

Solid Waste Is An Opportunity for Tennessee

A TRUE STORY- In spring 2008, a Nashville attorney was trying a case in a small city on the Kentucky border. He noticed big tow trucks pulling abandoned cars out of ravines and woods. He said "I really like that your county is so serious about cleaning up the environment." The local attorney laughed "Are you kidding—that is Chinese business taking our metal back to China to sell us frying pans." Well, that economic model did not last but there is \$\$\$\$ to be made in recycling. If Chinese business could afford to retrieve metals, ship to China, use them as a raw material in business, and ship the finished goods back to us, why can't we do it on our own? **Prices of recycled goods have fallen since their peak in summer 2008 but now prices are at the level that supported recycling for twenty (20) years.** Every elected official we talk with has a recycling business in their district.

A FEW REALITIES

>>TDEC has for years had a nation leading, award winning government work place recycling program. Diligence, commitment to details. **ALSO—two thirds of waste is generated at business, schools, or work.**

>>substitute paper and corn based products for styrofoam cups & plates and plastic eating utensils, none of which decompose for hundreds of years. **All waste at fast food places would be compostable**

>>Nashville schools, *are said to use* 1 million (1,000,000) one time use, disposable styrofoam lunch trays **annually** while Shelby County uses none. *How?* **A management commitment to keeping dish washing machines in operating order and staff on duty.**

>>Bartlett Tennessee (Shelby County) diverts 90% of its yard waste as a primary solid waste program. **Yard waste is approximately 12% of the waste stream. 1.4 million tons of the waste stream in Tennessee is yard waste--90% recovered state wide would divert 950,000 tons of yard waste annually.**

>>Stopping methane gas from landfills would be the equivalent in terms of green house gasses in shutting down 21% of the nations coal powered energy plants. **We can stop methane by composting food waste (12% of the waste stream) and yard waste (13%) and make money because the methane can be harvested and we have compost left over. This would diverts approximately 3 million tons of waste annually.**

Please Remember

1. Nothing is garbage until we decide it is—with better policies we can shift from "garbage" to "solid waste". If we throw something away we were using, holding, or eating it shortly before.

2. "If you begin with the composition of solid waste, solutions fall like rain from the sky."
[Peter Anderson]

3. Tennessee landfills are disasters because karst geology with fissures and holes allows migrations, bad decisions, and brutal chemicals all to casually introduced into the environment (and our human bodies). **So, let's fix it**