

Westchester County

2023 Annual Report

**Westchester County Department of Environmental Facilities
Division of Solid Waste Management and Recycling Office**

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Executive Summary

The Westchester County Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) serves as New York State's designated Planning Unit for Westchester's 43 municipalities and manages Refuse Disposal District (RDD) No. 1, to which 36 of the County's municipalities belong. DEF oversees several solid waste and recycling facilities, which handle about 90% of the County's residential waste stream. DEF also manages the County's many recycling and waste reduction programs and services.

Over the past three decades, Westchester County and DEF have consistently performed at or near the top of all waste management performance indicators, including waste reduction. Since 2005, the amount of residential solid waste the County has disposed of has decreased from 525,950 tons to 382,124 tons in 2023, a reduction of 143,826 tons or 27%. In 2023, the County continued to demonstrate why it is considered a regional leader in the field of environmental management by posting a total waste stream recycling rate of 52%, far outpacing the [EPA national average](#) of 32% (2020) and NYS average of 43% (2018). The County's recycling rate includes a wide variety of materials collected and diverted from the solid waste stream beyond cans, bottles and paper collected curbside, such as roadway millings, large bulk metals, construction debris, and composted organic waste.

Recycling in Westchester continues to make good sense economically as well as environmentally. In 2023, 65,929.27 tons of curbside recyclables collected by municipalities within the RDD were delivered to the Daniel P. Thomas Material Recovery Facility (MRF). Revenue from the sale of these recyclables totaled \$4,471,033.98.

In 2023, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation released its new Solid Waste Management Plan, "Building the Circular Economy Through Sustainable Materials Management", which outlines a plan for solid waste management through 2032 and sets a goal for all Planning Units to reduce the amount of waste disposed of by 85% by 2050. Westchester County is committed to achieving the goals of the State Plan. Planned projects for 2024 include conducting a Waste Reduction Study to identify a path toward meeting the State goal of 85% reduction, and exploring the feasibility of siting and constructing a County compost site to manage residential food waste.

The environmental programs in place in Westchester County and managed by DEF, include: enforcement, tours of the County's Material Recovery Facility, recycling of municipally-collected yard waste under the Organic Yard Waste Program, operation of the Household-Material Recovery Facility, Mobile Shredder, and new programs like the Residential Food Scrap Transportation and Disposal (RFSTAD) program and the County's first small-scale composting facility and education center, CompostED. These and other programs discussed in this report, all contribute to Westchester's excellent record of performance. The County, through the work of DEF, remains committed to serving as a leader in the environmental management field in 2023 and beyond.

DEF/Recycling & Solid Waste Facilities

1. Material Recovery Facility (MRF):

The MRF, located in Yonkers, serves as the primary recycling facility for the municipalities in the RDD. The items delivered and processed at the MRF and then sold to recyclers include: aluminum (cans and foil), ferrous metals, food and beverage cartons (gable top and shelf-stable aseptic), plastics (coded 1–7), plastic boat wrap, newspaper, corrugated cardboard, and assorted paper, including office paper and paper collected by the County’s two Mobile Shredders. In 2023, the MRF processed 65,929.27 tons of recyclables.

2. Charles Point Waste-to-Energy Facility:

Operated by Wheelabrator Technologies, the Charles Point Waste-to-Energy Facility, located in the City of Peekskill, processes up to 2,250 tons of household and commercial waste per day. Refuse collected from Westchester municipalities and commercial customers is delivered to this fully enclosed facility, where it is transferred to utility-type boilers that recover thermal energy in the form of high-pressure steam. The steam-powered turbines generate 63 MW of electricity an hour—enough to power over 30,000 homes. Additional steam not required for electricity generation is marketed to a nearby commercial customer, White Plains Linen, for use as a clean, reliable, and renewable energy source.

In 2023, the facility processed 697,537 tons of solid waste to generate electricity, while 8,455 tons of ferrous metal were extracted from the ash residue and properly recycled.

In 2023, 359,256 tons of waste generated by RDD municipalities were delivered to the facility and 2,539 tons were delivered by County departments. RDD municipal tonnages remained about the same as the previous year.

3. County Transfer Stations:

Three County Transfer Stations located in White Plains, Mount Vernon, and Yonkers offer RDD municipalities reduced costs for delivering the solid waste they collect by significantly reducing their travel time. The County provides transport of the waste from the transfer stations to the Charles Point Facility in Peekskill.

In 2023, RDD municipalities in the northern part of the County delivered 75,378.88 tons, compared to 74,378.58 tons in 2022, of solid waste directly to Charles Point. District municipalities in the southern part of the County delivered 276,748.34 tons of solid waste to these three transfer stations.

4. Household-Material Recovery Facility (H-MRF):

The H-MRF, located on the County’s Grasslands Campus in Valhalla, opened in April 2012 to provide a geographically centralized location for residents to dispose of hard-to-get-rid-of household wastes, including hazardous chemicals, cleaning products, tires, rechargeable batteries, Freon-containing appliances, electronic waste, propane tanks, expired or unwanted medications and textiles. The H-MRF also offers confidential document shredding services. The H-MRF is open Tuesday–Saturday from 10am -3pm.

RDD residents are able to use the facility at no cost, while Westchester County residents that do not reside within the RDD are required to pay a small fee based on the type and amount of materials they deliver.

When possible, collected materials are recycled; while all other materials are disposed of in a safe and environmentally responsible way. In 2023, 16,034 households visited the H-MRF and delivered a total of 1,027,238 lbs. of materials, including:

- 255,574 lbs of paint
- 14,089 lbs of automotive batteries
- 1,791 lbs of hazardous household batteries
- 47,520 lbs of pesticides
- 176 lbs of mercury containing devices
- 192,347 lbs of electronics
- 94,199 lbs of misc. HHW
- 7,777 lbs of fluorescent bulbs
- 1,250 lbs of pharmaceuticals
- 130,260 lbs. of bulk metals
- 265,640 lbs. of confidential documents for shredding
- 1,863 lbs. of misc. solid waste

The H-MRF also accepts chemicals and fluorescent light bulbs from Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators (CESQGs). This enables local schools, municipal and county departments and small businesses to dispose of these items properly. In 2023, 52 CESQGs delivered a variety of chemicals and fluorescent bulbs to be safely and properly disposed.

Recycling Programs

5. Recycling Education:

Typically, the MRF Education and Conference Center allows visitors to observe the operation of a municipal solid waste and recyclables transfer station. In total, 46 tours were given in 2023. MRF tours are free of charge and provide participants an opportunity to learn about the management of solid waste and recyclables in Westchester. Tours allow participants to see the equipment that separates, sorts, and prepares materials for sale to third party recyclers. From an observation tower, visitors can see the tipping floor, where truckloads of recyclables are delivered. Tours are offered to students and persons of all age groups (kindergarten and above) and typically last an hour.

Continued recycling education occurs daily as DEF staff regularly answer questions from the public via email and social media. These interactions provide an opportunity to share educational resources with County residents. Staff attending the 5 Household Recycling Days in 2023 also passed out educational recycling flyers, including the Recycle Right pamphlets and information about the H-MRF in Valhalla.

6. Medication Take-Back Program:

Residents are able to drop off unwanted or expired medications at the H-MRF on the first Tuesday of every month. Following the close of business, Westchester County Department of Public Safety personnel supervise transportation of the collected medications to the Waste-to-Energy Facility in Peekskill for destruction.

A total of 250 households delivered 1,250 lbs. of medications directly to the H-MRF. In addition, 38 Westchester County Police Departments participated in the Medication Take-Back Program by hosting MedReturn Units at their stations. These MedReturn Units allow residents to drop off unwanted medications confidentially and conveniently, 24/7. The Police Departments deliver the collected medications to the H-MRF. In 2023, 6,241 lbs. of medications were collected by Police Departments and brought to the H-MRF on the first Tuesday of each month. In total, Westchester County collected 7,491 lbs. of medications at the H-MRF. An additional 2,960 lbs. of medications were collected across 5 HRD events and contributed to a total of 10,451 lbs. of medication waste disposed of in 2023.

7. Mobile Shredder Program:

In 2023, DEF continued to operate two Mobile Shredders, conducting shredding events at various locations throughout the County. Residents are permitted to bring up to four file-size boxes of personal papers to these events to be shredded and recycled. In 2023, DEF hosted 95 residential events and welcomed over 12,225 households who delivered 217.58 tons of paper for shredding. The Mobile Shredders were also available to residents that attended one of the County's 5 different Household Recycling Day (HRD) events in 2023. Across the 5 events, an additional 17.75 tons of paper was collected for shredding.

8. Boat Wrap Recycling Program:

In 2023, Westchester County's Boat Wrap Recycling program collected nearly 42.98 tons of plastic used to protect boats during the winter from participating Long Island Sound and Hudson

River marinas. An average boat can use as much as 14 lbs. of recyclable wrap (low-density polyethylene or LDPE), which would normally be thrown away in the Spring. The County sells the collected plastic to recyclers.

In 2023, 28 marinas and boat yards along the Long Island Sound and the Hudson River operated as designated collection points. DEF picks up and delivers the material to the MRF.

9. Westchester County's Recycling HelpLine:

The County's Recycling HelpLine at (914) 813-5425 serves as an informational tool to assist local residents and businesses by providing answers to questions regarding waste management and recycling. Residents can also call the HelpLine to book an appointment to deliver material to the H-MRF. The HelpLine is available 7 days a week from 9 am to 7pm and free to use.

The HelpLine is operated by staff from the United Way, trained to answer frequently asked recycling questions, and to transfer other questions to appropriate DEF staff. The Recycling HelpLine also provides residents with information on various County sponsored events such as residential shredding events featuring one of the Mobile Shredders. Additionally, the HelpLine assists residents with questions related specifically to their particular locale, since waste collection programs vary from one municipality to another. In 2023, the Recycling HelpLine handled 13,640 inquiries.

10. Electronic Waste Recycling Program:

DEF provides electronic waste (e-waste) collection containers at 26 RDD municipal sites in addition to the HRMF and HRD events, where residents can dispose of their unwanted electronics. In 2023, the County diverted about 681 tons of e-waste from the solid waste stream through this program.

11. Organic Yard Waste Transfer Station IMA Program:

Beginning in 1998, the Westchester County Board of Legislators authorized the County to enter into 5-year Inter-Municipal Agreements (IMAs) with RDD municipalities to operate the Organic Yard Waste Transfer Station Program. Participating municipalities collect yard waste at a municipal depot. The County arranges for collection from the depot and transport to commercial composting facilities. As an economic incentive to divert yard waste from the solid waste stream, RDD member municipalities pay less per ton for collected yard waste than for disposal of municipal solid waste. The program allows participating municipalities to increase local recycling rates and to save money by diverting yard waste from the waste stream. In 2023, the program collected 94,109.96 tons of material. Municipalities that currently host an Organic Yard Waste Transfer station include: Briarcliff Manor, Cortlandt, Croton, Eastchester, Greenburgh, Harrison, Irvington, Larchmont, Village and Town of Mamaroneck, Mt. Kisco, Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, Ossining Village, Port Chester, Rye City, Scarsdale, Sleepy Hollow, Tarrytown, White Plains, Yonkers. By hosting a site, these municipalities also agree to accept yard waste from neighboring municipalities.

12. Recycling Enforcement:

In 2023, DEF inspectors continued to inspect loads tipped at both private and municipal transfer stations located within Westchester, looking for improperly mixed loads of garbage and recyclables in violation of the Source Separation Law (SSL). They also continued to inspect businesses, schools, multi-tenant facilities, and other institutions throughout the County to ensure compliance with the SSL. Inspectors also began outreach efforts to educate businesses about the new Single-Use Plastics legislation that went into effect in September. The legislation mandates a 6-month period of education and outreach prior to enforcement through violations. Inspectors will continue education efforts into 2024.

In 2023, DEF issued 58 Notices of Hearing to haulers and waste generators for recycling violations. Of the violations issued, 15 were issued to municipal haulers, 14 were issued to private haulers, and 29 were issued to waste generators.

13. Household Recycling Days:

In 2023, Westchester County held 5 Household Recycling Days (HRDs) which were tremendously popular. Events were held at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park in Yorktown Heights, Sprain Ridge Park in Yonkers, the Charles Point Resource Recovery Facility in Peekskill and at Playland Park in Rye. The events attracted over 3,491 households for an average of 698 households per event. In total, residents safely disposed over 263,000 pounds of hazardous waste, paint, medications, electronic waste and other difficult to dispose of items for proper recycling/disposal.

Growing Initiatives

14. Residential Food Scrap Transportation and Disposal Program (RFSTAD):

In Fall 2020, the County established RFSTAD to assist municipalities seeking to start or maintain food scrap programs. The District saw the need to establish a program that would ease the financial burden for local municipalities to connect with local food scrap programs, and recognized that the transportation and disposal of food scraps constituted the largest barrier to these programs in many communities.

Under RFSTAD, District municipalities pay a subsidized rate for the transportation and disposal of food scraps collected by the municipality either through drop-off or curbside collections. This subsidized rate makes the processing of food scraps cost neutral or provides a cost savings when compared with municipal costs to process municipal solid waste. RFSTAD also allows for the bulking of food scraps with a goal of reducing greenhouse gasses created during the transportation of the food scraps to an organics recycler.

2021 marked the first full year of the program with 19 municipalities contributing 812 tons of food scraps. In 2023, 25 participating municipalities recycled 1,104 tons of food scraps, a 7% increase from 2022.

15. CompostED

DEF broke ground on the CompostED facility in December 2020 and it officially opened on Earth Day 2021. The facility is located across from the H-MRF on the Grasslands Campus in Valhalla, and is the County's first small-scale food scrap composting demonstration and education site. The site has the capacity to process up to two tons of food scraps a week while also serving as a valuable educational resource for County residents, students, and municipal officials. Educational tours are designed to provide a hands on learning experience and teach participants how they can compost at home. In 2023, CompostED hosted 21 tours for 200 participants.

In addition to serving as an educational hub for composting, in 2023 the facility also composted 88,700 pounds of food waste. CompostEd currently works with two of the largest food pantries in Westchester County, Meals on Main Street and Hope Community Services, where inedible food waste is collected on a weekly basis and composted at the facility in Valhalla. The horticultural grade compost is then donated to farms and gardens in the county that donate a significant amount of the food they grow to food pantries. In 2023, CompostED distributed 122 cubic yards of compost to various community gardens, parks, and farms across the County.

16. Expanded Textile Program

In December 2021, in partnership with HELSPY, DEF expanded the textile recycling program at the H-MRF by installing 3 new bins. Residents have the opportunity to recycle a variety of textiles (clothes, shoes, towels, rugs and more) in any condition (torn, worn, stained, broken zippers, etc.) as long as they are clean, dry, and odorless. In 2023, residents delivered over 16 tons of textiles to the H-MRF for recycling, a 16% increase from 2022. An additional 3.09 tons of textiles were collected at Household Recycling Days (HRDs).

17. Lithium-Ion Batteries

In July 2023, as a response to growing concerns over the potential hazards associated with lithium-ion batteries, Westchester County Executive George Latimer and the County's Department of Emergency Services, Department of Environmental Facilities and Department of Consumer Protection took proactive measures to ensure the safety of residents. As part of these new measures, DEF established a system to accept damaged lithium-ion batteries from County Fire Departments. Residents had previously been able to drop-off intact and damaged lithium-ion batteries to the HMRF and would continue to do so. DEF began working with Call2Recycle to safely package and recycle intact and damaged lithium-ion batteries for proper disposal.

Safety videos and flyers were developed and shared to ensure residents were aware of the potential dangers of damaged lithium-ion batteries.

The education and awareness campaign resulted in an increased number of collected batteries at the HMRF. Since July 2023, DEF received damaged batteries from 5 different fire departments across the County. Additionally, since July the HMRF received 1,641 total batteries (about 880 pounds), 17 of which were damaged batteries, from residents. In the previous 7 months, the facility had received 1,215 pounds of lithium-ion batteries, for a total of 2,095 pounds of collected batteries in 2023. In 2022, the HMRF received 1,053 pounds of lithium-ion batteries, a 99% increase.

18. Recycle Coach

In 2023, Westchester County’s Department of Environmental Facilities (DEF) partnered with Recycle Coach to launch a free mobile app to help make recycling and solid waste information more accessible to County residents. The Recycling Coordinator developed the RFP to procure the contractor and has been working directly with the contractor to ensure the success of the program.

Recycle Coach connects residents with their municipal collection schedules, shares local disposal and recycling information and supplies educational tools to help make it easier to recycle products. Users can access Recycle Coach from their desktop computers and mobile devices. Recycle Coach compliments DEF’s current education efforts and will help to not only provide accurate and timely educational resources, but hopefully reach new audiences and more residents overall.

In 2024, DEF will work to onboard municipalities and help promote the app to residents. Recycle Coach offers an in-depth data dashboard that will allow DEF to report back on app usage, communications, new users and more. The onboarding of municipalities will be a major focus for the Recycling Coordinator in 2024.

Refuse Disposal District #1

16. Refuse Disposal District Advisory Board:

County law requires the Board to be composed of 14 volunteers and 2 ex officio members to advise the RDD on solid waste issues and policy. Six members are designated to represent the County’s cities; five members are designated to represent the towns; and four to represent the villages.

The 2023 board members were:

1. Thomas Meier—City of Yonkers – Chair
2. Benedict Salanitro—Town of Rye
3. George Mottarella—Town of Harrison
4. Ryan Coyne—City of Rye
5. Jeffrey Coleman—Village of Scarsdale
6. Peter Sciliano—Town of Mt. Pleasant
7. Rocco Circosta—Village of Ossining
8. Brian Simmons—Town of Greenburgh
9. Stefania Mignone—City of White Plains
10. Damani Bush—City of Mt. Vernon

Attachment 1: 2023 Westchester County Recycling Rate

MUNICIPALLY COLLECTED WASTE & RECYCLING IN TONS	
Curbside Commingled Containers and Mixed Paper	75,855
Organic Waste Recycled (Yard waste + food scraps)	143,939
Bulk Metal Recycled*	11,795
Construction & Demolition Debris and Sewage Sludge Recycled	120,315
Other Recyclables: Tires, Electronics, Anti-freeze, Motor Oil, Vehicle Batteries, Textiles, and Deposit Beverage Containers	9,148
TOTAL RECYCLED WASTE	375,577
TOTAL DISPOSED WASTE	382,124
TOTAL RECYCLED & DISPOSED*	766,156
MUNICIPAL RECYCLING RATE	50%

**"Bulk Metal" includes 8,455 tons recycled from the Waste-to-Energy plant at Charles Point and subtracted from the "Disposed Waste" column.*

PRIVATELY COLLECTED WASTE & RECYCLING IN TONS	
Source Separated Recyclables & Scrap Metal	99,987
Yard Waste Recycled	47,645
Construction & Demolition Debris (C&D) Recycled	612,127
Construction & Demolition Debris Disposed	462,720
Garbage Disposed	224,235
TOTAL RECYCLED WASTE	759,759
TOTAL DISPOSED C&D AND GARBAGE	686,955
TOTAL RECYCLED & DISPOSED	1,446,714
PRIVATE HAULER RECYCLING RATE	53%

WESTCHESTER COUNTY TOTAL COLLECTED WASTE & RECYCLING IN TONS	
TOTAL RECYCLED WASTE	1,135,336
TOTAL DISPOSED WASTE	1,069,079
TOTAL RECYCLED & DISPOSED	2,204,415
WESTCHESTER COUNTY 2023 RECYCLING RATE	52%

Attachment 2: 2023 Municipally Collected Waste & Recyclables

Municipality	Recycled Waste*	Disposed Waste	Total Solid Waste Generated (Recycled + Disposed)**	Percent Recycled (Total)
ARDSLEY	2,676	2,100	4,776	56%
BEDFORD	6,752	12,512	19,264	35%
BRIARCLIFF	3,257	2,796	6,053	54%
BRONXVILLE	2,968	2,086	5,053	59%
BUCHANAN	505	1,296	1,800	28%
CORTLANDT	15,458	14,175	29,633	52%
CROTON-ON-HUDSON	3,542	3,520	7,062	50%
DOBBS FERRY	6,369	4,435	10,803	59%
EASTCHESTER	12,533	8,160	20,693	61%
ELMSFORD	1,561	1,678	3,239	48%
GREENBURGH	24,644	16,072	40,716	61%
HARRISON	11,983	8,538	20,521	58%
HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON	2,360	3,280	5,640	42%
IRVINGTON	3,441	2,694	6,135	56%
LARCHMNT/M'MARNCK	7,976	7,961	15,937	50%
LEWISBORO	869	2,953	3,822	23%
MAMARONECK- VILLAGE	3,574	7,987	11,561	31%
MT. KISCO	6,689	4,050	10,740	62%
MT. PLEASANT	7,369	8,982	16,351	45%
MT. VERNON	12,755	30,690	43,445	29%
NEW CASTLE	4,781	6,010	10,791	44%
NEW ROCHELLE	12,116	28,134	40,250	30%
NORTH CASTLE	10,722	5,075	15,797	68%
NORTH SALEM	708	2,127	2,835	25%
OSSINING - TOWN	2,167	2,049	4,216	51%
OSSINING - VILLAGE	9,084	9,453	18,537	49%
PEEKSKILL	3,077	8,840	11,917	26%
PELHAM	9,797	2,803	12,600	78%
PELHAM MANOR	11,458	2,087	13,545	85%
PLEASANTVILLE	5,314	2,259	7,573	70%
PORT CHESTER	11,394	13,036	24,430	47%
POUND RIDGE	805	2,321	3,127	26%
RYE BROOK	8,196	3,259	11,455	72%
RYE CITY	10,106	5,487	15,593	65%
SCARSDALE	12,506	6,865	19,371	65%
SLEEPY HOLLOW	4,551	4,468	9,020	50%
SOMERS	2,632	6,496	9,128	29%
TARRYTOWN	3,694	3,769	7,463	50%
TUCKAHOE	6,082	2,590	8,672	70%

WESTCHESTER CO. PROGRAMS	9,346	937	10,282	
WHITE PLAINS	23,784	27,960	51,744	46%
YONKERS	49,618	85,098	134,715	37%
YORKTOWN	26,360	13,490	39,850	66%
TOTALS	375,577	382,124	757,701	50%

**Recycled waste included: bulk metal, electronic waste, deposit container estimates, organics (leaf debris), food scraps, and miscellaneous other wastes (motor oil, antifreeze, tires, textiles, etc.)*

***8,454.97 tons of bulk metal recycled from the Waste-to-Energy plant at Charles Point is subtracted from the "Disposed Waste" column and included in recycling totals*