SUSTAINABLE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

80% waste diversion by 2023

The 2009 Sustainable Solid Waste Management Study explored the costs of continuing to manage our waste in the same manner over the next 20 years. A comparison was made between the status quo and a phased-in approach to increase diversion during the same period. The results indicate that costs to improve and expand the diversion infrastructure are about the same as costs of keeping things at the same pace and that by 2023 a diversion-based system becomes less costly.

As a result, the MARC Solid Waste Management District has embraced a goal to reduce solid waste currently disposed of in landfills by 80 percent by 2023. The district is seeking the commitment of its local government members to work toward a sustainable solid waste management system using proven diversion practices. This phased-in approach uses incremental steps to target residential, commercial, and construction-demolition waste streams.

SUSTAINABLE SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:
• Protects human health and the environment
• Produces less waste
• Uses waste as a resource whenever possible
• Advances economic development and job creation through materials management

A sustainable system requires a pivotal change in how waste is handled and viewed in the region. What we think of as waste is a pool of individual materials waiting for a second life. This 80/2023 goal creates a vision for what is possible when we practice resource management instead of waste management.

Countless natural resources are used to mine, manufacture and transport the products we readily use and discard every day. Large volumes of quality recovered materials can reduce the manufacturer’s demand for virgin raw materials and attract investment in local markets, resulting in more jobs and less waste.

The rewards for redirecting our dollars today for a sustainable system tomorrow are boundless — more diverse jobs, better use of natural resources, longer life for regional landfills, lower economic and environmental costs, and better quality of life.
Waste minimization and recycling activities benefit quality of life and economic development. Volume-based rate incentives for residential programs are proven nationally to reduce waste and increase recycling. Often the consumer experiences additional services and cost savings. Demand for these services in turn supports public and private investment in collection and processing with higher quality and volumes of recovered materials to sell on the open market, ideally attracting local manufacturers. Growing local markets for recovered materials can potentially create 10 times more jobs than landfill disposal.

The region can look to national and local models of success in Zero Waste® businesses and progressive communities. And while we work toward meeting our goal, industries and manufacturers are increasingly working to design waste out of the system through product stewardship.

A phased-in, incremental approach to waste management helps steadily increase diversion rates. More reduction, reuse, recycling and composting activities over time leads to fewer items ending up in landfills.