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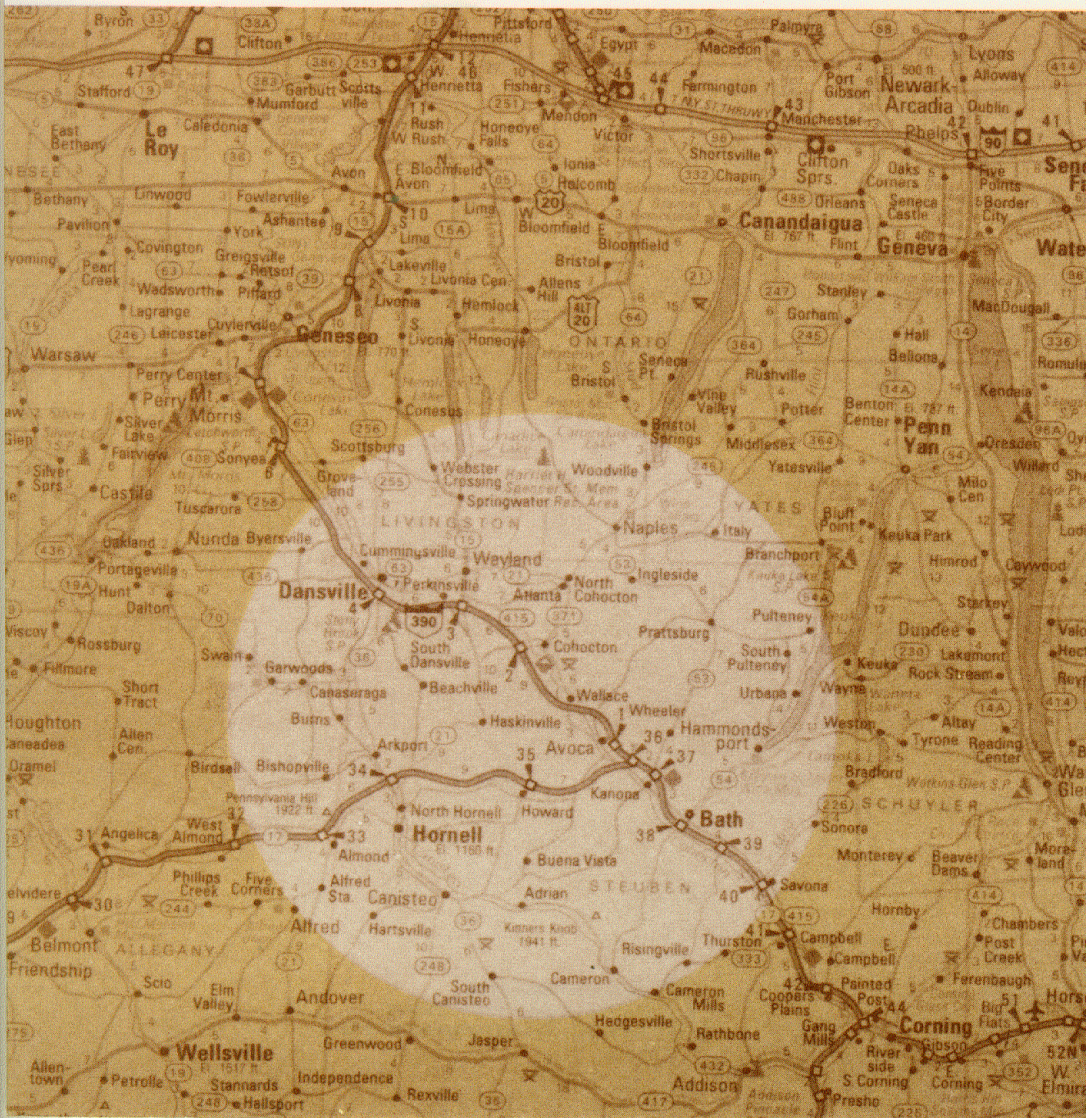
Joining Forces on Solid Waste Management

Regionalization Is Working in Rural and Small Communities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CONTENTS

Introduction 1
Using Regionalization in Your Community 5

Advantages of Regionalization..... 6

Potential Obstacles to Implementing Regionalization..... 7

Getting Started..... ... 9

Establishing a Regionalization Task Force 10

Studying the Feasibility of Regionalization 10

Informing Residents 11

Getting Technical Assistance for Your Regionalization Efforts 11

Financing Regionalization Projects 12

Types of Regional Organizations 13

Intergovernmental Agreements 14

Authorities, Trusts, and Special Districts 15

Nonprofit Public Corporations 15

Regional Councils 16

Commercial Sector..... . 17

Successes in Regionalization ..... .19

Land-of-Sky Regional Council, North Carolina 19

Metropolitan Environmental Trust Authority, Oklahoma..... 21

Regional Waste Systems, Maine 23

Southwest Public Recycling Association, Arizona..... .. 25

Big Lakes Regional Council, Kansas 27

Regionalization: It Can Work in Your Community 29

Regionalization Resource Guide..... 31

Publications Available from EPA..... 32

EPA Resource Centers 36

EPA Regional Offices 38

Additional Federal Resources 40

INTRODUCTION

Because of limited resources, individual rural and small communities can find it difficult to provide all the services for which they are responsible, from public works projects to municipal solid waste (MSW) management. One strategy that some communities have developed to meet this challenge is regionalization. Regionalization is a process whereby neighboring cities, towns, and counties pool resources to address local challenges. Through regionalization, rural and small communities often are able to accomplish together what is difficult to do individually.

One area in which regionalization has become an important tool is MSW management, traditionally a function of individual local governments. As managing MSW has grown increasingly complex, rural and small communities in particular may find it difficult to fulfill their responsibilities in this area. Unlike their urban counterparts, rural and small communities often have a lower tax base, which means limited revenues for financing waste management activities.

Moreover, attempting to adopt integrated waste management (using a complementary mix of waste prevention, recycling, combustion, and landfilling) can present further challenges. While many communities recognize the benefits of integrated waste management, changing the status quo can be complex and costly--especially in small and rural communities. By working together, however, effective recycling programs (including the marketing of recyclables and purchasing of goods with recycled content), state-of-the-art landfills, and waste-to-energy facilities are within the reach of even small communities with few resources.

Joining Forces: Regionalization Is Working in Rural and Small Communities provides readers with an introduction to regionalization. This handbook discusses some of the key advantages and potential barriers associated with regionalization, explains the planning activities that need to precede a multijurisdictional project, and describes the different types of organizational approaches that can be used to carry out regional solid waste management activities. It also presents five successful regionalization efforts to help you consider how regionalization might work in your own community. In addition, the Regionalization Resource Guide at the end of this booklet provides a list of resources that are helpful to decision-makers considering multijurisdictional approaches to MSW management.

Integrated Waste Management

More and more communities are finding that using integrated solid waste management improves their ability to handle MSW in a safe and environmentally sensible manner. Integrated waste management relies on the complementary use of a mix of waste management practices to safely and effectively handle MSW:

*Waste Prevention, or source reduction, is the design, manufacture, purchase, or use of materials and products to reduce

the amount and/or toxicity of discarded waste. Because it reduces the amount of waste that a community must manage, waste prevention is the preferred MSW management technique.

*Recycling, including composting, is the collection and use of secondary materials for use as the raw materials in the manufacture of new products. An important part of recycling is "buying recycled," the purchase of products made from recycled materials.

*Waste combustion and landfilling should be used for the waste that cannot be prevented or recycled.

USING REGIONALIZATION IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Whether your community is hoping to use regionalization to launch a cooperative recycling program, finance the development of a state-of-the-art landfill, or initiate some other solid waste management project, it is important to consider carefully the advantages and the potential obstacles offered by a multijurisdictional strategy.

Advantages of Regionalization

When dealing with today's complex solid waste management issues, communities are finding that regionalization offers some important advantages, which can include:

Greater economies of scale. By joining forces, communities might be able to implement a project that otherwise would be too expensive for a single community. By combining financial, administrative, personnel, and equipment resources, the cost of pursuing certain projects (such as developing state-of-the-art landfills or conducting waste characterization studies) is spread among several jurisdictions, bringing these projects within the reach of small and rural communities.

Regionalization also can enhance the cost-effectiveness of community recycling efforts. Communities might be able to command a better price for their collected recyclables if they have a large enough quantity on hand. In addition, buyers of recyclables often specify minimum quantities of a particular material as a contractual requirement.

Cooperative purchasing agreements among several jurisdictions also can make "buying recycled" more cost-effective. Widely used recycled supplies and products can be purchased in larger quantities and at lower prices when communities pool their resources.

Increased financial support. Regionalization can provide greater leverage in obtaining the financial resources needed for solid waste management planning and implementation activities. For example, many states give priority to regional efforts when disbursing grants and other forms of financial support for solid waste projects.

Increased flexibility. Because of the greater resources available and the improved economies of scale, regionalization opens up new waste management possibilities. With more opportunities available, communities can develop strategies tailored to their specific needs and concerns.

Environmental improvement. Regionalization offers access to state-of-the-art technologies, which can result in enhanced environmental protection for many jurisdictions.

Recognizing the advantages of regionalization, many states are beginning to mandate the development of multijurisdictional partnerships to deal with solid waste issues. At present, a number of states require regional planning as an adjunct to solid waste management planning state-wide. Texas, for example, mandates that its cities, counties, and regional councils prepare coordinated solid waste management plans, with local plans to be approved by regional councils. Check with the agency that regulates solid waste in your state to find out if any laws or regulations exist regarding regionalization of municipal solid waste management in your area.

Potential Obstacles to Implementing Regionalization

Although regionalization offers many advantages, some potential barriers also exist:

Potential partners can have different MSW management goals. While neighboring communities share many common solid waste management needs and concerns, disparities in population, geography, industrial base, or other characteristics may make it difficult for communities to agree upon specific regional projects.

Multistate or multicounty regional programs can face varying regulations. Regions that straddle two or more states or that include several counties might need to resolve issues raised by contradictory or conflicting laws and regulations.

Potential inequities can exist among neighboring communities. Communities considering regionalization should recognize that the costs and benefits of regional projects, although shared, will not necessarily be identical for all communities. Tradeoffs might have to be made.

For example, a community sending its waste to a facility shared with its neighbors benefits from not having to site and manage a landfill within its jurisdiction. However, it probably will be subject to fees levied by the community in which the waste management site is located. While the community hosting the regional facility bears the financial costs and the potential conflicts associated with siting a waste facility within its jurisdiction, it is likely to receive such benefits as host fees and free local disposal.

Hauling waste across jurisdictions can cause conflicts. Regionalization sometimes can require that waste be transported over long distances and through neighboring areas. Communities on routes leading to a regional solid waste facility might see an increase in traffic. Concerns over the resulting congestion, pollution, and roadway wear and tear could create conflicts among communities.

These and other potential barriers should be explored thoroughly before embarking on any regional strategy. If a potential barrier is identified early on, it is likely that an effective solution can be found. For example, when considering a project that involves the transportation of waste through adjacent communities, officials could decide to restrict facility traffic to certain roads or tax the facility to cover the costs of road repairs. By acknowledging the potential obstacles up front, communities can take constructive steps to overcome these challenges.

GETTING STARTED

For communities considering a regional approach to solid waste management, planning is the first step. Planning involves studying the feasibility of regionalization, educating the residents of participating communities, and identifying potential sources of funding or other types of support. It is important to bring together everyone involved at the beginning of this process to ensure a successful program.

Establishing a Regionalization Task Force

Establishing a task force or other collaborative forum is a useful way to bring neighboring municipalities together to map out a project. Although local government officials probably are acquainted with their counterparts in other jurisdictions, such a forum helps to strengthen existing ties, open new lines of communication, and facilitate the development of multijurisdictional cooperation. To maximize its effectiveness, the task force should serve as an open forum for discussing all issues related to possible regionalization projects. Neighboring communities considering regionalization need to learn as much as possible about each others' solid waste management problems and programs.

Task force members should represent all groups interested in regionalizing solid waste management. Although local governments typically are responsible for managing solid waste, citizens, industries, and businesses generate this waste, and therefore have a stake in its management. Others interested in solid waste management include public interest groups, commercial solid waste management companies, engineering firms, recovered materials processors, manufacturers using recovered material feedstocks, and purchasing agents responsible for buying recycled materials and products.

Studying the Feasibility of Regionalization

The primary responsibility of the task force is to evaluate whether and how regionalization might work in member communities. Participating communities should develop a list of goals for the regional effort that might include reducing the amount of waste

entering local disposal facilities, initiating recycling programs, meeting state solid waste reduction goals, or siting a state-of-the-art landfill or waste-to-energy facility. The task force should gauge how regionalization will help meet these needs.

For example, the economies of scale realized by building a regional landfill might be sufficient to justify its development. The advantages of a regional landfill, however, must be weighed against the cost of transporting waste from several jurisdictions to a central site. Social and political influences also need to be considered. It simply might not be feasible to site any facility where there is little support from citizens or elected officials.

Informing Residents

Since local support is essential to the success of any project, the task force needs to consider ways to inform residents about regionalization and its advantages. To do this, many regionalization efforts include a public education component. The task force can take the lead in developing and implementing a public education program that:

* Educates citizens about the purposes of regionalization and the expected benefits to a community.

* Informs people about the ways in which planned changes in solid waste management could affect them. For example, a decision to collect and market recyclables in more than one jurisdiction could alter the way in which households dispose of their trash or separate their recyclables.

* Invites residents to participate in solid waste management decision-making. Some techniques include conducting town meetings and having citizen representation on the task force.

Getting Technical Assistance for Your Regionalization Efforts

If you would like advice on setting up a regional project, you might contact communities that already have joined together to provide municipal services such as transportation, emergency

medical services, or wastewater management. Contact state or local government officials to find councils, development districts, or planning commissions managing such efforts in your area. State agencies that oversee environmental protection efforts, community planning, or local government activities are another potential source of technical assistance on regional cooperation. (See the Regionalization Resource Guide at the end of this handbook for a discussion of additional resources.)

Financing Regionalization Projects

While it often is limited, financial support sometimes is available for such start-up activities as organizing neighboring jurisdictions and exploring the feasibility of a particular project. Check with state agencies responsible for environmental protection, community planning, and rural development. Some states also have comprehensive solid waste management laws that include funding for regionalization projects.

Private foundations also may provide funding for regionalization projects. For example, financial support provided by a private local foundation enabled the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission in Amarillo, Texas, to reach the funding level required to receive a state matching grant to develop a regional solid waste plan. When seeking grant money, emphasize that the funds are going to be used for a multijurisdictional project. Putting together a list of the local governments involved and their population figures can improve the impact of your proposal by showing how many citizens will be served by the effort.

If sufficient funding cannot be secured from outside sources, participating communities might have to share start-up costs. Some regions divide the costs evenly; others base each local government's share on population or budget size. For example, when the Green Hills Regional Planning Commission in Trenton, Missouri, helped establish a solid waste management district in the region, a fee of 25À À per resident was collected initially. After the district was formed, the state provided a $45,000 planning grant, and the 25À À fee was dropped.

TYPES OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

While a task force is adequate for initial planning activities such as studying regionalization and educating residents, a permanent, regional management organization should be established. In many cases, the original task force members can form the core of the new organization.

The regional management organization serves two key purposes:

* It implements the projects planned by the task force, providing the necessary authority for financing solid waste management activities.

* It serves as the formal management structure for all regional projects.

Several different types of regional management structures currently are being used. The type of structure chosen depends on such factors as available financing, applicable laws, and existing government bodies or regional organizations. The amount of control that communities want to have over the organization and the type of services or projects that the organization oversees also are important factors. For example, if a regionalization effort entails constructing waste management facilities or providing ongoing solid waste services, a formal, legal structure with financing capabilities might be needed. For a one-time project or a limited, clearly defined effort (such as organizing a household hazardous waste collection program or arranging for equipment sharing), a more flexible arrangement might be appropriate.

Intergovernmental Agreements

Intergovernmental agreements are the most widely used type of organizational structure for regionalization projects. These agreements are contracts between two or more municipalities to perform a specific task together. They may be informal arrangements or more complicated legal contracts. (Generally, only formal contracts are enforceable.) The primary advantages of intergovernmental agreements are flexibility and expediency. Communities can combine their resources on specific projects without developing a formal organizational structure. One

disadvantage to these agreements, however, is that capital financing can be hard to obtain since each participating government must raise money for the project individually. For each new decision, all jurisdictions must regroup and reach a new agreement. Consequently, intergovernmental agreements often are better suited for more limited regional projects.

Authorities, Trusts, and Special Districts

Some communities create an authority, public trust, or special district to organize their regional program. Similar to government agencies, such organizations are dedicated to performing a specific, clearly defined public function (such as managing MSW). Authorities, trusts, and special districts frequently are granted the power to issue bonds, levy taxes or assessments, or use other means to raise funds for specific projects. Depending on state laws, they also can have the power to impose regulations, contract with private companies, or take other steps to perform their function. These organizations often operate under a separate budget from member communities and are administered by a board of directors composed of private citizens rather than elected officials.

Because they often have jurisdictional authority and the power to raise revenues, authorities, trusts, and special districts can have considerable political and financial independence. Such autonomy helps these organizations sustain cooperative partnerships among communities and execute projects in an environment free of individual community politics. Most communities set up an advisory board or establish a reporting structure for the organization that ensures proper oversight.

A number of states have legislative provisions to establish authorities, trusts, or special districts as part of solid waste management. To find out if your state encourages (or requires) the use of such organizations for solid waste management activities, contact your state attorney general or state environmental protection agency. Existing multijurisdictional organizations within your state or attorneys assisting local governments with legal matters also can provide assistance.

Nonprofit Public Corporations

Nonprofit public corporations, owned and managed by the participating governments, also can operate regional programs. Typically, member communities pay dues, and additional monies are raised through fundraising. These organizations usually are tax-exempt and can issue tax-exempt bonds (provided they meet certain Internal Revenue Service criteria); this makes fundraising easier.

Nonprofit public corporations are run as independent businesses. A board of directors, made up of elected or appointed officials from each jurisdiction, makes decisions concerning policies, budgets, and operations. The boardroom serves as a forum for resolving jurisdictional issues, planning the scope of services, and setting waste management priorities. Communities might choose to participate in specific contracts or programs, depending on their individual needs.

While less independent than authorities, trusts, and special districts, nonprofit corporations often can make decisions that municipalities cannot. For example, a nonprofit corporation could borrow money to finance long-term waste management projects while local governments might be pressured to avoid debt.

Although nonprofit organizations offer communities many advantages, establishing these organizations can be time-consuming. As with authorities and special districts, the state attorney general's office or local lawyers who specialize in regional government matters are good sources of information about the feasibility of using a nonprofit public corporation as part of a regionalization effort.

Regional Councils

Regional councils are another commonly used approach to multijurisdictional cooperation, with hundreds of such organizations throughout the United States. Sometimes referred to as councils of government, regional planning commissions, or regional development centers, regional councils have been used to organize and manage all types of cooperative projects. A key characteristic of regional councils is their flexibility.

Depending on state or local laws, member communities typically can organize regional councils according to their specific needs. Communities often form regional councils as a first step in a regionalization project. Through the council, public and private decision-makers can be brought together to consider a regional strategy. If regionalization seems promising, the council then can plan and implement the program.

Many communities that are considering regionalization already belong to a regional council that was formed for other projects. Using these existing regional councils for solid waste management might be preferable, since connections between local governments already have been established and financial and technical experience has been developed.

Commercial Sector

Many communities are taking advantage of the increased level of regional solid waste management services offered by the commercial sector. Cooperative arrangements with businesses can be used for a range of services, from hauling MSW to administering an entire regional waste management system, including financing, construction, and operation.

Contracting and franchising are the two most prevalent forms of commercial involvement in solid waste management services. With contracting, regional organizations enter into binding agreements with businesses to provide specified services. These contracts can be structured to emphasize particular goals, such as quality of service or cost savings. Contracts between local governments and businesses generally are governed by a state's public contracting laws.

With franchising, the government entity grants a commercial company (or several companies) the right to provide a service in a defined geographical area. User fees frequently are charged to pay for the services. Service level, quality, and price usually are controlled by regulation, rather than by competition.

Commercial enterprises can offer a number of benefits to communities including expertise in the latest solid waste technologies, lower costs, and extensive corporate experience. A disadvantage of using private companies is the potential loss of

control and flexibility for participating communities. Another possible disadvantage is the lengthy and frequently complex competitive bidding process. Long-term contracts, while generally cost-effective, might work against the best interests of individual communities if market conditions or circumstances change significantly. In addition, the regional organization will need to monitor contractor performance and compliance.

* Table 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of the Types of Regional Organizations *

Type of Organization	Advantages	Disadvantages
Intergovernmental Agreements	Offer the most flexible structure for regional cooperation--communities can structure each project individually.	In the absence of a more formal organization, financing for projects can be difficult to obtain.
Authorities, Trusts, and Special Districts	Have political and financial autonomy. Able to raise funds through bonds or taxes.	Member communities need to ensure public or government oversight.
Nonprofit Public Corporations	Have financial autonomy. Are able to issue tax-exempt bonds, making fundraising easier. Communities have control over decision-making because local officials sit on the board of directors.	Can take a long time to establish. Since communities have control over decision-making, political considerations can influence projects.
Regional Councils	Can be structured to meet the needs of member communities. Existing councils can lend experience and a shared sense of cooperation.	Can have limited fundraising abilities.
Commercial Sector	Can offer experience, access to state-of-the-art technologies, and lower costs.	Can entail lengthy bidding and require contract negotiation. Less control for participating communities.

SUCCESSES IN REGIONALIZATION

Intergovernmental Agreement

Land-of-Sky Regional Council--North Carolina

For many communities, intergovernmental agreements arranged on a project-by-project basis are the preferred method of structuring multijurisdictional programs. In western North Carolina, member communities of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council use the organization as an informal tool for studying local issues and considering the most appropriate solutions. To actually initiate a project, however, the communities sign formal, binding intergovernmental agreements. This way, the local governments are free of any political or financial obligations and can agree or decline to participate in specific programs.

Member communities of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council have used intergovernmental agreements to conduct a number of solid waste management projects, including a feasibility study examining ways to improve the regional market for recyclable materials; a series of waste reduction workshops for industries in the area, complemented by waste assessments at some prominent local businesses; and solid waste educational efforts such as promotions for a conference and a manual on regional solid waste management projects.

In another agreement, Henderson and Transylvania Counties joined together to purchase and share a large piece of waste management equipment. Both counties realized that they needed to employ alternatives to landfill disposal for wood waste and green waste. A tub grinder would enable them to process wood and other green material into mulch and/or soil amendment. Since neither county could justify spending over $200,000 to purchase its own grinder, they agreed to work together to secure financial support and split the remaining cost. With the assistance of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, the two counties were able to secure a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission covering half the cost of the grinder.

Because Transylvania County is much smaller than Henderson County, the two counties negotiated an intergovernmental agreement giving 5 percent ownership to Transylvania and 95

percent to Henderson. The purchase cost was divided accordingly. Under the terms of the agreement, Henderson County retains the right to store and use the grinder at will; as part owners, Transylvania County is able to use the grinder upon request, paying only for gas and maintenance while in use. In addition, the counties agreed to minimize training and liability costs and improve safety by training just one heavy equipment operator, a Henderson County employee, to run the machine for both counties.

The agreement has proved to be a cost-effective strategy for both counties. While there were no local precedents for developing an equipment-sharing intergovernmental agreement, with the help of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and other regional organizations, the counties created an arrangement that now serves as a model for neighboring counties' solid waste management projects.

Public Trust

Metropolitan Environmental Trust Authority--Tulsa, Oklahoma

Finding the best multijurisdictional vehicle for a regional program sometimes involves some initial experimentation. Recently, a regional organization in Oklahoma called INCOG (Indian Nations Council of Governments) predicted the need for large-scale changes in the way that solid waste is managed in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area. Tulsa and eight neighboring communities searched for a way to combine resources to meet the new challenges involved with managing solid waste more efficiently.

After a couple of unsuccessful attempts using other types of regional structures, decision-makers from the community decided that the most appropriate management organization was a public trust. Under an Oklahoma state law, public trusts are organized to fulfill a single purpose and are granted all the powers of municipalities, including the power to issue bonds or borrow money directly. The communities decided that the trust might be more financially flexible than individual districts and have greater independence to develop and manage projects.

Member communities carefully structured the trust, called the Metropolitan Environmental Trust Authority (META), to ensure equity among all members. A board of trustees, who are elected

community officials, manages META. Member communities hold an equal share in the assets and liabilities of the organization. In addition, unlike other regionalization trusts or authorities, which often dictate voting power according to the population of member communities, each municipality is given a single vote to prevent densely populated communities from having more influence.

The funding structure is designed to support this balance. Member communities are charged regular dues covering the overhead expenses of META (approximately $85,000 last year). Fifty percent of these costs are divided evenly among the members and 50 percent are assessed according to population. Specific META projects charge each participating community separately. A community can opt not to join a specific program; membership in the trust is maintained simply by paying regular dues.

Projects often are initiated through a META proposal or "business plan" that specifies the goals of the program, the steps that will be taken, and the financial implications. META's first project involved implementing permanent, 24-hour drop-off recycling collection centers throughout the trust's member communities. Called the Depot Recycling program, the project involved siting special collection stations in the parking lots of shopping centers.

Depot Recycling was initiated after a private study showed that a recycling program could be cost-effective for the area. The business plan proposed by META was approved by seven of the nine members, primarily because of a favorable financial structure. Since member communities were assessed costs on a per-capita basis, smaller governments benefitted from economies of scale previously out of their reach. In addition, Depot Recycling offered a less expensive recycling program than the larger communities could have organized individually, since META was able to obtain corporate donations, state grants, and other forms of financial support.

Nonprofit Public Corporation

Regional Waste Systems--Portland, Maine

One of the keys to regionalization is finding a management structure that facilitates cooperation while allowing members to achieve their individual goals. For a collection of 21 communities in southern Maine, a nonprofit public corporation turned out to be the best solution. Through Regional Waste Systems (RWS), the communities planned and established a waste-to-energy facility, new landfills, composting facilities, and recycling programs.

While most of the communities in the region had been managing their solid waste independently, increased demands for services and improved (and more expensive) management methods were straining local resources. As a result, a number of nearby communities were interested in participating in an informal regional council initiated previously by the city of Portland and three neighboring communities. To accommodate the new members (and the increased volume of waste) and develop needed solid waste management projects, council managers decided that a regional organization with the ability to secure funding through bonds or loans was needed.

Many formal regional organizations did not offer member municipalities the control that they required, however. Historically independent, these New England communities were reluctant to surrender authority over local issues to a special district or other management body. One organizational option, the nonprofit public corporation, offered a way to regionalize certain aspects of member communities' solid waste management responsibilities without significantly reducing control over decisions that might affect their community. It was agreed that the new organization would focus on solid waste treatment and disposal; collection and billing would remain the responsibility of individual communities.

Accordingly, 21 communities created and collectively purchased Regional Waste Systems. As owners, member communities control the corporation through guaranteed voting rights. RWS is managed by a board of directors composed of elected representatives from member communities. These towns are allotted seats according to population. (Portland, for example, is allotted nine seats;

sparsely populated communities must share a single seat with two or three other towns.) The membership agreement requires communities to deliver their collected solid waste to RWS and to pay the resulting tipping fees, assessed according to tonnage.

While the tipping fees cover most ongoing operating costs, the corporation issues bonds to raise capital for RWS' waste management facilities and investments in new equipment. As a nonprofit corporation, setting priorities and raising funds is often less politicized than the activities of a government agency. Member communities' contribution to RWS' budget (the tipping fee) is simple and directly proportional to the amount of waste a community generates. Residents of these towns clearly can see the connection between the cost and the service provided. In turn, RWS is shielded from a line-by-line review of its budget by voters. As a result, the board is able make capital investments, raise funds, and even carry a deficit for a length of time, depending on what board members feel is in the best long-term interests of communities in the region.

This freedom enables RWS to concentrate on finding the most appropriate solutions for managing the solid waste it receives from member municipalities. These solutions include a 500-ton/day waste-to-energy combustor and ashfill, new landfills, and a composting facility for yard trimmings. In addition, over 90 recycling drop-off stations have been sited, resulting in the diversion of approximately 7,000 tons of MSW from local landfills. The corporation also is planning to construct and operate a materials recovery facility and a construction waste recycling site.

Nonprofit Public Corporation

Southwest Public Recycling Association--Arizona

The Southwest Public Recycling Association (SPRA) is another example of a successful nonprofit public corporation addressing solid waste issues. Formed in 1991, SPRA's mission is to strengthen the Southwest's recycling markets. The region is challenged by low material generation rates because of sparse population, relatively few accessible markets for collected materials, and vast distances to those limited markets, all factors contributing to high recycling costs.

In 1990, elected officials in Tucson, Arizona, initiated discussions on ways that local governments in the region could work together on marketing recyclables. A voluntary task force was formed to study the many issues involved. The task force gathered necessary legal information from town, city, county, and state attorneys. It also researched other cooperative marketing efforts and decided to use a successful New England program as their model. Since an organization for cooperative, multijurisdictional contracting and purchasing already existed, government procurement officials familiar with contracting for goods and services and with cooperative purchasing played a pivotal role in creating the new organization.

SPRA was launched with support from its member jurisdictions and with federal and private funding. Tucson's mayor provided staff support for drafting incorporation papers and bylaws and donated office space. Participating cities and towns paid membership dues set at 1À À per capita. EPA provided grant funding to cover SPRA's first-year marketing and market development efforts. Other sustaining funding comes from dues paid by associate members from the private and nonprofit sectors. SPRA has succeeded in attracting over 20 associate members including solid waste service companies, manufacturers, environmental groups, school districts, and materials processors. The organization represents approximately 5 million people in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

SPRA has been instrumental in enhancing recycling collection and marketing efforts in the area. Generally, in the Southwest, larger cities contract with private vendors for recycling services, while the smaller, rural communities manage solid waste

directly. By working together under the auspices of SPRA, however, small communities aggregate materials in marketable quantities and enjoy cost efficiencies.

SPRA also is in the process of implementing a comprehensive regional recycling economic development program. It developed purchasing agreements with end-use markets for recyclables collected in the region and negotiated contracts for steel, glass, and corrugated cardboard. In developing these purchasing agreements, SPRA compared the economic impact of working within existing regional markets to markets outside the region. SPRA members have the option of participating in the marketing agreements or going on their own, as their needs and circumstances require.

As a regional solid waste organization, SPRA is involved in a variety of activities beyond cooperative marketing of recyclables. It is working to site manufacturing industries that use recovered materials in the region so that transportation costs can be reduced and jobs can be created. For example, a paperboard company based its decision to site a recycling mill in New Mexico because SPRA was able to guarantee a reliable supply of old corrugated containers.

SPRA also developed a model "buy recycled" program to ensure the purchase of products made from the region's recyclables. By ordering recycled products in larger quantities, SPRA can offer its members economies of scale that would not be available to them individually.

This regional solid waste organization also provides technical assistance and information to its member jurisdictions and saves them research and consulting costs. For example, SPRA subscribes to Recycline, the online national recycling database, and shares that information with all members. Clearly, this regional organization is addressing a broad spectrum of solid waste needs for local and state governments in the Southwest.

Regional Council

Big Lakes Regional Council--Manhattan, Kansas

Pottowatami, Riley, Marshall, and Morris Counties in north central Kansas recently decided to work together through their regional council to cooperatively address solid waste management issues. The Big Lakes Regional Council was established to improve educational programs, emergency services, grant funding, and other programs in the area, gradually proving itself an effective regional planning and administrative organization. So, when member counties began facing increasingly difficult and expensive solid waste management projects, they decided to use Big Lakes to help meet these challenges.

Working through an established regional council offered the counties many advantages. Big Lakes Regional Council is governed by a board of directors composed of three elected officials from each county. Over the course of their two-year appointed term, the directors and their staff are able to establish an effective working relationship with state officials. These contacts help the Council learn about and secure educational materials, grants, and other important resources. Grants, in particular, often are critical to Big Lakes projects. While Big Lakes assesses fees on member counties based on population (currently, 57À À per person) to raise revenues, additional financing often is needed for initiatives.

One of the first solid waste challenges the counties addressed was the development of a household hazardous waste (HHW) collection program, estimated to cost from $40,000 to $50,000 annually per county. After one of the counties suggested that regionalizing a HHW collection effort might make it more feasible, Big Lakes conducted some initial research. It learned that funding was available and, since the state was trying to encourage regional strategies for MSW management, grants were more likely to be provided for such regional projects. Big Lakes also learned that a regional project would cost far less per county than individual programs--estimating approximately $70,000 annually for the four-county region, or about $18,000 each.

Big Lakes presented the results of its research to the member counties and several others nearby. Three member counties and one nonmember agreed to join the collection program. To finance the

project, Big Lakes proposed and secured a grant for approximately half of the needed funding; the other half came from Big Lakes' budget. Big Lakes also was an important resource for education and promotion. The Council distributed thousands of posters, which it received from the state. It also distributed videotapes for use in schools, developed press releases, held public forums to introduce the program and answer questions, and discussed the collections at other, general public meetings.

The participating counties also benefitted from having a single organization coordinate the administration of the program. From previous projects, Big Lakes learned to facilitate equipment sharing, maintenance, scheduling, personnel training, payments between counties, and other aspects of cooperative project management that might otherwise create friction between members. As a result, the counties were able to rely on Big Lakes' experience and the relationships it had developed with the state and regional governments. The end result was a cost-effective method of planning, promoting, financing, implementing, and managing an HHW collection program.

REGIONALIZATION: IT CAN WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY

As the success stories show, regionalization is helping rural and small communities tackle solid waste management projects they may not be able to accomplish individually. With a range of organizational options available, regionalization can be tailored to fit the needs and resources of all kinds of communities.

Regionalization can work, for example, even when potential members are unable or unwilling to make political or financial obligations. North Carolina's Land-of-Sky Regional Council is an example of how local governments can structure an organization that ties their communities together without specific, binding commitments. Member communities, such as Land-of-Sky's Henderson and Transylvania Counties, work together through intergovernmental agreements to regionalize specific projects, but can opt out of other projects at no cost when they feel the effort is not in their individual interest.

For communities interested in regionalization but reluctant to grant too much independence to a regional organization, there are other options. In Maine, the nonprofit public corporation Regional Waste Systems turned out to be the perfect vehicle: a strong regional organization with the power to approve and finance projects, yet owned and guided by the member communities. In the Southwest, jurisdictions in five states successfully marketed recyclables and attracted new recycling industries to the region through the Southwest Public Recycling Association, another nonprofit corporation.

Alternatively, if local decision-makers feel a strong regional organization is needed to oversee their community's waste management projects, they might set up an authority, public trust, or similar organization. The members of the Metropolitan Environmental Trust Authority (META) in Oklahoma chose this type of organization because they could empower it to plan, finance, and implement critical waste management projects without political and budgetary constraints.

These local governments all have found ways to design a regional program that works. Regionalization might work in your community, too. In addition to suggestions on how to develop regional solid waste management programs found here, the following guide lists a selection of some of the extensive publications and other

resources available for small and rural communities on solid waste management and regional programs. These resources and a little creativity can help you and your neighboring communities use regionalization to meet your toughest solid waste management challenges.

REGIONALIZATION RESOURCE GUIDE

A number of organizations, including EPA, other federal agencies, and nonprofit groups, have developed resources to assist communities in planning and implementing MSW regionalization projects. The following is a selected, annotated bibliography. When ordering a publication, reference the document number provided after the title.

Publications Available from EPA

The following publications may be ordered from the RCRA Hotline at 800 424-9346 or TDD 800 553-7572 for the hearing impaired.

* Criteria for Solid Waste Disposal Facilities, March 1993, EPA/530-SW-91-089.
Provides owners and operators of landfills with basic information on the Subtitle D regulations, including issues of location, operation, design, ground-water monitoring, corrective action, closure, and financial assurance.

* Decision-Makers Guide to Solid Waste Management, November 1989, EPA/530-SW-89-072.
Provides a hands-on guide to integrated solid waste management. Describes a range of waste management solutions and alternatives and helps state and local officials choose appropriate options.

* Household Hazardous Waste Management, A Manual for One-Day Community Collection Programs, August 1993, EPA/530-F-92-031.
Provides community leaders with guidance on all aspects of planning, organizing, and publicizing an HHW collection program.

* Native American Network
Facilitates the exchange of experiences and ideas about solid waste issues among tribes, and forges working relationships among tribal governments, EPA, other federal agencies, and state and local governments. To order, request a subscription to Native American Network.

* Pay As You Throw: Lessons Learned About Unit Pricing, April 1994, EPA/530-R-94-004.
Explains in step-by-step detail how communities can launch a unit pricing program (a program where residents pay for solid waste

services based on the amount of waste they generate). Also helps communities decide if unit pricing will work for them.

* Recycling Works! State and Local Solutions to Solid Waste Management Problems, January 1989, EPA/530-SW-89-014.
Describes successful state and municipal recycling programs and provides a complete listing of addresses and phone numbers for state-level recycling offices.

* Reusable News
Reports, on a quarterly basis, on EPA's and others' efforts to safely and effectively manage municipal solid waste. Articles describe current and innovative efforts in the public and private sectors. Keeps readers up-to-date on solid waste rulemaking and new EPA publications. To order, request a subscription to Reusable News.

* Safer Disposal for Solid Waste: The Federal Regulations for Landfills, March 1993, EPA/530-SW-91-092.
Summarizes the federal regulations covering landfill location, operation, design, ground-water monitoring and corrective action, closure and post-closure care, and financial assurance. Gives local officials and others dates for compliance and additional sources of information.

* Sites for Our Solid Waste: A Guidebook for Effective Public Involvement, April 1990, EPA/530-SW-90-019.
Helps public officials, citizens, and industry professionals effectively involve the community in finding waste sites and constructing solid waste management facilities.

* Used Dry Cell Batteries: Is a Collection Program Right for Your Community?, December 1992, EPA/530-K-92-006.
Helps communities determine whether establishing a program to collect used dry cell batteries is right for them. Reviews the key issues related to setting up and running a collection program.

* Variable Rates in Solid Waste: A Handbook for Solid Waste Officials; Volume I: Executive Summary, June 1990, EPA/530-SW-90-084A.
Points out potential costs and benefits of using variable rates to pay for solid waste services. Assists officials in analyzing options available in their jurisdictions; also alerts officials

to potential conflicts and solutions.

* Variable Rates in Solid Waste: A Handbook for Solid Waste Officials; Volume II: Detailed Manual, June 1990, PB90-272 063. Supplements Volume I (described above) by providing more technical data on variable rate systems. Includes six detailed charts to assist officials in analyzing solid waste fee systems.

EPA's Public Information Center (PIC) provides information and refers public inquiries to other appropriate sources of information within EPA. To order the following documents, call PIC at 202 260-7751.

* Narrowing the Gap: Environmental Finance for the 1990s, 1992. Describes important macro-level finance issues for the 1990s and lays out 14 key findings and recommendations, such as broadening the use of economic incentives and market alternatives to prevent pollution, improving coordination among federal small community financial assistance programs, and increasing the use of bond banks to improve access to the bond market by small communities.

* Paying for Progress: Perspectives on Financing Environmental Protection, 1990.
Reviews the issues associated with financing environmental programs by presenting views from the private and public sectors. Discusses the roles of federal, state, and local governments; presents creative approaches to environmental funding; explains potential barriers to financing; and introduces various incentive systems.

* Public-Private Partnerships for Environmental Facilities: A Self-Help Guide, 1990.
Outlines the issues and decisions local officials face in developing public-private partnerships. Includes an action checklist of the major steps required to initiate a public-private venture.

* Solid Waste Contract Negotiation Handbook, 1992.
Provides sample provisions of solid waste contracts and agreements, as well as guidelines for developing such agreements and contracts.

* Solid Waste Contracting: Questions and Answers, 1992.
Complements the Solid Waste Contract Negotiation Handbook

described above by providing a general introduction to solid waste contracting.

The following publications are available from various other EPA offices. Ordering information is included in the descriptions below.

* Analysis of the Policy Implications of Regional Municipal Solid Waste Disposal, U.S. EPA Region 10, 1990.
Discusses the costs and benefits associated with regionalization of municipal solid waste disposal, as well as the policy issues raised by importing and exporting solid waste. Focuses on regional solid waste management in the Pacific Northwest. To order, call EPA's Region 10 Public Information Center at 206 553-1465.

* Building Support for Increasing User Fees, U.S. EPA Office of Water, 1989.
Provides an example of the public education efforts needed to build support for user fee increases. Although this document discusses water and wastewater fees, the information can be applied to solid waste services as well. To order, call the Water Resources Center at 202 260-7786.

* Economic Incentives: Options for Environmental Protection, U.S. EPA Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, 1991.
Evaluates a variety of market-based incentives, such as creation of markets, monetary incentives, deposit/refund systems, information disclosure, and procurement policies. Municipal solid waste incentives discussed include variable rate programs, scrap tire recycling incentives, deposit/refund systems for lead-acid batteries, and credit systems or deposit/refund systems for used oil. To order, call EPA's Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation at 202 260-7786.

* HELP! EPA Resources for Small Governments, U.S. EPA Office of Regional Operations, 1993.
Introduces EPA programs that affect small communities and provides a comprehensive list of contacts. Targeted to local officials in small communities, HELP! is available free of charge by calling EPA's Office of Regional Operations at 202 260-4719.

EPA Resource Centers

The following clearinghouses, dockets, and hotlines stock up-to-date information pertaining to municipal solid waste management. These resource centers can also refer communities to appropriate resource persons or documents for technical information.

* Public Information Center (PIC)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Public Information Center (3404) 401 M Street, SW. Washington, DC 20460 phone: 202 260-7751 fax: 202 260-6257

Serves as the primary point of contact between EPA and the public. Refers calls and letters to the appropriate sources for technical information, and distributes a variety of general-interest items.

* RCRA Docket Information Center (RIC)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency RCRA Docket Information Center (5305) 401 M Street, SW. Washington, DC 20460 phone: 202 260-9327 fax: 202 260-9327

Holds and provides public access to all regulatory materials on solid waste and distributes technical and nontechnical information on solid waste.

* RCRA/Superfund/OUST Hotline
RCRA/SF/OUST Hotline 1725 Jefferson Davis Highway Arlington, VA 22202 phone: 800 424-9346 fax: 703 486-3333

Answers questions on matters related to solid waste, hazardous waste, or underground storage tanks. Also can be used to find and order EPA publications.

* Pollution Prevention Information Clearinghouse (PPIC)
PPIC Science Applications International Corporation 7600A Leesburg Pike Falls Church, VA 22043 phone: 703 821-4800 PIES system: 703 506-1025 fax: 703 821-4775

Provides a library and an electronic bulletin board (accessible by any PC equipped with a modem) dedicated to information on pollution prevention.

* Environmental Financing Information Network (EFIN)
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency EFIN (3304)401 M Street, SW. Washington, DC 20460 phone: 202 260-0420 fax: 202 260-0710

Provides an online computer database containing abstracts of publications and a network of public financing and environmental program experts. Help using the database is available.

* Small Business Ombudsman Clearinghouse / Hotline
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Small Business Ombudsman (1230C) 401 M Street, SW. Washington, DC 20460 phone: 800 368-5888 fax: 703 305-6462

Helps private citizens, small businesses, and smaller communities with questions on all program aspects within EPA.

* Solid Waste Assistance Program (SWAP)
SWANA Solid Waste Assistance Program Post Office Box 7219 Silver Spring, MD 20907 phone: 800 677-9424

Collects and distributes current municipal solid waste information.

* EPA Main Library
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters Library 401 M Street, SW. Room 2904 Washington, DC 20460 phone: 202 260-5921 or 5922 fax: 202 260-6257

Maintains environmental reference materials for EPA staff and the general public, including books, journals, abstracts, newsletters, newspapers, and audio-visual materials generated by government agencies and the private sector. Also provides access to online computer services, bulletin boards, and CD-ROM systems.

EPA Regional Offices

EPA's ten regional offices work closely with state and local governments, as well as with EPA headquarters. Call or write the regional office serving your state for more information on solid waste management in your region.

* Region 1 [Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont]

JFK Building One Congress Street Boston, MA 02203 Library: 617 573-9687
Waste Management Division Mail Code: HER-CAN6 617 573-5700

* Region 2 [New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands]
Javitz Building 26 Federal Plaza New York, NY 10278 Library: 212 264-2881
Hazardous Waste and Solid Waste Programs Branch Mail Code: 2AWM 212 264-3384

* Region 3 [Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia]
841 Chestnut Building Philadelphia, PA 19107 Library: 215 597-0580
Hazardous Waste Management Division Mail Code: 3HW53 215 597-8181

* Region 4 [Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee]
345 Courtland Street, N.E. Atlanta, GA 30365 Library: 404 347-4216
Waste Management Division Mail Code: 4WD-RCRA 404 347-3454

* Region 5 [Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin]
77 West Jackson Blvd.Chicago, IL 60604-3507 Library: 312 353-2022
Waste Management Division Mail Code: HRP-8J 312 886-7579

* Region 6 [Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas]
First Interstate Bank Tower 1445 Ross Avenue, Suite 1200 Dallas, TX 75202-2733 Library: 214 655-6427
Hazardous Waste Management Division Mail Code: 6HHW 214 655-6701

* Region 7 [Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska]
726 Minnesota Avenue Kansas City, KS 66101 Library: 913 551-7358
Waste Management Division Mail Code: STPG 913 557-7050

* Region 8 [Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming]
999 18th Street, Suite 500 Denver, CO 80202-2405 Library: 303 293-1444
Hazardous Waste Management Division Mail Code: 8HWM-WM 303

293-1720

* Region 9 [Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, American Samoa, Guam]
75 Hawthorne Street San Francisco, CA 94105 Library: 415 744-1510
Hazardous Waste Management Division Mail Code: H-3-1 415 744-1730

* Region 10 [Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington]
1200 Sixth Avenue Seattle, WA 98101 Library: 206 553-1289
Hazardous Waste Division Mail Code: HW107 206 553-1261

Additional Federal Resources

The following federal agencies also can provide technical and/or financial assistance for regional solid waste management programs:

* Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)
1666 Connecticut Avenue, NW. Washington, DC 20235 202 673-7968

* U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
451 Seventh Street, SW. Washington, DC 20410 202 708-1112

* Indian Health Services (IHS)
5600 Fishers Lane Rockville, MD 20857 301 443-3593

* U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
1849 C Street, NW. Washington, DC 20240 202 208-3710

* Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
400 West Summit Hill Drive Knoxville, TN 37902 615 632-2101

* U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Administration (RDA)
South Agriculture Building 14th & Independence Ave, SW. Washington, DC 20250 202 720-9583