

# Fund 40130: Leaf Collection

## Mission

To provide curbside vacuum leaf collection service for customers within designated sanitary leaf districts on three separate occasions during the leaf collection season (November through January). Curbside vacuum leaf collection conveniently clears leaves from residential neighborhoods.

## Focus

The Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) provides curbside vacuum leaf collection within Leaf Districts served through Fund 40130, Leaf Collection. Leaf Districts are created through a petition process established by the Code of Virginia, Section 21-118.2. Section 15.2-935 allows local jurisdictions to prohibit the placement of leaves and grass in landfills and other disposal facilities. To that end, leaf and other yard waste recycling was established in 1994 by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. The Board approved the amendment to the County's solid waste ordinance, Chapter 109.1, to require residents to separate yard waste from trash and other recyclables for placement at the curb separately to allow for collection and delivery to a yard waste recycling facility.

Residents move leaves to the street where they are vacuumed using specialized equipment into trucks, which is hauled to SWMP facilities for either onsite shredding into leaf mulch or for transfer to a compost facility outside of Fairfax County. SWMP has divided vacuum leaf residences into ten service areas. Email updates are sent to customers who have subscribed for advance notice of collection dates, and signs containing QR codes linked to the schedule online are posted in neighborhoods. Each residence receives three rounds of leaf collection each season to ensure sufficient time passes for leaf accumulation and collection at the curb.

Because of the seasonal nature of vacuum leaf collection, SWMP relies on existing solid waste collection employees, limited term employees, and outside contractors for this service. The majority of SWMP vacuum leaf collection equipment is only used for leaf season and is idle for the remainder of the year. Vacuum equipment cannot be used when leaves are frozen.

There were major service delays during the FY 2023 season caused by early leaf volumes that were higher than normal, 50 percent higher total leaf volumes, as well as staffing, equipment, and contractor issues. Throughout the service delay, SWMP received many concerns from customers about the public safety impacts of uncollected leaves including blocked storm drainages creating flooding concerns, pedestrian, and vehicle conflicts when pedestrians are forced to walk in streets, fire hazards from vehicles parking on leaves, slip and fall hazards from walking on slippery leaves, and reduced on-street parking.

The current service model also conflicts with the Board of Supervisors' environmental directives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move towards zero waste outcomes. Carbon is expended to move leaves to the curb, to collect leaves, to transport leaves to the processing facility, and to transport the compost back into the landscape from which it was generated. On-site composting of leaves is a more sustainable model for managing leaves.

SWMP remains concerned about its ability to guarantee timely service due to unpredictable leaf drop timing. Because of prioritizing public safety and vacuum leaf service conflicts with Board of Supervisor sustainability goals, SWMP developed a proposal to discontinue Vacuum Leaf Service after the FY 2024 season. SWMP underwent a public opinion survey in early FY 2024 to receive customer feedback regarding the staff proposal. 53 percent of respondents believe the service is convenient and 86.5 percent did not support the staff proposal.



Upon reviewing the result of the public opinion survey, SWMP staff are postponing the proposal to discontinue vacuum leaf service after the FY 2024 season. Although the rationale for discontinuing the service permanently persists, the strong negative reaction of current customers indicates that additional outreach to educate customers is needed as is more time for customers to identify alternative leaf management methods.

Revenue is derived from a collection levy (service fee) that is charged to homeowners within the leaf districts. The FY 2025 levy of \$0.019 per \$100 of assessed real estate value represents an increase from the FY 2024 rate of \$0.012 per \$100 of assessed real estate value. This rate increase reflects the additional cost of providing the service through County and contract employees, and the need to replace aging capital equipment. SWMP will continue to ensure an adequate balance between real estate tax revenues dedicated to leaf collection operations and usage of accumulated operational surpluses to sustain operations. However, additional rate increases are projected in future fiscal years to meet the operational and aging capital equipment needs of this program. A preliminary rate of \$0.024 per \$100 of assessed real estate value is estimated for FY 2026 and subject to further review with an outside rate consultant.

Performance Measures for Solid Waste are displayed at a program-wide level. Please refer to the Solid Waste Management Program Overview in Volume 2 of the [FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan](#) for those items.

## Organizational Chart



## Budget and Staff Resources

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Adopted	FY 2024 Revised	FY 2025 Advertised
<b>FUNDING</b>				
<b>Expenditures:</b>				
Personnel Services	\$578,914	\$441,926	\$441,926	\$872,141
Operating Expenses	2,496,224	1,899,736	1,899,736	2,938,323
Capital Equipment	73,749	630,000	827,308	1,000,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$3,148,887</b>	<b>\$2,971,662</b>	<b>\$3,168,970</b>	<b>\$4,810,464</b>

**FY 2025  
Funding  
Adjustments**

*The following funding adjustments from the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2025 program:*

**Employee Compensation** **\$430,215**  
An increase of \$430,215 in Personnel Services includes \$9,201 for a 2.00 percent market rate adjustment (MRA) for all employees, effective July 2024. The increase of \$17,618 is included to support employee retention and recruitment efforts that will reduce pay compression and align the County's pay structures with the market based on benchmark data. The remaining increase of \$403,396 is due to the realignment of payroll cost allocations and additional staffing levels required to operate the program.

**Operating Expenses** **\$1,038,587**  
An increase of \$1,038,587 in Operating Expenses is mainly due to increases in costs for contracted hauling and employment services, leaf disposal fees at non-County composting facilities, and fuel.

**Capital Equipment** **\$370,000**  
Funding of \$1,000,000 in Capital Equipment reflects an increase of \$370,000 over the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan, including \$930,000 to replace three Leaf Trucks and \$70,000 to replace one Leaf Tag Trailer. The replacement equipment has exceeded its useful life and is required to be replaced based on age, mileage, frequency of costly repairs, excessive downtime, and overall condition of the equipment. There has been a substantial increase in steel prices, which has increased the cost of new equipment along with the program capital equipment reinvestment.

**Changes to  
FY 2024  
Adopted  
Budget Plan**

*The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2024 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2023 Carryover Review and all other approved changes through December 31, 2023.*

**Carryover Adjustments** **\$197,308**  
As part of the *FY 2023 Carryover Review*, the Board of Supervisors approved funding of \$197,308 due to encumbered carryover in Capital Equipment for the purchase of two leaf tag trailers and a new hoist and truck body.

**FUND STATEMENT**

Category	FY 2023 Actual	FY 2024 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2024 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2025 Advertised Budget Plan
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$5,069,996</b>	<b>\$3,765,140</b>	<b>\$4,324,267</b>	<b>\$3,821,778</b>
<b>Revenue:</b>				
Interest on Investments	\$85,057	\$14,839	\$14,839	\$44,697
Sale of Equipment	0	0	0	35,000
Leaf Collection Levy/Fee	2,372,101	2,705,642	2,705,642	4,223,359
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,457,158</b>	<b>\$2,720,481</b>	<b>\$2,720,481</b>	<b>\$4,303,056</b>
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>\$7,527,154</b>	<b>\$6,485,621</b>	<b>\$7,044,748</b>	<b>\$8,124,834</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>				
Personnel Services	\$578,914	\$441,926	\$441,926	\$872,141
Operating Expenses	2,496,224	1,899,736	1,899,736	2,938,323
Capital Equipment	73,749	630,000	827,308	1,000,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$3,148,887</b>	<b>\$2,971,662</b>	<b>\$3,168,970</b>	<b>\$4,810,464</b>
<b>Transfers Out:</b>				
General Fund (10001) <sup>1</sup>	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$54,000	\$44,193
<b>Total Transfers Out</b>	<b>\$54,000</b>	<b>\$54,000</b>	<b>\$54,000</b>	<b>\$44,193</b>
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>\$3,202,887</b>	<b>\$3,025,662</b>	<b>\$3,222,970</b>	<b>\$4,854,657</b>
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$4,324,267</b>	<b>\$3,459,959</b>	<b>\$3,821,778</b>	<b>\$3,270,177</b>
Operating Reserve <sup>2</sup>	\$864,854	\$691,992	\$764,355	\$654,035
Capital Equipment Reserve <sup>3</sup>	864,853	691,992	764,356	654,035
Rate Stabilization Reserve <sup>4</sup>	2,594,560	2,075,975	2,293,067	1,962,107
<b>Unreserved Balance</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Leaf Collection Levy/Fee per \$100 of Assessed Value</b>	<b>\$0.012</b>	<b>\$0.012</b>	<b>\$0.012</b>	<b>\$0.019</b>

<sup>1</sup> Funding in the amount of \$44,193 is transferred to the General Fund to partially offset central support services supported by the General Fund, which benefit Fund 40130. These indirect costs include support services such as Human Resources, Purchasing, Budget and other administrative services.

<sup>2</sup> The Operating Reserve provides a minimum of 15 percent of the operating budget to maintain financial stability for unforeseen expenditures.

<sup>3</sup> The Capital Equipment Reserve is for future capital equipment requirements based on replacement value and age of equipment.

<sup>4</sup> The Rate Stabilization Reserve provides funds to mitigate against any need for an unusually large rate increase in a future year.