



Fast Facts

Georgia ranks tenth of all fifty states for the most active municipal landfills.

According to Georgia DCA, nearly 2.6 million tons - about 40% - of MSW Georgians throw away each year are common recyclable materials with reuse markets inside the state.

In 2004, Georgia residents and businesses spent an estimated \$90 million to dispose of common recyclable materials. Based on recycling market values, if these items were recycled, the resulting raw materials would be worth more than \$250 million.

More than ten percent of the waste - almost two million tons - disposed of in Georgia's landfills was imported from other states in FY07. The vast majority, 1.6 million tons of waste, went to MSW landfills.

In 2008, tipping fees posted at the gate were \$35.15 per ton of waste for MSW landfills and \$23.72 for C&D landfills in Georgia - half as much as tipping fees in some Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states.

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Reduce and Better Manage Solid Waste

What's at Stake?

Waste discarded by Georgia's industrial, commercial and residential sectors that is not reused or recycled is deposited in landfills. The low cost of waste disposal in our state encourages the inefficient use of landfill capacity, burdens taxpayers with clean-up costs and leads to the poor use of our natural resources.

Landfills pose a threat to public health and our environment as chemicals and microbes are released as the waste is decomposed. These chemicals can contaminate the air, water and soil. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has repeatedly stated that all landfills eventually leak and their "leachate" can threaten our drinking water supply.

Challenges

Garbage and trash from households is sent to municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills while waste from construction, repair and demolition of residential and commercial buildings, roads and bridges is sent to Construction & Demolition (C&D) landfills.

In 2003, the Georgia Department of Community Affairs reported the state has 25 years of remaining permitted MSW landfill space. Logically, this should be enough space to handle the trash Georgia produces through 2028. However, with large amounts of waste imported from other states and few incentives to reduce our waste stream, it is likely the remaining landfill space will not last nearly as long as projected - without undertaking controversial measures such as expanding existing landfills into the surrounding communities or permitting new landfills.

Large solid waste corporations have incentive to fill their landfills as quickly as possible. Importing waste from Florida and Northeastern states helps their bottom line, but harms Georgia's capacity for managing solid waste. Allowing materials to be deposited in a MSW landfill that can otherwise be disposed, like yard trimmings, also reduces critical landfill capacity.

Weak state and local regulations leave Georgia's natural resources at risk in regards to landfills. For example, current state regulations allow for the construction of landfills in poorly suited locations, such as 100-year floodplains.

Large solid waste corporations often look for rural counties that have the two attributes: lenient land use requirements (or lack of zoning) and cheap land. Georgia's current state requirements do not require liners for construction and demolition landfills. Yet the waste that goes into a C&D landfill is largely unregulated and many construction materials, such as leftover paint, adhesives, grease and batteries, are toxic.

Next Steps

- Create strong, effective incentives for waste reduction and recycling.
- Oppose efforts to remove the ban on yard trimmings in MSW landfills.
- Fully fund the Solid Waste Trust Fund, which helps clean up abandoned landfills and aids local government efforts to reduce solid waste.
- Increase local host fees from \$1 to \$3 per ton of disposed solid waste and increase the state host fee from \$0.50 to \$3.50 per ton of disposed solid waste.
- Remove the EPD Director's ability to waive the requirement that C&D landfills have liners and leachate collection systems.
- Counties should adhere to local comprehensive solid waste management plans, further define restrictions on solid waste disposal and management, and identify sites not suitable for solid waste handling facilities.