Director's Report 12-1-2021

Throughout the month of November the NWSWD staff continued to handle our resident’s waste materials in a way that focuses on keeping valuable resources out of the landfill and provide our residents with the services they need. However, our staff have been spread thin. The worker shortage you have heard about on the news is real and spread across all sectors in VT. The NWSWD has been largely operating just one or two employees short of optimal for the past few months. This has not had any large impacts on our operations but has meant overtime for some employees. However, in November the other shoe dropped. Illness, injury, and a holiday all combined to push our staffing to the point where we had to make the choice to suspend food scrap collection for a week. Once staff were able to return, we were able to resume service, and customers hardly noticed. We are closing in on filling the remaining positions, but this episode shows how important quality, reliable, and healthy team members are!

We are not alone in out staffing shortages. Waste Districts throughout Vermont have been forced to delay collections and close sites due to staffing. Recently we have received communication from two towns that they may have trouble plowing our sites in their town due to their staffing and their priorities to main travel routes and other services. This recent dose of winter allowed us to test our systems for clearing snow getting our drop-off sites ready for winter. There have been no troubles with plowing so far, but we are arranging for back-up plow services just in case.

We are working on the 2021 Annual report. We have spent the last month compiling the facts and figures as well as examining our programs and operations over the past year. This report will be completed in the next two weeks and forwarded to you all. Please let us know if you would like to personalize the report or send it to your town offices directly, or if you would like the NWSWD office to forward it to town officials. I am excited about all of the great work that the District has been completing and I really look forward to sharing our success with our residents in a way that’s accessible to more people so if you have any suggestions about to distribute the annual report, please let us know.

Looking forward to waste related action in the Vermont Legislature, there are two bills that will hopefully benefit Vermont’s waste system. Both bills create Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs. H.115 would create a system where the manufacturers of hazardous products will contribute to the HHW collection system in VT. The other which is being drafted and will be introduced in the Senate, will make producers responsible for the recycling of all packaging and printed material in Vermont. Both bills will build on the systems that exist in Vermont but make manufacturers and brands more responsible for the products and packaging they sell.

District Staff are looking forward to using the relative quiet of winter to contemplate how we can improve what we do to make it more convenient to keep a wider variety of material from going to the landfill. As always, we value your suggestions and input.

Onward - John