

Massachusetts
Department
of
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION

case study

Town of Hamilton “Three-Sort” Program

In a Three-Sort program, residents use separate containers for trash, single-stream recycling and food waste collection at the curb. Dramatic reductions in trash tonnage and increases in recycling and food waste have yielded significant savings for this suburban North Shore town.

Community Population: 8,374
Households Served: 2,640
Services Provided: **Every other week** curbside trash collection, weekly single-stream recycling and food waste collection

Program Overview

- Curbside collection of trash is limited to one 35-gallon standardized cart collected every other week. Residents with excess trash or who need to dispose of trash on the alternate week must purchase the Town’s official overflow bag (\$1.75 for 33-gallon bag, available at two local retailers).
- On alternate weeks, the trash truck collects only overflow bags.
- Single-Stream Recycling (SSR) is collected weekly, using resident’s own containers.
- Food waste is collected weekly in a 13-gallon wheeled cart with locking lid.
- Program serves all residential dwellings up to four units and small businesses that wish to participate.



History

- In April 2006, Hamilton initiated a Waste Ban Enforcement (WBE) program, supported by the Board of Selectmen, which directed the Town’s hauler to leave behind any visible recyclables that were placed in trash instead of in recycling bins. Annual trash tonnage decreased from 3,226 tons (1.22 Tons Per Household served or TPH) to 2,833 tons (1.07 TPH).
- In October 2007, Town Meeting authorized Selectmen to institute a one-barrel limit for curbside trash collection, known as a “Waste Reduction Program” (WRP). Households generating more than one barrel of trash per week were required to purchase “overflow bags” at \$1.75 each. The WRP commenced March 12, 2008. For CY08, recycling increased and trash decreased to 0.76 TPH.
- In early 2009, a local volunteer organized a two-month pilot program to weigh the amount of food waste that could be collected from about 75 households.
- Starting in April 2010, the food waste pilot was expanded to approximately 600 households in the Towns of Hamilton and Wenham. Participants paid \$75/year and received a green, 13-gallon cart for placing food waste at the curb for weekly collection by a separate hauler. During negotiations for renewal of the trash and recycling collection contract, the Town’s solid waste and recycling hauler proposed town-wide “three-sort service” with little cost increase above current program. The cost difference was minimal because the hauler proposed to use one split-body truck to collect both the SSR and food waste weekly and a second truck with an automated arm to collect the trash every other week, replacing the weekly trash and bi-weekly recycling trucks used previously.
- In April 2012, the three-sort program was implemented town-wide. Town officials instructed the hauler only to collect trash contained in overflow bags on the alternate weeks. For CY12, with only nine months of the new program, the trash decreased by 30% to 0.48 TPH.

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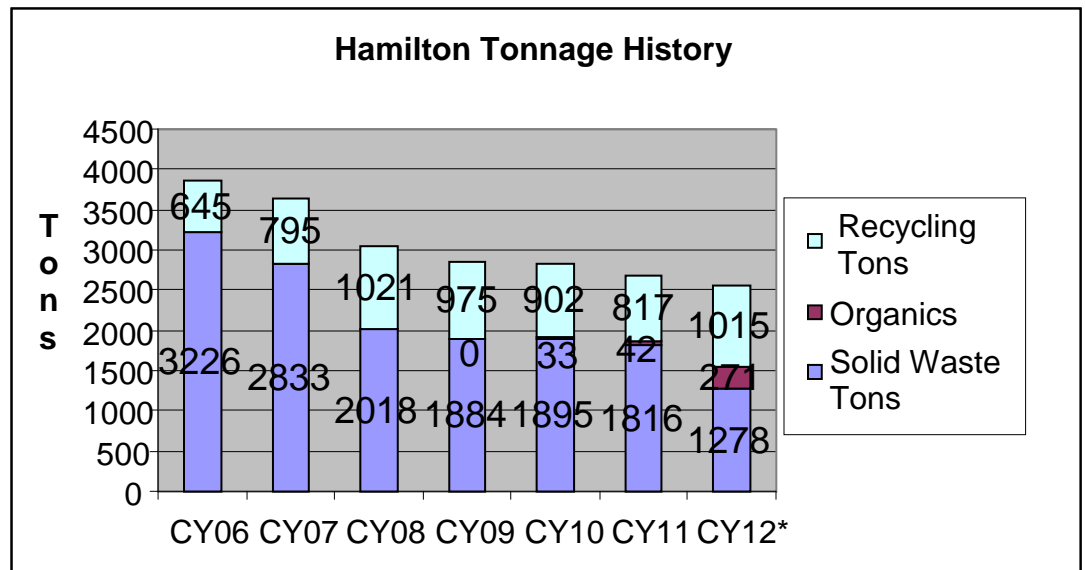
Department of
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Implementation

- The Town procured and distributed 2,703 standardized 35-gallon carts for trash.
- The Town procured (with help of a MassDEP grant) and the hauler distributed the 13-gallon wheeled food waste carts.
- A full-color, 8-page information booklet was developed and printed by the town (with a MassDEP grant) and delivered with the new trash and food waste carts.
- The Town pays a \$40/ton tipping for food waste delivered to the composting facility and a \$70/ton tipping fee for trash delivered to a disposal facility.
- The trash bag vendor manufactures Hamilton’s official trash bags, warehouses and delivers bags to the local stores, and handles billing and accounting.
- Small businesses may participate as long as they comply with state waste bans and do not exceed one 35-gallon cart of trash per address per week.

Results

- **With the town-wide “three sort” program in effect for only nine months (April – December) in Calendar Year 2012 (CY12*),** the results are:
 - Trash decreased 30 percent (539 tons).
 - Recycling increased 24 percent (198 tons).
 - Organics collection increased 544 percent (229 tons)
 - The Town saved over \$25,000 in disposal costs due to the organics alone.
- In CY12, the trash tonnage dropped to 1,278 tons or 0.48 Tons Per Household.
- In CY12, residents bought 33,800 overflow bags, averaging 12.5 per barrel recipient.



Administration & Enforcement

- Revenues from bag sales are deposited into a Trash Enterprise Account.
- There has been no increase in illegal dumping since the implementation of the WRP or the three-sort program.
- The Town coordinates requests for additional or replacement carts. .

Additional Waste Services

- White goods: Drop-off area at DPW (for a fee).
- Bulky waste: One item per week collected curbside (no fee).
- Mercury-containing products and batteries: Drop-off at DPW (no charge).
- Yard waste: Drop-off at compost area.
- Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event: Held yearly.
- Electronics and cathode ray tubes (CRTs): Drop-off at DPW (for a fee).

For More Information

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Produced by the
 Bureau of Waste Prevention
 January 2013
 Printed on recycled paper.

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