



WASTE DIVERSION

2019 STRATEGIC PLAN

FOR ROUTT COUNTY





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Executive Summary

Responsible solid waste management is a critical component of meeting community goals for an economically, culturally and environmentally sustainable future. The Routt County Vision 2030 report identified sustainability as a core community value. This sentiment is echoed in the vision statement for the City of Steamboat Springs, Steamboat Springs City Council's 2019 goals, and in the 2019 Routt County Strategic Plan.

In response to desires of the community for a commitment to responsible and sustainable management of waste streams, Yampa Valley Sustainability Council (YVSC), with support from Routt County and a comprehensive group of community stakeholders, developed this Waste Diversion Strategic Plan. The plan is designed to support State requirements for core environmental health services and recently developed statewide waste diversion goals, with an intent to reduce waste and increase material recovery over the next five years and beyond.

To kick off the planning process, community stakeholders met in February and throughout 2018 to identify and discuss priorities for waste diversion in Routt County. As a part of the process, and as a basis for the plan, the group developed the following mission, vision and goal statements:



VISION

By being good stewards of the environment and practicing sustainable resource management, Routt County will continue to be a vibrant place to live, work and visit. It will also be a healthy and safe community for future generations.



MISSION

Reduce the use of raw materials and increase the reuse, recycling and composting of our discards by encouraging source separation, building community partnerships and emphasizing opportunities that strengthen our local economy.



GOALS

Develop a strategic plan to reduce waste and increase materials recovery in Routt County through a comprehensive stakeholder process.

Based on these guiding statements, stakeholders identified six key areas in which waste reduction and increases in recycling and reuse could be achieved throughout the county. Short and long-term objectives and action steps were identified for each priority area. Objectives and action steps were then shared with County Commissioners, residents and community stakeholders to collect feedback and suggestions for revision. Smaller task force groups have since been formed to address each priority and to develop work plans for implementation to achieve objectives.

<p>Increase recycling at businesses and multi-family properties.</p> <p>Increase accessibility to curbside recycling in rural areas of Routt County.</p>  <p>Curbside Recycling</p>	<p>Provide composting options for largest organics producers and residential neighborhoods.</p>  <p>Organics Recovery</p>	<p>Increase access to and availability of recycling for businesses.</p> <p>Provide education and promote waste reduction strategies.</p>  <p>Business Waste Diversion</p>
<p>Develop infrastructure and policies to divert waste from construction and demolition projects.</p>  <p>Construction and Demolition</p>	<p>Develop a convenient recycling drop-off for hard-to-recycle materials.</p>  <p>Transfer Station</p>	<p>Create a community-wide education campaign to increase recycling and reduce recycling contamination.</p>  <p>Education and Events</p>

To help ensure accessible and affordable waste diversion opportunities are available countywide, policy, programming and infrastructure will all need to be in place. Support from elected officials will be another key to success. Successful implementation will help ensure that Routt County is a vibrant, healthy and safe community for future generations.

Introduction + Background

As a whole, Colorado lags behind other states for diversion rates. In 2017, a record 9,307,000 tons of waste was created, while recycling rates flat-lined at just 12%, well behind the national average of 35%. On average, each Colorado resident throws away nearly eight pounds of trash per day, or more than 1.45 tons per year. That’s more than eight million tons piling up in landfills every year.

Recycling could be a win for Colorado’s economy and the environment. Each year Colorado buries nearly \$265 million worth of recyclable material, such as aluminum, cardboard, paper, glass and plastics in landfills. That material

could have been recycled here in Colorado, creating jobs, strengthening local economies, and reducing carbon footprints. Recycling, reusing and remanufacturing already generate over \$8.7 billion in economic benefits in Colorado annually, even with the low recycling rate. On average, recycling creates nine times more jobs per ton than landfills, and reusing materials creates 30 times more jobs. Yet most of our paper, plastics and metals are shipped out of state, or even out of the country, rather than recycled locally.

Colorado is starting to make progress by recognizing the economic and environmental benefits of investing in local waste reduction programs. In 2017, the Colorado Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission approved the state’s first-ever waste diversion goals, aiming to increase recycling and composting over the next 20 years (see chart below). The new goals for Colorado are 45% recovery by 2036. It is anticipated that within the next few years, local municipalities will be required to develop and implement strategies to meet these goals, and this regional plan for Routt County is a first step in that direction.



FIGURE 3. COLORADO’S RECYCLING GOALS

DIVERSION GOALS	2016	2021	2026	2036
Front Range	32%	39%	51%	
Greater Colorado	10%	13%	15%	
Statewide	12%	28%	35%	45%

WASTE DIVERSION IN ROUTT COUNTY

Like many rural communities in Colorado, Routt County struggles with low waste diversion rates and lacks well developed recycling and composting programs. Low volumes, long distances to markets and the convenience of landfilling challenges the economic viability of rural waste diversion programs. Despite these challenges, increased diversion is possible, and several Western mountain resort and rural communities provide viable models for sustainable recycling and compost programs.

Yampa Valley Sustainability Council (YVSC), with support from Routt County Department of Environmental Health (DEH), researched the importance and relevance of waste diversion in Routt County as it relates to the broader regional and statewide landscape, as well as successful waste diversion programs, to better understand how the challenges of rural recycling can be overcome.

The value of waste diversion in Routt County is discussed below not only at the local level but also from a larger regional, state and even global perspective:

Economic Stability

Recycling creates nine times more jobs than landfills per ton. As a state, Colorado employs more than 86,000 people in the reuse, recycling and remanufacturing industries. Increased recycling also means more money returned to our economy. In Colorado we throw away \$265 million worth of recyclable materials – aluminum, metals, cardboard, paper, and plastics – every year. These materials are valuable commodities, which could be sold for profit instead of buried in the ground.



Locally, Routt County's economy is highly dependent on jobs and tax dollars associated with nature-based/outdoor activity tourism. Visitor experience is enhanced by local efforts to preserve and protect the environment, consistent with other resort communities. If visitors do not sense this commitment, they may go elsewhere.

State Plans and Goals

On August 15, 2017, the Colorado Solid and Hazardous Waste Commission voted to adopt a resolution that sets statewide diversion rate goals. Adopting waste diversion goals at the state level sets a benchmark that all stakeholders can work toward by improving recycling, composting and waste reduction. The result will be an increased awareness of Colorado's waste diversion rate and a mechanism to motivate and improve materials management services, and access to those services, statewide.

Regulations

Waste diversion is not only important as part of Routt County's character and economy, but it is also required by law. In the last five years, Colorado has passed state laws that require recycling of electronics, tires and paint. In addition, with the approval of the statewide waste diversion goals, it is predicted that additional rulemaking will be enacted to promote waste diversion. Preparation and planning are required to comply with current and future laws effectively. State Environmental Health regulations also assert that County Departments of Environmental Health must take appropriate steps to ensure the proper storage, collection, treatment and disposal of garbage, refuse, and solid and hazardous waste. In addition, they must promote programs to minimize the amount of solid and hazardous waste and maximize the amount of recycling and reuse.

Climate Action

Recycling is a relatively quick and cost-effective step a community can take to reduce effects of climate change. For every ton of materials recycled, three tons of carbon emissions are saved. Zero Waste strategies, such as recycling, composting and reuse, are among the fastest, most cost-effective local solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By recycling just 10% more, Colorado could prevent more than 450,000 tons of carbon emissions annually, the equivalent of taking nearly 100,000 cars off the road.



ROUTT COUNTY CHALLENGES

Although the importance of waste diversion for Routt County is clear, it is not without its challenges. Barriers to waste diversion, specific to Routt County, were documented in the Routt County Recycling Study conducted in 2014. The challenges of waste diversion in rural mountain communities are also well documented in the 2016 Colorado Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan.

Across the U.S., recycling in rural areas is generally more challenging than in urban areas, and Routt County, like all Colorado mountain and rural areas, faces several disadvantages.

The Northwest Colorado Regional Waste Diversion Study, along with community stakeholder input, identified several challenges facing Routt County that will require creative community-led solutions:

- **Long distance to markets:** Most recyclables are being hauled long distances to facilities and little coordination is occurring in the region. Organizations need to work together to streamline recycling and find solutions that benefit all.
- **Lack of coordination:** Few mechanisms are in place to coordinate waste diversion with landfills, haulers and citizens. Most entities work in isolation and rarely coordinate waste diversion efforts with others. Consensus is needed for consistent messaging and education, especially with a focus on waste reduction and reuse.
- **Lack of data:** Data on waste and recycling is not collected for most regions of northwest Colorado, making it very hard to measure progress and identify opportunities. A good model is Eagle County, where Walking Mountains Science Center collects data on waste management.
- **Contamination in recycling bins:** Contamination rates in curbside recycling bins and Green Machines (public recycling collection bins) are high, resulting in increased amounts of waste going to the landfill and lower value for recycled materials.
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Routt County lacks several key pieces of infrastructure or services, including:
 - an industrial compost facility that accepts food waste or biomass, which makes up nearly 25% of Routt County's waste stream
 - outlets to recycle concrete, asphalt, old pipes and other C&D materials, which amount to 10% of the waste stream
 - year-round household hazardous waste recycling options
- **Space constraints:** Many businesses do not have access to cardboard recycling because of space constraints, and building owners are not willing to provide the service.
- **Funding:** Funding in Routt County for waste diversion efforts and infrastructure improvements is limited, as is funding from the state.
- **Economics:** The cost of recycling is an obstacle for many businesses and residents. For example, electronics are being dumped illegally on both public and private property, which results in potential contamination of soil and water and cleanup costs.



In 2018, more than 60 tons of material was diverted from the landfill through YVSC's biannual Recycling Drop-Off events.



Foundations for Our Success: What's Working Now

Despite the challenges facing rural areas, there are numerous success stories where rural, low-density areas have overcome these obstacles and created strong recycling programs. It starts with strong community support, which Routt County garnered during the community stakeholder process, and eventually leads to tailored solutions to address needs and opportunities within the unique demographic and geographic region.

Progress is already underway in Routt County that will lay the foundation for the road ahead. Here are some of the highlights of programs already working well in the region:



RECYCLING

- Curbside recycling pick-up for residents
- Green machine recycling drop-off in Yampa and Oak Creek
- Cardboard collection
- Recycling bins downtown Steamboat Springs
- Recycling in parks downtown
- City of Steamboat Springs Ordinance for single family recycling



ORGANICS RECYCLING

- Education on backyard composting
- Leadership Steamboat earth cube project
- YVSC's Food Waste Challenge
- Biosolids composting at Twin Enviro Landfill
- Colorado Mountain College Food Recovery Chapter
- Christmas tree recycling through the City of Steamboat Springs
- Restaurants and breweries feeding animals with leftover food or spent grains
- Cooking oil recycling
- Northwest Colorado Food Coalition
- Food Recovery through LiftUp and Horizons Specialized Services
- Community Agriculture Alliance Marketplace selling local food



BUSINESSES

- Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation recycling program
- Business waste assessments



CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION

- Drop-off and shopping at Milner Mall and thrift stores



TRANSFER STATION

- Northwest Colorado Regional Waste Diversion Study
- Biannual Recycling Drop-Off
- Electronics, mattress, tire, wood and scrap metal recycling
- CFL lightbulb recycling
- Paint recycling



EDUCATION

- YVSC A-Z Recycle Guide
- Guidelines in special event permit to make events more sustainable
- CSU Extension Office workshops
- Business waste assessments
- Yampatika school education programs
- Social marketing/networking platforms like craigslist to foster reuse
- Colorado Mountain College continuing education classes
- Internships with the Routt County Environmental Health Department
- Statewide funding opportunities through RREO grant program
- Recycle Colorado conference and working groups

Methodology:

Stakeholder Engagement Process

Community stakeholders began collaborating in February 2018 to develop the Waste Diversion Strategic Plan for Routt County. One primary goal has been ensure an inclusive, community-based process, which will be central to plan implementation as well. Task force groups were formed from larger stakeholder groups to focus on priority action areas. Each group will identify at least one action item to complete each year moving forward. Task force groups will consist of community leaders and subject matter experts for each designated topic, along with interested stakeholders.

Stakeholders identified three KEY CRITERIA for determining action steps:

- EASE OF IMPLEMENTATION
- POTENTIAL TO INCREASE DIVERSION
- ECONOMIC VIABILITY



STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Colorado Mountain College
 Colorado State Forest Service
 Mainstreet Steamboat Board
 North Routt Community Charter School
 Steamboat Springs Board of Realtors
 Routt County Commissioners
 Routt County Democrats
 Stagecoach Property Owners Association
 Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation
 Steamboat Springs Chamber
 Steamboat Springs City Council
 Steamboat Springs Economic Dev. Council
 Strings Music Festival
 Town of Hayden
 Town of Yampa
 Yampa Valley Medical Center
 YVSC community meeting
 YVSC Talking Green public event

TIMELINE



PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN MATERIALS MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

- Aces High
- Alpine Aggregates
- City of Steamboat Springs
- Cloverdale Farm
- Colorado Mountain College
- Community Agriculture Alliance
- Community Representatives
- Colorado State University Extension Office
- Eco-Cycle
- Elkstone Farm
- Innovative Ag Colorado
- Integrated Community
- LiftUp
- MainStreet Steamboat
- Mountain Tap Brewery
- Routt County Department of Environmental Health
- Routt County Planning Department
- Sand Ridge Energy
- Smartwool
- Sodexo
- Souder, Miller and Associates
- State of Colorado Environmental Compliance
- Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation
- Steamboat Springs High School
- Town of Hayden
- Twin Enviro Services
- Waste Management

Priority Action Areas + Strategies

ACTION STEPS

Stakeholders identified short term action steps, to be implemented over the next 1-3 years, for each of the six priority areas. Community members then provided feedback on these action steps. Task force groups will move forward to prioritize these actions and work toward implementation. Longer term action strategies are also included below.





Curbside Recycling

Improving the convenience of recycling through accessible curbside recycling programs is one of the most effective steps toward increasing waste diversion. The Town of Hayden currently provides curbside recycling to all residents, and the City of Steamboat Springs requires that recycling is offered to all city residents. Access is limited, however, in the more isolated rural areas of Routt County, as well as for multi-family units, condos and vacation rentals.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide curbside recycling to all residents, including multi-family units.
2. Increase accessibility and convenience of recycling for rural residents of Routt County.

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Collect data on what areas in Routt County have access to curbside recycling and which haulers service these areas.
2. Update the City of Steamboat Springs recycling policy to include a requirement for multi-family unit (MFU) recycling.
3. Enforce existing City of Steamboat Springs residential recycling ordinance.
4. Research how other communities are reducing contamination of curbside recycling and work with local haulers to implement pilot program.
5. Create toolkit of information and best practices for HOAs to include recycling in their trash contracts.
6. Increase number of households with accessibility to curbside recycling in Routt County and phase out Green Machines in Yampa and Oak Creek.
7. Conduct inventory on all trash and recycle bins in public spaces; ensure each location has both trash and recycle bins.
8. Research municipalities that have a single trash/recycle hauler contract agreement.
9. Review current City of Steamboat Springs planning guidelines and process to ensure recycling is considered in planning review where appropriate.
10. Develop hauler data collection requirements to track how much recycling and waste is collected in Routt County.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Set countywide waste diversion goal.

Community Feedback

- Many areas in Routt County don't have access to curbside recycling. We need to expand recycling accessibility.
- Need curbside food waste pick-up to be composted.
- Visitors need education on what can go in the recycle bin. Simple signage and laminated cards for condo owners and hotels will eliminate some of the confusion.
- Increase frequency of haulers picking up recycling. For example, in Silver Spur we have recycling pick-up half as often as trash. When our bin is full it is easier to neglect efforts.
- Encourage haulers to use trucks with larger carrying capacity to increase the boundaries where they pick-up trash/recycling in the County.
- Expand curbside recycling options to Stagecoach.
- Downtown businesses should collaborate to consolidate trash and recycle hauling.
- Improve construction & deconstruction recycling infrastructure and policy.
- Implement source-separated glass recycling.
- Offer Tetra pak recycling.
- Improve multi-family unit recycling.
- Integrate incentives into policy.
- Create single hauler contract in City of Steamboat Springs and paid by residents as utility.
- Implement Pay As You Throw system
- Enforce data collection to calculate diversion rate.

Success Story

Single-hauler Recycling Ordinance in Hayden

Since 2014, the Town of Hayden has had a single hauler ordinance for trash and recycling.

With over 300 users the Town of Hayden has reduced recycling waste by one third, adding less waste to the local landfill.

The single hauler ordinance reduces the number of trucks on the road and makes recycling and trash collection convenient for all residents.





Organics Recovery

Nearly 25% of the waste in Routt County is organic materials, including leaves, grass clippings, branches and food scraps. In 2017, Routt County residents lost access to food waste recycling when Twin Enviro stopped accepting food scraps at its compost facility. Some small-scale efforts are underway, such as restaurants recycling food waste with local ranchers and grocery stores like Natural Grocers giving food scraps to small backyard farmers. However, developing a comprehensive community program and infrastructure for composting is a key priority for increasing waste diversion in Routt County.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide composting options within Routt County for largest producers and residential neighborhoods.

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Collect data on total quantities of food waste generated in Routt County.
2. Conduct feasibility study to determine what type of compost facility and systems make the most sense for Routt County.
3. Research market development initiatives for compost products and explore applicability for Routt County to help new infrastructure succeed.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Develop a compost facility that has identified end markets and is accessible for businesses and residents to recycle food waste.

Community Feedback

- Provide education to residents on how to successfully compost in their backyards without attracting animals.
- Implement year-round yard waste and leaf drop-off for Routt County residents.
- Reduce food waste generation and improve composting options by providing education on food waste reduction tips and backyard compost options.
- Expand green machine availability.
- Partner with ranchers to feed food scraps to animals.
- Provide opportunities to recycle food scraps using anaerobic digestion.
- Develop compost facility in Routt County.
- Adopt policy to keep organic waste out of the landfill.

Success Story:

Leadership Steamboat Earth Cube Project



The 2018 Leadership Steamboat class chose food waste as their group project topic, since locally approximately 25% of waste going to the landfill is food. After raising \$15,000, three Earth Cubes (in vessel composters) were purchased and placed at LiftUp, Colorado Mountain College and the Steamboat Springs Middle School. Each Earth Cube takes up to 50 pounds of food waste per day and produces compost in 30 days. Finished compost will be used at the respective facilities.



Business Waste Diversion

Businesses generally produce 40-60% of the waste in a community, making them an integral part of a waste diversion strategy. Businesses also face some distinct challenges around waste diversion, including space constraints for collection bins, staff turnover, and a greater diversity of needs than residents for different types and volumes of services. Several key members of the business community were involved in developing the Waste Diversion Strategic Plan for Routt County.

OBJECTIVES

1. Make recycling and composting convenient and feasible for all businesses.
2. Collect data on the types and volumes of waste being produced and recycled at businesses.
3. Incentivize businesses to increase their waste diversion by connecting diversion potential to economic benefit.

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Support City of Steamboat Springs staff as they develop and implement a fee on single-use plastic bags; support businesses during implementation.
2. Collect data and information from local businesses on barriers to recycling and composting through a comprehensive survey and focus groups.
3. Participate in the City of Steamboat Springs Downtown Planning discussions to ensure there is adequate planning to increase recycling and composting initiatives.
4. Research sustainable business certification programs in other communities.
5. Reduce the use of plastic straws and other single-use plastics in restaurants by promoting a campaign to make them available only by request.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Require businesses to recycle in the City of Steamboat Springs.
2. Develop and distribute sustainable packaging and purchasing guidelines to businesses in Routt County.
3. Make sustainable business incentive and certification program available to all businesses in Routt County.
4. Go to bid on recycling and trash contract for downtown businesses in Steamboat Springs.
5. Incentivize restaurants in Routt County to donate surplus food.
6. Provide downtown Steamboat Springs businesses with access to recycling, trash, composting and grease recycling through coordinated bins in alleys.

Community Feedback

- Incentivize businesses to use recyclable to-go containers and encourage customers to bring their own.
- Incorporate sustainable restaurant practices into new restaurant worker training.
- Develop Green Business certification program.
- Implement business recycling policy.
- Pass Plastic Bag Ban.

Success Story

Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation's Waste Diversion Efforts



Waste diversion is an integral component of Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation's business model, and there are numerous waste diversion efforts happening at the mountain.

- Since 2016, The Cabin at the Steamboat Grand has donated 32,000 pounds of edible food to clients of Horizons Specialized Services.
- All dining utensils, plates and other serveware, including those used by the resort's ski school, are reusable.
- Starting in 2019, Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation has committed to getting rid of all plastic straws and provides paper straws upon request. They also recycle much of their hard-to-recycle materials.
- The Steamboat Grand recycles all unused soap; skier services recycles old uniforms and skis; vinyl signs are turned into tote bags; and all old or broken skis are recycled and made into furniture.
- In an effort to reduce the amount of paint purchased, Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation only uses a few paint colors throughout their buildings. Reducing the number of paint colors used, eliminates many gallons of paint that has to be stored, tracked and recycled.



Construction and Demolition (C&D)

C&D materials comprise 10% of the waste in Routt County and offer a valuable opportunity to increase both recycling and reuse. Currently only a handful of contractors are sorting materials on site for recycling or reuse. Space constraints, economic viability and education are barriers to diverting C&D waste from the landfill, as well as a lack of local infrastructure to resell or recycle these materials.

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a location for reusable C&D materials to be salvaged and redistributed.
2. Set a waste diversion goal for C&D projects

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Collect data on the quantity of materials being generated at C&D sites.
2. Collect data on the total number of building permits distributed in Routt County annually.
3. Research sustainable construction and deconstruction programs and requirements in other communities.
4. Organize focus group to engage construction professionals to discuss barriers and opportunities to diverting waste.
5. Identify potential partners to collect materials for recycle or reuse.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Require construction sites to recycle tk% of materials including cardboard, wood, metal, single stream recycle and aggregates.

Community Feedback

- Require construction sites to be Zero Waste, as well as designed for energy efficiency.
- Educate builders and architects on sustainable construction and deconstruction best practices.
- Provide access to “Idea” houses/showrooms to demonstrate sustainable building practices and material reuse.
- Identify accessible Re-Source store that accepts and redistributes building materials.
- Incentivize construction professionals to recycle and reuse during building deconstruction.
- Educate construction companies, builders and architects on impact of sustainable building practices.
- Create construction and deconstruction reuse network.

Success Story:

Workshop L and New Mountain Builders Worksite Diversion and Reuse

The new design-build collaboration of Workshop L residential architecture and contractor New Mountain Builders makes waste reduction and job site recycling part of the team's organizational philosophy from start to finish. In the design process, architect Erik Lobeck designs for simple roof lines to save materials. If the construction project includes demolition of a building or section of a home for remodel, the team incorporates reclaimed materials into the construction of the new project whenever possible. On the construction site, separate bins are designated for recyclables, cardboard and metals. Wood is set aside for reuse as blocking or distributed to people for firewood. All materials are utilized until the end of the job rather than throwing anything out.



Transfer Station

The success of YVSC's biannual Recycling Drop-Off event for residents and businesses demonstrates the strong community need for a year-round one-stop-drop facility for bulky and hard-to-recycle materials. The convenience of a permanent facility will increase the volume of material collected, making it more economically feasible for haulers to offer recycling of new items. In addition, this facility could become a regional transfer station to consolidate recyclables from surrounding counties for more cost-effective transportation to markets on the Front Range.

OBJECTIVES

1. Provide accessible, one-stop-drop, year-round recycling facility for bulky and hard-to-recycle materials.
2. Partner with surrounding counties and other regional players to co-develop infrastructure and end markets and increase volume of recyclable materials.

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Increase accessibility to YVSC's A-Z Recycling Guide for hard-to-recycle materials through development of mobile app.
2. Increase YVSC's Recycling Drop-Off to 2x/year and expand marketing efforts to include Moffat County.
3. Identify current recycling hauler services, infrastructure and gaps and lay out details for improved accessibility to year-round recycling options.
4. Explore potential to develop a feasibility study for a facility that includes the size, potential locations and menu of service options.
5. Incentivize haulers to work together to make recycling more efficient in Routt County.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Partner with adjacent counties to consolidate number of trips hauling recyclables to Denver.
2. Conduct economic feasibility study to demonstrate cost of hauling recycling to Denver and trash to the landfill.
3. Increase number of residents and contractors shopping at the Milner Mall (used building supplies) by providing online shopping and onsite pick-up, worksite pick-up of materials, and a platform for builders to communicate about materials available for reuse.
4. All residents have access to year-round one-stop-drop hard-to-recycle facility in Routt County.

Community Feedback

- Offer shredded paper recycling.
- Offer Styrofoam recycling.
- Offer Household Hazardous Waste disposal year-round.
- Provide accessible electronics recycling.
- Establish a transfer station.
- Explore railroad to transport recyclables.
- Provide Terracycle boxes in town to upcycle uncommonly recycled items.
- Promote Create Space at the Art Depot to recycle craft supplies and pick-up new supplies.
- Use social media to trade, sell or giveaway items.

Success Story: **YVSC's Recycling Drop-Off Events**

Since 2010, YVSC has offered at least one annual Recycling Drop-Off event for residents and recently expanded the event to businesses. Electronics, mattresses, scrap metal, paint, household hazardous waste, skis, motor oil, lightbulbs and batteries are just a few of the items collected each year. In 2018, 66 tons of material was diverted from the landfill. This event offers a convenient one-stop-drop and continues to grow.





Education and Events

Strong, consistent community education is the foundation of every good recycling program, and there are several programs already underway in Routt County. However, recycling markets have tightened substantially over the past year, and contamination in the recycling bin has become a critical problem. Contamination reduces the value of the recyclables and may even cause some loads to be rejected. Routt County needs consistent, community-wide campaigns to reduce recycling contamination and ensure all residents and businesses know what to put in their bins. Special events provide a great opportunity to teach the community about the importance of recycling and how to do it right, making these events a core component of an educational campaign.

OBJECTIVES

1. Reduce recycling contamination in Routt County.
2. Increase waste diversion at special events.

ACTION STEPS (1-3 YEARS)

1. Promote YVSC's new web-based and mobile recycling app and waste sorting game.
2. Support the City of Steamboat Springs on their efforts to ban single-use plastic bags.
3. Update the City of Steamboat Springs Special Event Permit to require waste diversion at events.
4. Implement consistent recycling and trash signage throughout Routt County.
5. Survey three local haulers on top contaminants in the recycling stream.
6. Collect baseline data on curbside recycling contamination rates in Routt County.
7. Implement dirty dozen campaign to reduce contamination of curbside recycling.
8. Encourage all coffee shops to offer customer discounts for bringing a reusable mug.
9. Implement "choose to reuse" campaign in Routt County.

LONG-TERM ACTION STRATEGIES

1. Increase participation in Colorado State University Extension food preservation workshops

Community Feedback

- Integrate recycling education into day-to-day curriculum in Routt County public schools and make recycling bins available with each trash bin.
- Install cards regarding recycling guidelines in hotels and condos.
- Add a note on VRBO & Airbnb rentals notifying guests of expectations.
- Place reusable grocery bags in each hotel room and condo.
- Compost in schools.
- Assist Steamboat Springs High School eco-club in implementing recycling PSA and implementing recycling awareness campaign for students to reduce recycling contamination.
- Implement robust school waste reduction program.
- Educate elected officials and community leaders on waste diversion.
- Implement community-wide education campaign.
- Provide guidelines in special event permit to make events Zero Waste.

Success Story

Colorado Mountain College's Stall Street Journal



Students in Colorado Mountain College's Sustainability Studies program made creative use of restroom stall doors by creating the Stall Street Journal, a weekly posting of relevant waste reduction topics. One issue covered plastic straws and their negative impact on the environment, encouraging students to reduce their usage of single-use plastic straws. The team also conducted a recycling study in 2016 that looked through bins at the college, sent out surveys, and used the data collected to make better signage for waste bins on campus. Both of these projects have gotten positive feedback and have improved the awareness and behaviors of students to reduce waste.



Conclusions + Next Steps

Bans on recycling imports and proliferation of plastic pollution has forced the recycling industry to redefine markets and their management of plastics. As one of the fastest, easiest and most cost-effective solutions to reduce climate pollution, now is the time to invest in new recycling infrastructure and implement policies that promote waste diversion. At the state level, new policies are being discussed to reduce single-use plastics, increase recycling rates on Colorado's front range, and assist rural communities in their waste diversion goals. As previously mentioned, Colorado has one of the lowest waste diversion rates in the country, and we need to begin developing actions that contribute positively to the new statewide goal of 45% recovery by 2036.

As both the City of Steamboat Springs and Routt County look to develop goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, YVSC continues to advocate for innovations that are essential for a sustainable future. Reducing the amount of valuable materials being landfilled is a critical first step. This Waste Diversion Strategic Plan has been driven by the community and, based on participation, Routt County businesses and residents are ready to move forward. Task force groups have begun working in the priority action areas to identify short-term priority strategies. New regional collaborations are developing; pooling resources to improve on regional infrastructure, coordinate transportation logistics, and share educational materials.

The next step is to present the Waste Diversion Strategic Plan to Steamboat Springs City Council and the Routt County Board of County Commissioners for consideration to adopt the plan. A six-month report with updates on task force progress will be released mid-year followed by an annual report with progress on action items and plans for 2020.

To help ensure accessible and affordable waste diversion opportunities are available countywide, policy, programming and infrastructure will all need to be in place. Support from our elected officials will be key to success. Successful implementation will contribute toward continuing to make Routt County a vibrant, healthy and safe community for future generations.

REFERENCES

[Northwest Colorado Regional Waste Diversion Study, 2018](#)

[Routt County Waste Diversion White Paper, 2018](#)

[State of Recycling in Colorado, 2018](#)

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