

# Anchorage School District Recycling

## April 2008

### Current School Waste Collection and Recycling Data

According to the current (2007-2008) Anchorage School District list, ASD has about 95 schools serving approximately 50,000 students, plus an additional five primary administrative locations. About 75% of the schools are serviced by Alaska Waste and 25% are serviced by Solid Waste Services (SWS). Alaska Waste also provides recycling services to 15 schools through dumpsters, curbside totes or its ORP (mixed paper) route. In addition, between 20 and 25 schools are participating in some type of recycling activities independently, e.g., students, staff, and/or parents are taking materials to the recycling center themselves.

### School Waste Stream

According to waste composition studies, approximately 40% of a typical school's waste stream by volume is recyclable paper. This includes white, color and glossy paper; newspaper; paperboard; and corrugated cardboard. A small percentage of the waste stream includes other recyclable materials such as plastics (up to 10% by volume), and aluminum, steel and glass (each at about 1 – 2% by volume). The remaining waste is dominated by bathroom wastes (paper towels etc.), food wastes, and food service wastes (paper and plastic packaging, fast food wrappers, drink cups, disposable plates and cutlery etc.).

### Recycling Plan for ASD

SWS proposes to offer assistance to the school district for implementing recycling by providing funds for each school. Funds may be used to purchase classroom recycling bins and custodial collection containers for each school. It also may be used to pay for any additional costs incurred by adding recycling collection to the current waste hauling service, including modification of dumpster locations, additional dumpster rental and service. A portion of the funding is allocated to hiring a recycling coordinator within the school district or funding the addition of recycling oversight tasks to a current staff person or persons' duties.

Currently, Alaska Waste is working with several high schools to establish and monitor full-scale recycling collection for mixed paper. The company plans to study these schools in depth to determine the best potential service for each. This may ultimately lead to a menu of options for schools that allows each school to choose the service most appropriate for its size, volume generation, location, and other considerations. Choices may include:

- a) *recycling dumpster service* – a current dumpster is converted to recycling or a dumpster is added,
- b) *recycling compactor service* – if volume is deemed large enough, the compactor may be converted to recycling and a smaller dumpster added for trash, or
- c) *recycling tipper cart service* – if a school is small or recycling volumes estimated to be low, one or more tipper carts could be provided for collection.

Alaska Waste plans to study these data before creating this menu of choices for schools. The company will then determine which schools would work best for each individual school. Alaska Waste has indicated that it does have enough equipment available (i.e., dumpsters, carts etc.) to implement a full-scale recycling program for the school district. For the schools currently serviced by SWS, recycling collection can be added to the current Municipal mixed paper route.

In addition, the school district has indicated that it is willing to implement recycling at all of its buildings in one phase in 2008. Ideally, ASD would like to begin implementation by July 2008, which is the start of the district's fiscal year, with full implementation by fall 2008.

### **Key Considerations for Success**

- Setting a recycling goal for the entire school district as a whole would offer a benchmark for measuring success. For example, the school district could make a statement that it plans to "Recycle 25% of its current waste stream by 2009."
- SWS suggests that the school district target the 40% of the waste stream that can be recycled as mixed paper. This should include corrugated cardboard. For select larger schools, it may be advantageous to place two containers to capture cardboard separately. According to anecdotal information and some ASD recycling collection data, most schools generate more corrugated cardboard waste than other mixed paper waste.
- A recycling "point person" within the school district will ensure that the program is implemented and maintained to its highest potential, and provides accountability for funding provided.
- Education and outreach within the schools will be an extremely important part of creating a successful program, increasing participation and decreasing contamination levels. Recycling outreach should be overseen by someone within the school district.
- Including a request for recycling services in the upcoming bid for recycling services (when Alaska Waste's current contract expires in June 2008) will allow Alaska Waste to fully integrate recycling into its service plan.
- Including custodial staff in the creation and planning of the program, including types of containers purchased, will ensure success as custodians will be implementing much of the program.

### **Source of Funding**

The costs associated with Anchorage School District recycling will be funded through an increase in the tipping fee.