



Legislation Text

File #: 2023-0949, **Version:** 1

To: County of Sonoma Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office, Climate Action and Resiliency Division

Staff Name and Phone Number: Simone Albuquerque (707)565-2132

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

County of Sonoma Municipal Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study

Recommended Action:

Accept the County of Sonoma Municipal Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study Report.

Executive Summary:

The County of Sonoma's 5-year Strategic Plan identifies the Climate Action and Resiliency goal of achieving zero-waste county operations by 2030. In addition, the California Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy (SB 1383), aims to reduce organic waste disposal 75% by 2025, and rescue at least 20% of currently disposed surplus food for people to eat by 2025. This legislation requires all businesses and multi-family dwellings with more than 2 cubic yards of weekly service generating over 20 gallons of organic waste weekly to participate in organic waste collection. This may apply to some County facilities.

The Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study (ZWACS) was identified as a necessary step to establish a baseline understanding of current waste levels and conditions and outline a path to making all County facilities zero waste. Overall, the study found that organic material was the most frequently encountered element within the landfill waste stream followed by paper and metal. The County may use the results of the ZWACS to identify and support additional County facilities in establishing organics collection programs.

Recommendations of the study include:

- Confirm the use of organic waste collection programs at all County operated facilities and that proper collection bins are provided.
- Provide education and outreach for staff and public where applicable.
- Incorporate new language into contracts to incentivize Zero Waste goals.
- Implement seasonal waste protocols for appropriate facilities.
- Practice deconstruction, salvage, and reuse in all Construction & Demolition activities

An overview of the ZWACS was presented at the Climate Action and Resiliency Strategic Goals Workshop, August 29, 2023. Moving forward, this report will guide County Staff in working with Zero Waste Sonoma to follow-up on the key findings of the study. These actions will inform the Climate Resiliency Master Action Plan which will outline how the County can achieve zero-waste county operations by 2030. This plan will go before the Board of Supervisors December 12, 2023.

Discussion:

Background

On September 17, 2019, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors formally joined cities, counties, and countries across the world in declaring a climate emergency, establishing the climate crisis as a top priority. Since then, the County of Sonoma (the County) has reiterated its dedication to climate action and resiliency through actions such as creating a Climate Action and Resiliency Division (CARD) within the County Administrator's Office (CAO), dedicating \$10 million to near- and mid-term climate projects, and committing one of five Strategic Plan pillars to Climate Action and Resiliency.

Through this 5-year Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 2, 2021, the County has identified specific goals and objectives to help direct its work towards climate action and resiliency. Within those goals and objectives lie targets for decreasing net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and achieving carbon neutrality and zero waste by 2030. While the County has already begun making progress towards some of its overarching targets, achieving zero waste and carbon neutrality will require that the County acquire a baseline understanding of its current waste profile. Only then can the County identify a path forward to achieving zero waste and carbon neutrality.

With this critical gap in data identified, your Board allocated Strategic Plan Funds to hire a consultant to complete a County of Sonoma Municipal Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study (ZWACS). Through a publicly solicited bid process, the County partnered with Stearns, Conrad and Schmidt Consulting Engineers, Inc., (SCS Engineers) to create the ZWACS. SCS Engineers is a leading firm in the waste industry and has completed successful related projects with Zero Waste Sonoma. CARD staff worked with Zero Waste Sonoma and Sonoma County Public Infrastructure to review this study.

County of Sonoma Municipal Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study

The primary objectives of the study were to:

- Collect statistical evidence of material categories of waste generated by County operations.
- Identify specific generator types that are contributing substantial quantities of recyclable and organic materials to the waste stream.
- Create a qualitative assessment of the composition of the County waste streams, additionally accounting for seasonality.
- Provide recommendations for prioritized actions to achieve the goal of Zero Waste by 2030.

Necessary data on County facility waste pick-up sites and waste production quantities was collected through the County's waste hauler (Recology) and through 19 on-site waste audits. Waste audits were rigorously conducted at these site visits, which were selected to be a representative sample of the facility types that make up the County's profile of broad operations.

The categories of key waste generators by County Government facility type include: the Airport, Animal Shelters, Corp Yard/Maintenance/Warehouses, Detention Centers, Offices, Recreation Areas, and Veterans Memorial Buildings.

Organic material was the most frequently encountered element within the landfill waste stream followed by paper and metal. These items are divertible, meaning they do not need to enter the landfill. Approximately sixty-seven percent of the waste generated at County facilities could be recycled, composted, or otherwise

diverted from the landfill. A study conducted in 2022 by Zero Waste Sonoma found similar results in commercial generators throughout Sonoma County, finding that divertible materials made up approximately sixty-five percent of the landfill stream.

Attributes relative to specific facility types include:

- The animal shelter’s landfill stream was more than fifty percent organic material.
- The Veterans Memorial Building landfill stream contained more than seventy five percent divertible material.
- Seasonal variations, such as the fishing season at Spud Point Marina, allow for the targeted capture of considerable recyclable material.
- County offices had significant recyclable paper contamination and some County offices reported challenges procuring SB 1383 compliant, vendor-certified paper products.

From these key findings, the following recommendations to achieve zero waste were made:

- Verify compliance with SB 1383 regulations at all County operated facilities.
- Confirm proper use of organic waste collection programs.
- Provide triple stations at waste generating locations inside facilities (gray, blue, and green containers). This includes providing green bins in restrooms to collect paper towel waste.
- Provide education and outreach for staff and public where applicable.
- Consider auditing subcontractor-run operations.
- Incorporate new language into contracts to incentivize Zero Waste goals.
- Implement seasonal waste protocols for appropriate facilities.
- Provide ongoing communication and technical assistance with facilities and janitorial staff
- Practice deconstruction, salvage, and reuse in all Construction & Demolition activities.

More details on the methodology, key findings, and recommendations can be found in the full ZWACS report (Attachment 1). Due to the exclusive focus on County operations, this study did not include public outreach and engagement.

Recommendations from this report will be incorporated into draft actions for your Board’s policy direction in December and, with your policy guidance, the Climate and Resilience Master Action Plan presented to your Board next spring will detail actions to achieve zero waste at County facilities.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County’s Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Climate Action and Resiliency

Goal: Goal 2: Invest in the community to enhance resiliency and become carbon neutral by 2030; Goal 3: Make all County facilities carbon free, zero waste and resilient

Objective: Objective 1: Design the new County Center to be carbon neutral and zero waste; and pursue carbon reduction and zero waste plans for remaining County facilities.

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

December 13, 2022: Climate Action and Resiliency Ad Hoc recommended the Climate Action and Resiliency Division oversee the completion of a zero waste audit.

August 29, 2023: Climate Action and Resiliency Workshop - Board received presentation on preliminary results of County of Sonoma Municipal Zero Waste Audit and Characterization Study, among other climate action and resiliency topics.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

N/A

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Full Study without Appendices

Attachment 2: Executive Summary of the County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Study - English

Attachment 3: Executive Summary of the County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Study - Spanish

Attachment 4: Key Metrics County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Study - English

Attachment 5: Key Metrics County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Study - Spanish

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

County of Sonoma Zero Waste Audit and Waste Characterization Full Study with Appendices

Appendix A Waste Stream Composition Summary Table

Appendix B Field Photos

Appendix C Waste Characterization Field Forms

Appendix D Visual Waste Assessment Field Forms