags in bulk, make them think twice about how many bags are being put out to the public. 4 cents a pound when plastic was sold. Takes it out of the regular trash stream which is \$98/ton
- Garbage bags vs Grocery bags legislator type of thing.
- Quantifying impacts
- Education explaining why it's important.