2017 SWANA Excellence Award Entry
Integrated Solid Waste Management System
Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division
Santa Barbara County Department of Public Works

Contact: Thomas Chiarodit, tchiarodi@cosbpw.org, (805) 882-3624
County of Santa Barbara, California
County Population - 440,000
Population Directly Served - 210,000
Budget - $23,600,000
Cost per Person Directly Served - $112 per year
Cost per Household - est. $330 per year
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division (RRWMD) of the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department provides solid waste and recycling services for the majority of residents and businesses in Santa Barbara County. RRWMD’s responsibilities include oversight of open and closed facilities, trash & recycling collection, hazardous waste solutions, public outreach, and regional leadership. RRWMD operates as a lean, service-oriented business within an enterprise fund, where all activities are routinely evaluated for productivity and cost-effectiveness, with adjustments made accordingly.

The term “Waste Management” implies a passivity that does not reflect the RRWMD culture of being proactive regarding the shifting challenges of the modern waste stream. The organization’s success in providing a full spectrum of Integrated Solid Waste Management services to the community is largely due to the ongoing investment in infrastructure and in people to not just manage solid waste, but to exemplify leadership in doing so.

I. SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Santa Barbara County is located on the California Coast about 100 miles north of Los Angeles. The county is geographically quite diverse and is among the larger ones in the state encompassing 2,274 square miles, with a population estimated at 440,000. The Resource Recovery & Waste Management Division (RRWMD) of the Santa Barbara County Department of Public Works, provides direct and indirect services to a significant portion of the county.

Trash and Recycling Facilities

RRWMD operates one landfill, four recycling & transfer stations, and is responsible for remediating and monitoring closed landfills and improved open spaces. The Tajiguas landfill is the most critically important of these facilities - it is a Class III landfill that has been County-owned and operated since 1967. The parcel is 497 acres large, with a permitted operating footprint of 118 acres. Tajiguas receives about 200,000 tons of waste per year generated by the
County of Santa Barbara and the cities of Buellton, Goleta, Santa Barbara and Solvang. The methane gas captured and converted to energy at the landfill is equivalent to planting over 44,800 acres of trees per year or removing the annual emissions of over 33,800 vehicles.

Tajiguas also serves as an educational platform – last year alone over 1,000 students and community members toured the facility and learned about its operations first hand. Tajiguas was also a pioneer in the use of falconry to keep bird levels down. All disposal and diversion programs are designed to minimize what gets buried in the landfill while maximizing the beneficial re-uses of material as well as providing the safe handling and disposition of materials that should not be buried.

Maintaining the longevity of the landfill is very important as it is unlikely that another landfill will ever be sited in as convenient and centralized of a location. In 2002/2003, RRWMD sought and gained approval for an expansion that increased the permitted capacity to 23.1 million cubic yards, which provided 15 years of additional landfill capacity. This capacity has been augmented by County programs that are now achieving diversion rates of 73%, further preserving valuable landfill airspace.

The next step in this ongoing process is the construction and operation of The Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project (TRRP) - a plant that would combine a material recovery facility with an anaerobic digester that would further enhance diversion while extending the life of the landfill. The TRRP is critical to the SWANA topic areas of “System Overview,” “System Performance and Integration” and “Financial, Employee and Business Management,” which is where the TRRP discussion is housed in this submission.

The EPA includes the County’s “Green Franchise Agreements” and its “Mandatory Commercial Recycling Ordinance” in its online “Managing and Transforming Waste Streams” tool kit. The California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery – CalRecycle - also cites the County of Santa Barbara’s Mandatory Commercial Recycling Ordinance adopted in 2003 as a model for other jurisdictions to learn from, and used the County ordinance as a template for crafting a
similar statewide regulation adopted 9 years later in 2012. RRWMD also won the SWANA Silver Award for Landfill Excellence in 2001, the Gold Excellence Award for Integrated Solid Waste Management System in 2008, and the Gold Excellence Award for Marketing in 2009.

RRWMD has established programs and demonstrated excellence in addressing virtually every aspect of Integrated Solid Waste Management with major responsibilities in the areas of trash & recycling facilities, trash & recycling collection, hazardous waste solutions, regional planning & leadership, and community outreach & education. The organization considers outreach and education as integral to the success of any endeavor – to the extent that if people are not aware of a program, RRWMD has fallen short. In addition to robust outreach, RRWMD is also committed to ongoing measurement and evaluation of all activities, and is well-positioned to employ a sound understanding of current activities in order to better envision future directions.

II. SYSTEM PERFORMANCE AND INTEGRATION

Trash & Recycling Collection

After the passage in 1989 of AB 939, California’s landmark diversion mandate, RRWMD shifted from unregulated territories to geographically defined exclusive franchise agreements for the collection of waste, recyclables, and green waste for over 30,000 residential customers and close to 2,000 commercial and multi-family complexes. The franchise agreements include comprehensive diversion mandates, rate regulation and the establishment of high service standards. RRWMD staff is responsible for managing the agreements, with responsibilities that include a wide range of performance tracking, annual rate calculations, mediation of customer complaints, negotiation of new programs/agreements and the levying of “punitive damages” as needed.

With the advent of franchise agreements, RRWMD began to negotiate and administer recyclables processing agreements on behalf of our regional partners. These agreements direct the flow of 30,000 tons of commingled recyclables per year, and historically have provided funding for programs run by local jurisdictions. RRWMD staff conducts routine waste characterization studies and commodity sales market audits as part of administering the processing agreements, as well as engage in ongoing and targeted public education to maximize the amount of recyclable materials collected while keeping contamination at a minimum.
RRWMD also assumes responsibility for processing and marketing 20,000 tons of curbside green waste per year. After collection the material is ground into mulch at RRWMD facilities prior to being marketed for local beneficial reuse in agriculture, landscaping and gardens. RRWMD has conducted ongoing and special Public Awareness Campaigns to keep the collected green waste as clean as possible, which is essential to the division’s ability to successfully market the product. These links highlight some elements of the RRWMD Green Waste Marketing Campaign that won a SWANA Gold Excellence Award in 2009. (Green Waste Campaign)

Prior to moving to highly-regulated agreements, diversion was measured at 30%. The organics and recycling tonnage in addition to other RRWMD activities have led to a 73% diversion rate for the most recent reporting year - a figure near the very top of all jurisdictions in the state. 2020 diversion is projected at 85% once the TRRP is operational.

In the summer of 2009, RRWMD began working with the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors to seek direction on how to address the reality that 3 of the County’s 5 service zones had contracts that would expire on June 30, 2011. This resulted in the formation of an Interdepartmental Project coordinated by RRWMD that included representatives from the Board of Supervisors, and the offices of the CEO, Public Works, County Counsel and the Auditor Controller.

During a 2 year process RRWMD moved to reconfigure the service zones so that they would be more balanced in their economic appeal, and overhauled the Franchise Agreement terms. The subsequent procurement process resulted in rate reductions between 10-28%, translating into a cost savings to county ratepayers of more than $2,350,000 per year. In addition, waste collection for County facilities was included in the contract specifications, resulting in savings to the County of over $400,000 annually.

The new franchises also featured many new and expanded services including virtually unlimited residential recycling, curbside battery collection, expansion of bulky item/electronics pickups and the distribution of postage pre-paid Sharps containers. The franchises also required the successful bidders to operate truck fleets that ran on “clean” CNG fuel, which in turn required the investments, permitting and construction of CNG fueling stations, which has helped overcome the lack of infrastructure for CNG fueling in the county.
Household Batteries

In the 1990’s RRWMD established and publicized a network of locations where batteries could be dropped off and properly disposed of. In 2011 this program was augmented by curbside collection whereby residents put their unusable batteries in a clear closed bag on top of their curbside recycling containers. Since it began in FY 2011-12, this program has collected over 40,000 lbs. of batteries, which roughly translates into the safe disposal of 800,000 batteries.

RRWMD has conducted public outreach specific to the curbside battery collection program. Mailers have been sent to all 33,000 residential customers in the County and supplementary material has been featured in hauler newsletters. The written material was produced in English and Spanish, with an emphasis and simple and easy to understand graphics.

In 2017 RRWMD took the lead in coordinating a regional program whereby local jurisdictions joined together in a multi-media campaign specific to curbside battery collection. The effort included a 15 second video that runs on public affairs television and is also posted on LessIsMore.org. (Battery Collection)

Sharps

The 2011 collection contracts were also revised to require the haulers to deliver postage pre-paid sharps containers upon request to their customers. For the first 5 years of the program, 1,492 sharps containers have been delivered, which in turn provided a safe disposal method for nearly 400,000 needles of various types. This is in addition to the other collection infrastructure RRWMD has created for Sharps disposal.
Bulky Items

In 2001 RRWMD increased the free bulky item collection for residents from once to twice per year. The main impetus for this change was to reduce the amount of illegal dumping and to make it easier to safely dispose of electronics, which have grown. The haulers process the material so that electronics and other special waste are properly handled. Recyclable and reusable materials are also removed before sending the rest to the landfill.

Hazardous Waste Solutions

RRWMD administers a broad range of Hazardous Waste Disposal services in Santa Barbara County, taking special care to ensure that the services are well-promoted and available for the entire region’s demographic and geographic diversity. RRWMD’s Form 303 to CalRecycle for 2015-16 indicates that out of a base of 97,411 Service Area Households, 37,441 participated in RRWMD Hazardous Waste Collection programs for the year. Some of the participants may have been counted more than once if they were repeat customers, while others were not counted at all if they went to a Transfer Station with several types of material. Even with imperfect numbers, it is clear that the extent to which county residents are aware of and utilize the RRWMD Hazardous Waste Solutions is quite high.

Community Hazardous Waste Collection Center (CHWCC)

The CHWCC is a public/private partnership between the County of Santa Barbara and the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), whose purpose is to divert household hazardous waste from disposal at the landfill by providing the public with a disposal method that is convenient, safe, and environmentally sound. The Center serves a population of approximately 210,000. Community-wide participation is strong.

Since FY 1993-94, the Center has served over 180,000 customers and safely disposed of 6,500 tons of potentially hazardous material. Operational costs averaged $1.70 per lb. over the past 5 years.
Sharps Collection

RRWMD partners with the County Public Health Department (PHD) to provide a used sharps (needles) collection program to the region. In the past 5 years, over 16,000 sharps containers have been distributed leading to the safe handling and disposal of an estimated 4,000,000 plus needles and lancets. Also, sharps disposal flyers/brochures continue to be distributed at medical facilities, pharmacies, solid waste transfer stations, hazardous waste collection facilities, and at public events. This is in addition to the provision of postage pre-paid sharps containers by the franchised waste haulers.

Community Hazardous Waste Collection Events

RRWMD holds collection events in some of the more remote parts of the county to ensure that all parts of the community have easy access to appropriate methods of disposing of hazardous waste. Over the past 5 years these collection events have safely collected and disposed of 120 tons of hazardous waste from 2,497 residents and businesses.

Electronics Recycling

The County applied to be an authorized collector of Covered Electronic Devices when CalRecycle established a statewide electronics recycling program in 2005. As an approved collector, the County receives reimbursement for collecting electronic equipment containing cathode ray tubes (CRTs) and other covered electronic devices for recycling, resulting in no net costs to participating jurisdictions for the services provided. Over the past 5 years, permanent sites have taken in more than 1,600 tons of electronics.

Pharmaceuticals Collection (Operation Medicine Cabinet)

In FY 2009-10, in coordination with the County Sheriff’s Department, the County launched a countywide pharmaceuticals collection program called Operation Medicine Cabinet, the first of its kind in the region. Collection containers have been installed at all 9 Sheriff’s substations, where residents can drop off pharmaceuticals of any kind. Ongoing outreach has made the public aware of the program that is receiving and safely disposing of about 4 tons per year of pharmaceuticals.
RRWMD also played a key role in an effort that led to the passage in 2016 of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Ordinance for the Collection and Disposal of Unwanted Drugs by the County Board of Supervisors. CalRecycle acknowledged this program with an award for Outstanding Legislative Achievement. Stewardship plans are due from industry representatives to County staff by July 21, 2017, at which time staff has ninety (90) days to review and either approve or reject the plans. Operation of the program, including establishment of new collection sites, will begin within three months of a plan’s approval.

**Used Motor Oil Collection**

The County serves as the regional coordinator for a used motor oil collection program funded by CalRecycle for the cities of Buellton, Goleta, and Solvang, and the County unincorporated areas. This program supports 10 certified used oil collection centers that accept used motor oil and oil filters from the public for proper disposal, in addition to other local facilities. Motor oil and oil filter collection containers, as well as funnels for people who change their own motor oil, were also purchased and distributed under this program. RRWMD also conducts media campaigns in English and Spanish to promote the availability of these collection centers. Over the past five years, our certified collection centers, permanent facilities, one-day HHW events and agricultural oil collection program have recovered nearly 150,000 gallons of used motor oil and 41,000 filters.

**III. FINANCIAL, EMPLOYEE AND BUSINESS MANAGEMENT**

RRWMD has operated as an enterprise fund since 1990, meaning that the division is run like a business that generates its own funds for ongoing operation, infrastructure repair and replacement, and enough working capital to absorb rate fluctuations and provide stable rates to customers. Enterprise funds are generally expected to have enough resources to operate for 30-90 days in the event that there are no revenue sources – RRWMD has a policy requiring 180 days of operating reserves and typically exceeds even that high standard. RRWMD ended the most recent Fiscal Year with enough revenue for 291 days of operation. In 2016, S&P upgraded the County’s overall credit rating to Aa3, reflecting the sound financial management throughout the organization.
At its core the Tajiguas Resource Recovery Project (TRRP) is one of the largest, if not the largest, effort of financial management the RRWMD has ever been involved in. In 2002/2003, RRWMD sought and gained approval for an expansion of the Tajiguas landfill that provided 15 years of additional disposal capacity. Very aggressive diversion programs have helped to further extend landfill life, but it is projected that current disposal capacity will be exhausted in 2026, and significant closure and post-closure costs are already being built into the financial forecast models. For many reasons, it is not realistic to anticipate another landfill being sited that is nearly as convenient or cost-effective as the existing one. From a purely economic point of view, it is in the interest of RRWMD and its regional partners to extend the life of Tajiguas as long as possible.

Anticipating this need, RRWMD has acted since 2009 as the lead agency in a far-reaching strategy to plan, fund and site the regional TRRP in collaboration with the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Solvang and Buellton.

The TRRP has been presented over 140 times to a broad range of stakeholders in order to share information and receive input, and the team itself has met on scores of occasions. The TRRP was approved by all of the regional partners at the end of 2016. In addition to overall administration of the TRRP, RRWMD is responsible for securing over $120 million in funding, which makes it by far the largest amount of public funding the county has ever sought.

The TRRP is proposed to be sited at the County’s Tajiguas landfill and will act as one last attempt to pull out and process recyclables and C & D materials before they are buried. Organics like green waste and food scraps will also be removed and directed to an anaerobic digester, where energy will be produced for the power grid and digestate will be composted to create an end product for local agricultural markets. The TRRP will process an estimated 155,000 tons of MSW and 35,000 of recyclables each year, is projected to increase diversion in our community to 85%, will generate green energy and will result in an estimated reduction of 110,000 Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide each year - equivalent to taking more than 22,000 passenger vehicles off of the road annually.

The TRRP provides some telling indicators of the prudence and professionalism of the financial management by RRWMD. The regional partners in the TRRP are entrusting RRWMD with the overall financial management of the project on their behalf, and the County Board of Supervisors has shown tremendous confidence in the department by authorizing RRWMD to finance the TRRP through a bond offering of approximately $120 million.
Employee Relations

The Santa Barbara County Department of Public Works (COSBPW) has made a concerted effort to foster a culture of leadership throughout all of its Divisions, and has committed to providing training in leadership and team building to all of its employees. The training began in 2015 for upper management, and it proved so valuable that the decision was made to expand a version of the training to the entire Public Works Department. The training is conducted by Academy Leadership, an organization founded by “Annapolis and West Point graduates who also have long records of success in both the military and private business sector.”

As of March 2017, almost half of the Public Works and RRWMD employees have completed the leadership training, with the goal of reaching all employees within a year. The purpose of the training is to foster better communication and cooperation, improve job performance and morale, and to strengthen the department’s desire and ability to provide excellent service to the public. RRWMD is committed to investing in physical and human infrastructure, providing workers with the keys to leadership with the same type of preparation that is brought to bear on handling solid waste, properly closing a full cell in the landfill or rallying all available resources in the midst of a disaster.

One indication of the positive culture at COSBPW and RRWMD is that employees routinely are trusted to serve on a state level as executives for organizations such as the County Engineers Association of California (CEAC). County personnel play roles as CEAC’s regional director for the Central Coast and as a national representative for the National Association of County Engineers. RRWMD’s director, Mark Schleich, chairs what is now called the Resource Recovery and Waste Management Committee for CEAC. The similarity of names is came about because Mark convinced CEAC that renaming the committee reflected their focus better than “Solid Waste Management.”

The workplace promotes employee growth and morale through a Public Works Picnic once per year, and a departmental newsletter that highlights employees and their accomplishments. Employees are encouraged to grow by taking advantage of the county’s Employee University which offers in-person and online classes in computer skills (Excel/Word/Power Point), accounting, leadership, labor relations, communication, career development and more.

Employees can request 9/80 or 4/10 workweeks and telecommuting, when appropriate. Employee benefits include negotiated discounts for goods and services plus a 24/7 Life Matters Assistance Program for help on a wide range of life challenges. Employee retention is also a good measure of the workplace environment. RRWMD has very low turnover with an average service time of 18 years.
Safety

The Public Works Department has a dedicated Safety Officer who oversees safety orientation for all new hires, monthly safety training for all non-office positions, monthly safety bulletins and more. The Safety Office keeps abreast of changes in the law and best-available-practices for various job duties. The Safety Officer is certified in Professional Disability Management Designation and is a Designated Employer Representative for the California Department of Transportation. The Safety Officer and her assistant are also certified in CPR, First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens and Automated External Defibrillators. Annual safety awards are presented by management that acknowledge safe work behavior with certificates, gift cards, jackets and more.

IV. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Recycling Resource Guide

In the late 1990’s, RRWMD began producing a regional recycling guide for businesses and residents. Community response has been strong and supportive since the beginning, and the guide has evolved to reflect changes in safe disposal and recycling challenges. The information is also available on the LessIsMore.org web site as a PDF in English and Spanish, where it is accessed thousands of times each year. (Recycling Resource Guide)

Creating and maintaining the guide is quite demanding. For example, the drop-off locations for oil, batteries and paint are constantly in flux. Contact information from the previous publication needs to be confirmed, changed or deleted. Contact information for new locations needs to be added. Given that there are over 60 products being tracked from a “Where to Dispose Of?” perspective, along with many other diversion and recycling related topics, the task is significant.

Currently the Resource Guide is printed in English one year and in Spanish the following year. Copies are distributed to libraries, governmental offices, community groups and also given out during facility tours, at composting workshops, public events such as farmers’ markets and Earth Day, and upon request. RRWMD has distributed over 17,000 English and Spanish “Recycling Resource Guides” over the past 5 years.
LessIsMore.org

RRWMD has maintained a website to disseminate information for the public for about 20 years. It started small in scope and audience, but as the web has grown so has LessIsMore.org. The site includes all of the information in the Recycling Resource Guide plus information on upcoming public events, program information, staff contacts, embedded videos on a range of waste related topics, articles and more.

In 2010, RRWMD re-designed LessIsMore.org so that it would be easier to navigate and in be more user friendly. To say that this re-design worked would be an understatement. The number of visitors doubled in the first full year after the “remodeling” from 30,000 to 60,000. This past year there were almost 170,000 guests who come from within the United States and from countries all over the world.

RRWMD has identified the areas of greatest interest for our community based on our direct interactions with the public and by using Google Analytics to identify the nature of our web traffic inquiries. For FY 2015-16, there were 90 pages/topic areas on LessIsMore.org that received 500 or more page views. There were 20 topics that received more than 4,000 page views, including finding the location of an HHW/ABOP facility; finding the location of a place to take trash or recyclables; how to dispose of e-waste; what to do with Sharps and unwanted medicine; and seeking information on the RRWMD mulch program. We use our analysis to inform our Public Outreach Plan.

Backyard Composting

Since 1992, RRWMD has sold nearly 8,500 backyard composting containers to the public at a discount, which even with a modest usage rate would result in the diversion of hundreds of tons of organics from the landfill every year.

In conjunction with bin sales, RRWMD has created and distributed printed and online composting guides designed to make the process simple and easy to do. RRWMD also conducts free public workshops every spring that are typically attended by over 100 people per year. Staff is also available via e-mail and telephone for further advice.
School Education

The County has several programs to educate students about source reduction, recycling, and composting. RRWMD staff conducts facility tours for close to 1,000 students each year, and is also closely involved in the curriculum design for “Explore Ecology,” a long-time partner and subcontractor for school outreach. Over the past 5 years has provided environmental education for over 30,000 students. RRWMD works with schools and their waste haulers to maximize recycling efforts, provides containers for use inside and outside of the classroom, and has also conducted composting workshops and helped establish food scrap composting programs at several school gardens.

“English as a Second Language,” ESL, is another program that the RRWMD has partnered with for over 10 years, with a target audience of foreign language households that change their own car oil. For the most recent FY 2015/16, there were 1,437 students who received instruction on the proper techniques in changing used motor oil as well as providing resources to find a convenient oil recycling facility. These students spoke 25 different languages and 36% reported that they, or someone in their household, changed their own oil. This is more than twice the state average for households changing their own motor oil, which is why RRWMD has chosen to target this audience.

Facility Tours

RRWMD staff provides solid waste management facility tours to students and other interested members of the community. Tours of the Tajiguas Landfill and the South Coast Recycling and Transfer Station (SCRTS) are promoted on LessIsMore.org, and outreach materials are prepared and distributed at community events and through our educational contractors. Over the past 5 years, staff has conducted tours for almost 5,000 people. During the tours RRWMD staff explains how waste is managed in our community, the technical aspects of the facility, and provides guidance on waste prevention and reduction, recycling, and reuse.

One of the highlights of every tour is meeting the falcons and falconer and seeing them in action. The Tajiguas Landfill was perhaps the first landfill in the nation to use falcons to “persuade” the bird population that they might be wise to take their business elsewhere. Falconry is now commonly used, but when RRWMD hired a falconer in 2002 it was quite a bold step.
Green Business Program

The County RRWMD administers the countywide Green Business Program of Santa Barbara County (GBPSBC) and contracts with a consultant to serve as the Program Director. Under the GBPSBC, businesses are offered positive incentives and assistance to take actions that protect, preserve, and improve the environment above and beyond their compliance with applicable regulations. Upon implementing the necessary number of voluntary measures, businesses will be certified as “green.” Over 60 businesses have been certified over the past 5 years and over 30 agencies and organizations provide financial support and/or in-kind contributions to the program.

Open Space Restoration Areas

In addition to offering solid waste management services, the RRWMD has created the opportunity for the public to enjoy new open spaces and has established restoration areas in many sensitive habitats in our community. These projects have been done in partnership and coordination with many other local, state, and federal agencies, as well as local nonprofit organizations.

The Baron Ranch Trail is a 6-mile loop contained within the property boundaries of the Baron Ranch, adjacent to the Tajiguas Landfill, and is currently open to hikers Saturday-Monday of each week, from dawn to dusk.

The Foothill Open Space Area, once a regional landfill, is now a valuable urban open space resource that houses two nonprofit organizations: HEARTS, a therapeutic riding program for children and adults with disabilities and Growing Solutions Restoration Education Institute (Growing Solutions), a nonprofit nursery specializing in native plant propagation. RRWMD has sponsored over 30 community planting days, and with the help of neighbors and other community members, helped restore the former landfill site with native plants and enhanced the system of on-site trails.

The Carpinteria Bluff Natural Area is an abandoned burn dump that RRWMD cleaned up and re-vegetated in 2005. Used for decades by local residents and nearby oil extraction facilities as a place to burn garbage, this seaside property is now successfully restored and contributes aesthetically and biologically to the bluff open space and trails, providing access to community beaches and offering panoramic views of the Santa Barbara Channel.
CODE ENFORCEMENT

RRWMD employs 2 code enforcement officers to help address issues like litter, illegal dumping and containers that impede the public’s visual and physical right-of-way. The most notable intersect between Community Relations and Code Enforcement occurs in Isla Vista, a college town with a population density that is 600 times greater than that of the rest of the County. This in turn places a great deal of strain on all levels of government.

In the mid-2000’s, RRWMD set out to prioritize the main solid waste related problems in Isla Vista based upon staff observation and discussions with community groups. The major issues were that student housing often did not have sufficient trash service leading to litter and illegal dumping; containers were left in public view; and arsons were high, with dozens of dumpster, furniture and couch fires every year.

RRWMD worked with the franchised trash hauler to minimize most of the “problem” areas, and also augmented the County Code by making outdoor storage of furniture illegal in Isla Vista. RRWMD notified property owners that mandatory service level standards and other Isla Vista solid waste statutes would be strictly enforced. During an intense period of focus by Code Enforcement, over 400 cases of violation were initiated from 2013-15.

The results of implementing the code enforcement strategy are striking. The problem of student housing without enough trash and recycling service became rare, and the problems of “container” pollution were largely abated. Most dramatic of all was the decline of arsons from a peak of 36 in 2012 to a single incident in 2016.

FOOD FORWARD

RRWMD launched an effort in 2015 designed to help households reduce their food waste and to facilitate donations of prepared and unprepared food to those in need. The information is listed in the FOOD FORWARD GUIDE and updated online. If the generation of food waste is not avoidable, people are then directed to the RRWMD backyard composting program, with its easy to follow instructions and discounted bins. RRWMD has taken the lead in establishing a commercial food scraps collection program for the unincorporated area and the City of Goleta. The route currently diverts 3-4 tons per week from landfill burial, and is a strong starting point for compliance with AB 1826, the state’s Mandatory Organics Recycling Law.