The Role of the Private Sector in the Deschutes County Solid Waste System

Purpose: This paper describes the current role (2019) of the private sector in providing comprehensive recycling and solid waste services to the residents and businesses of Deschutes County and discusses how the private sector role will be considered as the County moves forward with implementing the recommendations of the SWMP.

Background

The current Deschutes County solid waste management system operates under a partnership with local jurisdictions and a regulated arrangement with private companies to deliver recycling, collection and transportation services. The County owns and operates the only landfill for disposing waste. These roles are further described throughout the Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP).

The private sector has had a significant role in the solid waste system for many years. Private companies have always provided curbside collection of waste from residents and businesses. Over the years, the private sector's participation in the system has increased and now includes:

- Curbside collection of waste, recyclables and yard debris from residents and businesses under a franchise system.
- Transfer of waste and recyclables from rural transfer stations to Bend also under the franchise system.
- Operation of the recycling center and compost operation at Knott Landfill is a public/private partnership where the County provides infrastructure and operational assistance while a private company operates the facility.
- A private company through a contract with the County provides operation assistance at Negus Transfer Station in Redmond.
- A private non-profit company through a grant agreement with the County provides education and promotion of recycling and waste reduction.
- A private company through a contract with the County operates the Household Hazardous Waste facility at Knott Landfill
- Other private companies such as The Broomsmen independently provide recycling services at events such as concerts and various festivals.

The Solid Waste Department is aware of the benefits that the private sector can bring to the system and has strived when developing facilities to enable consideration of private operations. The facilities that were constructed at Knott Landfill in 2005 included a large transfer building and recycling/composting facilities. Both of those facilities have offices, employee lunch/break facilities and have utilities metered separately to facilitate operation by private companies if the County should choose to do so. As mentioned above, the recycling facility at Knott Landfill operates in such a fashion.
Implementation of the SWMP and the Role of the Private Sector

This Solid Waste Management Plan did not specifically address the role of the private sector in the solid waste system as part the recommendations made for changes/improvements to the system over the next 10 years. The SWMP sets the direction in which the system should move and includes recommendations to achieve that vision. It does not provide specific operational details on how those recommendations will be implemented. The SWMP points out that the solid waste system in Deschutes County provides a very high level of service to the community at a very reasonable cost considering the breadth of services provided. The County believes that this is due in part to the relationships and roles of the public and private sectors in the system. With consideration of the responsibilities stated in ORS 459.085 relating to the responsibilities to manage solid waste and consistent with the goals and guiding principles adopted in the SWMP, the County intends to continue in this manner, and will consider private ownership and/or operation at appropriate points in the implementation of the SWMP over the next ten years. Specifically, it is anticipated that consideration of the private sector will occur at the following point.

- The SWMP calls for efforts to increase diversion of construction and demolition material from the waste stream. This will likely include a significant investment in infrastructure to separate valuable commodities from that waste stream. The question of public or private ownership and/or operation of that infrastructure will be considered.
- The SWMP calls for construction of a new transfer station in Redmond. Once completed, operations will change significantly, as the site moves from a small rural facility to a modern facility that includes enhanced recycling opportunities and a compost operation. The County will consider private operation of part or all of that facility.
- The Southwest Transfer Station located between Sunriver and La Pine will also be improved in the future and the County will consider the private sector there as well.
- The County attempted to site a new landfill in the mid 1990’s which was unsuccessful for a variety of reasons. Through that process, however it was clear that there was interest from private companies to be involved in a new landfill. The County intends to fully consider the private sector as we move towards the development of a new landfill in the county. Private companies could assist the County in a number of ways including assistance with siting, permitting, construction and operation of a new facility.

When considering the private sector, a number of factors need to be considered such as:

- Ability to adapt to changes in County/City policies and programs
- Ability to react to changes in regulations
- Flexibility to adapt to waste diversion opportunities
- Capability to take advantage of competition in the marketplace
- Ensures equity of services
- Associated risk assigned to ownership options
- Associated risk with market conditions
- Appropriate control of cost and establishment/regulation of rates
• Other factors that ensure safe, efficient and reliable services as deemed important by the Board

As established under ORS 459.085 the County has the authority to ensure proper management of solid waste services including meeting the mandates of the States waste reduction and recycling policies. This legislation empowers the County as well as local jurisdictions to oversee and determine how best these services are provided including the role of the private sector. Deschutes County believes that the solid waste system is strongest when the public and private sectors work together to provide services. The County provides stability and ensures adequate programs and facilities are available to manage our waste safely and efficiently and meets the state requirements. The private sector provides flexibility and brings significant experience and expertise to the table.