

What a difference a year makes!

The Country is in a recession and every municipality is looking to cut costs where and when possible. In Pelham NH the Transfer Station was isolated as a source of cuts. A seasoned professional with a background in waste and recycling was brought in as the new director. He had an aggressive mission to increase Recycling, increase Revenues, increase efficiencies, offer more services, while cutting costs; this would be accomplished with a drastic refinement of the existing operations. There was a lot of out of the box thinking needed to be done. To be done the transfer Station needed to be looked at like a business; it's important for municipalities to have people overseeing waste operations with knowledge in the Recycling and Waste Industry. Knowledge is important; however it must be complimented with a desire, the caring, and ability to keep up with changes that continually occur in the field. Key factors are to involve staff in these changes and to explain why they are done. We provided videos and brochures on our changes so staff can better explain to residents how and why we can now mix paper, plastics, metal and glass. Otherwise the perception is we are not recycling. Most Municipal Employees have no incentive to refine or to improve operations. They cut costs when they are told to. Most are happy to see the trucks come in and go out. It's not their money.

If we were to succeed, these changes would reduce the budget and lower impact fees to residents. In the 1<sup>st</sup> year recycling has increased 120%, revenues increased dramatically, numerous efficiencies were put in place, costs we're lowered 25%, and multiple new services were offered. The site was transformed from a Transfer Station to a Recycling Complex. We were on our way to a refined complex.

How was this done? Change is never easy! There were many obstacles and a game plan to layout. The process began with a name change to better reflect what was to come. The Transfer Station was to be known as PERC (Pelham Environmental Recycling Complex), this would lead the way for our step by step transition. Along with a name change was a fresher uniform for staff, looking more environmental than waste industry.

The complex had a maze of containers and compactors for a variety of items, from a cast of vendors, many being middle men. Most containers were generating a false revenue stream. The containers were scattered about with no order and a potential safety hazard that caused very slow traffic flow.

Our first phase was to review every contract and processes that had been in place for many years. The initial decision was made to convert the site to a single stream recycling system. It is so important to build and have good relationships with all vendors. Knowing the market, the industry and the competition keeps everything in order. We new by simplifying this process we would increase recycling. We also new these recyclables would come mostly from the waste stream; lowering a disposal cost at that end. Both proved to be true. Residents no longer needed to separate or sort recyclables.

The scattered dumpsters and compactors were reduced from 12 to 2. This process eliminated many costs associated with rental, fuel, labor, utilities and space. The new containers were set up in a fashion to provide for a smooth approach and exit from the facility. Rather than compactors that allow only one person to use at a time, we opted for (2) 40 yd open top roll-off containers. These allowed for unlimited users extending over 46 feet long. We found by compacting down on the materials, in many

case we equaled the volumes in the compactors. The containers were sunken down to a 48 " height allowing for easy loading by residents. Three Lanes were set up allowing for multiple cars to utilize the recycling section of the facility at one time. The lanes provide for a drive through system with recyclables being accepted in the 2 outside lanes. This eliminated potential safety issues when entering or exiting the facility for individuals and any potential vehicle hazards. Single Stream also eliminated the need to crush glass and saving the product until needed.

Pelham is a town where use of the site requires recycling by ordinance. By utilizing a simple new sticker, that of a 1" pine tree would help us to further increase our recycling objective. Whenever a vehicle stopped on the recycling portion of the complex as you enter, the sticker was placed on the windshield next to the complex sticker. After several months, anyone that entered the waste disposal section of the site and did not have this special sticker were suspect of never stopping on the recycling side. A simple slip was placed in the trunk asking to try harder to recycle. The next time the trunk was open they would see the slip. Now they know, we know they are not recycling, this in conjunction with occasional bag audits for those without the stickers helps to increase recycling efforts. We wanted to make it easy and educational for the residents. We continually reminded folks to recycle and thanked them via signs and showing the savings. One other tool was the selling recycling totes at the complex.

The waste building, a former incinerator was structured with seven portholes. Of the 7, only 3 were utilized in a process where each vehicle would pull forward then back up to one of the 3 portholes, empty there waste and pull away. This had to be changed. The new site had a vision of 4 wide lanes; lane 1 allowed for all 7 portholes on the right to be utilized at once. Lane 2 to its left provided for additional vehicles to unload into a 30 yd roll off to their left. Lane 3 on the other side of the container allowed for even more vehicles to dispose of waste into the same roll off. The container was emptied utilizing a bob cat. The Roll Off was a welcome addition during peak times. The 4<sup>th</sup> lane was used as a site exit lane.

An underutilized conveyor in the building was eliminated prior to the need of any major repairs. Most materials were loaded into a compactor via bob cat anyways. The conveyor when down, shut down 3 windows and was always a moving part accident waiting to happen.

Due to fluctuating commodity pricing with low margin items and a desire to maintain a budget, the single stream was quickly off set with savings in other areas, while we keyed in on less risk items as scrap metals

The site accepted brush materials on one weekend per month. When a large enough volume was accumulated the materials were burnt. This process ended with the implementation of a chipping process. We now accept brush at all time to the pleasure of residents and the Fire Dept. We eliminated many expenses associated with the burn and the impact on the environment with a new process creating a useful bi product.

We began accepting construction and demolition waste by way of a scale and volume charge system. The pricing was far below that of any local outlets and gave the homeowners a close outlet for basic projects. This was also to the pleasure of the Fire Dept, Highway Dept and Parks and Recreation, who would often have to deal with burns or materials being illegally dumped.

With restructured contracts and new vendors we also accept Tires, Waste Oil, Electronics, Freon Items, White Goods, Microwaves, Household and Vehicle Batteries, oil filters, propane tanks, all light bulbs, Fireplace Ash, Textiles, Cell Phones, and we added antifreeze and vegetable to our waste oil program.

We wanted everyone aboard with the recycling program. To make this easy we placed single stream recycling bins in all municipal buildings and provided pick up services. We offer a pick up service for the elderly or for folks with no access to a vehicle for bulk items as well.

In a recession we held an Earth day Event with prizes, refreshments, gifts, an open house and the planting of a fruit tree; this will be an annual event. PERC sponsored a Christmas Tree in the Towns festival of trees, provided an aggressive but controlled marketing plan, we cut our next years budget, increased recycling, reduced expenses and offered more services without adding staff. We are saving money and our environment by harvesting the residential forests within the homes of our Pelham residents.

We look forward to the upcoming year; where we plan to continue our refinement, have plans for a recycling education center, a tool barn for used hand tools, composting outlet for food and yard waste along with a refinement of our Hazardous Waste Program at the recycling complex. We have some aggressive goals, but controlled. We would like to have a 100% recycling rate in the town for any materials that can be pulled from the waste stream. By working with the outside waste haulers and schools we believe we can capture these recyclables and attain this goal.

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Pelham Recycling Center



