Executive Summary
The Boy Scout Camporee was a three day, two night environmental education, training and service event conducted at the 350-acre La Crosse County, Wis., landfill complex. Organizers believe it is the first camping event at an active landfill in the U.S., and possibly, the world. The Camporee was planned and executed jointly by the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department and the Gateway Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, with support from and involvement of other stakeholders.

The landfill complex, in the scenic hills of western Wisconsin, is a natural place to study environmental science, sustainability, recycling and more. Approximately 120 Scouts, plus leaders and facilitators pitched tents, cooked over campfires and engaged in a wide range of service and learning activities. Organizers received strong positive reviews from participants. Based on the Camporee’s success, similar events have occurred at the site and are scheduled for the future.

1.) Statement of Intent
The La Crosse County, Wisconsin, Solid Waste Department is applying for a SWANA Excellence Award in the category of Public Education Excellence. We believe our event, “2013 Boy Scout Camporee at the La Crosse County Landfill” meets or exceeds all the criteria SWANA has established for this award category.

The event was planned specifically to:

- Enhance understanding among youth and adults about the diverse operations, programs, environmental features, and land use opportunities offered by the Solid Waste Department at this 350-acre landfill site, which serves five counties and 27 municipalities in west central Wisconsin and east central Minnesota.
- Change the prevailing perceptions of youth and adults regarding landfills: moving from the traditional concept of a “dump”, to the current and evolving role of the landfill site as a resource recovery facility and a land asset with long term value.
- Encourage reduction, reuse and recycling of solid waste by youth and adults
- Encourage future participation in community cleanup events by building a sense of pride and ownership for the results of these programs.
- Give Scouts the opportunity to earn community service hours by helping improve hiking trails on the landfill site, helping remove invasive plant species on the site, and recovering more than 1000 pounds of recyclable materials left behind by previous property owners.

The format of the Camporee required Scouts, leaders and Solid Waste Department staff to collaboratively set goals for participation and desired learning activities; plan for and solve a range of logistical and programmatic challenges related to having the event at an operating landfill site; query themselves and others to establish a baseline of attitudes and perceptions about the role of landfiling, recycling, waste-to-energy and other technologies in the management of solid waste; and then determine how they would use the Camporee event to advance environmental stewardship in the region. In addition, the Scouts and the County hoped to organize the Camporee in a manner that could be used as a template for other groups to follow in meeting environmental education goals.

Finally, the Camporee was designed to set the stage for other education activities. It has succeeded in doing so, with the recent completion of a Winter Klondike (winter camping at the landfill site); a scrap metal collection project (Scrap-A-Thon) and a more detailed program to assist Scouts in earning credits toward environmental and sustainability-oriented merit badges.

2.) Research / Planning

The Need
Understanding of and support for the diverse La Crosse County solid waste system is critical to its continued financial and operational success.

The publicly-owned, vertically integrated system is overseen by a regional Solid Waste Policy Board; the La Crosse County Board’s standing Public Works and Infrastructure
Committee, which has budgetary and other managerial authority; and ultimately the La Crosse County Board.

In addition to its somewhat complex governance structure, the Department’s programs feature a mix of public-private partnerships, including:

- A 28-megawatt combination generating plant and resource recovery facility (photo, left) owned and operated by Xcel Energy. The plant’s two generating units burn processed municipal solid waste (refuse-derived fuel or RDF) and wood waste from the region
- A landfill gas-to-energy facility that provides fuel to heat the campus of a nearby health care organization
- The 350-acre landfill complex (photo, right) operated by an independent contractor

Based on its financial, environmental and public acceptance key performance indicators, the Solid Waste Department has broad public support for their operations. However, anecdotal data suggests that most users of the system continue to have misperceptions about the County’s integrated program of waste-to-energy, landfilling, landfill-gas-to-energy, recovery/recycling and other activities. By correcting these misperceptions, and actively soliciting the input and involvement of system users, the County hopes to strengthen support for retaining local, publicly-owned solid waste operations. Educating the public about a complex system such as La Crosse requires multiple strategies to reach diverse audiences spread over a broad geographic footprint.

In October 2012, County Solid Waste Department leaders, including Solid Waste Director Henry Koch, PE; Assistant Director and Household Hazardous Materials Program Manager Randy Nedrelo; and Sustainability Specialist Nick Nichols laid out a plan to actively engage regional organizations with interests in the environment, education, sustainability and other topics to help reach more community members and build their understanding of solid waste management in the region. Their efforts were part of a larger initiative to move the Solid Waste Department from a traditional public information and public relations program to a more robust Community Outreach program.

The County leaders identified organizations with an educational component to their mission; a focus on environmental protection; youth participation; and location within the geographic service area of the Solid Waste Department. Initial contact consisted of phone calls and letters by the County inviting more
than two dozen groups to visit the site, and engage in discussion about how the County’s operations could become a hands-on environmental learning workshop.

After touring the site, representatives from the Gateway Council of the Boy Scouts of America quickly saw its potential as a living classroom where Scouts could meet many of their program and merit badge requirements related to science, engineering, recycling, natural resources, and land use planning. In addition, the Camporee format would give Scouts and adults a first-hand look at an operating landfill, and the additional resource recovery activities which occur there. This was critical in helping shift perceptions about the site being a place to “dump” garbage, versus an integrated solid waste management complex that produces materials with market value.

**Materials Used Prior to Implementing the Program**
The County has consistently invested in printed education materials such as brochures and flyers; in-classroom presentations; and motorized tours of the landfill site to communicate with key audiences and educate system users. However, the education and public information program lacked a true hands-on component.

**Target Audiences and How the Program is Appropriate for Each Audience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Educational Components to Meet Audience Needs</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Boy Scouts                       | - Event planning and logistics  
- Collaborative goal setting  
- Hands-on activities  
- Site tours  
- Presentations  
- Service activities          | - Enhance Scouts’ ability to plan and think ahead to ensure event success  
- Engage Scouts with environmental professionals through one-on-one activities and collaboration  
- Lay foundation for future joint projects  
- Provide Scouts with facts about comprehensive solid waste management in their region  
- Build Scouts’ sense of ownership and pride in this publicly-owned system through learning and service activities |
| Scout Leaders and Other Event Volunteers | - Pre-event discussions to determine viability of the plan, and value to participants  
- Event planning and logistics  
- Collaborative goal setting  
- Hands-on activities  
- Site tours  
- Presentations  
- Service activities  
- Followup discussions and feedback | - Provide leaders and others with first-hand knowledge of the logistics at an operating landfill  
- Lay foundation for future joint projects  
- Provide leaders and others with facts about comprehensive solid waste management in their region  
- Build leaders and others’ sense of ownership and pride in this publicly-owned system through learning and service activities |
| Parents of Scouts                | - Informational materials sent to parents  
- Feedback from Scouts after the Camporee | - Provide parents with facts about comprehensive solid waste management  
- Allay concerns about Scouts’ safety and comfort during the Camporee  
- Build sense of ownership and pride in this publicly-owned system |
| Media / General public           | - Print and broadcast media coverage throughout the region                                                | - Enhance the public’s understanding of the landfill site as a publicly-owned asset, with many actual and potential uses |
Program Goals and Strategies

During the period November 2012 and April 2013, more than a dozen meetings were held with Council leaders, troop leaders, Scouts and County staff to solidify goals, identify strategies and tactics to meet the goals, and determine a feedback mechanism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Goals</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand existing perceptions of key audiences</td>
<td>Elicit verbal and written feedback from target audiences prior to event</td>
<td>- Discussions, anecdotal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change inaccurate perceptions</td>
<td>Provide an experience that demonstrated the actual conditions at the site.</td>
<td>- Tours with executive committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County staff gave tour to planning group and used them as ambassadors to other Scout leaders</td>
<td>- One-on-one discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide an accurate and complete depiction of the Department’s programs and</td>
<td>Develop a comprehensive agenda of activities, presentations, tours, etc. to build accurate,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activities</td>
<td>first-hand knowledge among participants</td>
<td>- Hiked to operating and non-operating areas of the site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Viewed a demonstration of safe household hazardous materials handling at the on-site HHM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>facility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Toured the award-winning, on-site landfill gas-to-energy infrastructure which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>captures landfill-generated methane and conveys the gas via pipeline to a nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>healthcare facility where it is converted to fuel for heat and power supply.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a sense of pride and ownership among key audiences for the programs,</td>
<td>Incorporate in the Camporee agenda one or more activities that would add value to the site,</td>
<td>- Constructed 200 feet of new hiking trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and benefits derived by users of the system</td>
<td>its operations or its stakeholders.</td>
<td>- Recovered more than 1000 pounds of recyclable metal and refuse left by previous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>property owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Removed invasive plants from two acres of land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement an event feedback mechanism</td>
<td>Continued relationship</td>
<td>To be implemented via traditional paper survey and electronically for future events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a “road map” for planning and execution of future, similar on-site</td>
<td>- Document planning, execution and feedback details.</td>
<td>- Post event meetings to share learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>events</td>
<td>- Provide a synopsis for use by the County when staff is conducting outreach to other groups</td>
<td>- Presentations by County staff and Boy Scout council leaders promoting the event’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Anticipated Obstacles and Opportunities for Meeting Goals**

The key obstacle to a successful event was overcoming concerns by Scouts, leaders and others regarding the site itself, including:

- Potential odors
- Potential contact with waste materials
- Unpleasant aesthetics
- Lack of facilities/space for recreational activities
- Uncomfortable weather conditions that could make the site muddy or inaccessible

In addition, organizers had to obtain approval from County corporation counsel to conduct the event; verify insurance coverage and waivers for participants; and obtain a burn permit to allow for campfires and cooking on the site.

### 3. Implementation/Execution

#### Timeline of events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County invites Scouts and other groups to visit site</td>
<td>Gateway Area Council leaders express interest in an on-site event</td>
<td>Brainstorming meetings held with County staff, Gateway Council leaders and Troop leaders</td>
<td>Approvals obtained from all required County authorities</td>
<td>Bi-weekly planning meetings</td>
<td>Bi-weekly planning meetings</td>
<td>Bi-weekly planning meetings</td>
<td>Camporee held May 3-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Problem-solving and decision-making activities

Planning and conducting a Camporee for more than 120 people at an active landfill site in Wisconsin in early May poses a unique set of challenges. Together, the Scouts, County staff, Council and Troop leaders worked to address the following:

- Determining where on the landfill site to set up tents and support areas
- Providing toilet facilities
- Securing a clean water source for cooking, cleanup and other purposes
- Securing a burn permit for campfires
- Planning for uncomfortable weather conditions
Organizers used a collaborative decision-making approach over the course of nearly four months to ensure activities aligned with merit badge requirements, and the weekend included a good mix of education, service and recreational activities for the age group.

**Budget (including any funding leverage)**
Within its Community Outreach program, the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department has a budget of roughly $5000 designated to support education activities. In a typical year, this budget has been used for printed materials, off-site presentations and other passive learning activities.

As part of its broader effort to transition to an experience-based Community Outreach program, the County opted to use some funds from its education budget to provide portable toilets, miscellaneous supplies, and food for its staff at the Camporee. In addition, the County provided staff time and expertise to work with Boy Scout leaders during the four month planning period.

The Boy Scouts charged a $5 participation fee to offset costs for food, other supplies and accommodations at the site.

**Partnerships and collaborations with other organizations**
In addition to La Crosse County Solid Waste Department and the Gateway Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the event involved collaboration with:

- More than a dozen individual Boy Scout troops and leaders, who provided local input, ideas and funding
- Corporation Counsel/Department of Administration of La Crosse County, who provided review of event logistics and approval of insurance and liability coverage
- Gundersen Health System, which provided a speaker (Tom Thompson, Sustainability Coordinator)
- Landfill contractor/operator St. Joseph Construction Co., which helped install temporary signage and conducted a site safety review.

**Discuss how well the elements described in the planning phase were accomplished.**
The Camporee was deemed a success by both the Scouts and the County. Feedback from participants included unaided recall of key themes, such as environmental responsibility, perception of the landfill site as a multi-faceted community asset, understanding of the range and diversity of solid waste services offered at the site, and comprehension of landfill-gas-to energy programs.

In addition, the relationships built between Boy Scout leaders and County staff generated new opportunities for collaboration.
La Crosse County Sustainability Coordinator, Nick Nichols and Household Hazardous Materials Manager Randy Nedrelo were invited to give presentations at regional, day-long sustainability event.

The County’s Solid Waste Director, Henry Koch, PE, was invited to serve on the Boy Scouts local executive board.

The Boy Scouts conducted a scrap metal collection event and a winter camp-out (a Klondike) at the landfill site. A second scrap metal collection is slated for June 2014.

Media coverage of the event led to inquiries by two local colleges regarding use of the site for environmental education purposes.

Describe how your program is unique or an improvement over a similar program.
Neither the Boy Scout Council leaders nor County Waste Department staff have identified any other event of this type in the U.S.

4.) Results/Evaluation

How the target audience(s) participated in, or reacted to, the program

Success Measures
Success of the Camporee was measured through anecdotal feedback and documented requests by the Scouts or other groups to replicate the event. No formal feedback tool was implemented. However, organizers agree that all participants at future events will be offered an online or hard copy survey to ensure adequate, representative feedback.

Testimonial 1: Lisa Schock, Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop 64, Arcadia, Wis.

“I believe the Scouts gained a TON of landfill knowledge. They all had a fun time and learned a thing or two about the various processes that transpire at the landfill. Each of them came away with a smile on their face and enjoyed giving back a little time and energy making the trail. I remember that I pictured something quite different.

“And the entire place to me was pretty picturesque. Even the area where the "garbage" was - it still looked neat. The place had unique little spots...that maintained and produced
efficient, clean energy which supports a large area. I don't think I was hesitant about staying there, but I did think it was a little funny.

“They truly experienced a completely different Camporee. As to naysayers - I say try it you just might like it.”

**Testimonial 2: Paul Schaffner, Scoutmaster, Troop 110, Fountain City, Wis.**

“...New and different is always good. The campout was unexpectedly educational for me. When I was a kid, our community had a dump. The La Crosse County Landfill Camporee was eye-opening and refreshing. Who would have thought a landfill would be refreshing? The management has taken an approach of civic and environmental duty. They’re operating the landfill like a business while giving care to manage the waste correctly. Everyone we met cared about their job and was excited to tell Scouts about what they did.

“The Scouts from Troop 110 had never worked on a wooded trail before. The trail-making activity was educational as well. We learned about tools like Mattock, Macleod, and the Grub Hoe which none of us had used before. I’d be up for doing the Camporee there again and continuing the trail work.”

**Testimonial 3: John Robison, Assistant Scoutmaster, Troop 68, Onalaska, Wis.**

"The kids enjoyed every ounce [of the Camporee] from the service project to the educational areas to the games.

"I was expecting it to be really dirty and figured that we would have to clean up the area before we could camp there. It was very educational for me. I grew up in central Iowa where they would just bury the garbage in the ground and push dirt over the top of it. Being able to actually see a proper landfill and understand how it works was a great educational experience."
Testimonial 4: Marshall N., Boy Scout, Troop 64, Arcadia, Wis.:

“It was great to build a trail to help in the community. Although it was a little muddy, all the activities were fun and interesting. I thought it would smell bad, but there was no smell other than the woods. (I liked learning about) how the landfill pipes the gases from the garbage to Gundersen Health Care...Nowhere is quite like the LaCrosse landfill.....there was no smell, we saw little trash, and learned a lot.”

The unprompted phrases in these testimonials reveal the primary goal of “shifting perceptions” among participants regarding solid waste management in the La Crosse region was broadly achieved.

Program Improvements
The La Crosse County Solid Waste Dept. and the Gateway Council point to several improvements that will be made to the program when the next Camporee is held (tentative 2015).

- Use testimonials, photos and in-person presentations to demonstrate to other troops the landfill is a beautiful, safe, and educational environment for Boy Scout camping. Many Scouts came out to the Camporee and had a fantastic time but there were also some Troops that were put off by the idea of camping at an active landfill site.
- Implement a brief pre-Camporee survey to establish baseline perceptions regarding landfills and related solid waste issues. A post-Camporee survey will be designed to document changes in understanding, beliefs and attitudes about the landfill, La Crosse County’s solid waste program and related issues.

On a broader note, County staff learned to let the Council leaders, Troopmasters and Scouts themselves drive the planning and implementation of future events, with landfill experts serving as a resource and offering technical, site-related support. The landfill staff has the background, knowledge and expertise to supplement the groups’ educational approach. (Trust the Scouts themselves to know when they’re ready to rest! Photo, above)
Program Replication
Creating a “how-to-camp-at-the-landfill-site” template for other Troops and other organizations to follow was a Camporee planning goal. That goal has been partially met. An overnight “Winter Klondike” camping outing was held at the landfill site during December 2013. Although smaller in scale and complexity, the Boy Scout troops that participated in the Klondike relied heavily on lessons learned and shared by those who planned and participated in the May 2013 Camporee.

Supporting Information
On subsequent pages are additional photos the La Crosse County Landfill Boy Scout Camporee, and additional materials used to promote the event and subsequent events at the site.
GATEWAY AREA COUNCIL & La CROSSE COUNTY LANDFILL presents...

Spring Camporee
Dump your inhibitions and Landfill up on FUN

Get up close and personal with the landfill

Blaze Trails Through the Surrounding Forest

Learn About the Powering of Surrounding Buildings with Fumes from the Landfill

Much More Including Classic Camporee Traditions

$5 Per Scout

Less than a mile from the heart of La Crosse's Valley View Mall Area!

May 3-5, 2013
Dump your inhibitions and landfill up on fun!

Friday, May 3rd:

Check-In: 5:00pm-8:00pm
SPL Meeting: 9:00pm
Leaders Meeting: 9:30pm

La Crosse County Landfill Address:
6500 State Road 16
La Crosse, WI 54601

Saturday, May 4th:

Programming: 8:00am-4:30 pm
Focus will be on environmental themes including the Landfill Gas to Energy project with Gunderson Lutheran, household hazardous material, trail blazing and invasive species service projects, fun with the giant landfill scale, and learn about everything landfill from the magnificent vista overlooking La Crosse’s Valley View Mall. You can learn why we recycle and the importance of conserving our resources.

Lunch: 12:00pm-1:00pm

Dinner: Break for Dinner starts at 4:30pm

Council-Wide Fire Ceremony to follow towards dark

Sunday, May 5th:

Religious Service: 9:00am

Depart: 10:00am

Things To Know!

Provide all your own food for lunch and dinner and anything in between

Bring Garden Rake, shovel, and gloves (optional)

Rain or shine, Be Prepared!

No Open Fires, must cook with enclosed charcoal or gas (there will be a fire at closing fire ceremony)

OA Call-out, Schedule your elections prior to this event

Webelos Recognition at Camp Fire

Water available on site but not in camping area
Camp Set-up at La Crosse County Landfill

Staying out of the rain with New Tarp/Tent party including string cheese, peanuts, and Cheese cake.

GAC Spring Camporee
May 3-5, 2013

Seven Stupendous Troop 64 Scouts

Breakfast Cookers

Flag Line-up

Sam teaching stove ignition

Scouts had two tarps – a kitchen and a dining room

Augie Horn Blower

Scouts heard 4 presentations ALL about the Landfill’s environmental conservation projects.
Teamwork and Determination was used with ALL activities: Atlatls, slingshot, bridge building, toxic waste disposal, scale weight estimation, orienteering, map & compass, and chariot knot making.

Todd and Coltin playing in the dump.
Scouts did a conservation service project too – NICE Good Turn!

Ribs and Cheesy Potatoes

Troop 64 even had a skit as well as the SE Leaders Kazoo Band

S’more Bar making and EATING!!!

Despite the RAINY Cold weather start the 2013 Spring Camporee warmed up to a HUGE success!!!!!

Marshall, Henry, and Coltin along with Sam, Brady, CJ, and Tony (missing from photo) and leaders Jeff, Lisa, and Todd braved the Council sponsored Spring Camporee 2013 at the La Crosse County Landfill.

Group HUG️

We all fall down.
Gateway Area Council & La Crosse County Landfill present Spring Camporee

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

FRI DAY, May 3, 2013

4:00 pm - 9:00 p.m.  Troop Arrival, Registration, Set-up
9:00 p.m.           Scout master & SPL Meeting
11:00 p.m.          Lights Out

SATURDAY, May 4, 2013

6:00 a.m.            Breakfast & Cleanup
7:00 - 7:30 a.m.     Cub units arrive & register (including Webelos "day only")
7:45 a.m.            Camporee Opening Ceremony
8:00 a.m.            Morning Activities Period
12:00 p.m.           Lunch & Cleanup
1:00 p.m.            Afternoon Activities Period
5:00 p.m.            Dinner & Cleanup
9:00 p.m.            Campfire
10:00 p.m.           Scout master & SPL Meeting
10:00 p.m.           Star gazing at the Peak (Astronomy Club)
11:00 p.m.           Lights Out

SUNDAY, May 5, 2013

7:00 a.m.            Reveille, Breakfast, & Cleanup
9:00 a.m.            Scout’s Own Service
9:30 a.m.            Closing Ceremony
10:00 a.m.           Pack Up & Departure