

RDKB - RDCK COMPOSTING PARADIGM PROJECT

Zero organics to landfill by 2010

APPENDIX B:

SUMMARY REPORT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

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SUMMARY REPORT OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

This report brings together highlights of community and industry input into the overall project development plan over the past fifteen months, from September 2003 to December 2004. The strategies used to encourage feedback included:

- Letter to introduce project to economic development, educational and composting sectors to solicit partnerships (Sept 03)
- Selkirk Community College Workshop on Public Acceptance Issues for Organics Recycling (Castlegar) – YR 2 Integrated Environmental Planning Class (Oct 03)
- Multi-stakeholder meeting (Castlegar) Oct 03
- E-mail and letter updates to partners and project team
- Website development and maintenance, establishing links with RDKB and RDCK sites.
- Information package mail out to RDKB and RDCK Municipal Councils, Regional Boards, and public advisory committees (60 packages)
- Hauler survey development and interviews
- Poster to promote community open houses and focus groups
- Open House Primer (4 page newsletter – also posted on website)
- Five Open Houses with displays in Grand Forks, Trail, Castlegar, Nelson and Creston (Oct 04)
- Marketing Survey
- Focus Groups with workbook
- Business interviews (grocery store, hotel/pub, rancher) with Operations Survey
- TV interview – Laurie and Raymond with Shaw Cable (Trail) Oct 04
- Radio interview – Laurie with Nelson Co-op Radio (from Creston) Oct 04
- Press releases

Highlights are presented for the marketing survey, and the focus group sessions combined with individual interviews and communications.

Marketing Survey Highlights

A total of 33 surveys were completed by attendees at Open Houses. The most significant findings were as follows:

- 57% are currently backyard composting.
- 60% would like organics pickup service, of these 63% would like weekly pickup, 32% bi-monthly
- 41% didn't want to pay anything for this service, 31% would pay between \$21-40/yr
- 67% prefer bi-weekly non-organics collection
- 52% are willing to drop off organics – 71% indicated site should be less than 10 km away.

- 61% are not currently buying commercial compost or other amendment. 69% of those that do, buy between 11- 200 kg per year.
- 61% use finished compost for ornamentals and vegetable gardens, 33% for hanging baskets and potted plants.
- 100% would buy a locally produced product based on similar or superior quality
- 95% would buy local within a 10% price range.
- 50/50 split on purchasing product with mill by-product, but 86% would buy if safety was proven. Pretty much any logo or information would do the trick, no strong preferences.
- Results are similar for municipal bio-solids – 61% would buy, 83% if safety proven. No clear endorsement preference.
- 88% favour including long-term waste management costs in current charges.
- 76% support increase in taxes to pay for composting facility.
- 85% support landfill ban on organic waste.

These results compare favourably with comments made during focus group sessions and recorded in workbooks.

2. Focus Group sessions and Workbooks

Five Open Houses and Focus Group sessions were held in Grand Forks, Trail, Castlegar, Nelson and Creston. The total number of community representatives consulted was 68. This number includes a broad cross-section of stakeholders including grocery store and hotel operators, hospital staff, haulers, elected officials, ranchers, economic development specialists, residents, media, commercial recycling and composting operators and local government administrative staff.

Separate reports for each of these focus group sessions have been prepared and are posted on the website. What follows is a summary of comments from all participants and establishes common themes and points of consensus.

2.1 Common themes and consensus points

The following points were repeated in every community and seemed to cut across sectors as being reasonable methods of developing a full service organics recovery program.

1. Backyard composting should be encouraged and continuous education provided.
2. Neighbourhood depots are considered viable options for garbage, recycling and organics with additional feature of being easy to “animal-proof”.
3. Phase in service levels based on early successes and financial feasibility; use pilot projects.
4. Each community has unique operational considerations and opportunities - consult with staff on what is feasible;
5. Strong support for regional policies (bans), education, collection standards and keeping organics out of the landfill (Zero tolerance). Fines are popular solution for non-compliance.

6. Early, aggressive and continuous education is needed; personal responsibility and environmental stewardship are key messages for a Zero Waste culture.
7. Availability of additional time, money and space was cited as concern by some residents and businesses.
8. No clear preference on frequency levels of service; but encouragement received to be creative with collection options. Co-collection programs were a popular solution in larger centres or where new programs are being introduced anyway. Bi-weekly garbage seems acceptable when alternatives are working.
9. Explore feasibility of improving recycling options as part of this project.
10. Public ownership of facility with private operation was a popular suggestion.
11. Acknowledgement of integrated environmental and economic goals eg. Zero organics to landfill and water quality protection; reduced landfill costs and new economic opportunities.
Note: Non-landfill pollution issues also surfaced i.e. sewage disposal in Columbia River in Castlegar.
12. Self-haul garbage option for curbside customers was not popular; user-pay is popular.
13. Build on what other communities are doing.
14. Get going!!

2.2 Summary of Risks and Recommendations by project component

The following table presents points made concerning:

- service levels and collection options
- business structure
- development plan and cost recovery options
- education and policy

Since the focus group sessions were conducted using a consensus model and creativity was encouraged, the recommendations presented here are a reliable source for informing program design. Overall, participants were extremely supportive of the project concept though the implementation details were harder to agree on. Some excellent advice was provided for the development plan and for supporting education and policy.

See Table 1 for a summary of risks and recommendations to be considered.

Table1 - Summary of Risks and Recommendations

RISKS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>SERVICE LEVEL/COLLECTION OPTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time, storage space, money – “no more new initiatives” • Bears • Inequality of service levels between rural and urban areas • How to deal with seasonal residents? • Weight of organics containers? • Will a special vehicle be needed? • Low participation rates for recycling may be a bad omen. • Compost collection and production in outlying areas – don’t want to exclude but don’t want excessive costs or poor quality control that gives central product a bad name. • Fluctuations for commercial enterprises in volumes, service levels, operations. • Lots of animal carcasses in some parts of the region (i.e. Creston Valley – more than 100/yr ostriches, horses, cattle, emus plus bears and roadkill) • Role of entrepreneurs offering private collection services for recycling and organics 	<p>Residential (Urban)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine new service with curbside pickup of other recyclables or an attended recycling depot. • Use trucks with divided compartments to collect recyclables and compost. Could alternate: organics/recycling one week, garbage next week. • Bi-weekly organics with monthly garbage might work. Seasonal variations? • Bi-weekly organics with monthly yard waste and recycling collection. • Use clear garbage bags for easy enforcement (okay for commercial) • Provide in-kitchen compost catchers. • Won’t need liner for garbage can. Clear liner for compost cart? <p>Rural</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depots make sense in some cases but need to be staffed and need convenient hours including Sundays. • Find a community-based solution for areas where transportation to central facility doesn’t make sense. • Shredding and compacting organics in rural locations and truck to central facility. <p>Commercial/All</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make service convenient, easy, and cheap. • New housing developments should have a central organics tank – saves on trucking costs. Add neighbourhood organic tanks –one every 5 blocks – shouldn’t be more than a 2-3 minute walk. • \$\$ incentive will make it easier to free up staff time, separate organics. • Grocery stores can store organics in “septic tanks”. • Set up a separate bin for fruit and veggies as a starting point. • Provide a cost incentive of 20% or more to compost vs landfill.
<p>OWNERSHIP/OPERATION</p>	

RISKS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not really a business opportunity. • Needs industry/government subsidy. • Only a public facility could run without Celgar material. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referendum on funding compost facility? • Government could build and lease to private operator, could be lease to own, or government could contract out operation. • Could pay a diversion credit. • Public ownership will protect the public from sudden increases in tipping fees or disruption in service due to bankruptcy. • Private operation preferred. RFP for private operators – compare \$\$ with public operations.
<p>COST RECOVERY/DEVELOPMENT PLAN</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and role of municipalities • Losing participation because carts are hard to clean. • Political will to follow through on study recommendations. • Rodents • Impacts on landfill revenues if organics removed • What if Celgar opts out or closes? • Celgar material currently considered “industrial waste” by province – Celgar is trying to get this classification changed. If Celgar’s waste is re-classified, they will be able to market it themselves and the material may never be available for this project. • Factoring in compost as a final cover use is not economical since Celgar organics are free for this use at present – why spend money to process at plant? • Service reliability and predictability of costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start project with readily available materials (e.g. Celgar, business food waste), and then add smaller feedstock sources; Generate \$ to fund expansion. • Charge for picking up organics, but charge more for garbage pickup. • Charge fees for whatever is collected. • Composting surcharge on landfilling fees. • “Credit” for what is collected towards end product purchase. • Municipal bonds. • Avoided landfill costs (closure etc) can be used to calculate project finances. • Use cash incentives to encourage conservation mentality. • Markets for compost include: golf courses, farms, organic growers. • Calculate savings by extending landfill life. • Tipping fees for private haulers bringing material to central facility. • May be landfill savings from shorter opening hours, reduced cover costs, reduced investment today for closure and costs of new landfill if organics removed. At present we are not putting aside \$\$ for future landfill closure costs. • Tipping fees could be different for Celgar and commercial customers versus residents i.e. residents pay per containers and the collector pays tipping fee at the compost facility. • Maximize income from collection fees, tipping fees, and compost sales, and then cover rest with taxes. • Start residential programs early to get taxpayer input, and justify public \$. • Communities can come on line as they are ready.

RISKS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contamination affects grade of compost and liability for businesses that use compost • Don't think taxes will go down – will probably go up. Collection costs will increase in municipalities but landfill costs won't decrease. • Education will not reach at least 10% of the people. • Will workers be removing plastic bags at compost plant? Will people line kitchen catchers with plastic bags? • People will expect good quality product from their sorting efforts – can we meet this expectation? • Product quality may have to be traded off versus % recovered from community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creston Valley needs a separate solution – not part of the “Celgar solution”; Farmers could operate – already have equipment; waive tipping fees – allows for instant cooperation. • Marketing of all compost products only if all material processed through central plant for quality control; • Backyard composting is part of the solution – low-cost option is the way to go. • Produce quality suitable for farmers. • Produce more than one grade of compost. • Make sure finished compost has clear labeling: recommended uses. • Hold contest to name finished compost (suggestions from Creston - “Kootenay Old Gold” • RD needs to amend bylaws to make composting less costly than landfilling. • Leave room for small entrepreneurs. • Sell program to people so they will participate – prove it works, then penalties won't be needed. • Demonstrate value of finished compost, that commercial system is working and now residential can work. Make compost available for free or low-cost. • Make garbage pickup less convenient and more expensive than recycling pickup. Garbage self-haul over recycling/compost self-haul. • User Pay/Tag a bag system most fair – needs to be universal • Talk to municipal staff about feasibility of proposed ideas. • Keep costs about the same as present garbage costs. • Consider community based or block by block composting, not just central facility. • RDCK's current SWMP doesn't call for central composting – would have to be amended. • Private haulers and their customers may need help with initial capital costs for collection systems (commercial and residential) • Consider related profit-centres i.e. worm farms.
<p>SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND POLICY</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haulers don't want to be front-line enforcer in case customers cancel 	<p>Specific topics for businesses and residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the benefits of dividing up garbage?

RISKS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People might rebel if we are too heavy-handed (eg. Illegal dumping). • Hard to enforce ban. • Loopholes – “free” transfer stations, roadside composting – plastic bag litter. • Monthly garbage service may result in illegal dumping (noted this is related to distance to final disposal facility). • Inconsistency between education pre-organics collection, transition period, and post-organic collection • Confusion over what is accepted and what isn’t accepted (i.e. diapers?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is included in program? • How do we minimize animals getting into garbage or organics containers? • Line kitchen catchers with biodegradable liners i.e. newspapers, paper bags. • Composting vs disposal of noxious weeds at landfill, at home. • Air quality concerns related to backyard burning and interface burning of organic materials; promotion of composting alternatives for “firesmart” debris and yard prunings. • Health and safety concerns for illegal dumping • Proper care and disposal of household garbage. • Backyard composting –“Bear Proof” your composter • Composting in confined spaces • True costs of landfilling over the next 50 plus years. • General Zero Waste education: Closed Loop, systems thinking <p>Specific topics for local government</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed implementation plan – bite size chunks; want full-cost analysis. • Project orientation for existing and newly elected officials • Talk about how costs would be shared by municipalities. Nova Scotia video helps to explain possible facility – may want to use in presentation; keep presentation to 1.5 hours. • Present all options and how they might work. • Present examples of other municipalities and regional districts that have worked together on recycling and/or composting projects. <p>Strategies and projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webcam or static photo displays of landfill at transfer stations and grocery stores. • Share costs of education programs between two regions. • Join forces with FireSmart program for education and alternatives to burning; firesmart debris collection at transfer stations or mobile chipper. • Can have a voluntary ban on disposal of organics – focus on education not enforcement – why are organics in the landfill a problem? Community program needed. Don’t be too heavy-handed. • Clear bags make enforcement easy. • Door to door education about what is compostable – could be a summer student

RISKS	RECOMMENDATIONS
	<p>project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college courses “Composting Techniques for Small Communities” • Standardize tipping fees between landfills across regional district boundaries • Will need aggressive ramp-up education program in years leading up to collection – don’t wait until program starts. • Get hauler cooperation in following regional rules for collecting organics in rural areas. Can adopt price incentives and rules as part of service agreement. Use “oops” note when agreement isn’t followed. Empower operators to enforce bans – provide incentives through reduced disposal costs for clean loads. • Distribute Backyard Composters and support with continuous education. Focus on how and why. • Get schools involved eg. Worm farm projects and science curriculum. • Find a way for people without gardens to get compost to people with gardens. • Universal enforcement of rules especially at landfills • Have “zero waste coaches” work with large generators (hospitals, schools) to set up systems (and pick somebody with a pleasant personality). • Treat everyone equally with respect to service levels (frequency) and costs (i.e. Area C and Grand Forks). • Use radio, tv and information videos • Don’t forget about the homeless and financially challenged – not all food “waste” should be composted. Donate to shelters and food banks (Zero Hunger) • Pilot project with large generators too – pick early adopters who will champion project (i.e. Best Western and Ferraro Foods in Trail are candidates)

For copies of documents referred to in this report, please visit the project webpage accessible through either the RDKB or the RDCK websites.