
Appendix 3 History of Solid Waste Management in Thurston County

The City of Olympia began collecting garbage in 1938 when Olympia City Commissioners passed Ordinance 2298 creating a Garbage Fund and a Garbage Department. Municipal service was initiated to ensure efficient collection of trash and maintain public health and sanitary conditions throughout the City.

For the next 50 years the City focused on collection and disposal of garbage. In the late 1980s state and local efforts shifted to an emphasis on recycling and waste reduction, with passage of the Waste Not Washington Act. Olympia initiated curbside recycling and yard debris collection in 1988.

From the early 1900s to the late 1960s, waste was dumped and burned at several sites. In 1935, the City began using an area on the west side near Ascension Avenue, and at some point moved the landfill near what is now the Top Foods grocery on Cooper Point Road and Black Lake Boulevard. This 13-acre site was used until 1968. The site was closed, and has been for sale.

In the late 1940s Thurston County began using a 140-acre site of an old quarry near Hawks Prairie for dumping and burning garbage. In 1972 the County dump at Hawks Prairie was converted to a landfill to standards of the federal Resource Recovery and Conservation Act (RCRA). As each section was filled it was covered. The last 20-acre section was operated from 1991 until 2000, when it was capped; closure was complete by 2002. In May 2000, the site was renamed the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center (WARC) and began being used as a transfer station.

Thurston County prepared its first Solid Waste Plan in 1981, and a revision in 1993 in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Not Washington Act.

Olympia prepared its own plan in 1991 which focused on improving the existing refuse collection system, and expanding the waste reduction and recycling programs within the City of Olympia. The primary objective of the Plan was to minimize the operating costs of programs while maximizing services.

A chronology of key events is shown on the following page.

Timeline of Key Dates in Thurston County Solid Waste History

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- ~1899 – 1935
- The City of Olympia garbage dump is located in downtown Olympia in the area now occupied by the Budd Inlet Wastewater Treatment Plant. Waste is frequently burned.
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- 1935
- Olympia stops using the downtown dump and uses a site Ascension Avenue on Olympia's Westside until it is closed and another site is opened at Cooper Point Road and Black Lake Boulevard.
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- 1938
- City of Olympia Commissioners create a Garbage Fund and Garbage Department to collect trash from residents and businesses to help maintain public health.
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- Late 1940s – 1972
- Thurston County operates an open pit dump at Hawks Prairie. To maintain sanitary conditions, waste is burned.
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- 1962
- State law (RCW 35.21) gives cities express authority to control all garbage and residential recycling collection, either by contract or by municipal crews.
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- 1968
- City of Olympia dump at Cooper Point is closed and the City begins using the Hawks Prairie dump.
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- 1972
- The Thurston County dump is converted to a sanitary landfill and burning is stopped. Landfill cells are lined with an impermeable material and waste is covered with a shallow layer of dirt to prevent leaching and keep conditions sanitary.
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- Early 1980s
- A private processing center for recyclable materials is established near the Hawks Prairie landfill.
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- 1988
- City begins collecting residential curbside recycling.
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- 1989
- Olympia's Yard Waste Drop-Off Site opens at the City Maintenance Center on Eastside Street.
 - City opens the Dirt Works Composting Demonstration Garden at Yauger Park.
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- 1990s
- City promotes recycling awareness, education and outreach at schools and public events.
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- 1990
- City Council adopts an ordinance encouraging waste prevention and recycling by City government (Waste Reduction/Recycling/Procurement Ordinance #5141).
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- 1991
- City Council adopts Olympia's Solid Waste and Recycling Plan, with emphasis on efficiency improvements, continued recycling and waste reduction.
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- 1993
- Thurston County Solid Waste opens Recycle Drop-off Center, Compost Center, Closed Loop Park and HazoHouse (a household hazardous waste facility) at Hawks Prairie.
 - County locates eight recycle drop off sites throughout the county.
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- 1994
- City begins residential curbside yard waste collection.
 - City begins multi-family recycle collection.
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- 1998
- City implements all-cart, semi-automated residential collection, along with alternating every-other-week pick-up for garbage and recycling using the same equipment and staff.
 - City changes from three-stream recycling (paper, cans and glass) to two-stream recycling (mixed papers and mixed containers (cans, plastic and glass)).
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- 2000
- County landfill at Hawks Prairie is converted to a transfer station (Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center, WARC). It begins shipping waste by rail to Roosevelt Regional Landfill in Klickitat County in eastern Washington.
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- 2003
- City begins fully automated residential collection.
 - City changes to single-stream recycling. Recyclables taken to Pacific Disposal (near the WARC) and shipped to Clackamas, Oregon for sorting and distribution.
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- 2004
- City of Olympia changes commercial garbage collection from rear-load to front-load trucks.
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