

Communication & Engagement Plan

Background

Santa Cruz County's Buena Vista Landfill is projected to reach capacity by 2028. Buena Vista is the only remaining landfill in Santa Cruz County serving residents and businesses in the unincorporated county. As a result of the pending landfill closure, the County and its residents need to develop other waste management facilities to ensure adequate waste disposal capacity to efficiently manage the 157,700 tons of trash, recycling, and organic waste that county residents and businesses in the unincorporated county dispose annually. The County has spent over 30 years in collaboration with city jurisdictions and the public through its Integrated Waste Management Task Force to identify the right mix of facilities and available property to provide ongoing waste disposal services to residents and businesses in the unincorporated county.

The County's Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) was established in 1990, as required by State law, to serve as a commission reporting to the Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors. The Task Force's membership includes elected officials and public works staff engaged in waste management activities for each of the local jurisdictions (cities and county) within Santa Cruz County. The Local Task Force holds quarterly meetings, which are open to the public, to discuss and address important waste management issues.

The Task Force completed a siting study in 2000 that identified two major findings: (1) County residents do not want to develop a new landfill at a new location and (2) redevelopment of property at the Buena Vista Landfill for on-site waste management and off-site waste disposal is preferable to permitting a new landfill. As a result of these findings, County Public Works staff developed the Buena Vista Landfill Redevelopment Project (project) to build waste transfer stations, an organics diversion facility, a redesigned recycling facility, and other facility upgrades at the Buena Vista Landfill site to serve County waste management needs. If waste management facilities are not developed locally, the costs for waste disposal and climate impacts from waste transfer emissions will increase.

Communication Goals

1. Bilingual public awareness and comprehension campaign regarding the necessity for sufficient waste disposal infrastructure to handle the waste produced by residents and businesses in the County.
2. Public and stakeholder support for development of the necessary waste management infrastructure at the Buena Vista Landfill site.
3. Foster community participation and collaboration in waste reduction initiatives through effective communication strategies.



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Objectives

Through workshops, events, online engagement, and print materials, the public will understand:

1. The Buena Vista Landfill is nearing the end of its functional life as a landfill.
2. The role of the County Integrated Waste Management Task Force in developing policy recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors.
3. The need to provide adequate waste management facilities within the County that support our environmental values.
4. The problems that will result if adequate waste management facilities are not developed.
5. The suggested measures for local waste management include the establishment of a compost facility, utilization of biochar, implementation of biogas systems, and similar initiatives.

Audiences/Stakeholders

This Communication and Engagement Plan is intended for the Audience/Stakeholders identified in the table below. The table also identifies the engagement purpose and contact strategies.

Category of Interest	Stakeholder Groups	Engagement Objective	Contact Strategies
General Public Business Owners	- County Residents - Chambers of Commerce	Inform to improve public awareness of landfill closure and new facility development	Traditional media, social media, presentations to community groups, website, press releases, and outreach meetings.
Commercial Waste Haulers	- GreenWaste Recovery - Keith Day Company - NERO Dropbox Haulers - Garbage Disposal Services	Involve and inform to avoid negative impacts to these users, inform about the need for operational changes, and collect input on facility changes.	Direct messaging via email, direct mailing at place of business, signboards and handouts at landfill, website, press releases, and outreach meetings.
Local Residents	- Property Owners within 1,000 feet (or 2,500) feet of the Buena Vista Landfill property	Inform and involve to avoid negative impacts to neighboring landowners.	Direct mailing to home address, traditional media, social media, presentations to community/homeowner groups, website, press releases, and outreach meetings.
Local Businesses	- Waste Works account holders - Regular business facility users	Inform and involve to avoid negative impacts to businesses.	Traditional media, social media, presentations to community groups, website, press releases, and outreach meetings.



Local Jurisdictions	- Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Capitola, Scotts Valley	Inform and involve to support a stable economy.	
Local Stakeholders	Watsonville Wetlands Watch Watsonville Pilots Association		Direct messaging via email, website, press releases, and targeted outreach meetings.
Resource Managers and Environmental groups	-State and Federal agencies (e.g., Fish & Wildlife Service) -Wetland managers -Local environmental groups -Local land trust(s) -California Native American Tribe(s) traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area	Collaborate to ensure that local environmental, archaeological, and historical resources are properly considered and effectively protected.	Direct messaging via email, website, press releases, and targeted outreach meetings.
Integrated Waste Managers	- Public works departments - Santa Cruz County Integrated Waste Management Task Force	Inform, involve and collaborate to improve regional waste management.	Facilitate social media, advertising and other outreach strategies.

Additionally, the Audience/Stakeholders will be notified of the environmental impact report (EIR) being prepared for the project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the opportunities for communication and engagement in the CEQA EIR process. These include: 1) distribution of the EIR Notice of Preparation (NOP) and opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EIR, including environmental issues to be addressed and project alternatives to be consider; 2) distribution of the Draft EIR and the opportunity to provide comments on the analysis therein; and 3) notification of the Final EIR and Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors meeting(s) to certify the EIR and make a decision on the project.

Key Messages

- 1) The County is responsible for waste management in the unincorporated area and provides additional vital waste services to residents throughout Santa Cruz County.
- 2) The County’s Buena Vista Landfill is nearing capacity.
- 3) The County must continue to provide waste management services after the landfill’s closure.
- 4) Zero Waste strategies have not reduced waste generation within the County; and although waste diversion has improved, the volume of waste requiring management continues to increase.
- 5) A variety of strategies are required to manage waste to limit impacts on air and water resources.



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6) To be successful, waste management efforts require the development of necessary infrastructure to process organics for transformation to compost, sort recyclable materials for reuse, and transfer trash to a new disposal site.

Venues for Engagement

Task Force Meetings:

Santa Cruz County has worked closely with its local jurisdictions through ongoing meetings of the Task Force. The County continues to collaborate with local jurisdictions to develop waste management programs that support County residents and businesses. Over its 30-year history, the Task Force has prepared plans that identify strategies to reduce waste, divert recyclable from the landfill, and process organic materials for reuse as compost and mulch.

A large part of the Task Force's work is to plan for the time when the County's landfills reach full capacity. The Task Force submits a plan review report to the State every five (5) years. State law requires the review report to identify jurisdictions that no longer have 15 years of remaining permitted landfill capacity.

Communication Strategies

Media Toolkit:

- Bilingual media toolkit for social media and newsletters that can be shared with the public, District Supervisors, Collaborative Partners (i.e. Green Waste and Environmental Innovations)
 - This will ensure all messaging is aligned with what we are putting out there.

Newsletter:

- CDI newsletter
 - Target audience: Public-facing subscribers, Board of Supervisors, Key DPW staff
- Board of Supervisors Newsletter
 - Target audience: Constituents of Santa Cruz County
- GreenWaste Newsletter
 - Target audience: Engaged community members take an active role in proactively participating in eco-friendly waste management practices, including recycling and composting.
- Environmental Innovations Newsletter
 - Target audience: Green Certified Businesses
- Chamber of Commerce Newsletter
 - Target audience: Members and potential stakeholders

Note: Newsletters will have a link to a public facing media kit so readers can share on their social media.

Op-ED:

- Draft an Op-Ed to attract interest and awareness for the project.



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Social Media:

- Bilingual County/CDI Facebook posts
- Bilingual County/CDI Nextdoor post
- Bilingual County/CDI Instagram posts
- Bilingual CDI Instagram

Flyers:

- Flyers displayed at events (i.e. Earth Day, other environmentally centric events)

Calendaring:

- Calendar workshops on news outlet calendars (GoodTimes, Lookout Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz Sentinel)

County's Project Website:

- 1) Background and basic information about the problem and the plan to redevelop the Buena Vista property
- 2) Summary of the services provided at the Buena Vista Landfill site
- 3) Identify gaps in information that we are presenting
- 4) Recording of webinar workshop

Stakeholder Meetings

- Plan at least 2 workshops per year for Stakeholders.

Community Events:

- Table with informational handouts at fun community events to engage people who may not come to a meeting.
- Participate at events like Earth Day, the County Fair, and Farmer's Markets to inform the public.
- Connecting the Drops.

Phased Approach Implementation Timeline

County should prepare a phased approach to outreach that can be implemented should community concerns exceed those anticipated by staff and County consultants.

Phase 1: Ongoing Efforts

- Buena Vista Landfill Redevelopment Project Website, [Buena Vista Landfill Project \(santa-cruz.ca.us\)](http://Buena Vista Landfill Project (santa-cruz.ca.us)) (regular updates and project documents)
- Media toolkit for social media and newsletters
- Distribute media toolkit to stakeholders



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- Key press releases and social media information (ongoing as needed)
- Project Op-Ed
- Mailings (ongoing as needed)
- Record workshops and have them available on project website
- Flyer design and print, have it ready for events

Phase 2: Engagement and Outreach

The purpose is to provide additional information about County's Buena Vista Landfill Redevelopment Project plans.

Tasks for Phase 2:

- 1) Review and update draft stakeholder engagement plan with assistance from County communications staff
- 2) Consider including more text about existing waste management programs and need for redevelopment at Buena Vista,
- 3) Consider adding a survey to determine how to better message project benefits,
- 4) Consider multiple phased approach to outreach.
- 5) Workshops (ongoing in relation to EIR and as needed)

Phase 3 CEQA EIR Process:

The purpose is to engage the public and stakeholders in the process as the County prepares the EIR for the project, as required by CEQA. Roll out draft then final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), gather/respond to feedback, send project to BOS for decision on the project.

Tasks for Phase 3:

- 1) Release EIR Notice of Preparation (NOP) for 30-day public review via project website, email distribution, mailings, and press releases to obtain input on the scope of the EIR and notify of public scoping meeting.
- 2) Hold public scoping meeting during 30-day NOP review period to present the project and purpose of CEQA EIR.
- 3) Release Draft EIR for 45-day public review via project website, email distribution, mailings, and press releases to obtain public and agency feedback on Draft EIR and notify of Draft EIR public meeting.
- 4) Hold public meetings on Draft EIR to summarize the findings and collect verbal comments.
- 5) Release Final EIR (with response to comments on the Draft EIR and any modifications to the EIR) via project website, email distribution, mailings, and press releases to notify the public of the Final EIR availability and Final EIR public hearing.
- 6) Hold County Board of Supervisors public hearing(s) to certify the Final EIR and decide on the project (maybe at the same meeting or separate meetings).
- 7) County project permits



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Evaluation and Assessment of Communication & Engagement Plan

By taking a phased approach to outreach, we allow ourselves opportunities to assess the outreach program and evaluate how the plan is performing against our goals and objectives by asking:

- What worked well
- What didn't work as planned
- Meeting recaps with next steps
- What are the gaps in citizen knowledge that we should focus our outreach towards?
- How to modify outreach materials to fill any identified gaps.

