

# If we recycle, who owns the trash?

By Nancy Smith  
special writer

**M**OST folks can't care where the garbage goes as long as it disappears from the curb. Those who are responsible for its disposal know we face troubled times unless we make wise plans — now.

Many dedicated people work to fulfill the requirements of Michigan's Public Act 641. The update of the solid waste management plan will be produced by county, city and township officials, the Solid Waste Planning Committee (SWPC), and two teams of consultants — Camp,

Dresser and McKee, and Resource Recycling Systems. This document will require countless hours of research, meetings and computer compilations. A most important tool in preparing the plan will be a survey of residents in all 60 units of government that make up Oakland County. (In its most recent decision, a committee of the Oakland County Board of Commissioners cut out the survey money.)

THE SWPC consists of volunteers from many communities in the county, and many are 10-year veterans. Act 641 requires the following representation among the 13 voting members:

- Three — city, township and county government (one each).
- One — regional planning agency.
- Four — solid waste industry.
- Two — environmental interest group.
- Three — general public.

Six advisory panels have similar representations.

At present, only 30 communities

have voted to join the plan. These units each chose a representative to the municipal solid waste planning board. The task of this group will be to administer and implement the final plan in partnership with Oakland County staff.

Six major cities did not join: Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Novi, Walled Lake and South Lyon.

Concerned with costs, they formed the Southwest Oakland County Solid Waste Consortium and hired a consultant, Black & Veatch of Kansas City, to design other alternatives. Their second alternative would be to

join the plan.

THE BOARD of Commissioners will determine financing and may provide county regulations to guide and improve solid waste operations.

Both the board of health and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources have final authority over conditions in every phase of solid waste management. They will continue to monitor landfills and make sure incinerators do not damage air quality.

There is much controversy about "flow control." Flow control simply means: Who owns the trash?

Amazing but true — the same mountain of garbage that nobody wants in his or her backyard must be committed, in a legal contract, or large scale waste disposal won't work.

Planners must know how much residential, commercial and industrial solid waste must be processed in a year to coordinate a cost-efficient system.

Guaranteed volume will determine the size and number of waste management facilities. For example, the plan will include incinerators and resource recovery units such as transfer stations and special-

ized pick-up equipment.

Incinerator size is of greatest importance since their initial cost is much greater than recycling options due to the need for pollution controls and toxic ash disposal.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT change is that solid waste planners now recognize that a regional approach is best.

Nancy Smith has been a member of the Oakland County Solid Waste Planning Committee since 1978, is president of Earth Alive and has been a Farmington Hills resident for 25 years.

## Court trains volunteers

Oakland Probate Court will hold training and orientation sessions for volunteers who work with children ages 6-16.

All sessions are held in the Probate Court conference room on the second floor of the Oakland County Courthouse, 1200 N. Telegraph, Pontiac. Patti Reedy, volunteer coordinator, can be contacted during business hours at 858-0041 for information on the program.

Dates and times are 7-9 p.m. Tuesdays, May 17 and 24.

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