

Hub and Spoke: Rural Recycling

Background

Developing a successful rural recycling program is a challenge. When state legislatures wrote waste reduction and recycling mandates into law and placed responsibility with local governments, few realized the special circumstances that must be considered in rural areas. In May of 2010 DEQ brought community representatives together to find solutions to Montana's rural recycling challenges. This workshop built more support for local and regional approaches to overcoming recycling barriers.

The low population in rural areas affects recycling due to the low volume of recyclable materials generated. Small communities do not generate enough recyclables to lure large recyclers to town and may not even produce enough to financially support a full scale recycling program. This is where the DEQ has promoted the Hub and Spoke concept as a method for smaller communities to join together and share costs and revenues. Working together, rural communities can overcome these barriers

Existing Programs in MT

The hub and spoke structure is already in place in some rural areas of Montana, such as in the Eureka-Kalispell hub. The smaller community of Eureka started out relying on volunteers to take the collected recyclables to Kalispell, where Valley Recycling agreed to be the 'hub'. Valley Recycling does the marketing and both communities benefit from higher revenues justified by the larger volumes. Various towns, cities, and areas in Montana have arranged recycling programs by developing partnerships with larger communities or recycling companies. The town of Conrad collects aluminum cans and then schools and individuals

haul the collection to Great Falls. The town of Lincoln recycles and has three collection sites for aluminum, tin, cardboard, glass, plastic #1 and #2, paper, and newspaper. Lincoln utilizes Headwater's Cooperative recycling services. These systems are great examples of how rural areas can utilize bigger resources to accomplish recycling goals.



Benefits of Partnering

- Increased volumes of recyclables, which opens marketing opportunities.
- Potential for cooperative marketing, which can substantially increase revenues.
- Conserved landfill capacity and avoided tipping fees.
- Shared costs for equipment, personnel, processing, transportation, marketing and facility capital and operating costs.
- Increased revenue potential.

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Moving Forward

DEQ's "Recycling Can Work in Montana" Action Planning Workshop helped individuals examine how rural recycling could be expanded in Montana. The following is a list composed of some of the suggestions made by the workshop's members:

- Develop a community-supported recycling organization to start things rolling.
- Focus on succeeding at recycling one recyclable commodity, such as aluminum cans or newspaper, at a time.
- Improve the recycling programs that are already established (e.g. get 100% of the cardboard recycled).
- Implement recycling at transfer stations and landfills to make it convenient for residents.
- Encourage small businesses and local governments to purchase recycled materials
- Step up recycling education at all levels, including reuse and source reduction.
- Pool resources among rural communities.



The creation of a successful and practical plan for rural recycling takes time and effort but Montana is leaping forward and moving closer to achieving statewide recycling goals. Get involved in your community and see what recycling options are available or speak to members of your community to see if they would be interested in initiating a plan for your area. Get the word out and educate yourself about the options rural areas have for recycling and don't forget to **REDUCE, REUSE, & RECYCLE!**



**MONTANA HAS GREAT POTENTIAL
TO CREATE SUCCESSFUL
CHANNELS AND METHODS FOR
RECYCLING IN RURAL AREAS.**



Pollution Prevention Bureau
Waste Reduction and Recycling Program
P.O. Box 200901
1100 Last Chance Gulch
Helena, MT 59620-0901
recycle@mt.gov

In photos: Recycling in Eureka, MT. The recycled materials included paper, cans, plastic, aluminum cans, and magazines. The recyclables are shown being prepared to be transported to Kalispell to have them recycled.