

Chapter Eight: Actions to Meet Goal Four

Goal Four of this Plan states:

Implement policies and procedures to provide information to the public and ensure public participation throughout the decision-making process regarding waste management facilities by 2013.

This goal responds to a variety of concerns raised by the public and solid waste authorities about the solid waste planning process. Increasing general education on solid waste issues with an emphasis on landfill capacity and increasing the public's involvement in decisions about solid waste facilities would address most concerns.

PUBLIC NEED FOR INFORMATION

The public currently holds solid waste facilities in negative regard. Common worries include groundwater contamination, methane-caused explosions, and developmental health defects. The concerns prompt opposition to new facilities, the expansion of operating facilities, and the continued operation of permitted facilities. Solid waste facilities must be continually monitored and managed for the health and safety of the surrounding community and environment, but many of the fears expressed could be labeled as "misconceptions." The facilities do not pose the risk that some citizens perceive. Public education would minimize these fears and may reduce the opposition to solid waste facilities the fears generate. Providing information about old, closed landfills could also address some misconceptions about landfills.

Public concern about "good neighbor" issues such as services provided, speeding garbage trucks, and site aesthetics are frequently raised in public forums. These forums are a good way for residents to express their fears and get the information or action they need to address them. For example, constructing speed bumps and enforcing speed limits can control truck traffic. Constructing berms and planting or preserving trees and shrubs to screen facilities can resolve aesthetic concerns. Ensuring good operational procedures are followed can minimize odor, dust and other aesthetic issues. It is easier to recognize and address these matters when the public has a way to voice their concerns early in the permitting process than when landfills begin operating.

Public opposition is often rooted in the "not in my backyard" or NIMBY camp. Residents often recognize the need for new facilities, but strongly feel they should be located elsewhere, preferably in rural, unpopulated areas. Existing facilities are deemed to have "been here long enough," and the thought that another neighborhood should "have a turn" is popular. Involving the public when decisions are made about new facilities allows for procedural justice by giving citizens the opportunity to express their thoughts and opinions. Public involvement also allows the concerns to be addressed through education or action steps.

KEY ACTIONS TO MEET GOAL FOUR

Landfills and other solid waste facilities provide a necessary service to North Carolina's residents. Despite efforts to reduce waste and increase recycling levels, the volume of solid waste disposed has steadily increased with no sign of short-term abatement. Because it is harder to site new landfills, it is difficult to ensure the state has sufficient disposal capacity. Reducing waste disposal and increasing recycling and diversion help maintain the state's landfill capacity. Increased public involvement and education could make siting new landfills easier and address the concerns and misconceptions about

operating facilities. The actions suggested to reach Goal Four also help achieve Goal Five because they address the state's need to ensure landfill capacity.

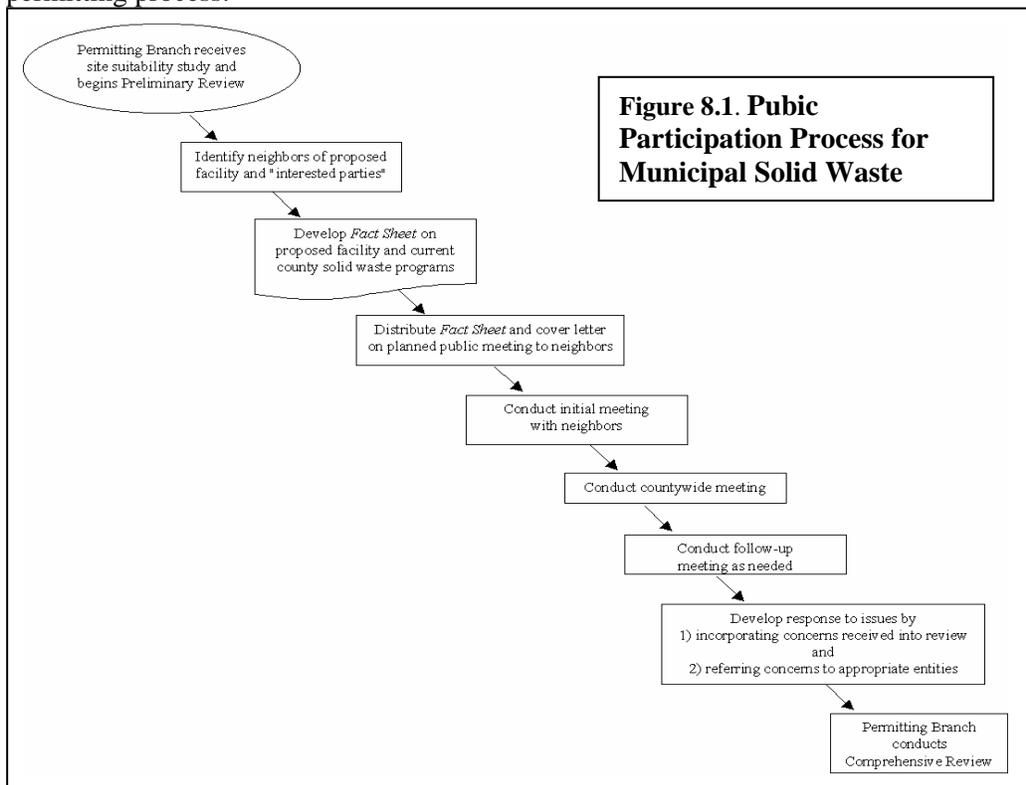
Objective 4.1. Ensure public involvement and education when siting new municipal solid waste landfills.

The state should distribute site-specific information about proposed municipal solid waste landfills to neighboring populations and provide them opportunities to comment early in the permitting process.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Identify communities that neighbor proposed solid waste facilities.
- Require facility applicants and affected local governments to develop and implement a community participation plan.
- Require applicants to analyze the proposed facility's affect on the community, such as additional traffic or aesthetic changes.
- Require applicants to develop public participation plans to address the effects identified.

Figure 8.1 illustrates an example of expanded public participation in the municipal solid waste landfill permitting process.



Objective 4.2. Ensure public involvement and education when making decisions about proposed C&D, transfer and compost facilities.

The state should distribute site-specific information about proposed facilities to neighboring populations and provide them an opportunity to comment early in the permitting process.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Identify communities that neighbor proposed facilities.
- Require applicants and affected governments to develop and implement a community participation plan.
- Require applicants to analyze the proposed facility's effect on the community, such as the additional traffic or changes to the aesthetic view.
- Require applicants to develop public participation plans that address the effects identified.

Objective 4.3. Ensure public involvement and education when making decisions about existing solid waste facilities.

The state should require the distribution of site-specific information to neighboring populations and allow them an opportunity to comment during the decision-making process.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Identify communities that neighbor existing solid waste facilities.
- Develop and implement public participation plans for existing facilities.
- Provide information or "fact sheets" about existing solid waste facilities.

Objective 4.4. Ensure public involvement and education when making decisions about closed facilities.

The state should require the distribution of site-specific information to neighboring populations.

The following key actions further this objective:

- Identify communities neighboring closed solid waste facilities.
- Provide information or "fact sheets" on closed solid waste facilities.

In addition to helping achieve Goal Four, the suggested objectives in this chapter also increase the chance of achieving Goal Five, ensuring the state's landfill capacity.