

Somerset County – Public Works

Solid Waste & Drainage Division Strategic Plan

Background

The Somerset County Department of Public Works consists of three divisions: the Solid Waste & Drainage Division, the General Services Division and the Roads & Waterways Division.

The Solid Waste & Drainage Division is responsible for landfilling, recycling and mulching operations as well as improving drainage. Its fleet consists of 16 tagged vehicles, 11 pieces of specialty equipment and 1 implement. The normal workforce is approximately 20 employees. The Solid Waste & Drainage Complex which is located on James Ring Road in Westover includes an administrative office, shop, equipment shed, employee break room, inmate break room, storage sheds, recycling building, scale house, landfill, borrow pits (BP), leachate storage tank and mulching center (MC). There are also 6 transfer stations (TS), 4 county dumpsters (D) and an incinerator (I) located throughout the county.

A similar strategic plan is in place to guide the Department's other two Divisions.

Mission

The Somerset County Department of Public Works is committed to enhancing the quality of life of our citizens by striving to plan, construct and maintain the county's public works infrastructure.

The Solid Waste & Drainage Division is determined to provide a safe and efficient waste disposal network as well as comprehensive drainage system to promote economic development while protecting Somerset County's beautiful and unique environment.

Functions

The functions of the Solid Waste & Drainage Division are numerous and vary greatly. Most are performed in-house, some are contracted out and others performed by inmates. Those associated with safety are emphasized to protect our staff, inmates, contractual employees and general public. These functions are as follows:

In-house:

- Emergency Response
- Accounting
- Administration
- Landfill Operations
- Borrow Operations
- Mulching Operations
- Leachate Hauling
- Waste Hauling
- Recyclable Hauling
- Transfer Station Operations
- Facility Maintenance
- Inspection
- Technical Support

- Snow Removal and Deicing

Partially Contracted:

- Legal Services
- Engineering
- Surveying
- Right-of-way Acquisition
- Fleet Maintenance
- Environmental Testing
- Methane Processing
- Ditching
- Flood Control

Inmate Assisted:

- Litter Control
- Grass Trimming

Infrastructure

The Solid Waste Infrastructure is distributed throughout the county and forms the backbone of the waste disposal network. Some are obvious such as the landfill and transfer stations, while others are more subdued such as leachate storage facility and borrow pits. Each plays an important role to the county's waste disposal network. The division's current infrastructure is as follows:

Type	Quantity
Landfills	2
Borrow Pits	6
Transfer Stations	6
Leachate Storage Facilities	1
Buildings	8
Dumpsters	4
Incinerators	1

Assets

The property, improvements, inventory and fleet managed by the Solid Waste & Drainage Division has a considerable value. The properties and their improvements were assessed by the state's Department of Assessments and Taxation. The value of the Solid Waste infrastructure was based upon engineering cost estimates. The value of the division's inventory and fleet was based upon Blue Book values where possible and best judgment for the remainder. The values of these assets are found below:

Asset	Value
Somerset County Landfill, Office/Scale House, Recycling Building, Shop, Equipment Shed, Storage Sheds, Breakrooms, Leachate Tank & Mulching Center (MC)	381,400
Borrow Pits (BP)	1,165,100

Expansion Property	29,600
Chance (TS)	600
Costen (TS)	N/A
Crisfield (TS)	50,700
Mt. Vernon (TS)	44,400
Tylerton (TS)	38,700
Westover (TS)	N/A
Smith Island Incinerator (I)	74,000
Detention Center Dumpster (D)	2,750
Great Hope Golf Course Dumpster (D)	2,750
Howard Anderson Bldg. Dumpster (D)	2,750
Sheriff's Office Complex Dumpster (D)	2,750
Fleet	327,756
Inventory	166,955
Total Asset Value	\$2,289,611

Funding

The Solid Waste & Drainage Division is funded directly by the General Fund. A majority of the revenue is generated from tipping fees, transfer station permits, recycling sales and sludge disposal fees. These sources are dependent upon the county's waste stream which is anticipated to increase as the population grows.

S.W.O.T. Analysis

This plan includes an analysis of the Solid Waste & Drainage Division's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T.). Each of these attributes is documented below as perceived by the staff who participated in this process. All employees of the division were given the opportunity to participate in the preparation of this strategic plan.

Strengths

- Administrative support of Department.
- Cooperation with the other divisions, departments and agencies.
- Reputation for good waste disposal system.
- A highly trained technical, professional and administrative staff.
- Knowledge of environmental permitting process for drainage projects.

Weaknesses

- Suitable transfer station near Costen.
- Permitting concerns with landfill expansion.
- Capacity limitations on landfill and borrow pit.
- Recycling efforts hindered by lack of reporting by businesses.
- Flat terrain, high groundwater and hydric soils hinder drainage.

Opportunities

- Potential for landfill and borrow pit expansion.
- Possibility of Costen transfer station improvements.
- Use of media to increase public awareness of importance of our waste disposal system.
- Creation of a Waste to Energy Facility using methane from the landfill, food scraps from businesses and/or chicken litter from local poultry operations.
- Cooperation with Mosquito Control to improve drainage.

Threats

- Sustaining great workplace under current budget constraints.
- Closure of regional acceptance facilities for waste materials.
- Regulatory changes which increase Division responsibilities, i.e. MDE, MDOT, DNR, COE, OSHA, MOSHA and EPA.
- Running out of landfill space and borrow material.
- Significant erosion problems caused by severe weather events.

Strategic Plan Objectives and Tactics

Objectives are benchmarks established to accomplish the Department's mission. They change only slightly from year to year and are broken down into short and long term. Short term is usually accomplished within 1 year. Long term is expected to be accomplished within 5 years.

Tactics are functions that accomplish the objectives. These change from year to year as market conditions warrant.

Based on analysis by the department's leadership and staff, the following objectives and tactics have been identified to fulfill the Department's mission:

Short Term

Objective #1 Foster a good working relationship among other entities with similar needs.

- a. Provide guidance to other county departments and municipalities on their waste disposal and recycling efforts.
- b. Instruct the BOE, UMES and non-profits on their waste disposal and recycling programs.
- c. Cooperate with adjacent counties on regulatory requirements, training opportunities and cooperative agreements.
- d. Work with Mosquito Control on beneficial drainage projects.

Objective #2 Fill vacant positions, retain qualified staff and increase morale.

- a. Review job descriptions, advertise vacant positions, schedule interviews and hire highly qualified applicants.
- b. Create a training database for entire division staff, assess training needs, schedule necessary training and routinely update.
- c. Reinforce productivity through annual department meetings, monthly operations meetings and weekly staff meetings.
- d. Emphasize team culture throughout division by being open to new ideas (Suggestion Box), providing employee assistance (Open Door Policy), assessing compensation (Salary

Adjustments/New Benefits), evaluating responsibilities (Job Descriptions) and showing appreciation for efforts (service awards).

Objective #3 Maintain an efficient and effective communication system throughout division.

- a. Coordinate upgrades to existing radio system with Emergency Management to ensure reliable communication during routine and emergency operations.
- b. Provide quality cell phones to technical and supervisory personnel.
- c. Retain a high quality machine to fax, copy and scan for office purposes, thereby reducing the need for desktop machines.
- d. Update the Division's phone-tree just prior to the hurricane and snow seasons.

Objective #4 Establish efficient fleet management system.

- a. Evaluate the life cycle of the current fleet and develop a replacement plan via purchase or lease.
- b. Track DOT certifications using fleet management software.
- c. Assess transfer stations for transportation efficiency.
- d. Purchase and implement scheduling software for routine fleet maintenance.

Objective #5 Provide an effective Safety Program for the Division.

- a. Retain the services of safety consultant for necessary guidance on safety issues to minimize MOSHA and OSHA enforcement actions.
- b. Maintain an active role in safety inspections as overseen by the County's insurance company.
- c. Keep facilities, vehicles and equipment properly maintained.
- d. Provide necessary safety training and gear to entire staff.

Long Term

Objective #1 Establish a usable asset management system for the division's infrastructure.

- a. Prepare simple asset report forms for use by inspectors, interns and inventory specialists in order to finish collecting field data on county solid waste and drainage infrastructure.
- b. Transfer data into GIS system accessible to end users via existing GIS software and update routinely for additions, deletions and modifications.
- c. Maintain inventory of division's parts and supplies with assistance from mechanics and inventory specialists.
- d. Use data for beneficial purposes, i.e. update asset value, maintenance needs and budgeting purposes.

Objective #2 Update the solid waste management plan to provide waste disposal and recycling in a cost effective manner.

- a. Explore ways to "Reduce" our waste stream while considering budget impacts.
- b. Explore ways to "Reuse" our waste stream where economically feasible.
- c. Explore ways to "Recycle" our waste stream by hiring a Recycling Coordinator that can devote adequate time on recycling efforts.
- d. Investigate ways to extend the life of our landfill and borrow pit through improved cover and compaction methods.

Objective #3 Improve our recycling program to increase our recycling percentage and revenues.

- a. Hire a Recycling Coordinator that can focus sufficient energy on recycling to find new markets for existing and potential recyclables.
- b. Update recycling plan to include recent regulatory changes and necessary improvements.
- c. Take an active role in recycling issues via the Chamber of Commerce, MDE, municipalities, BOE and UMES.
- d. Promote recycling program through tours, pamphlets, website, press releases and presentations.

Objective #4 Explore reliable funding sources to support the Division.

- a. Encourage use of Waste to Energy facilities for products such as methane, food scraps and chicken litter.
- b. Continue to use federal, state and private grant opportunities for programs such as E-cycling, Household Hazardous Waste Day, Pesticide Container Recycling Day and Tire Amnesty Day.
- c. Consider establishing or increasing user fees, i.e. tipping fees, transfer station permit fees and sludge disposal fees.
- d. Investigate scrap metal marketing strategies to increase revenues, i.e. increase advertising, stockpile product for better pricing and sell marketable items online.

Objective #5 Establish a marketing strategy to promote importance of Division.

- a. Update and improve information on County website.
- b. Use press releases to better inform the public of permit renewal, transfer station closures and special events.
- c. Promote cost saving measures, i.e. use of interns and inmates.
- d. Encourage businesses and agencies to report recycling efforts to avoid mandatory recycling programs.

Summary:

In order to accomplish the Department's mission, the Solid Waste & Drainage Division must be able to perform its functions efficiently. This cannot occur without a highly qualified and motivated staff which has the necessary resources to complete this goal. Objectives and tactics have been established based upon current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This strategic plan will be implemented in the most effective manner possible.