

# **WASHTENAW COUNTY SOLID WASTE PROGRAM**



**2011  
ANNUAL REPORT**

The Washtenaw County Solid Waste Program continues to provide its residents, businesses, institutions and local units of governments a wide variety of useful solid waste management, recycling services, and educational opportunities. The following report is intended to give a brief and general overview of the ongoing programs and accomplishments of the Solid Waste Program in 2011. The report is divided into three primary categories: **On-going Programs**, **2011 Program Events** and **Education & Outreach**.

## **On-going Programs**

### **1. Home Toxics Reduction Program (HTRP)**

The Home Toxics Reduction Program permanently located at the Washtenaw County Western Service Center at 705 N. Zeeb Rd., has collected approximately 2,011,528 lbs of Hazardous Household Waste over the last 16 years of its operation. During 2011, Saturday collections alone collected over 201,528 lbs. of Home Toxics, serviced 3,392 cars and diverted these materials from the landfill. The program has been effective in preventing hazardous materials from reaching the landfill and potentially causing adverse environmental affects. The HTRP has broadened its reach to include and assist schools, businesses, and other community organizations who now benefit by receiving informational assistance and the opportunity to participate in the county's HHW contract to receive reduced pricing for hazardous materials disposal.



*Permanent HHW drop-off facility at 705 N. Zeeb Rd.*

The year of 2011 marks the first year of a 3-year HHW contract renewal with "EQ – The Environmental Quality Company," a local hazardous waste vendor. Washtenaw County businesses, institutions, local units of government and residents that require disposal of hazardous materials are also able to utilize the county's contract and expertise to identify regulations and requirements necessary to properly handle any hazardous materials that require disposal. Businesses that are prohibited from participating in the county's home toxics program are also provided with names of service providers to meet their disposal needs.

The total HHW volume collected in 2011 was approximately 201,528 lbs, which is significantly greater than the 2010 HHW volume collected of 173,892 lbs. The increased volume may be attributable of the Solid Waste Program being open the 1<sup>st</sup> three (3) Saturdays of each month, increased awareness and general economic conditions. For the second consecutive year, during 2011, the HWW program again reduced the collection days from every Saturday to the first

three Saturdays of the month, April thru November, excluding holidays. Items such as latex paint are easily dried out by residents at their homes, and such education efforts have been utilized to inform citizens of alternative disposal methods and thus reduce disposal costs for HHW. Also, Washtenaw County staff have ongoing partnerships with vendors for free disposal of fire extinguishers for recycling and used oil in efforts to reduce program costs. The attached diagrams show the historical HHW cost per lb. per year trends, illustrating the progress we have made in reducing disposal costs and also acting as an indicator for the future of HHW costs in Washtenaw County. At 0.38 cents per lb. in 2011, this cost per lb. has been the lowest in the history of the program.

## **2. Medicine Take Back Program**

This program was originally launched in 2008 and has continued to successfully function and flourish throughout 2011. The Medicine Take Back Program currently consists of several pharmacies throughout Washtenaw County, which serve as collection points for the general public to take their old pharmaceuticals for proper disposal. This is a much safer alternative to the most common practice of “flushing” and thus contaminating the local waterways. The current waste disposal vendor is Drug and Lab Disposal who provides each participating pharmacy with collection containers and pick up service. To date, over 4,795.00 lbs of pharmaceutical waste have been collected and safely disposed of through this program. The website [www.dontflushdrugs.com](http://www.dontflushdrugs.com) has acted as a useful tool in educating the public about the program, and to encourage participation. We anticipate the number of participating pharmacies to grow as the program continues to succeed and gain recognition. The original contract with the participating pharmacies was such that the County funded disposal costs under at a discounted group rate, however, as of October 1, 2011, all disposal costs are funded via the Michigan Department of Agriculture “Clean Sweep Grant” which was awarded to Washtenaw County.

## **3. Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) “Clean Sweep Grant”**

The Washtenaw County Solid Waste Program was awarded a \$45,000 re-imbusement grant in 2011. This grant is aimed at improving awareness, recovery and collection of discarded pesticides in the community from farmers, commercial sources such as golf courses, agricultural nursery’s and the general public. In addition, the grant focuses on the recovery of mercury containing devices and pharmaceutical waste. The grant also consisted of a \$15,000 capital improvement amount which enabled the expansion of the existing HHW drop off facility to include grant specific services located at Zeeb Rd. Being a re-imbusement grant, all disposal costs for all mercury containing devices and pharmaceutical waste collected at the Washtenaw County Medicine Take Back Program though participating pharmacies will now be collected and disposed of at no cost to the county.

#### **4. Waste Knot Program**

This business recognition program has continued to grow, having accepted nearly 50 new partners in 2011. To become a member of Waste Knot, an organization must practice waste reduction and reuse, purchase recycled content products as part of their business plan and have policies in place to include waste reduction and reuse, including employee education. Though the above-stated are the minimum requirements to be admitted to the program, most partners go above and beyond in their endeavors to be “green.” In addition to the standard recyclables, local organizations are becoming increasingly aware the importance of proper disposal of hazardous materials and e-waste, in addition to food waste through composting. Many businesses are using innovation and creativity to help reduce their waste stream as much as possible. Since business waste composes roughly 60% of the total waste generated in Washtenaw County, it is extremely important to continue to educate and encourage waste reduction and recycling in the business sector through the Waste Knot Program.

### **2011 Events**

In 2011, the Washtenaw County Solid Waste Division participated in several main events, which include recycling opportunities for businesses and residents.

#### **1. Environmental Clean-Up Days**

Washtenaw County sponsored (2) major clean-up events in 2011. The 1<sup>st</sup> event was held on May 14<sup>th</sup> in Chelsea, MI. This event drew 667 cars and collected nearly 60,000 lbs of hazardous materials that would have otherwise been sent to the landfill, potentially contaminating the environment. In addition, the 2<sup>nd</sup> major event was held on October 8th at the EMU Rynearson Football Stadium and serviced 310 recyclers. Items collected at these events ranged from the traditional recyclables, traditional HHW materials (cleaning supplies, pesticides, gas, oil, etc), Freon appliances, tires and electronic waste.



#### **2. Waste Knot Ceremony**

the 2011 Waste Knot Ceremony was held in April to reward and recognize all Waste Knot business partners. The ceremony consists of awarding new Waste Knot members with an award plaque, provides a networking opportunity for partners and also features several speakers, usually highlighting particular firms’ outstanding practices. In 2011, the award ceremony had record attendance and shown locally on CTN Cable channel.

## **Education & Outreach**

### **1. Environmental Excellence Awards**

The winners for the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Environmental Excellence Awards are chosen by members of the Washtenaw County Department of Planning & Environment and the Water Resource Commissioner's Office and has been developed to recognize local businesses with their waste prevention and recycling programs, storm-water management efforts and Pollution Prevention innovations and compliance. The Chrysler Group, LLC-Chrysler Proving Grounds located in Chelsea was the overall winner of the 2011 Environmental Excellence Award.

### **2. Ypsilanti Heritage Festival**

This event features a "green tent" where the Washtenaw County Solid Waste Program is one of many environmental agencies/organizations to host a booth to educate the public about the various programs they offer, including the Home Toxics Reduction Program and other recycling/waste resources.

### **3. Ann Arbor Green Fair**

The Green Fair is a celebration of the Washtenaw community's environmental leadership and Washtenaw County Solid Waste hosts a table where information about our several programs is available to the public. Furthermore, all Waste Knot partners who participate in the Green Fair are able to do so at no cost.

### **4. Huron River Day**

This event provides the Solid Waste Program an opportunity to educate the community about our several programs, including the Home Toxics Reduction Program and other recycling/waste resources. We also provide environmental crafts and resources for younger children.

### **5. Washtenaw County Consortium for Solid Waste Management (WCCSWM)**

WCCSWM is a consortium of representatives from local governments and public institutions who join together in a voluntary organization for the purpose of meeting at regular intervals to discuss and study solid waste, recycling and utilization of recycled products. The consortium also meets to develop policy and programs for ratification and implementation by member representatives of the County, local governments and public institutions. WCCSWM helped fund the purchase of the domain name [www.dontflushdrugs.com](http://www.dontflushdrugs.com) for the Pharmaceutical Take-Back Program and [www.recyclemyplastics.com](http://www.recyclemyplastics.com) for the Shrink-wrap Recycling Program. In addition, the WCCSWM membership has developed and supports the now annual "Master Composter" program offered annually to train and educate leaders in our communities on the "Best Management Practices" of composting.

## **6. Multi-Media Education**

Washtenaw County solid waste staff provides support to air the “Issues of the Environment” radio show on WEMU 89.1 every Wednesday morning. Staff provides issues and local experts on the issue to help inform listeners through the interview conducted by the show’s host David Fair. Solid Waste staff contacted the Community Television Network, CTN, to create a 30 minute talk show called the “Green Room”. Staff member Barbara Lucas conducts the interviews with experts and provides a video to accompany the interview. The Green Room has recorded over 20 interviews that include topics on how to clean up a small mercury spill, invasive non-native plants, the County’s weatherization program, energy reduction effort for businesses and homes, and green roofs.