

Dear Anchorage Resident

Do you know where your trash has been going? Based on the data we have, disposal at the Anchorage Regional Landfill has increased steadily from its opening in 1987, through the 1990s, and into the new century. The quantities disposed peaked in 2007 and then began declining again. Current disposal quantities are at the same levels as in 1997-1998, even with an increase in population since then.

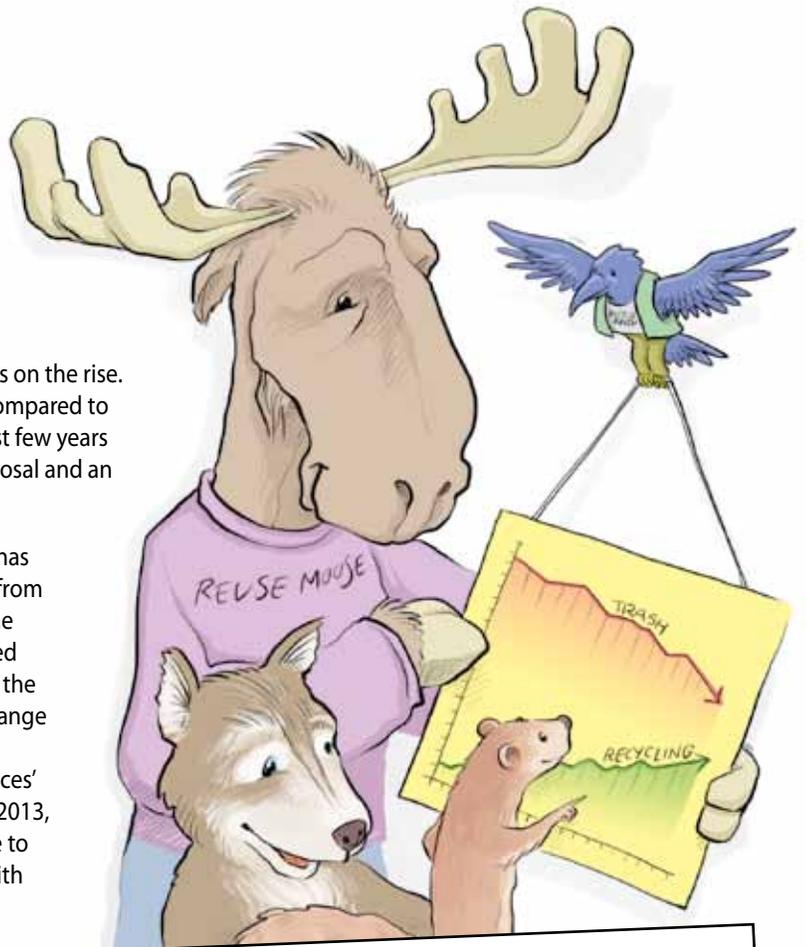
During those declining years for waste disposal, recycling was on the rise. In fact, the recycling rate (the quantity of material recycled compared to the quantity disposed) has more than doubled in just the past few years to 20% by weight in 2011, illustrating both a decrease in disposal and an increase in recycling.

In the past four years, the way residents manage their waste has changed significantly. Residential waste collection has gone from workers getting out of their trucks and throwing trash into the trucks by hand to almost all residents having roll carts serviced by automated trucks. Picking up trash without getting out of the truck has reduced injury and increased worker safety. This change also has brought pay-as-you-throw trash rates and curbside recycling to most of the municipality. All of Solid Waste Services' residential customers will have curbside service by spring of 2013, and Alaska Waste has expanded its curbside recycling service to almost all of its service area in Anchorage and Eagle River. With the expansion of curbside recycling, more and more residents are recycling.

The total quantity of waste going into the landfill is only part of the story. Our per capita trash disposal has dropped from 7.4 pounds in 2004 to 5.7 pounds in 2011 and recycling per capita has risen from 0.8 pounds to 1.4 pounds during that same time.

So what does this tell us? We're slowly moving from disposal to recycling while also reducing our overall generation rate. That's a good thing. We are thinking more about our purchases, preventing waste up front, and we're thinking more about how we dispose of what we do generate. Nice job, Anchorage!

Despite the strong increase in recycling, however, we are still below the national recycling rate of 34%. That tells us that we can continue to improve. The guide on pages 6 and 7 is a great reference for identifying a lot of the items you can recycle in Anchorage. And being thoughtful about our purchases will continue to make a big difference. Bringing these practices from home to work also makes a significant difference. More businesses are going green to help reduce their use of resources and to save money.



A Word from the New Director

Hello Anchorage—

I'm very happy to be on board at Solid Waste Services. I visited Alaska many years ago and knew it was a place I wanted to live and work. I'm impressed with the Anchorage area and the progress of the solid waste program. We have an excellent curbside collection program that includes recycling as well as record usage of recycling drop-off sites. I hope to draw on my 23 years of experience in integrated solid waste management to bring new ideas to Anchorage.

We're currently working on expanding the curbside recycling program, enhancing drop-off opportunities, and exploring ways to bring glass recycling back to the community. Our new landfill gas recovery project is about to start providing power to JBER. I envision many more great things coming in the future for the solid waste program in Anchorage.

We are planning to increase our outreach efforts so that you know what resources are available and where to find them. As part of this plan, we hope to develop an education center that will showcase recycling, composting, green purchasing, toxics reduction, landfill gas recovery, and other green topics and activities. We'll be able to show youth and adults alike what is being done and what can be done in Anchorage and have it all in one place. Let's keep moving toward zero waste!

Thanks Anchorage for making my family and me feel welcome.

- Paul F. Alcantar