



UCRRA Reform Committee

Report to the Ulster County Legislature

August 1, 2024

**The Committee expresses gratitude to
Legislature Clerk Victoria Fabella, Deputy Legislature
Clerk Jay Mahler and Legislative staff members
Lizvett Bost and Michael Tierney for their assistance
through the deliberation and review process in the
creation of this report.**

UCRRA Reform Committee Membership

Mike Baden, Committee Chair; former President UCATS&M

Tracey Bartels, Committee Vice-Chair; former Chair of the Legislature

March Gallagher; Ulster County Comptroller

Jim Gordon; UCRRA Board of Directors Vice-Chair & representative

Manna Jo Greene; Legislature representative from the Energy,
Environment & Sustainability Committee

Amanda LaValle, Deputy Ulster County Executive

Laura Petit; former Legislator and Legislature minority designee

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Section 1: Executive Summary

How should Ulster County deal with the future of waste management?

This is the essential question behind the Committee's charge. It has been a subject of heated debate for decades characterized by the economics of the day and political posturing. Yet it goes beyond both. Our society creates waste. We all make waste. We must deal with the removal and resulting processing with strategies based on environmental and economically evaluated data. This much is clear. We must decrease the amount of waste we produce and address the residual in a responsible manner. We cannot sustain our current volume and methods of disposal.

This report presents an in-depth look at the current state of waste in Ulster County and makes recommendations to better manage the future of Ulster County waste.

The data is staggering. Ulster County residents produce, on average, four pounds of municipal solid waste and construction and demolition (C&D) debris per day. Over 385 tons per day of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) and C&D are managed and disposed of by the UCRRA. It is transported by truck to Seneca Meadows Landfill, 480 miles round trip, producing 12,467,520 lbs. of CO₂/year, at an annual cost of over \$11,000,000. The UCRRA contract with Seneca Meadows, Inc. expires in 2025. The Seneca Meadows landfill permit with NYS is currently set to expire in 2025 and is subject to significant legal challenges which place its long-term viability in question. Quite simply, our current arrangement is unsustainable and environmentally irresponsible.

This topic is not a new discussion for Ulster County. Witness on the next page a speech made over five decades ago to the Ulster County Legislature by Herb Heckler, Planning Director.

Speech to Ulster County Legislature by Herbert Hekler, Planning Director

Subject: CONCLUSIONS OF SOLID WASTE STUDY.
February 11, 1971 - 4:00 P.M.

The problem of solid waste disposed is growing rapidly because of increasing per capita solid waste generation coupled with an increasing population. Residents of Ulster County now produce approximately 4.8 pounds of refuse per person per day or nearly 5 millions pounds per week. If forecasts prove correct, in 30 years, Ulster County will be generating 13 million pounds of refuse per week or more than double present loads.

The old method of refuse disposal was the town dump - a stinking, rat-infested no-man's land. But the days of the dump are nearly over because of the more stringent regulations of the State Health Department - particularly the prohibition of burning.

The Comprehensive Solid Waste study, which the County Legislature asked us to undertake, divided the problem into two parts - 1) an immediate solution and 2) a long range solution. For the short range, every local disposal site should be immediately brought up to the Part 19 standards of the Health Code. The towns have been doing an outstanding job in trying to meet these standards but the costs are getting high. The average estimated cost for bringing local sites up to Part 19 is \$39.66 per ton.

Now let us turn to the long range. Many different methods of waste disposal were studied and costed for Ulster County. These included incineration, composting, shredding, land fill, and even shipping the refuse out of the County. Of these alternatives, there was no doubt that best and cheapest solution for this county is the sanitary landfill.

The engineering firm of Manganaro, Martin, and Lincoln, set up various computer models to determine the optimum location for least cost solutions. Nineteen alternatives were studied but only five were recommended as being reasonable alternates. Examples of feasible alternates are: 1) providing one landfill site to serve the entire county; 2) developing two regional sites - one to serve the Rochester-Wawarsing area, the other to serve the remainder of the county; 3) dividing the county into three regions - one serving Rochester-Wawarsing, one serving the northern portion of the County and Kingston, and one serving the southern part of the County and New Paltz.

In most reports the author wishes to conclude - "this is the best solution - we recommend that you do the following." In this report it did not work out that way because several regional solutions were fine and the differences in costs only varied from \$39.52/ton to \$40.10/ton. This is only a 1% difference. But all of these regional landfill alternatives were substantially cheaper than incineration at about \$65/ton, or composting at \$50/ton, or shipping out of the county at \$48/ton. They are also cheaper than bringing local sites to expected higher management standards which would be nearly \$43/ton.

PAGE 2.

Because the differences in cost between different regional landfill alternatives is not great, the County Planning Board would be delighted if any one of them were implemented. We strongly recommend however, that the solution be a regional approach. We say this not only because of cost but because we believe the regional solution will result in higher efficiency, better operation, and greater dependability. In addition, the regional solution provides for greater flexibility. Flexibility is important because today all sorts of new means of processing wastes are now being studied. The Planning Board is concerned with the environment and ecology of this county. We think that eventually we will need to recycle wastes. To do this, and be able to afford machinery to separate bottles from tin cans and plastics from biodegradable products, we will need economy of scale. This could not be achieved if each town had its own small site.

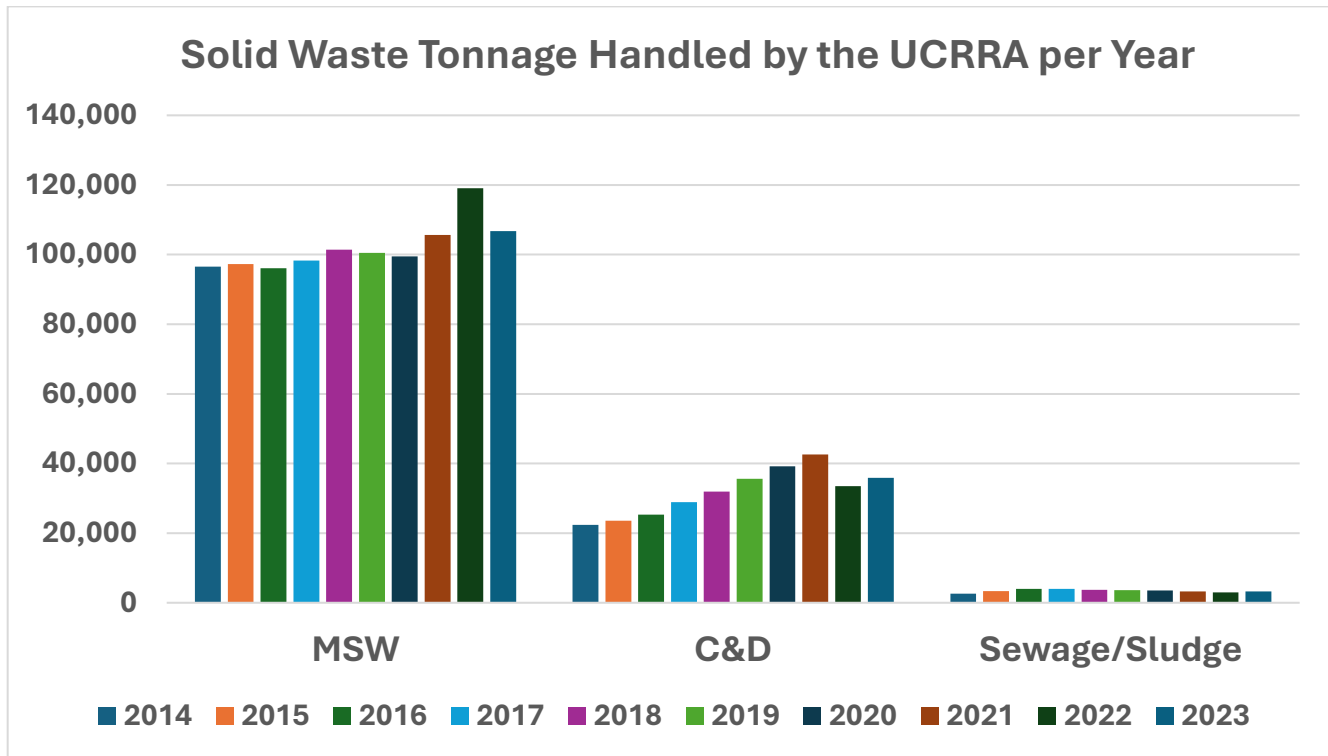
As to specific sites - possible regional sites are discussed for Hawarsing, New Paltz, Esopus, and Ulster. The specific site in Hawarsing is mentioned because at the time of the writing of the report, this was the most promising site. Since that time, the Town Board has been offered other sites that look much better. As far as we are concerned, fine, go ahead with a better site. But the principle we are aiming at is that it much better if Hawarsing, Ellenville and Rochester worked together rather than each developing a separate site.

As to New Paltz - the existing Town landfill and the land just acquired by the Town could serve the southern portion of the county for at least the next 50 years. We of course expect the initial reaction of New Paltz to be negative "Why should we take someone else's refuse, let them get their own site, etc." New Paltz certainly can take this position because they are one of the most far-sighted communities in this county and have a very fine sanitary landfill. But if a second look is taken, New Paltz might find itself in an excellent position for negotiations for economic or other advantages if it developed its site into a region landfill.

Third - as to the Callahan site in Esopus and the Hudson Cement property in Ulster - both of these are enormous excavations - they both look like the surface of the moon. These quarries can not only solve our refuse problem, but we can have a very positive end product in reclaiming this land for future recreation or industrial use. This dual objective of land reclamation and refuse disposal was our reason for pointing to these sites. But if these properties are not available, then we can turn to other alternatives. It was very interesting that if we drew 3 to 4 mile concentric rings around the computer's optimum location, the difference in cost was only about 50 cents per ton. With 600,000 acres of undeveloped land in Ulster County, we obviously can select other sites without materially affecting costs nor changing the soundness of the regional approach. But other sites might intrude upon residential development or take land better suited for other uses.

In conclusion, this is a complicated study with many different good solutions. We recommend that the Legislature appoint a special committee - we called it a Joint Municipal Committee - to review this report in detail and make recommendations to you for implementation. The full report of 500 pages and six pounds of weight, contains a great deal of information. But the solution is not a technical problem which can be addressed in an engineering - planning report, but rather it is a social and political problem. I forgot who said it but, politics is the art of the possible. We certainly hope that you, the elected leader of this County, can take this report and select the possible alternatives to provide a good solution to this very difficult problem.

UCRRA Waste Disposal Trends (2014-2023)



How to address this?

The Committee proposes a multi-pronged approach to be the best solution.

- ✓ First, re-use of all materials whose lives can be extended.
- ✓ Second, recycle all materials which can be recycled, including C&D, regardless of the potential for revenue.
- ✓ Third, increase and sustain education about Ulster County's regulations and the UCRRA system.
- ✓ Fourth, enforce existing laws and policies.
- ✓ Finally, dispose of the now reduced residual waste with an emphasis on local or regional self-reliance.

The Committee acknowledges that, in many regards, the UCRRA is operating successfully. The closure of municipal landfills throughout the County was successful. The composting program is a testament of the dedication to recycling organic materials. Still, Ulster County's waste program requires improvement.

Collaboration of Partners

County government and the UCRRA must implement a new partnership, in practice and in contract. Collaboration of **all stakeholders** is imperative for any successful Ulster County waste reduction plan.

Stakeholders

1. Ulster County
 - a. Legislature
 - b. Executive
 - c. Health Department
 - d. Department of the Environment
 - e. Department of Planning
2. Local municipalities
 - a. Legislative Boards
 - b. Transfer Stations
3. UCRRA
4. Private Haulers
5. Agriculture
6. Institutions
7. Businesses
8. Multi-Family Housing owners
9. Residential users
10. Environmental groups



Diversion from the MSW waste stream must be maximized, regardless of economics, with focus on the highest and best use of materials. Multiple diversion approaches need to be instituted. Non-regulated recyclable materials able to be recycled must be considered for regulation of diversion as well as increased enforcement of diversion of current regulated recyclables and organics.

The three Es are critical to achieve maximum diversion.

Expansion of the means and materials being diverted.

Education about diversion to all stakeholders.

Enforcement of existing diversion laws.

Assuming the NYS Solid Waste Management Plan goal of 85% waste reduction by 2050, there would remain 15% residual waste. The UCRRA and all stakeholders must acknowledge and address that residual waste is a reality.

The Committee strongly believes a shift to local self-reliance is imperative. In reviewing options, greenhouse gas emissions and environmental impact must be calculated and considered in all evaluations and reports. It is not enough to evaluate using only economics.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) estimates at least 80% of the material currently sent to landfills or combustion facilities has monetary value, either directly as material or indirectly through the creation of recycling sector jobs.

Local Solid Waste Management Plan

The most impactful new initiatives will require legislative changes. To achieve the vision outlined in the 2023 Ulster County Local Solid Waste Management Plan, there will need to be a combination of bold new legislation to provide the framework for transformational change and an ongoing commitment from everyone - NYS and local governments, planning units, the private sector, product manufacturers, distributors, retailers, educators, and all New York citizens and visitors. Partnership is key to achieving the vision for 2050.

Based on the data gathered and compiled, the Committee has identified program strategies to work toward a plan that is consistent with the NY State Solid Waste Management Plan, as published December 2023. The strategies set forth in this report were identified with the goal of further enhancing the reduction, reuse, and recycling of materials generated in Ulster County and providing for the means to recover energy in an environmentally sound manner from solid waste that has not been reused or recycled.

Section 2: Key Recommendations

It is no longer a question of what we will be facing, it is a question of how we will face it. Ulster County must continue its environmental leadership and continue to serve as a model for New York State.

The Committee identified four waste management priority topics.

1. **Diversion**
2. **Disposal**
3. **Intergovernmental Relations**
4. **Economics**

The Committee makes the following Key Recommendations.

It is important to note, in most cases the recommendations were reached with unanimous consent of the seven Committee members.

Where this did not occur, dissenting opinions are attributed.

1. **The majority of the Committee recommends the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency should remain responsible for solid waste management in Ulster County and the UCRRA and Ulster County should sign a new contract with agreed upon milestones starting in 2025.**

The agreement would facilitate cooperation between the Agency and the County solid waste and materials management efforts, with the goal of maximizing diversion. Ulster County can again lead the state in progressive materials management through cooperatively creating the Reuse Innovation Center and Program (Hub and Spokes System), implementing a zero-waste program to maximize waste diversion, siting or building of a solid waste facility (landfill or other) and other services with towns and the City of Kingston. The effort must include identified timelines. An annual review of milestones shall be conducted where the UCRRA and Ulster County must assess the effectiveness of their efforts.

- ❖ *Former Legislator Petit dissents from the recommendation that the UCRRA should remain responsible for solid waste management in Ulster County and prefers a County Department to be responsible for solid waste management.*
- ❖ *UCRRA Vice-Chair Gordon abstained from voting on the recommendation.*

2. To maximize diversion of materials from disposal, the UCRRA and the Ulster County government should create a Hub and Spokes System for collecting, diverting, and distributing useful materials. This system would necessitate willing municipal partners. The spokes of the system would be the existing town transfer and recycling centers, creating compost for town residents and agricultural interests as well as creating opportunities for increased diversion and re-use operations for all useful materials. Investment in a Reuse Innovation Center and Program is critical to facilitate materials diversion in an economically and ecologically beneficial manner and would create a business and commerce hub.

3. In keeping with Executive Order 1 of 2023, requiring no organic material be sent to a landfill or incinerator by 2030, legislation requiring the separation of all food scraps and organics should be adopted.

Such legislation should build on Ulster County's Mandatory Food Separation Law which pre-dated New York State's law. An ample roll-out period must be included to provide time for the build-out of infrastructure, and for capacity and public education. The State of Vermont's Universal Recycling Law, Act 148, should be reviewed and modeled where applicable.

4. Ulster County must site a local or regional landfill for residual waste. A generous host community benefit must be created for the chosen site.

The UCRRA was created with the express purpose of creating a solid waste program plan for Ulster County. The first contract envisioned setting up a County landfill. More than a quarter century later, the urgency of self-reliance has only increased. While alternative technologies continue to be discussed, there are questions of environmental and economic viability of said technologies. Long hauling waste via road or rail will face diminishing state capacity, this places Ulster County in a precarious situation. A local or regional landfill site will vest the county in maintaining its capacity through maximum diversion resulting in economic stability.

- 5. The majority of the Committee is open to the consideration of alternative technologies after formal review and full greenhouse gas emissions assessments. The majority of the Committee opposes the siting or utilization of waste to energy incineration.**

The Committee recognizes that all waste disposal technologies result in some form of residual material that ultimately requires disposal. The social and economic benefits must be evaluated for all waste disposal technologies

- ❖ *Former Legislator Petit concurs with opposing siting of waste to energy incineration in Ulster County, but dissents with the recommendation of ruling out the possibility of utilizing a different venue for waste to energy incineration.*

- 6. The current agreement requiring Ulster County Legislative approval of UCRRA bonding exceeding \$500,000 should be discontinued.**

The majority of the Committee recognizes that recommended actions for waste diversion and the siting of a local or regional landfill and/or alternative technology will require significant investment. To the extent that Ulster County maintains its relationship with the UCRRA, the agency should be empowered to make said investments. That said, the UCRRA should be required contractually to create a multi-year capital improvement plan.

It should be noted the current disposal system costs \$11 million to truck 480 miles round-trip and dispose of solid waste. As investments are made, it is expected that savings will accrue from cost avoidance.

- ❖ *Legislator Greene dissents with the recommendation because she believes the County is the safety net if the Agency is unable to cover its expenses.*
- ❖ *Former Legislator Petit dissents with the recommendation unless flow control is repealed.*

7. Increase the UCRRA Board from five to nine members.

The Committee unanimously recommends expanding the UCRRA Board to nine members.

The majority of the Committee recommends the following UCRRA Board membership appointment process:

- Five members appointed by the Ulster County Legislature, no more than two of whom can be an elected official or county employee.
- Three members appointed by the Ulster County Executive, no more than one of whom can be an elected official or county employee.
- One member appointed by the Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors
- All members must reside in Ulster County. The enabling legislation should reflect a requirement to represent geographic diversity.
- The Committee recommends a two full term limit.

❖ *Former Legislator Petit dissents with the recommendation of the UCRRA Board membership makeup and appointment process.*

8. Enforcement

The Committee unanimously recommends the UCRRA contract should explicitly detail enforcement responsibilities for all solid waste management laws existing at the time of contract execution and those adopted throughout the term of the contract. New enforcement areas will result in additional costs that should be quantified when the legislation is adopted and anticipated by way of a net service fee or additional contract between the parties

Section 3: All Recommendations

PRIORITY	Main Topic Area	Action Item	Sub-topic	Action Group(s)
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Continue to utilize the UCRRA to manage waste* and negotiate a new contract with the UCRRA including the UCRRA following existing regulated recycling and diversion laws.* *[This was not unanimously agreed by the Committee]	Diversion, Disposal	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Diversion	Maximize diversion of items from the MSW waste stream in as many ways as is possible to reach the NYS DEC goal of 85% by 2050.	Diversion	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers
High/ Immediate	Disposal	Site, Study, Secure Approval, and Construct a regional or county landfill with a strong zero waste message.	Intergovernmental Economics	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Diversion	Establish a Hub and Spoke System re-use center and program to divert reusable items from the waste stream managed by the UCRRA and mandated under the contract.	Disposal, Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities
High/ Immediate	Diversion	The UC Government and UCRRA collaborate on the creation of a Zero Waste Plan with the Legislature adopting the ZWIP.	Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Remove the \$500,000 bond cap, as specified in the current contract. * *[This was not unanimously agreed by the Committee]	Economic	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Add contract language mandating the UCRRA implement and enforce regulated recycling and diversion laws.	Diversion, Disposal	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Expand the UCRRA Board of Directors, as proposed in this report with an increase to nine members, with appointments by the Legislature, County Executive, and UCATS&M.* *[This was not unanimously agreed by the Committee]	-	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Diversion	Achieve UC Executive Order 1 of 2023 by diverting 100% of organic waste from landfills and incinerators by 2030.	Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers

Priority	Main Topic Area	Action Item	Sub-topic	Action (Group(s))
High/ Immediate	Disposal	Review alternative technologies for diversion of residual waste after formal review and full greenhouse gas assessment* * [This was not unanimously agreed by the Committee]	Diversion Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA,
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Establish a rolling capital project and infrastructure plan. Identify and study infrastructure improvements to improve sorting and separation of materials not solely driven by costs.	Economics	UC Government, UCRRA
High/ Immediate	Diversion	Expand regulation of organics and food scrap composting.	Intergovernmental	UC Government
High/ Immediate	Intergovernmental	Advocate to the NYS Legislature the need for NYS regulatory programs for items like paint, mattress recycling, the Bigger Bottle Bill, packaging restrictions, and other reductions in waste materials	Diversion	UC Government
High/ Mid-Range	Diversion	Establish a C&D diversion program. Evaluate the feasibility of C&D deconstruction, reuse, and recovery requirements. Require source separation and recycling of C&D debris.	Disposal	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers
High/ Mid-Range	Diversion	Increase the types of materials accepted for recycling by the Agency through the municipal transfer stations. Identify methods for the UCRRA and the municipalities to collectively upgrade diversion, reuse and recycling of key materials listed in the ZWIP.	Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities
Ongoing	Disposal	Expand education to increase recycling, waste diversion, and reduce improper disposal of materials.	Diversion	UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers
Ongoing	Diversion	Expand Organics recycling capacity in Ulster County through expansion of agency facilities, municipal sites, and other entities, including private businesses and residents.	Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers
Ongoing	Diversion	Advance technologies research for regional approaches to addressing sludge and bio-solids.	-	UCRRA

Priority	Main Topic Area	Action Item	Sub-topic	Action (Group(s))
Ongoing	Diversion	Host more frequent and more diverse locations throughout the County for paint, electronics, hazardous waste, paper shredding, etc. types of collections via a Hub and Spoke System of collections.	Disposal	UCRRA, Municipalities, Haulers
Ongoing	Diversion	Establish a waste reduction policy to increase waste reduction at County facilities by instituting a contract requirement of all organizations who use County facilities.	-	UC Government
Ongoing	Economics	Assess the availability of funding opportunities or partnerships with private facilities and nonprofit organizations to assist in accomplishing these tasks.	Intergovernmental	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities
Ongoing	Intergovernmental	Support the development of an agricultural plastics recycling program including stakeholders such as the Ulster County Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Soil and Water Conservation District.	Diversion	UC Government, UCRRA, Municipalities

editorial

8/12/87

The inevitable has happened in Ulster

Politicians who are short on vision and courage have a pat excuse they use when presented with a suggestion that they help each other out in getting rid of garbage — the DEC regulations are too tough to comply with, so let somebody else do it.

Ulster County is just the latest community to learn that classic Pogo lesson: "We have met the enemy and he is us." When it comes to getting rid of its garbage, Ulster has been its own worst enemy.

Seventeen years ago the county hired consultants to figure out what to do with its garbage. Easy, the consultants said, build a regional landfill or three satellite landfills to handle the load for the whole county. Not so easy as it sounded, it turns out.

Local officials screamed bloody murder — and so did many residents — when anyone suggested putting a landfill in their towns. So nothing was changed in Ulster. Small, local landfills continued to operate. But society's attitudes changed and so did those DEC regulations. They did indeed get tougher.

Now, the operators of all 16 Ulster municipal landfills must prove to DEC officials that they are not polluting the nearby ground and water, or close. Others will soon run out of room. The choices will be to clean up the landfills — a costly proposition for small towns — or find new ones. One can hear the shouts already.

But wait. Using the Department of Environmental Conservation's intransigence as an excuse to avoid doing anything will be more difficult this time. Governor Cuomo has signed a bill that requires the DEC to work with communities to encourage and develop a regional approach to garbage disposal. No more just nay-saying for DEC staff, but actually helping communities to formulate a sensible, long-term trash policy. That new cooperativeness ought to include helping communities stretch existing resources safely while they look for new answers.

Meanwhile, Ulster officials have established a Resource Recovery Agency to do what the consultants were hired to do 17 years ago — devise a countywide policy for garbage disposal. It has so far rented an office and installed phones. It will eventually discuss such things as incineration (now called resource recovery because the trash is converted into energy), regional landfills and recycling.

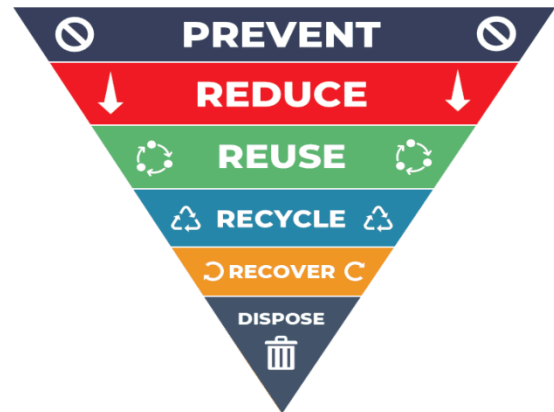
There is some urgency to the situation. One trusts the agency's members will recognize it and react accordingly. Ulster hasn't got 17 more years worth of sand in which to bury its head.

Section 4: Diversion

The Committee unanimously agreed on the aggressive adoption of materials diversion as the primary initial strategy in modernizing Ulster County’s solid waste management system.

In 1990 Ulster County’s recycling rate was an abysmal 4%. After the UCRRA took responsibility for recycling and through an aggressive education and enforcement campaign, the rate increased to 40% by the year 2000, but by the year 2021 the diversion rate decreased to 37% [see chart next page]

Diversion of items from the MSW waste stream must be maximized. The highest and best use of materials must be considered and prioritized. The Committee recommends an aggressive and sustained approach. Expansion of currently regulated recyclables and organics is essential to meet NYS and Ulster County’s stated goals.



The three Es are critical.

1. **Expansion** of the means and materials being diverted.
2. **Education** regarding waste diversion laws and best practices.
3. **Enforcement** of existing diversion laws.

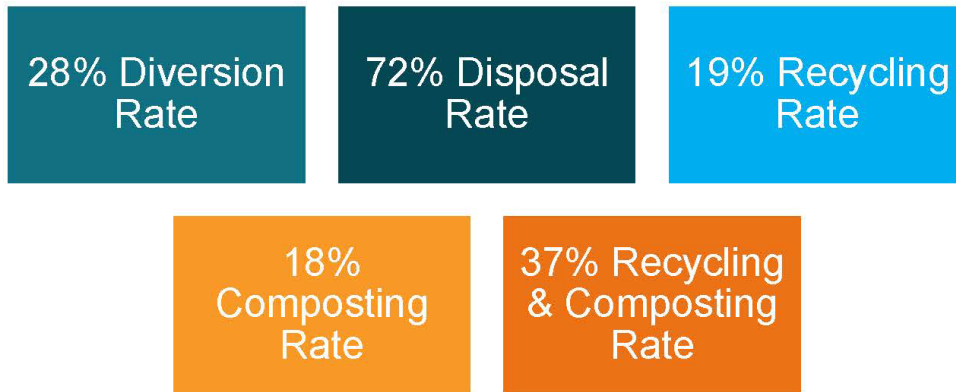
The identified strategy relies heavily on work done for the (draft) Zero Waste Implementation Plan (ZWIP) and Reuse Innovation Center 2023 draft final report to the UC Legislature.

According to the most recent New York State’s Solid Waste Management Plan, dated December 27, 2023, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) is defined as “: all waste and recyclables from single-family and multi-family homes (often referred to as “residential waste”); commercial establishments, including all offices, stores, shops, restaurants, or businesses of any nature (often referred to as “commercial waste”); and waste generated by institutions, including any schools, government buildings, prisons, nursing homes, hospitals, or other similar facilities (often referred to as “institutional waste”).”

Colloquially, MSW is referred to as trash or garbage. It includes recyclables, organics, yard trimmings, furniture, electronics, and other discarded items.

2020 Ulster County Annual Recycling Report
Planning Unit Update

6. GRAPHICS SUMMARY



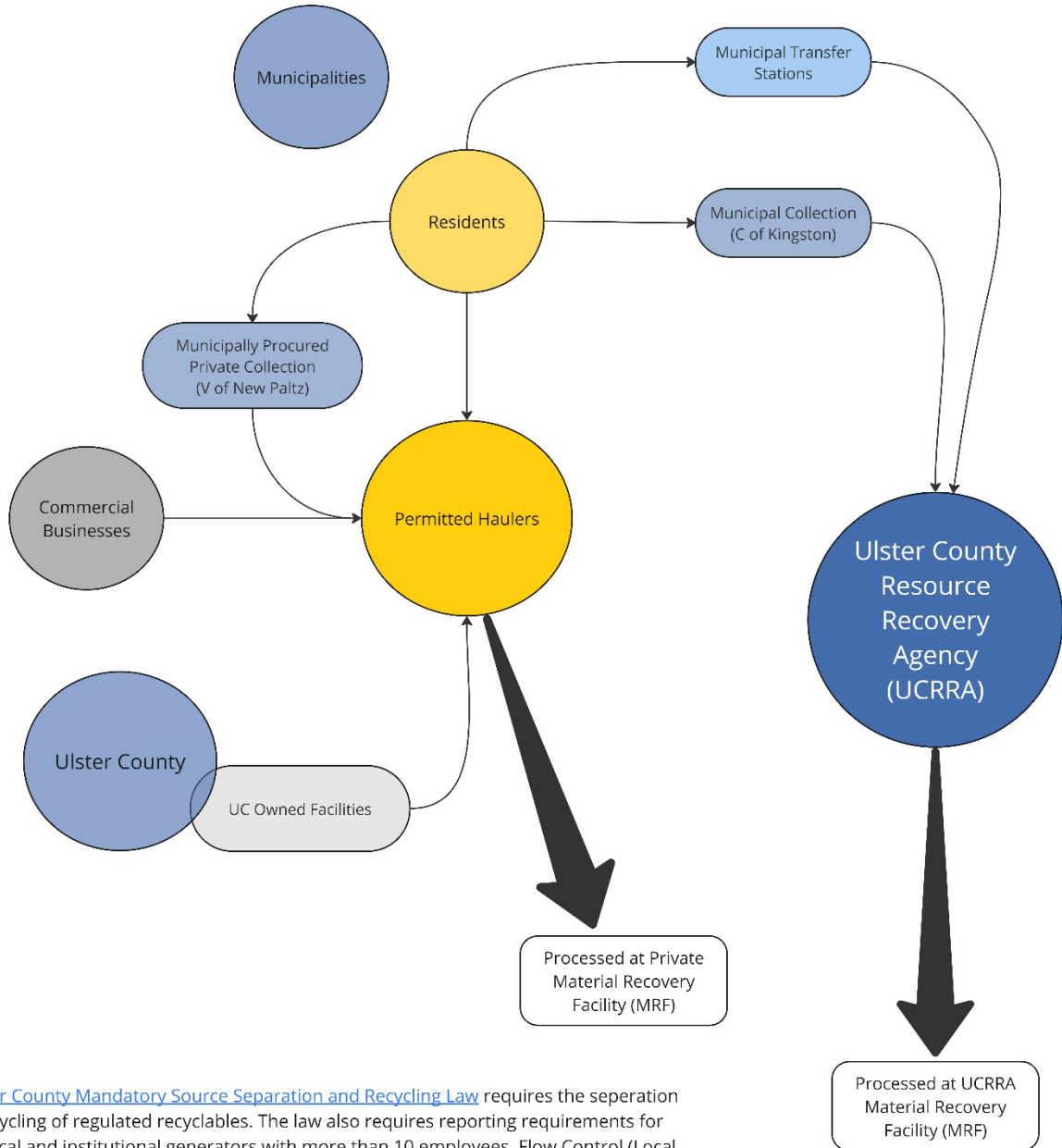
In addition to MSW, the total waste stream consists of construction and demolition (C&D) debris, non-hazardous industrial waste, and biosolids. In fact, statewide in 2018, New York generated 42.2 million tons of total waste. Of the 42.2 million tons of total waste stream generation, MSW accounted for 45%, C&D debris 46%, non-hazardous industrial waste 5%, and biosolids 4%. In Ulster County, C&D remains unregulated, and all figures related to its generation and disposal are self-reported and unverified. In New York State it is estimated that residential waste accounts for 54% of MSW and commercial/ institutional waste constitutes the remaining 46%. The state remained essentially at the same disposal rate of pounds of MSW per person per day in 2018 (4.09) as it was in 2008 (4.10). After an initial decline in the disposal rate, resulting in a drop of 10% in 2012, the disposal rate for MSW steadily rose, returning to the initial rate.

Enforcement of Source Separation and Recycling Law

- Violations of the source separation law regarding regulated recyclables must be identified and charged.
- Contamination percentages must be accurately tracked, and the data must be studied.
- The Enforcement Officer position has long been vacant. The Committee believes the diversion strategy may require additional enforcement capacity.
- The Independent Administrative Hearing Officer is funded and filled but has not been utilized.



UCRRA Reform Committee
 August 2024
 Regulated Recyclables Flow



The [Ulster County Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Law](#) requires the separation and recycling of regulated recyclables. The law also requires reporting requirements for commercial and institutional generators with more than 10 employees. Flow Control (Local Law No. 10 of 2012), does NOT apply to regulated recyclables

SAMPLE ANALYSIS OF MSW STREAM BY WEIGHT

UCRRA	NYS	WASTE MATERIAL
25%	32%	Paper  
28%	17%	Food Scraps  
19%	14%	Plastics  
2%	7%	Yard Trimmings  
3%	7%	Metals  
4%	5%	Textiles  
3%	4%	Glass  
3%	3%	Wood  
14%	10%	Miscellaneous  

The results of this analysis identify the percentages of municipal solid waste that would likely be reduced from disposal with increased diversion methods being utilized.

Organics Composting

Ulster County Executive Metzger's Executive Order Number 1 of 2023 sets a goal that all organic materials be diverted from either landfills or incinerators by 2030. This includes organics from food waste and yard waste and comprises approximately 30 percent of the waste stream.

There are 19 Municipal Recycling Drop Off Centers (MRDC, also known as municipal transfer stations) spread throughout Ulster County. The Committee recommends the creation of a Hub and Spoke System as described by UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider, in which those municipal centers continue operating, with additional support from UCRRA to streamline and systematize operations (the spokes), including in the facilitation of organics composting.

The transfer stations would continue to operate independently with additional support and guidance from UCRRA. Given the diversity of Ulster County and its vast rural geographic area, different approaches to local composting systems would be needed to meet individual local needs. The City of Kingston, with curbside composting, created a different system than the Town of Hurley, which contracted with Greenway Inc. to pilot a composting center at its town MRDC. It is expected that there would be wide variability among the towns, supported by the UCRRA and regulated by county-wide legislation.

Reuse Innovation Program

Source: [New Paltz Reuse Center Celebrates Grand Opening - The New Paltz Oracle](#) October 25, 2012



With Resolution 470 of 2022, the UC Legislature commissioned a report authorizing The Reuse Innovation Center Planning Study. The RIC would have been centrally located and would enhance, rather than replace, the services and reductions attained at the MRDCs. A draft report on the RIC was released in late 2023.

Source: RIC report, page 2

“Our working definition of the RIC is an ecosystem of enterprises, programs and projects, which can be any combination of public or private entities, that reuse materials in their original or similar form through craft or light industrial approaches, with one or more physical locations that can also house an array of supplemental businesses and projects that add value, such as training and repair services. This contrasts with a waste recovery park, which is designed for industrial recycling and reprocessing of materials into new and different ones.”

The Committee favors referring to the Reuse Innovation Center as the Reuse Innovation Center and Program to avoid misunderstanding the proposal as solely a centrally located edifice. Maximizing participation of an already successful system with the town transfer stations is preferred. A Reuse Innovation Center and Program is an evolution of the RIC, to reflect the diversity of Ulster County and allow for greater management flexibility.

The Committee unanimously supports the creation of a Reuse Innovation Center and Program (RICP) as a Hub and Spoke System with centralized locations (the municipal transfer stations) as the spokes and the UCRRA facility being the hub or centralized point of operation.

Construction and Demolition Debris

The solid waste system is in urgent need of investment to enhance its capacity to divert materials, notably construction and demolition debris (C&D). C&D comprises approximately 20 percent of the overall waste stream managed by the UCRRA in Ulster County.

The Committee underscores the critical importance of implementing effective separation of C&D waste at transfer stations. Citing changes in state law in 2019, the UCRRA discontinued accepting source-separated C&D waste material from the municipal transfer stations. Allowing adequately equipped towns to separate C&D debris at their transfer station facilities, rather than relying solely on commercial haulers, could prove advantageous. The Committee notes residential C&D homeowner waste is currently largely managed by municipal transfer stations as municipal solid waste. In order to reach the diversion goals of UC Executive Order 1 of 2023 and the NYS Solid Waste Management Plan, C&D will eventually need to be regulated and source separated. The Committee further supports legislation requiring that any projects utilizing public funding evaluate reconstruction before demolition and demonstrate a viable strategy for waste reduction.

Infrastructure

The Ulster County Materials Recovery Facility requires investment and modernization. Many items which can be recycled by other jurisdictions and private sector recyclers are not currently able to be recycled in Ulster County. New technologies could expand accepted recyclables including an expansion of acceptable plastics. The UCRRA should pursue maximum recycling capacity. The Committee believes that waste diversion should always be the first priority. The cost of disposal and the environmental savings outweigh the potential profit loss. This topic also ties into the topic of enforcement. Regulated recyclables should always be removed from the MSW waste stream. Improvements and upgrading of infrastructure can help with that process.

Additionally, education must be expanded and prioritized. There is confusion at the local transfer stations resulting in wish-cycling and contamination. Many mistakenly consider the chasing arrows symbol to indicate that an item is recyclable. Yet, in reality, it is a manufacturing symbol detailing the type of plastic used.

Event Days for Collection of Electronics, Household Hazardous Waste, Paint, Mattresses and Upholstered Furniture, Shredding Events, and Plastic Film Waste



The UCRRA currently holds events at its main facility, the New Paltz transfer station, and the DEC Region 3 headquarters in New Paltz. The UCRRA must hold regular event days for the collection of these items in diverse locations throughout the County. Events only held in New Paltz, and the Town of Ulster will not result in satisfactory diversion practices. These must be regularly held and made accessible to all residents of the County.

Source: [Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency approves Finance Committee – Daily Freeman](#)

December 2, 2023

Education

All parties involved in the collection and management of waste need to partner together to educate the public about waste, waste diversion, and waste reduction.

The UCRRA should hold meetings with municipal officials at least quarterly. for the purpose of education, updates, networking and sharing of ideas for improvements to municipal recycling drop off centers.

Some examples of education topics and actions to help cultivate an eco-conscious mentality and spread the message that you can be more sustainable in your daily life include:

- **Avoid single-use items.** Invest in reusable products such as water bottles, coffee mugs, food storage containers, metal straws and more. Save money over time while avoiding contributing to landfill waste.
- **Buy less.** Before buying something, consider whether it is a need or a want. Limit purchases to needed items to avoid overconsumption of goods.
- **Buy used.** If a person needs to make a purchase, consider buying the item used.
- **Compost.** Limit putting organics into landfills and help rejuvenate crops and nutrient-deprived lands.
- **Recycle.** Divert your waste from landfills by learning how to recycle correctly. It will help decrease your carbon footprint and help mitigate climate change.
- **Buy local.** Reduce the use of resources and energy that goes into transporting and manufacturing items by purchasing locally. Consider buying food from the farmer's market to reduce packaging and transportation costs.
- **Upcycle.** Upcycling reuses existing products in a new way instead so they can stay out of the landfill. People can get creative by upcycling themselves or buying upcycled products.
- **Go electronic.** Sign up for electronic bills and other notifications rather than printed and mailed communications.

Section 5: Disposal

Ulster County Executive Metzger's Executive Order Number 1 of 2023 states Ulster County shall endeavor to divert 100% of organic waste from landfills and incineration by 2030.

Among residual non-organic compostable waste materials, there is likely to be a significant amount of plastic not currently able to be recycled for reasons of cost, chemical composition, or both. Thus, the Committee calls attention to the idea of a monofil; a facility that would accept and store only plastic materials that cannot be recycled or broken down. New technology offers hope that such plastics could one day be reconstituted into useful material or degraded into natural conditions.

Given the possibility that Ulster County's current disposal site Seneca Meadows Landfill could close in coming years and the looming capacity crisis in New York State, it is therefore essential that UCRRA examine all options for disposal of materials that cannot be managed through diversion. As materials diversions strategies ramp up, the residual tonnage of MSW will be diminished. It is unlikely, however, that true zero waste will be attained. Even if the UCRRA adopted treatment technology, there would be residual waste that would require disposal.



Building a local landfill, either for the region, or the county, after exhaustive materials diversion, is viewed as the most cost effective and environmentally effective option. Such a solution would involve negotiating substantial host community benefits. In identifying locations for a local or regional landfill, the Committee believes a smaller, reduced sized, 50-to-60-acre landfill for specific materials can be obtained with maximum diversion taking

place. In studying the siting of such a landfill all phases of impacts must be studied, not just hydrogeologic studies.

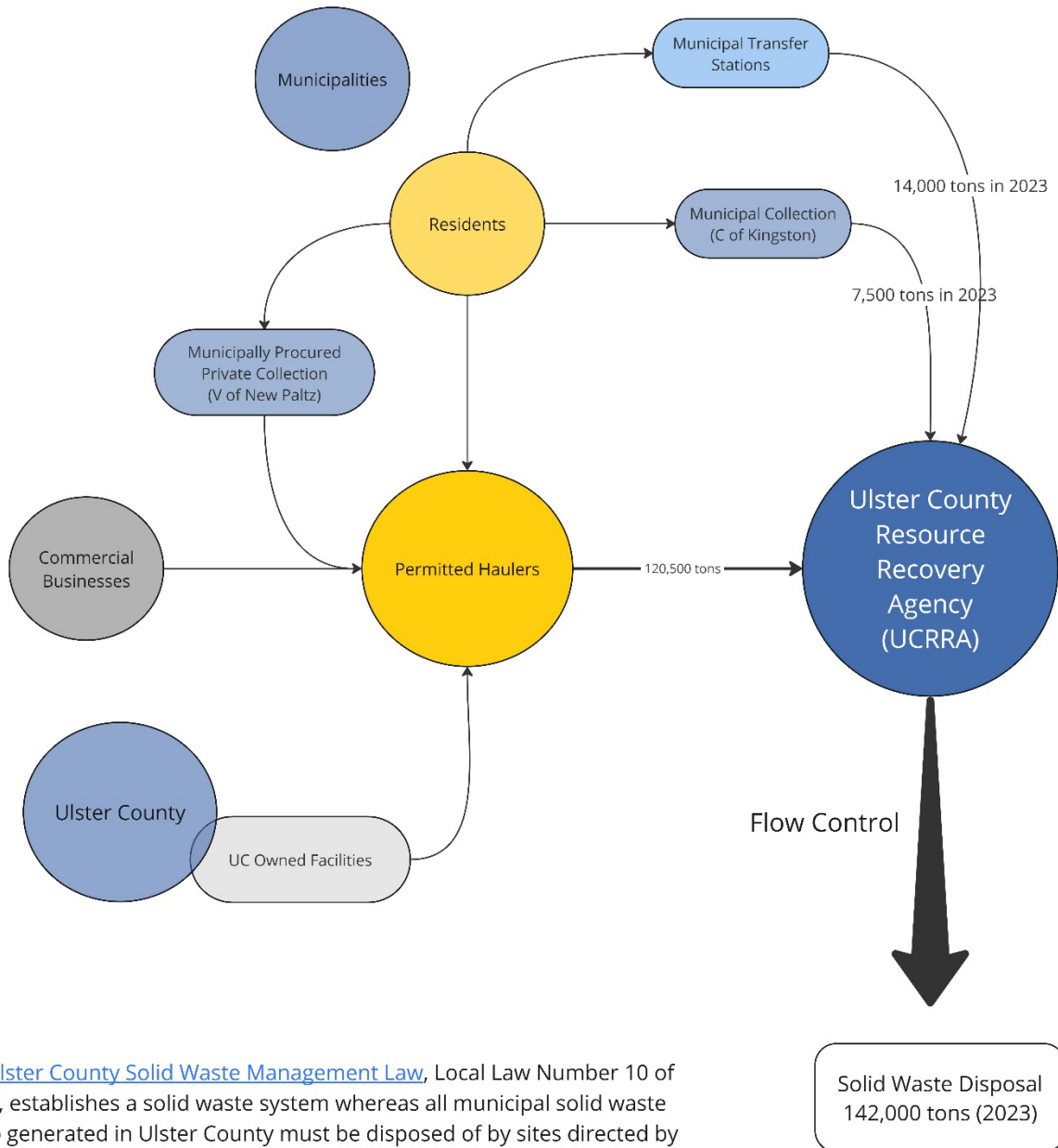
There must be an iterative process and host-community engagement for any site considered. The benefits to the community must be identified and agreed upon to mitigate impact on the community. Oneida Herkimer provides a stellar example in host community benefit and partnership. A modern-day landfill is not the landfill of decades ago. They can be operated safely and environmentally sustainable, including methane capture and energy maximization. Estimates place the timeframe for permitting at up to 10 years but acknowledge that much of that is the political internal work of the County. Regional collaborations with neighboring counties remain a possibility, however the Committee strongly believes that self-reliance is critical and forward movement should not be forestalled. Any landfill sites should not accept outside waste but should be reserved for the county and/or its regional partners.

As stated in the 2020 Ulster County Solid Waste Management Plan

“The combination of technologies and practices utilized by a [solid waste] planning unit are dependent on many factors, the most important being integration with existing facilities, access, and economics, all of which will be considered as new or alternative technologies are evaluated.” -pg. 80

The Committee believes the UCRRA must consider advanced technologies for waste management and to meet climate goals, but stresses that a local landfill is currently the only proven method of disposal that disposes of 100 percent of the residual waste and does so in the most economical and ecologically sound manner. The Oneida-Herkimer landfill is an example of such a facility. Recent Ulster County resolutions highlight the political divisiveness on this subject and underscore the need for an agency independent of politics. These resolutions are counter-productive given the unknowns of changing technology. Additionally given UCRRA status as an independent state public benefit corporation, there is uncertainty whether such resolutions have binding legal standing.

August 2024
Solid Waste Flow



The [Ulster County Solid Waste Management Law](#), Local Law Number 10 of 2012, establishes a solid waste system whereas all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Ulster County must be disposed of by sites directed by the County. This system is also referred to as "flow control."

**Disposal options highlighted in the
Ulster County Local Solid Waste Management Plan 2020**

Technology	Percent of Waste Stream	Cost per ton
Export to Landfill	100%	\$100-\$120
Export by Rail	100%	\$60-\$120
Local Landfill	100%	\$60-\$90
Biomass	70-90%	\$103
Gasification	70-90%	\$226
EfW	70-90%	\$249
MSW Composting	50-60%	\$125-\$170
Dry AD	50-60%	\$151
Composting	30-50%	\$87-\$125
Wet AD	15-25%	\$189
Pyrolysis	15-25%	\$238
Ethanol	15-25%	\$239

Section 6: Intergovernmental Relations

The Ulster County Legislature has been a leader in adoption of legislation addressing waste management diversion and disposal.

Examples of Recent Resolutions and Laws Adopted

Following is a partial list of resolutions and local laws adopted by the Ulster County Legislature and approved by the County Executive that provide for mandatory source separation and recycling as well as continuous improvement of the County's solid waste management regulations.



Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Law

Local Law No. 4 of 2010: Amending Local Law Number 8 of 1991 as Amended By Local Law Number 8 of 2007 Ulster County Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Law

Amendments to Ulster County Solid Waste Management Law

Local Law No. 10 of 2012: Amending Local Law Number 9 of 1991, Ulster County Solid Waste Management Law

Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission

Resolution No. 394, November 18, 2014: Establishing the Ulster County Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission

Use of Polystyrene Foam Food Service Ware

Local Law No. 4 of 2015: Regulating the Use of Polystyrene Foam Disposable Food Service Ware by Food Service Establishments in Ulster County

Bring Your Own Bag (BYOBag) Act

Local Law No. 5 of 2018: Promoting The Use Of Reusable Bags And Regulating The Use Of Plastic Carryout Bags And Recyclable Paper Carryout Bags
 Local Law No. 1 of 2019: Amending Local Law No. 5 of 2018, A Local Law Promoting The Use Of Reusable Bags And Regulating The Use Of Plastic Carryout Bags And Recyclable Paper Carryout Bags

**Skip The Straw Act**

Local Law No. 2 of 2019: Requiring Restaurants And Fast-Food Service Establishments Provide Plastic Beverage Straws, Plastic Utensils, and Single Serving Condiment Packaging Solely Upon Request

Zero Waste Community

Resolution 451, November 19, 2019: Establishing A Policy That Ulster County Shall Be A Zero Waste Community

Mandatory Food Scrap Composting

Resolution 444, November 19, 2019: Adopting Local Law No. 5 Of 2019, A Local Law Amending The Code Of The County Of Ulster To Include Mandatory Food Scraps Composting By Large Generators

Resolution 224, June 16, 2020: Adopting Local Law No. 6 Of 2020, A Local Law Amending Various Provisions Of Local Law No. 1 Of 2020, A Local Law Amending The Code Of The County Of Ulster To Include Mandatory Food Scraps Composting By Large Generators

Urging New York State Legislature To Increase Recycling And Reduce Municipal Waste

Resolution 243.1, August 18, 2020: Urging New York State Legislature To Increase Recycling And Reduce Municipal Waste Management Costs By Expanding The NYS Returnable Container Act

Ulster County's Local Solid Waste Management Plan

Resolution 242, February 16, 2021: Approving Ulster County's Local Solid Waste Management Plan

Environmental Compliance Manager

Resolution 249, June 15, 2021: Amending The 2021 Ulster County Budget To Fund Environmental Compliance Manager Position

Food Waste

Resolution 551, December 21, 2021: Adopting Local Law No. 8 Of 2021, A Local Law Amending The Code Of The County Of Ulster, Chapter 304, Solid Waste, Article IV, Food Waste Prevention And Recovery, In Relation To Composting

Reuse Innovation Center

Resolution 469, September 20, 2022: Establishing Capital Project No. 646 – Reuse Innovation Center Planning Study

Packaging and Printed Paper

Resolution 7, February 13, 2024: Urging The Expedious Establishment Of A New York State Stewardship Program That Includes Both Packaging And Printed Paper

Committee Recommendations

The Committee recommends the following initiatives, building on Ulster County’s demonstrated environmental leadership.

The Ulster County Legislature and the UCRRA should adopt the Zero Waste Plan (ZWIP)

In 2020, Resolution 265 proposed to Establish A Zero Waste Implementation Plan for Ulster County. Ulster County’s 2020 Local Solid Waste Management Plan includes mention of the Zero Waste Implementation Plan. The goal is to eliminate waste through responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of products and materials.

Here are some key points:

Vision: The plan aims to change consumer behavior to reduce waste and ensure discarded materials are recovered for their highest and best use.

Guiding Principles: It emphasizes the conservation of resources without burning or discharging harmful substances into the environment.

Action Steps: The plan includes educating and engaging the community, adopting supportive policies, and implementing Zero Waste Action Plans.

The resolution was withdrawn by the sponsor and an ad-hoc committee assumed work on the plan. Significant work has been accomplished on a plan with the ad-hoc committee and collaboration of the Ulster County Department of the Environment. In addition, the UCRRA holds monthly meetings of their Zero Waste Committee.

A collaborative effort building on the work already established should be prioritized to adopt a Zero Waste Implementation Plan for Ulster County. County government and the UCRRA should work together, acknowledging the critical importance of both stakeholders in the success of the Plan.

Memorializing Resolutions

The Committee recognizes that some action is beyond the authority of Ulster County government's ability to act directly. In those cases, we encourage that Ulster County's voice be heard and suggest that county government advocate to the NYS Legislature for the advancement of the following:

- The Bigger Bottle Bill
- Producer responsibility for packaging of materials
- Expansion of mandatory paint take back at all retailers with a square footage threshold that sell paint
- Statewide mattress recycling modeled after Connecticut and California

Full Membership of the Recycling Oversight Committee

The Legislature should fill all positions of the Recycling Oversight Committee.

Increase Membership of UCRRA Board (see page 34 for explanation in chart format)

The Committee proposes changes to the current UCRRA Board of Directors. Currently there are five members, appointed by the Chair of the Legislature and approved by the Legislature for three-year staggered terms of office. One member must be recommended by the minority.

The Committee proposes an increase to a nine-member Board, as detailed below, and recommends the Legislature advance a home rule request to the State Assembly and Senate to enact these changes.

The small size of the current five member UCRRA Board has hindered the organization when absences and resignations can prevent a quorum from acting. Furthermore, the appointment process leads to significant board turnover, affecting continuity of leadership and the development of experience at the board level.

Proposal

- Appointments should be made starting April 1st and expiring March 31st. In practice current appointments expire on December 31st but are rarely made before March of the following year. This has been done in deference to incoming Legislative bodies. UCRRA board members currently serve until replaced and are regularly appointed to diminished terms due to the delay. This recommendation attempts to acknowledge the current reality and rectify the situation.

County Legislature Appointments – Five members

- No more than two of the five Legislative appointments may be elected officials or county employees at one time.
- Appointments made by the Energy, Environment, and Sustainability Committee and with confirmation by Legislature.

County Executive Appointments – Three members

- No more than one elected official or county employee may be appointed at one time.
- Appointments do not require confirmation

Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors & Mayors (UCATS&M) Appointment – One member

- Elected officials or employees of Ulster County may be appointed.
- Appointments do not require confirmation

All 9 Board appointees

- At all times, one of the nine appointed board members **must reside** in a municipality where a UCRRA facility is located (currently Town of Ulster or Town of New Paltz)
- In making the appointments care should be given to maximize the appointments to be geographically diverse throughout the County

Appointing authority		Initial Appt. Term at New Legislation		3/31/2026	3/31/2027	3/31/2028	3/31/2029	3/31/2030
Legislature Expiring 12/31/2024 member	1	3 years	Appoint on 4/1/25			Term End		
Legislature Expiring 12/31/2024 member	2	3 years	Appoint on 4/1/25			Term End		
Legislature	3	Continue Current		Term End			Term End	
Legislature	4	Continue Current		Term End			Term End	
Legislature	5	Continue Current			Term End			Term End
Executive	6	1 year	Appoint on 4/1/25	Term End			Term End	
Executive	7	2 years	Appoint on 4/1/25		Term End			Term End
Executive	8	3 years	Appoint on 4/1/25			Term End		
UCATS&M	9	2 years	Appoint on 4/1/25		Term End			Term End

Legislature Retain 5 appointments, current Board members finish individual 3-year terms as currently appointed
New Members appointed by the Environment Committee/Confirmed by majority
Legislature vote

EXECUTIVE At any time, no more than 1 appointed member may be an elected official
OR an employee of Ulster County government

UCATS&M Appointed by the UCATS&M

Section 7: Economics

Contract

The Committee determined that the 1992 contract between Ulster County and the UCRRA has been largely successful as exemplified by the long duration of the agreement with minimal substantive changes. However, the original drafters of the agreement did not anticipate some of the changes in the waste management landscape. One major change during the period of the contract was the striking down of flow control legislation and then the reversal of that decision enabling Ulster County to ultimately adopt flow control legislation in 2012. Another area of substantial change has been the County's adoption of legislation, regulating certain types of waste such as single use plastic bags and food waste.

That said, we recommend the following changes be included in the upcoming contract negotiations.

1. Bonding Cap. The majority of the Committee, with two dissenting, recommends that the contract be amended to remove limitations on the UCRRA bonding authority cap. The cap expressed a lack of confidence in, and independence of, the UCRRA, and the Committee has concerns that the cap may not pass legal muster because the UCRRA is a separate independent public authority. Removal of the cap is necessary to empower the UCRRA to make investments as needed to address the evolving solid waste, recycling, and diversion needs of the County. The Committee found that while the County desired to add additional responsibilities to the UCRRA's portfolio, the bonding cap hampered UCRRA's ability to raise capital to address these responsibilities, and as discussed below, so did expectations of a zero net service fee.

2. Diversion. In its current form the contract does not identify waste diversion as a goal, unless there is a profitable market for the product, as is the case for most regulated recycling. The goal of maximizing waste diversion needs to be incorporated into the agreement with a recognition that these activities may add costs without substantial offsetting revenues and may require capital investment.

The contract should address challenging waste diversion areas directly. Both food waste and construction and demolition (C&D) waste are two areas that do not fall into the regulated recyclable definition yet add volume to our solid waste tonnage. The diversion of these waste streams requires special consideration and will require additional legislation. The contract should anticipate the potential for additional waste stream regulation in the pursuit of diversion. There are economic markets available for these diverted items.

3. Net Service Fee. Prior to the adoption of flow control legislation in 2012, the UCRRA consistently ran a deficit and as a result the County was responsible for an annual net service fee. Between 1998 and 2012, the County paid a total of \$31,899,107 in Net Service Fees, which included repayment of debt for the closure of municipal landfills. Once flow control was adopted the UCRRA ceased running deficits and was able to fund their expenses completely out of operating revenues. Both the County and the UCRRA adopted a zero net service fee at all costs mentality that has prohibited the UCRRA from taking on additional necessary responsibilities. An example of this is the implementation of the Food Waste Prevention and Recovery Act and the UCRRA'S reticence to take on enforcement of the law.

The Committee recommends that the language of the contract be modified to remove emphasis on net revenue but retain the emphasis on minimizing costs where possible. In particular, the Committee recommends consideration of the external costs and benefits associated with diversion and addressing climate impacts.

One time or ongoing costs associated with meeting legislative goals can be addressed either through the net service fee approach, or through a separate contract with the UCRRA, which could be used to fund these operations. An example is improved source separation equipment at the MRF which is a capital expenditure that would add to the UCRRA's costs but may improve the marketability of recycled products.

4. Legislative Oversight and Budget Approval. The current contract requires monthly reporting of tonnage and financials to the Legislature. This reporting fell off over time with the changing leadership of the UCRRA. The Committee recommends that these reporting requirements be renewed, with the addition of diversion efforts and enforcement activity being added to monthly reporting.

The current contract mandates legislative review of the UCRRA budget annually but provides a set of timelines that do not account for other mandatory budget timelines of the UCRRA and fail to consider potential net service fees. The UCRRA budget is presented to the Legislature's Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee and the Committee's inaction is considered approval.

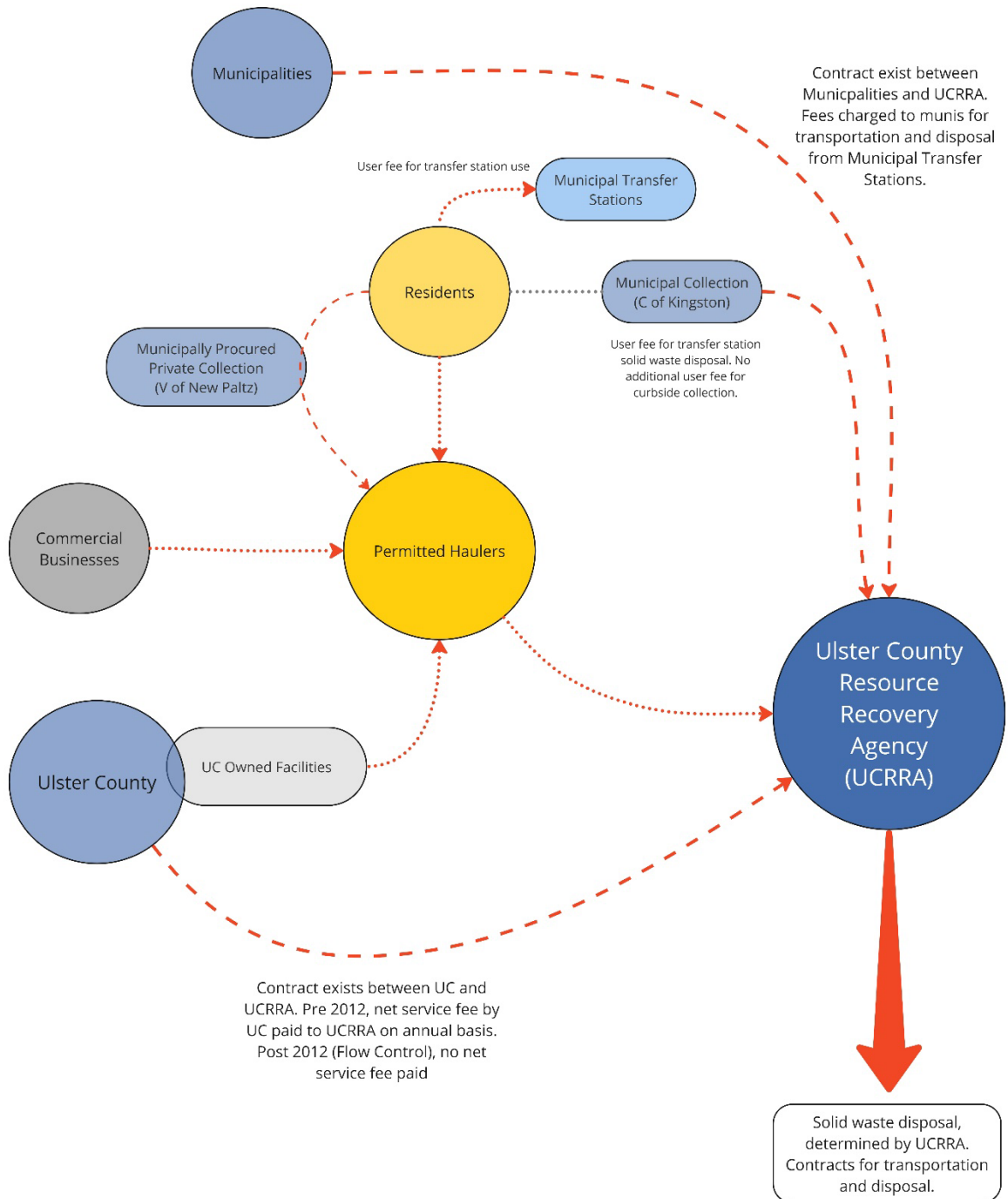
UCRRA can only present a net service fee bill for a prior year once its expenses and revenues are known (and preferably audited numbers), which is in the spring of the following year. Assuming the net service fee is paid in the fiscal year in which it is received rather than incurred, it would require both the UCRRA and the County to budget a potential net service fee in advance. Thus, as responsibilities are added to the UCRRA's portfolio, budgets of both entities may need to be amended to address these changes.

5. Enforcement. The Committee recommends that the contract explicitly detail enforcement responsibilities for all solid waste management laws existing at the time of contract execution and those adopted throughout the term of the contract. New enforcement areas will result in additional costs that should be quantified when the legislation is adopted and anticipated by way of a net service fee or additional contract between the parties. Enforcement matters should also be regularly reported on to the Legislature and made public to have a deterrence effect.

UCRRA Reform Committee

August 2024

Contracting and Fees



Budget

2024 UCRRA-Ulster County Budget Timeline

Fiscal Year runs 1/1 to 12/31

- 4/1 Annual Audit uploaded to PARIS as per Public Authorities Accountability Act (State law)
- 6/24 Initial Departmental budgets are due (As per Executive internal deadline)
- 7/15 Presentation of draft UCRRA budget to the Legislature (UCRRA Contract)
- 8/1 Final Departmental budgets are due (As per Executive internal deadline)
- 8/15 Legislative approval or modification recommendations of UCRRA Budget (UCRRA Contract)
- 9/15 UCRRA accepting or rejecting Legislative modifications (UCRRA Contract)
- 9/30 UCRRA to notify County of net service fee calculations for prior two six-month periods ending March 1 and September 1 (UCRRA Contract)
- 10/4 Submission of Executive Budget (Last Friday in October as per Ulster County Charter)
- 11/1 Budget uploaded to PARIS as per Public Authorities Accountability Act (State law)
- 11/22 County holds public hearings (No later than Third Friday in November as per Ulster County Charter)
- 12/12 Legislature adopts County budget (Second Thursday in December as per Ulster County Charter)

Proposed Budget Approval Schedule

Fiscal Year runs 1/1 to 12/31

- 4/1 Annual Audit uploaded to PARIS as per Public Authorities Accountability Act (State law)
- 6/24 Initial Departmental budgets are due (TBD as set by Executive internal deadline)
- 8/1 UCRRA presents estimated Net Service Fee estimate for upcoming budget year to the County Executive, Legislative Chair, Chair of Ways and Means, and Chair of Energy, Environment and Sustainability (proposed NEW UCRRA Contract)
- 8/1 final Departmental budgets are due (TBD as per Executive internal deadline)
- 8/15 UCRAA Board adopts preliminary budget on or about this date and presents draft adopted budget to the County Executive, Legislative Chair, Chair of Ways and Means, and Chair of Energy, Environment and Sustainability (proposed NEW UCRRA Contract)
- 8/15-
- 8/30 A joint meeting of the Ways and Means Committee, and the Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee considers the draft UCRRA budget and makes recommendations (proposed NEW UCRRA Contract)
- 10/4 Submission of Executive Budget (First Friday in October as per Ulster County Charter)
- 11/1 UCRRA Budget uploaded to PARIS as per Public Authorities Accountability Act (State law)
- 11/22 County holds public hearings (No later than Third Friday in November as per Ulster County Charter)
- 12/12 Legislature adopts County budget (Second Thursday in December as per Ulster County Charter)

Section 8:

Establishment and History of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency Reform Committee

The **Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency Reform Committee** was established with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2023-549 on October 17, 2023, offered by Legislators Maloney and Stewart, as a special committee of the Ulster County Legislature *“to review UCRRA enabling legislation, operations, policies, and the contractual agreement with Ulster County and recommend reform measures to the Legislature”*.

The resolution further specified the Committee’s membership and appointing authority.

Appointed members are as follows:

1. The Chair of the Legislature or the Chair’s legislative member designee
Former Chair of the Legislature Tracey Bartels
2. The Chair of the Ulster County Legislature’s Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee or Energy, Environment and Sustainability Committee member designee
Legislator Manna Jo Greene
3. A legislative member appointed by the Minority Leader of the Ulster County Legislature
Former Legislator Laura Petit
4. The County Executive or representative appointed by the County Executive
Deputy County Executive Amanda LaValle
5. The County Comptroller or representative appointed by the County Comptroller
Comptroller March Gallagher
6. The President of the Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors or Ulster County Association of Town Supervisors and Mayors member designee
Former Supervisor Michael Baden
7. The Chair of the UCRRA Board of Directors or UCRRA Board of Directors member designee
Former UCRRA Chair Andrew Ghiorse, was appointed and resigned on January 25, 2024, He was replaced by **UCRRA Vice-Chair Jim Gordon**

The Committee convened their first meeting on December 7, 2023, at the call of Legislature Chair Bartels. The members elected Supervisor Baden to chair the Committee. Chair Bartels was elected Vice-Chair.

The Committee convened 23 public meetings.

Meetings of the Committee have included the participation of UCRRA Executive Director Marc Rider; UCRRA Board Chair Regis Obijeski; Ulster County legislators; Kelly Turturro, Regional Director, NYS DEC Region 3; John Petronella, Permit Administrator, NYS DEC Region 3; David Pollack, Regional Enforcement Engineer, NYS DEC Region 3; and former Legislative Counsel David Gordon.

Letters inviting Ulster County licensed haulers were mailed. None participated or offered comments.

Section 9: Establishment and History of the UCRRA

UCRRA Mission Statement – To protect public health and the environment and to promote sustainable materials management practices in Ulster County by efficiently managing solid waste materials with a focus on resource conservation.

The ***Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA or Agency)*** serves as the solid waste planning unit for all municipalities within Ulster County. Local municipalities, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), private waste haulers, neighboring solid waste planning units, and private facility owners all play important roles in Ulster County’s current and future management of solid waste and recyclable materials.

The UCRRA’s stated goals in the LSWMP are intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. Reduce waste generation to move towards zero waste.
2. Use materials in the waste stream for their highest and best use.
3. Maximize reuse and recycling.
4. Engage state agencies, authorities, businesses, institutions, and residents in sustainable materials management programs.
5. Maximize the amount of energy recovered from the materials managed.
6. Engage manufacturers in end-of-life management of the products and packages they put into the marketplace with product stewardship programs.
7. Encourage self-reliance and sustainability at the local level.
8. Empower consumers to be accountable by encouraging smart purchasing, local purchasing, and maintenance (i.e., Repair Cafes).
9. Develop a solid waste management system that is sustainable and enables Ulster County to be self-reliant and responsible for the whole waste cycle.

In the mid-1980’s, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation began initiatives to close existing landfills that were no longer compliant with the newly updated solid waste regulations. NYSDEC enacted strict requirements for the siting, construction, and operation of disposal facilities. Consequently, many local communities found it beyond their financial and managerial capability to continue to dispose of waste in traditional ways. Local municipalities requested that the Ulster County government assume responsibility for solid waste management.

In 1986, the Ulster County Legislature obtained authorization from the State Legislature with the adoption of legislation (*Public Authority law Article 8, Title 13-G*) for the creation of the Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (the “Agency”), a public benefit corporation formed for the purpose of developing, financing, and implementing a comprehensive Countywide solid waste management program. The Agency’s organizational structure consists of a five-member Board of Directors; an Executive Director; Agency Counsel; and thirty administrative and operations personnel.

UCRRA oversaw the closure of multiple municipal landfills in Ulster County. UCRRA operates two permitted facilities: the Ulster Transfer Station and the New Paltz Transfer Station

Since 1997, UCRRA has been responsible for providing post-closure services to two closed landfills in Ulster and New Paltz. The UCRRA manages the landfill leachate collection and monitors groundwater quality and other environmental controls at these closed landfills.

The UCRRA Materials Recovery Facility was constructed in 2002 and processes dual stream recyclables from local municipalities or commercial businesses/institutions. The permitted capacity of the MRF is 90 tons/day, with storage capacity of 400 tons. UCRRA’s Recycling Outreach Team offers educational tours of the facility, and many other services to promote recycling, composting, and waste reduction throughout the County.

On December 18, 2012, pursuant to Local Law Number 10 of 2012, Flow Control was signed into law by the Ulster County Executive. Flow Control requires that all municipal solid waste generated in Ulster County, including curbside collection, must be directed to UCRRA. C&D, scrap metal, organics, and recyclables are not regulated through the flow control law and can therefore be managed at other facilities not designated by the UCRRA.

The UCRRA Organics Recovery Facility was constructed in 2012 as a small pilot project and was expanded in 2016 and in 2020. The Organics Recovery Facility processes source-separated organics (food scraps) from commercial partners using Extended Aerated Static pile method of industrial-scale composting. The food scraps are blended with wood chips, processed over 90 days, and are manufactured into an STA certified compost product that the Agency sells in bulk. In 2021, UCRRA was recognized as the Small-Scale Compost Manufacturer of the Year by the U.S. Composting Council.

Section 10: Background History of Waste Management

New York State History

** Source: 2023 New York State Solid Waste Management Plan*

The NYS Solid Waste Management Act of 1988, signed into law by then Governor Mario M. Cuomo, required municipalities to adopt local laws or ordinances requiring the separation and segregation of recyclable or reusable materials from solid waste by no later than September 1, 1992.

This Solid Waste Management Policy defined solid waste management priorities in New York State as:

- ✓ First, to reduce the amount of solid waste generated.
- ✓ Second, to reuse material for the purpose for which it was originally intended or to recycle material that cannot be reused.
- ✓ Third, to recover, in an environmentally acceptable manner, energy from solid waste that cannot be economically and technically reused or recycled; and
- ✓ Fourth, to dispose of solid waste that is not being reused, recycled or from which energy is not being recovered, by land burial or other methods approved by the Department (from New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) 27-0106.1).

Each year, the New York State Returnable Container Act, or "Bottle Bill," recycles more than 4.5 billion plastic, glass, and aluminum beverage containers, totaling over 300,000 tons of recyclables, and eliminating approximately 200,000 metric tons of CO₂, the equivalent of taking 9,000 garbage trucks off the road for one year.

Additionally, DEC is strengthening the state's solid waste regulations (Part 360). New York has adopted product stewardship laws using an extended producer responsibility model that requires the take-back and reuse or recycling of electronic waste, rechargeable batteries, and mercury-containing thermostats.

Innovative initiatives the state has implemented to further reduce waste include:

Organics management program with organics recycling facilities to reduce and divert food waste from the waste stream and reduce emissions.

- The Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law passed in 2019 and effective January 1, 2022, requires large generators of food scraps (those with an annual average of two tons per week or more) to donate excess edible food and recycle all remaining food scraps if they are within 25 miles of an organics recycler (composting facility, anaerobic digester, etc.). The goal of the law aims to both reduce waste and reduce emissions.
- The goal of the law aims to both reduce waste and reduce emissions.
- New York State Electronic Equipment Recycling and Reuse Act of 2010, a comprehensive electronic waste (e-waste) law that requires manufacturers who sell or offer for sale covered electronic equipment such as computers, computer peripherals, televisions, small scale servers, and small electronic equipment, to establish a convenient acceptance program for the collection, handling, and recycling or reuse of e-waste free of charge to most consumers. Since its implementation, more than 520 million pounds of electronic waste from New York consumers has been recycled or reused instead of being sent to landfills, waste combustion facilities, or other improper disposal methods.
- The New York State Rechargeable Battery Recycling Act requires manufacturers of covered rechargeable batteries to collect and recycle the batteries in a manufacturer-funded program at no cost to consumers. Consumers across the state have safely returned more than one million rechargeable batteries from 2013 - 2016.
- The New York State Mercury Thermostat Collection Act requires thermostat manufacturers to establish and maintain a program for the collection, transportation, recycling, and proper management of out-of-service mercury thermostats at no cost to New York State or consumers participating in the program. A total of 21,099 thermostats were collected from New York State consumers on behalf of manufacturers during the calendar years 2013 through 2016.

2023 New York State Solid Waste Management Plan

The most recently developed **2023 New York State Solid Waste Management Plan** is designed to guide collective efforts to reduce waste and the burden on communities from waste disposal, as well as to mitigate the emissions driving climate change. The Plan outlines strategies and methods to build circular economy, a more resilient supply chain, and a less wasteful future. New York State is aggressively advancing the implementation of the nation-leading Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). In New York State, waste is the fourth-largest contributing sector when considering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, representing 12% of annual emissions—only slightly less than the electricity sector, at 13%. To address climate change in the waste sector, New York State is encouraging a culture that advances sustainable materials management and supports a continuous cycle of use, reuse, and recycle. To protect communities and mitigate the worst effects of climate change, the 2023 Plan builds upon sustained efforts to reduce waste and advance the New York State's transition to the circular economy, helping to change New Yorkers' understanding of waste and their relationship to it. A circular economy carefully divests from disposal and instead supports processes, activities, and systems that make effective use of materials and prevent environmental degradation and economic loss by keeping valuable materials circulating in the economy.

The total waste stream includes MSW (waste from homes, offices, businesses, restaurants, stores, schools, etc. , commonly referred to as residential, commercial, and institutional waste); C&D debris (including all construction materials from new building construction, demolition, road construction, and construction excavation materials); non-hazardous industrial waste; and biosolids. The MSW portion of the waste stream is often the only portion of waste people think of, but, according to the 2023 New York State Solid Waste Management Plan, it is less than half (45%) of the total waste stream. It is slightly less than C&D debris, which constitutes 46% of the waste stream; non-hazardous industrial waste is 5%; with biosolids constituting 4%. The recycling rate for the total waste stream increased from about 36% in 2008, to 43% in 2018. However, there is more detailed information to consider when evaluating the four primary components of the total waste stream (MSW, C&D debris, industrial waste, and biosolids) separately. While, as noted above, the total waste stream recycling increased from 2008 to 2010, the MSW recycling rate remained relatively stable and even dipped slightly in 2017 and 2018. However, during

that same period, the C&D debris recycling rate rose considerably from 55% in 2008 to 64% in 2018. The significant increase in C&D debris recycling is the driver behind the increase in the overall total waste stream recycling rate. The MSW generated prior to recycling was 17.9 million tons in 2018.

Section 11: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM/ACRONYM	DEFINITION
C&D	Construction and Demolition
Committee	Ulster County Legislature UCRRA Reform Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
E-waste	Electronic Waste
GHG	Greenhouse Gasses
GUS	Greene, Ulster, Sullivan
HHW	Household Hazardous Waste
LSWMP	Local Solid Waste Management Plan
MRDC	Municipal Recycling Drop-off Center
MRF	Materials Recovery Facility
MSW	Municipal Solid Waste
Net Service Fee	The payment Ulster County must make to UCRRA, to ensure the Agency can balance its budget each fiscal year, as required under the current contract between UC/UCRRA
NYCRR	New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations
NYSDEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
PAYT	Pay As You Throw
PU	Planning Unit
SS	Single Stream
SSO	Source Separated Organics
SWMIC	Solid Waste Management Improvement Commission
TS	Transfer Station
UCRRA	Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency (UCRRA or Agency)
WTE	Waste to Energy

Section 12: Appendices

- A. UCRRA Contract
- B. DRAFT Zero Waste Implementation Plan
- C. Ulster County Municipal Recycling Drop Off Centers (MRDC)
- D. MRDC Summary
- E. Haulers Summary (Excel)

Appendices Web Links

UCRRA Reform Committee

- 1. Ulster County Legislature Resolution 549-2023 - Establishing UCRRA Reform Committee
[549 - 23 0.pdf \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
- 2. UCRRA Reform Committee Agendas/Minutes/Audio
[Energy, Environment And Sustainability | Ulster County Legislature \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)

Studies/Reports/Plans

- 3. 2023 NYS DEC Solid Waste Management Plan
[New York State Solid Waste Management Plan \(ny.gov\)](#)
- 4. Ulster County LSWMP 2020-2029
[Ulster\(Co\)_Final_LSWMP_2020-2029.2021_03_24.pdf](#)
- 5. ZERO WASTE 2020: Ulster County Vision Statement and Action Plan
[Res. No. 265 - Backup - Draft Zero Waste Implementation Plan.pdf \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
- 6. Ulster County Annual Solid Waste And Recycling Report Planning Unit Update 2019
[EXECUTIVE-SUMMARY-2019-ANNUAL-RECYCLING-REPORT.pdf \(ucrra.org\)](#)
- 7. Ulster County Reuse Innovation Center Strategic Plan and Feasibility Study Final Report
[113023-RIC-Final-Report-Draft-2 \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
- 8. Ulster County Comptroller's UCRRA Composting Audit
[Comptroller's UCRRA Composting Audit | Ulster County Comptroller \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
- 9. Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency Recycling Reporting template
[return forms to ucrra –P.O. BOX 6219 kingston ny 12402 apeo@ucrra.org \(fax\) 845-336-4129](#)

Legislation

10. NYS Public Authorities Law, Ulster County Resource Recover Agency Act
[New York Public Authorities Law Title 13-G – Ulster County Resource Recovery Agency](#)
11. Ulster County code, Chapter 304, Solid Waste
[Ulster County, NY Solid Waste \(ecode360.com\)](#)
12. Solid Waste Ulster County Local Law 4-2010, Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Law
[Microsoft Word - LL No. 4 of 2010_A Local Law Amending LL 8 of 1991 As Amended by LL 8 of 2007 UC Mandatory Source Separation \(ucrra.org\)](#)
13. Ulster County Local Law 10-2012, Solid Waste Management Law
[Microsoft Word - Local Law No. 10 of 2012.doc \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
14. Ulster County Local Law 1-2020, Food Waste Prevention and Recovery
[Ulster County, NY Food Waste Prevention and Recovery \(ecode360.com\)](#)
15. Ulster County Government Sustainability Initiatives: Environmental Executive Orders, Laws, Resolutions, Plans & Procedures
[Sustainability initiatives are those policies and procedures that ensure that the abundant environmental, social and economic resources that we rely on are there for us and for future generations \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)
16. Resolution No. 265 November 17, 2020, Establishing A Zero Waste Implementation Plan for Ulster County - Withdrawn by Sponsor
[RESOLUTION NO \(ulstercountyny.gov\)](#)