

POUNDS OF WASTE DISPOSED AND RECYCLED PER CAPITA

Outcome: Decrease Waste Disposal and Increase Recycling

Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

Although the Countywide Planning Policies do not include policy direction for reducing solid waste or promoting recycling programs, the Benchmark Task Force added this Indicator, because recycling and reductions in solid waste save resources and landfill space, and reduce the potential for soil and water contamination due to leakage from landfills.

Figure 20.1

King County Waste Disposal and Recycling (2000-2005)

Over five million tons of waste were generated in King County in 2005. Averaging about 14% annual growth, waste generation has increased over 50% since 2000. Along with this increase, recycling has become an increasingly popular alternative to disposal as shown in figure 20.1. The tons of waste recycled grew at a markedly faster rate than the tons of waste disposed. Between 2000 and 2005, the tons of waste recycled almost doubled, a rate about three times greater than that of disposed waste. By 2005, nearly one-half of the county's waste was recycled.

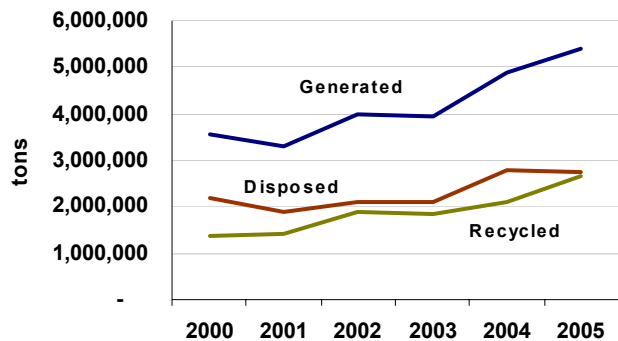


Figure 20.2

Recycling Components by Weight (2005)

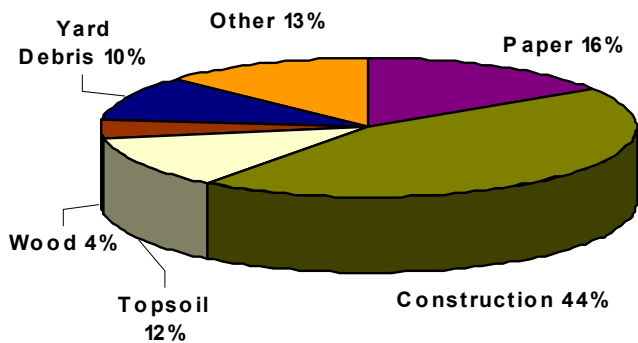


Figure 20.2 shows the allocation of the county's recycled waste. Of the 2.7 million tons of waste recycled, 44% of the tonnage was in construction debris including asphalt, concrete and other land clearing debris. Since 2000, the tons of construction debris recycled increased over 140%. Paper products (including newsprint, corrugated and mixed paper) contributed 16% of the recycled tonnage. Though the amount of paper recycled increased 18% since 2000, it accounted for a smaller share of recycled tonnage in 2005.

Figure 20.3

Pounds of Residential Annual Waste Per Capita

Striking changes in residential waste practices have occurred in the last 12 years as shown in figure 20.3. From 1993 to 2005, residential waste generation has grown (15% increase), but at a rate just slightly ahead of population growth (14% increase). At the same time, residential recycling increased by 43%, while waste disposal actually decreased (by 5%). This is notable because waste disposal was surpassed by recycling in 2005 with 52% of the county's residential waste being recycled.

