

The Handling of Waste Recycle or Bury?

As a society, if we started with a blank slate today, where “reduce, reuse and recycle” are the governing principles, what would be our focus?

- 1) State-of-the-Art recycling ----- Materials Recovery Facility (MRF)
- 2) Locate the MRF at the “population centroid” in order to minimize Vehicle Miles Traveled in the transport of any residual that can’t be reduced or reused
- 3) Process as much waste at the MRF as the state of the art allows – and fully expect that the art will steadily improve. Plan for a constantly shrinking residual until zero waste is achieved.
- 4) Plan to use the constantly shrinking residual for either energy production, or as a chemical feedstock for plastics, pharmaceuticals, etc., or both in combination.

We very likely would not even be considering burial as an option for any significant percentage of the waste. We certainly would not focus any of our time or effort on locating 400 acres of land where we could bury our waste. Considering the entire life cycle of materials, recycling is more cost-effective as well as far more environmentally responsible.

Unfortunately, because the County already owns 400 acres of Landfill, the question of what to do with the waste generated from the cities is at risk of having the “tail wag the dog.” For fear of facing the cost of closing the Landfill, the County may push all of the cities toward burying much more garbage for a much longer time period than is either economically or environmentally justified.

Rather than selling the Central Landfill to a private company which can only justify buying it if large scale burial of garbage can be accomplished, the Landfill should remain in public ownership and shift its focus to use of the land for its other values, such as energy production.