

Uinta County obtaining Integrated Solid Waste Plan

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Still in the beginning stages, Uinta County has partnered with Sublette, Lincoln, Uinta, and Teton Counties to have Trihydro Corporation, a Wyoming-based environmental consulting firm, develop a 20-year Integrated Solid Waste Plan (ISWP) to identify and evaluate solutions to environmental concerns of landfills filling too quickly and contaminants leaking into groundwater.

This ISWP was approved by the Uinta County Commissioners last June and was mandated by the state legislature in 2006. The legislation does not require that the ISWP be implemented, but possible outcomes could include a regional landfill, rate changes, highly encouraged recycling, composting and other waste diversion.

The cost of the ISWP development is reimbursed by the state, and to encourage the counties to work together, a 90 percent reimbursement will go to this plan because Uinta County decided to work with at least two other counties. In general, larger facilities, whether landfills, recycling centers or composting, are more cost-effective with more protection for the environment than several small facilities.

Trihydro is preparing an analysis of what Uinta County is doing now. Trihydro project consultant, Ken Schreuder, said the landfill and recycling center were surveyed to help Trihydro get a handle on the cost per ton to either bring waste to the landfill or to the recycle center. After costs are more concretely identified, they will be more able to look at options.

"A key component is going to be cost," Schreuder said. People need to understand what their current costs are in order compare to alternatives, Schreuder said.

"In January, we went to each of the four planning partners ... to get the local perspectives on waste management and recycling," Schreuder said. Each landfill has its own issues, whether they are regulatory, cost, or operational.

Meetings are open to the public and citizens are encouraged to become part of the local planning group. The next regional meeting is scheduled in March. At that meeting, the scope of alternatives will be narrowed to which options they would definitely consider, may consider and which alternatives are not an option, Schreuder said.

Later this month, a copy of the January presentation will be posted at WesternWyomingISWM.com

None of the landfills located in the western half of the state are lined. Only three in the state are designed and constructed with liners that capture and remove the pollutants that leak out of landfills.

While the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permitted the Evanston #2 landfill without a liner, if problems are detected, the status of the landfill could change. Most counties have received letters from the DEQ stating that the next landfill would have to be lined, Schreuder said.

The project will not reach completion until July 2009.