

Solid Waste Management Program Overview

Mission

To protect the public interest through solid waste management planning and regulatory oversight of the County's refuse ordinances by providing efficient and effective collection, recycling, and disposal of solid waste for customers in an environmentally responsible manner.

Connection to the Countywide Strategic Plan

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors adopted the first-ever Countywide Strategic Plan on October 5, 2021. The Countywide Strategic Plan serves as a road map to help guide future work, focusing on the 10 Community Outcome Areas that represent the issues of greatest importance to the community, and uses our One Fairfax equity policy to invest in people and places that have limited access to opportunity. On February 20, 2024, the second Annual Report on the work of the strategic plan was released to the public. The report contains point-in-time progress highlights for each of the community outcome areas, plus three data dashboards and data stories that are being replicated across all of the outcome areas, and a number of additional initiatives to embed the elements of the plan within department-level work. The report also includes a Year Three Implementation Model, which will engage hundreds of County subject-matter experts to identify and champion the specific strategies that will move forward to implementation under the guidance of the Board of Supervisors. For more information on the Countywide Strategic Plan, please visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/strategicplan. The Solid Waste Management Program primarily supports the following Community Outcome Areas:



Community Outcome Area	Vision Statement
Effective and Efficient Government	<i>All people trust that their government responsibly manages resources, is responsive to their needs, provides exceptional services and equitably represents them.</i>
Environment and Energy	<i>All people live in a healthy sustainable environment.</i>

Focus

The Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) is responsible for the management and oversight and long-range planning for all refuse collection, recycling, and disposal operations within the County. During FY 2024 and FY 2025, SWMP will be developing a new 20-year Solid Waste Management Plan for Fairfax County as required by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. The plan is required to show long-range planning for all waste including system capacity. The County's Community Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan has prescribed a goal for Fairfax County to divert 90 percent of all waste from landfill and waste to energy by 2040. The new 20-year plan will meet regulatory requirements and include a road map to zero waste by 2040 by establishing a menu of available technologies, strategies, and system improvements with their associated costs. It is anticipated that funding needs will increase significantly as zero waste programs are implemented.

Solid Waste Management Program Overview

In FY 2024, the SWMP completed a budget analysis to review past years' expenditures and projected FY 2025 personnel, operation, and capital reinvestment needs for our services to continue to operate at current levels. This analysis projected major budgetary shortfalls across Funds 40130, Leaf Collection, 40140, Refuse Collection and Recycling Operations, and 40150, Refuse Disposal, unless revenues are increased. The SWMP has historically used reserve funds to stabilize rate increases and supplement budgetary shortfalls which are not sustainable.

Current operations include a County-owned and operated refuse transfer station, two closed municipal solid waste landfills, a regional ashfill operated by the County, two recycling and disposal facilities, and equipment and facilities for refuse collection, disposal, and recycling operations.

Fund 40130, Leaf Collection, provides curbside vacuum leaf collection within Fairfax County's approved leaf collection districts. In FY 2025, approximately 25,000 properties are included within these districts. Revenue for Fund 40130 is derived from a levy charged to property owners within leaf collection districts. The levy for leaf collection increased from \$0.012 per \$100 of assessed real estate value to \$0.019 per \$100 of assessed value in FY 2025. This rate increase reflects the additional cost of providing the service through County and contract employees, and the need to replace aging capital equipment.

Fund 40140, Refuse Collection and Recycling Operations, provides for collection of waste and recycling from approximately 44,500 individual households within Fairfax County's approved sanitary districts. Revenue to support residential collection operations is derived from the refuse collection fee. In FY 2025, the collection rate increased from \$490 to \$555 per home, to assist SWMP in meeting increased labor, equipment, and contractual costs necessary to operate the collections programs.

SWMP County Agency Route Program (CAR) was discontinued effective January 1, 2024. SWMP CAR was responsible for the collection of refuse and recycling from County agencies and George Mason University. Revenue was derived from billings based upon the cubic yard capacity of the containers at each location, labor, equipment, and overhead costs as needed to provide adequate service. This service is now being provided through a private contractor.

The Recycling Program is also funded through Fund 40140 and Fund 40150, Refuse Disposal (described below), and it is responsible for:

- Overall management of solid waste reduction and recycling programs;
- Plans for future recycling programs and waste reduction systems; and
- Ensuring that disposal capacity remains available for waste by reducing the amount of waste sent for disposal through recycling programs that divert reusable or recyclable items from the waste stream to avoid disposal.

As part of the County's recycling program, the Fairfax County SWMP operates two staffed locations, one at the I-66 Transfer Station and the other at the I-95 Landfill Complex.

Fund 40150, Refuse Disposal, funds operations at the I-66 Transfer Station, which receives refuse collected in the northern and western portions of the County, and transports the refuse to Covanta Fairfax, LLC in Lorton, Virginia. When the Covanta facility is unavailable due to maintenance and other operational issues, waste is transported to the Prince William County landfill or other available landfills outside of Fairfax County. Leaves and grass are transported to a compost facility for processing in Prince William County. Other programs conducted at the Transfer Station include

Solid Waste Management Program Overview

operation of the Household Hazardous Waste program; food scraps drop off; electronics recycling; used motor oil, antifreeze, and cooking oil recycling; latex paint recycling; automotive battery recycling; and scrap metal/appliance recycling. In FY 2022, Fund 40150 moved to a single rate of \$66 per ton for all disposal and eliminated the discounted contractual disposal rate. This action was intended to simplify the rate structure and billing process as part of the conversion to a new billing system which went live in April 2021. In FY 2025, the disposal rate increased from \$72 per ton to \$79 per ton to assist SWMP in meeting increased labor and contractual costs necessary to operate the programs and to provide sustainable services.

Fund 40170, I-95 Refuse Disposal, funds the operation of the I-95 Landfill Complex. This location includes the municipal solid waste (MSW) landfill that was designed and constructed by the District of Columbia and operated from 1970 to 1995 until it was closed in December 1995. Since that time, the facility has accepted only ash generated by the combustion of waste. The ash landfill has been constructed in four phases and meets federal and state standards for the construction of new landfills, which require a double liner with a leachate collection system for the prevention of groundwater degradation. These operations are funded by a Refuse Disposal fee, which is \$31.40 per ton in FY 2025 to fund the ash disposal operation. This rate is set in advance by a formal multi-year contract with Covanta. Costs associated with operation and maintenance of environmental control equipment related to the closed portion of the landfill are anticipated to increase in future years. This is attributed to landfill gas collection, groundwater monitoring and remediation, stormwater management and leachate control. These activities ensure compliance with the facility's state-issued solid waste permit (SWP103) and stormwater permit (VAR051076), and applicable environmental regulations administered by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ).

Specific descriptions, discussions, and funding requirements for each fund of the Solid Waste Funds can be found on the pages following the SWMP Overview.

Solid Waste Operations Fee Structure¹

	Fund 40130, Leaf Collection	Fund 40140, Refuse Collection and Recycling Operations	Fund 40150, Refuse Disposal	Fund 40170, I-95 Refuse Disposal ²
FY 2025 Fee	\$0.019/\$100 Assessed Property Value	\$555 Curbside	\$79/Ton, System Fee Recycling and Disposal Center	\$31.40/Ton
FY 2024 Fee	\$0.012/\$100 Assessed Property Value	\$490 Curbside	\$72/Ton, System Fee Recycling and Disposal Center	\$29.70/Ton
Who Pays	Leaf District Residents	Sanitary District Residents	Private Collectors, Residents and County Agencies	Fund 40150 and Participating Jurisdictions

¹ There are numerous special rates that have been negotiated and implemented as needed, which are not reflected in the structure above. Examples include varying miscellaneous charges for yard debris (e.g., brush, grass, and leaves), tires, and others.

² The Ash Disposal Rate is set in contract with Covanta and adjusted at the beginning of each fiscal year since the residual disposal rate is escalated after the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is published in early July for each fiscal billing year. The new rate for each fiscal year becomes effective every July of each year after CPI data is available.

Solid Waste Management Program Overview

Performance Measurement Results

Effective and Efficient Government

The program continued to exceed the targeted service quality measure of 95 percent of its customers' rating refuse service as good or better.

Environment and Energy

The program achieved a recycling rate of 47.6 percent in CY 2022, nearly doubling the state-mandated recycling rate of 25 percent. The actual number of tons delivered to the Covanta facility was 702,175 tons in FY 2023. The upgraded facility allows Covanta to have a more efficient way to process waste from SWMP and produce more energy that can be sold to the local utility company.

Indicator	FY 2021 Actual	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Estimate	FY 2025 Estimate
Effective and Efficient Government						
Financial Sustainability and Trustworthiness						
Collection Cost per home collected in the sanitary districts	\$414.16	\$426.85	\$445.21	\$458.45	\$479.93	\$613.41
Cost per ton for disposal operations	\$65.16	\$68.51	\$68.11	\$76.94	\$78.46	\$89.86
Customer Satisfaction with County Services						
Percent of customers or citizens rating refuse services as good or better	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%	95.00%
Customer satisfaction deviation from 95 percent target	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Environment and Energy						
Supporting Sound Environmental Policy and Practices						
Total tons of sanitary district refuse and recyclables	70,652	62,855	70,000	60,772	65,000	70,000
Did the division meet the mandated recycling rate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Total County tons recycled	466,793	469,888	460,000	466,081	465,000	465,000
Total County recycling rate ¹	49.60%	47.80%	50.00%	47.60%	47.00%	47.00%
Ton of material delivered to Covanta	688,305	731,342	650,000	702,175	700,000	700,000

¹ To be consistent with the annual recycling rate reported to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ), which is measured annually based on calendar year (January 1 to December 31) rather than Fairfax County's fiscal year schedule (July 1 to June 30), the CY 2022 actual rate is updated to 47.8 percent. The recycling rate is reported to VADEQ by April 30 of the subsequent calendar year.

A complete list of performance measures can be viewed at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/budget/fy-2025-adopted-performance-measures-pm>