

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019



**RECYCLING AND  
MATERIALS  
MANAGEMENT**  
OF TOMPKINS COUNTY  
*recycletopkins.org*  
(607) 273-6632



**RECYCLING AND  
MATERIALS  
MANAGEMENT  
OF TOMPKINS COUNTY**

**Table of Contents**

Page (s):	
1-2	Director's Report
3-14	Program Highlights <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Disposal</li><li>- Recycling</li><li>- Recycling Collection</li><li>- Waste Reduction</li><li>- Old Landfills</li><li>- Household Hazardous Waste</li><li>- Administration</li></ul>
15	Department Organization
16	Financial Information

The Mission of the Tompkins County Department of Recycling and Materials Management (TCRMM) is to develop and implement a sustainable materials management strategy for Tompkins County consistent with the New York State solid waste management hierarchy that is environmentally sound, cost-effective, socially responsible and safe. This is accomplished through coordinated administrative, operational, and educational programs that maximize diversion with the 4R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rebuy) as a focal point.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2019 was a fiscally challenging year for the Tompkins County Department of Recycling and Materials Management, with recycling revenues declining 60% over the already reduced values of 2018. We are not alone—curbside recycling collection programs in many locations throughout the United States have been eliminated and processing costs at Material Recovery Facilities have doubled. In Tompkins County, recycling operations continue due to the contractually stable costs with our partner, Casella Recycling, but the loss of significant recycling revenues directly impacted our enterprise-funded budget in 2019.

One of the main factors contributing to low market values is contamination in the recycling stream. To address this, the Department worked with Casella Recycling to develop an enforcement plan to reduce contamination at the curb for implementation in 2020. The plan is a continuation of the “Recycle Right” education effort but also includes warning stickers for curbside recycling bins. Ultimately, rejection stickers will be placed on bins with contamination resulting in no pickup.

Meanwhile, other programs to divert materials from the waste stream continued to expand:

- A new Food Scraps Recycling Drop Spot was added in Groton bringing the total number throughout the County to 15. The new food scrap transfer building at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center continued to accept both residential and commercial loads of food scraps. After collection, the material is delivered to Cayuga Compost in Trumansburg for processing. The resulting compost is sold in bulk loads and bags to residents and commercial establishments to improve soil conditions.
- In 2019, two new public space recycling bins were placed at Hancock Street, near the bus stop in the City of Ithaca, and Main Street in Trumansburg. This brings the total number of public space recycling bin locations to 10 throughout the County.
- The Re-Business Partners program assisted 15 additional businesses with recommendations to reduce waste, increase recycling, and adopt green purchasing practices.
- The Department provided 11 event organizers with “Borrow-A-Bins” free of charge.
- Six household hazardous waste collection events took place in 2019.
- The Department’s grant application for food waste reduction and collection of food scraps in several low-income apartments in the amount of \$70,000 was accepted by the NYSDEC.
- Staff provided 38 educational presentations and tours, and conducted outreach at 25 community events throughout Tompkins County.

The Department provided potential vendors with a draft RFP for the next Recycling and Operations contract in accordance with GML 120W. The current contract with Casella Recycling expires in February, 2021. The final RFP will be issued in June, 2020 with an award of contract expected in December, 2020. This will be for a five year period with the option for a five year renewal period. An RFP for a three year contract for professional services associated with the environmental monitoring at closed landfills will also be issued next year.

As we develop our 2021 budget, the Department will strive to provide financial stability by reducing non-essential services and seeking additional revenues from grants and user fees with the hope that recycling revenues will start to increase as new paper mills begin operations within reasonable distance to Tompkins County.



Barbara Eckstrom  
Director

## **PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS**

The Department of Recycling and Materials Management’s budget is comprised of seven program areas: disposal, recycling, recycling collection, waste reduction, old landfills, administration, and household hazardous waste.

### **DISPOSAL**

#### **I. Program Description**

In 2019 Tompkins County transported 17,158 tons of municipal solid waste (MSW) from the Recycling & Solid Waste Center (RSWC) to nearby landfills through a contract with Ontario County, Seneca Meadows, Hyland Landfill (Angelica) and Chemung County. This program also includes enforcement of Chapter 140 of the County Code to prevent violations related to trash tag, hauler licensing, mandatory recycling, and illegal dumping laws.

#### **II. Program Goals**

- To provide safe and environmentally sound disposal practices for Tompkins County waste generators.
- Minimize illegal disposal violations in the County.

#### **III. Highlights**

- In 2019 the Department continued to cull recyclables from commercial trash, diverting 85 tons from the landfill through recycling.
- The County issued 21 hauler licenses and 105 licensed vehicles in 2019. There were 101 County Code cases investigated: 100 for illegal dumping, 1 for hauler licensing.

#### **IV. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to 3.75 full time employees as follows:

-Weigh Scale Operator	.75
-Senior Account Clerk Typist	.5
-Fiscal Coordinator	1
-Solid Waste Enforcement Officer	.5
-Senior Weigh Scale Operator	1.0

#### **V. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$2,022,670
Actual amount spent	\$1,978,225
Net savings	\$44,445

# RECYCLING

## I. Program Description

This program provides recycling opportunities for County residents, businesses and institutions. Through a contract with Casella Waste Systems Inc., the County received and processed 15,493 tons of recyclables at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center (RSWC). The facility includes a convenient public drop-off that accepts single stream recyclables, residential and commercial food scraps, and additional materials for recycling. Tompkins County also partners with Cayuga Compost to offer food scraps recycling programs. Other aspects of the recycling program include the ReBusiness Partners, Borrow-A-Bin, Public Space Recycling, and public outreach and education.

## II. Program Goals

- Provide a local facility to process and market recyclable materials collected through the curbside and drop-off programs including educational information, direct assistance, and community support for recycling.
- Provide a program to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws.
- Support an overall goal of 85% waste diversion by 2030.
- Increase recycling tonnage for food scraps and other materials.
- Reduce contamination in recycling streams.

## III. Highlights

- Staff established best practices for acceptance of commercial food scraps using the food scraps transfer station at the RSWC. The food scraps are delivered to Cayuga Compost in Trumansburg through a contract with Casella.
- Department staff worked with contractors to modify the materials accepted for recycling to accommodate changes in national recycling markets and more accurately reflect commodity streams.
- Launched a Food Scraps Recycling Drop Spot at the Groton Town Clerk's office. Satellite operations were maintained at the Brooktondale Community Center, Bostwick Road, Cayuga Compost, Cayuga Heights Village Hall, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Danby Town Hall, Dryden Town Highway Department, East Hill, Hancock St, Lansing Village Office, and Trumansburg Department of Public Works. The mobile drop spot was used at Brooktondale, and East Hill, East Hill Farmers Market, Groton Town Clerk's Office, Hancock St, and Newfield Town Hall
- Options for recycling at the RSWC included acceptance of residential and commercial single stream recyclables, source-separated single stream recyclables, and source-separated food scraps from residents and commercial haulers.



*Opening day at the Groton Drop Spot.*



- The County contracted with Buffalo Biodiesel to remove approximately 4.02 tons of Fats Oil and Grease (FOG) material.
- 15,493 tons of recyclables were accepted at the RSWC.
- Cayuga Compost collected and processed 2,181.8 tons of food scraps, with approximately 466 tons collected from the drop spots.
- A “Recycle Right” campaign to educate the public about proper recycling was continued in 2019. The campaign included print and radio advertising, as well as coordination of a team of Outreach Assistants to provide information at 25 events throughout the County.
- Distributed 764 kitchen caddies and 742 transportation containers to participants in the food scraps drop-off program.
- Provided at least 38 educational presentations or tours to organizations throughout the County.
- Staff reached approximately 10,412 individuals through tours, events, tabling and presentations.
- Staff continually updated the [recycletompkins.org](http://recycletompkins.org) website with up-to-date information and continued to support the "What Do I Do With" and "Find My Recycling Day" tools as well as Household Hazardous Waste drop off event registration.
- America Recycles Day activities included partnering with Challenge Workforce Solutions to offer a Free Confidential Document Shred Day to residents.
- The Borrow-A-Bin Program facilitated recycling collection at 11 events by loaning recycling bins free of charge.
- Staff conducted 15 waste assessments for local businesses and organizations through the ReBusiness Partners Program.



*TCRMM staff and Outreach Assistants contributed a “Recycle Right” themed entry to the Ithaca Festival parade.*



*Staff from Challenge Workforce Solutions helped to collect documents from residents for shredding.*

#### **IV. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to 5.75 full time employees as follows:

-Waste Reduction & Recycling Specialist	1
-Waste Reduction & Recycling Specialist	.5
-Waste Reduction & Recycling Specialist	.75
-TCRMM Assistant Director	1
-Communications Specialist	1
-Senior Account Clerk Typist	.5
-TCRMM Director	.5
-Recycling Assistant	.5

#### **V. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$1,607,083
Actual amount spent	\$1,397,886
Net savings	\$209,197



## RECYCLING COLLECTION

### I. Program Description

Through this program, the County provides bi-weekly countywide curbside collection of recyclable materials, which are transported to the County-owned RSWC. TCRMM contracts with Casella Waste Systems Inc. through a competitive bid process. County staff monitors and tracks service requests from the public to ensure quality service from the contractor. Recycling bins are available for sale at the TCRMM offices, and R decals are provided free of charge to allow for flexibility in collection receptacles. Public education is an important component of this program.

Approximately 43,879 homes receive curbside recycling collection as well as an estimated 2,377 small businesses.

### II. Program Goals:

- Provide convenient, cost-effective residential recycling opportunities through curbside collection through a ten year contract with Casella and a public drop-off area at the RSWC.
- Monitor service calls and responses to maintain quality service for the curbside collection program, and minimize recycling collection complaints year over year.
- Enforce all applicable federal, state and local laws for mandatory recycling.

### III. Highlights

- A 2019-2020 Curbside Recycling Guidelines brochure was made available to all residents in Tompkins County. There was no bulk mailing of the Guidelines, but staff increased the number of depository locations around the County.
- Throughout the course of 2019, TCRMM tracked 319 service calls regarding the curbside recycling collection service. This service-based contract was monitored closely throughout the year to maintain a high quality of service.
- To enhance communication and response systems regarding service requests, staff stamped data about truck routes traveled.
- Two new public space recycling stations were placed in 2019 which included one at Hancock St near the bus stop in the city of Ithaca, and a second location on Main St. in Trumansburg. Existing public space bins were monitored throughout the year at the Greater Ithaca Activities Center (GIAC) two locations, Wood St Skate Park – Ithaca, Montgomery Park-Dryden, Stewart Park-Ithaca, Tompkins County Courthouse-Ithaca, Tompkins County Human Services Building-Ithaca, Tompkins County Library-Ithaca, and Main Street in Trumansburg. It is estimated 2.54 tons of material were diverted through this program in 2019.



*The Hancock Street public space recycling station is located next to a TCAT bus stop.*

**IV. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to .25 full time employees as follows:

-Waste Reduction & Recycling Specialist	.25
-----------------------------------------	-----

**V. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$1,682,419
Actual amount spent	\$1,663,626
Net savings	\$18,793

## WASTE REDUCTION

### I. Program Description:

Through this program, Tompkins County Recycling & Materials Management supports the community, local economy, and the environment by encouraging innovative waste reduction and reuse projects. Many of these initiatives are accomplished through partnerships with local organizations including Cornell Cooperative Extension's (CCE) Compost Education Program, and Finger Lakes ReUse. In addition, TCRMM collaborates with Green Teams in the Ithaca City School District, and offers education to share these projects and diversion potential with the public. In 2019, an emphasis was placed on "Recycle Right" and "Clean the Stream" to reduce contamination of recyclables. TCRMM received a grant from NYS DEC to further food waste reduction and donation efforts at up to four apartment complexes, increasing the reach of waste reduction programming, and potentially serving as a model for expansion throughout the county. In 2020, this grant work will continue, including on-site education at each complex. Additionally, staff will be working to advance Environmentally Preferred Purchasing within the county, refreshing policy and encouraging best practices.



*TCRMM Staff and Outreach Assistants attended the Compost Fair, part of Cornell Cooperative Extension's Compost Education Program.*

Approximately 205,000 individuals were reached through this program, including residents, students, businesses, and other community members.

### II. Program Goals

- Reduce both the volume and toxicity of the waste stream by providing waste reduction, reuse and green purchasing programs and education to businesses, schools, municipalities and residents.
- Maintain an ongoing reuse program with Finger Lakes ReUse.
- Support the statewide goal of achieving 2.1 lbs msw/person/day by 2030.
- Maintain support for home composting through a contract with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

### III. Highlights

- Through home composting, it is estimated approximately 4,188 tons of food scraps and 6,466 tons of yard waste was diverted, showing a slight increase in home composting since 2018. The Compost Learning Collaborative (CLC) diverted an additional ton of food scraps at various sites.
- Continuation of support for Finger Lakes ReUse, which coordinates a Fixers Collective, Deconstruction Program, retail space, and eCenter. Over the course of 2019,

approximately 600 tons were diverted through this initiative, including materials like books, building materials, computers and electronics, furniture, house wares, and textiles.

- A food waste prevention campaign was continued through a social media campaign promoting tips and tools for food waste prevention

#### **IV. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to .25 full time employees as follows:

-Waste Reduction & Recycling Specialist	.25
-----------------------------------------	-----

#### **V. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$209,349
Actual amount spent	\$200,547
Net savings	\$8,802

## **OLD LANDFILLS**

### **I. Program Description**

This program includes monitoring, maintenance, and leachate removal at two closed landfills - Hillview Road Landfill in South Danby/North Spencer and Caswell Road Landfill in the Town of Dryden. This program is regulated by NYSDEC.

### **II. Program Goals**

- Perform routine, quarterly and annual reporting and inspections, regular maintenance, and leachate removal required by NYSDEC closure permits.
- Routine inspections identify maintenance items that are then scheduled for repair or budgeted for in the following year depending on the magnitude of the problem.

### **III. Highlights**

- The Hillview and Caswell landfill sites have a total of 64 monitoring points, including 13 residential locations. There are also 23 manholes and 18 cleanouts along the perimeter collection systems and 88 gas vents.
- Of the 64 monitoring points, 13 were eliminated in 2013 in an agreement between the Hillview Road Advisory Committee and Tompkins County, and approved by the NYS DEC. This means these points will no longer be monitored on an annual basis but are still maintained.
- Department staff started conducting residential well sampling in 2014 in place of the contracted engineering firm. Since then, County staff has conducted all environmental sampling at both landfills and residential locations. Training took place in the fall in preparation for staff retirement.
- Both landfills have two underground leachate storage tanks each. Monitoring wells routinely require maintenance that includes sanding, repainting, flagging and concrete apron replacement as required by NYS DEC.
- Many of these locations are trimmed throughout the year because of the rapid growth of vegetation as well as for providing a setting for accurate sampling. Each landfill footprint consists of approximately 30 acres that requires mowing around the first week of July.
- The amount of leachate removed from Hillview in 2019 was 206,200 gallons. The amount of leachate removed from Caswell in 2019 was 1,173,250 gallons.
- Weekly inspections are conducted to ensure contractual leachate hauling obligations are fulfilled.

### **IV. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to .5 full time employees as follows:

-TCRMM Director	.25
-Solid Waste Enforcement Officer	.25

**V. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$214,718
Actual amount spent	\$195,832
Net savings	\$18,886

## **HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW)**

### **I. Program Description**

The HHW collection program directs the proper management of residential household hazardous waste and hazardous waste from qualified non-residential generators (i.e. businesses, institutions, community organizations).

### **II. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to .25 employees as follows:

-Solid Waste Enforcement Officer .25

### **III. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$141,403
Actual amount spent	\$130,814
Net savings	\$10,589

### **IV. Program Goals**

- Diversion of hazardous wastes from the disposal waste stream and the effective management of that waste.
- Compliance with NYSDEC permit required inspections, maintenance, waste management and reporting.

### **V. Highlights**

- There were a total of 1,287 residents at the six (6) Household Hazardous Waste drop off days conducted in 2019.
- There were 11 non-residential Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators (CESQG'S) and an additional 22 bringing in universal wastes such as fluorescent tubes. Attendance numbers are not recorded for residential generators of universal wastes.
- There was a total of 81,574 pounds of solids, and 16,232 gallons of liquid hazardous universal wastes diverted from the waste stream in 2019.
- An on-line registration form was implemented in 2012 to allow for a more efficient registration process for drop off days. The on-line registration process was continued in 2019 and has proven a valuable tool in providing an abundance of information.



## **ADMINISTRATION**

### **I. Program Description**

Administrative staff assists customers as well as department staff. Over 19,000 customers were assisted in 2019 with information about recycling, composting, trash disposal, household hazardous waste and waste reduction programs.

### **II. Highlights**

- The Administrative staff handled 9,800 customer inquiries over the phone and completed 9,945 transactions at the front desk (sales of permits, trash disposal coupons and punch cards, and recycling and compost bins) for a total of 19,745 customers served. The front desk also distributed 267 food scraps recycling toolkits at no charge to residents.
- The Department accepts the sale of permits, punch cards and coupons online through its website. There were 348 online transactions in 2019, totaling \$9,243.
- The Communications and Administrative Coordinator is the primary liaison with other County departments, including Administration, Information Technology Services and Facilities, as well as with the County Legislature and the Facilities and Infrastructure Committee.
- The Communications Specialist reports to the CAAC and is responsible for maintaining the Department’s website and social media platforms. He also oversees the planning of community outreach events and assists with presentations to school groups and other civic organizations.
- The Administrative staff assisted customers with navigating a newly-designed website and taking advantage of its new features – “Find My Recycling Day” and the “What do I do with...?” materials database.

### **III. Human Resources**

Staff time allocated to this program is equivalent to 3.25 full time employees as follows:

-Communication/Administrative Coordinator	1.0
-Administrative Assistant	2.0
-TCRMM Director	.25

### **IV. Annual Program Budget**

Annual 2019 budget for this program is	\$434,599
Actual amount spent	\$403,578
Net savings	\$31,021

The savings realized in 2019 resulted from the half-time administrative assistant position being vacant for a portion of the year.

# Tompkins County Recycling & Materials Management Organizational Chart 2019



Total staff: 17

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The goal of financing the Department of Recycling and Materials Management is to enable the development, maintenance, and sustainability of an integrated solid waste management system that facilitates recycling, composting, waste reduction and other diversion activities to the greatest extent possible. Where possible, the financing system is also designed to create incentives for diversion of materials from disposal.

The Department is enterprise funded, and therefore no revenue is obtained from Tompkins County property taxes. The sources of revenue are:

- Disposal Fees: Waste is accepted at the Recycling and Solid Waste Center (RSWC) from Tompkins County residents, businesses, and licensed haulers. A disposal fee is charged to do so.
- Solid Waste Annual Fee: The annual fee helps to defray the costs of the Department's programs and services, exclusive of waste disposal. The annual fee pays for the Recycling and Solid Waste Center, curbside recycling collection, waste reduction programs, Household Hazardous Waste, and maintaining closed landfills.
- Recycling Revenue: The Department receives revenue from the sale of recyclable materials.
- Grants: The Department actively seeks available grants to defray some of the cost of its programs, including:
  - NYSDEC Municipal Waste Reduction & Recycling
  - NYSDEC Food Waste Reduction & Recycling
  - NYSDEC Climate Smart Communities
  - NYSDEC Household Hazardous Waste
- Miscellaneous Revenue: Other forms of revenue include the sale of recycling and compost bins, fines, permits and licensing fees.