

Executive Summary

Despite diligent efforts to implement all feasible strategies in the Solid Waste Management Plan, the percent of diversion over the last five years is essentially flat. The rate increased slightly for El Dorado Unincorporated, decreased for the City of Placerville and for South Lake Tahoe. More progress is needed over the next five years to meet the 75% diversion target.

Components of the Review

- A. Background on the SWMP
- B. Data on Diversion including State Measurement Changes
- C. Factors Impacting Diversion
- D. Most Impactful Strategies Implemented During the Five Year Term
- E. Recommendations for the Next Five Years

Attachments

- 1. Table Showing the Status of Each SWMP Strategy
- 2. Background Data on Diversion (to be inserted)

A. Background on the SWMP

A Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP) for El Dorado County was completed by a consulting firm in 2012. The purpose of the SWMP was to identify strategies and a blueprint for increasing the diversion rate for solid waste from an estimated 2012 baseline of 65% to the 75% diversion target by 2030. The SWMP recommended implementing 32 strategies. A percentage decrease in material going to the landfill were calculated for 16 of the strategies. These strategies were identified as either being short-term, intermediate, or long term. EDSWAC has reviewed the level of implementation for one-time and on-going strategies¹.

The El Dorado County Solid Waste Management Advisory Committee (EDSWAC) was charged with reporting on the implementation and impact of the SWMP every five years. This is the reporting for the years 2020 to 2025.

For the most part, the strategies have been implemented or efforts were made to implement them. A few strategies were not feasible. Attachment 1 provides a detailed implementation status for the 32 strategies.

B. Data on Diversion including State Measurement Changes

¹ See Attachment 1

El Dorado County has two Material Recovery Facilities (MRF): El Dorado Disposal (EDD) serving the west slope and South Tahoe Refuse (STR) serving the Tahoe Basin. The following two tables show the tons of solid waste coming into each MRF (MRF Tons Inbound), the tons diverted from being landfilled due to recycling, and the percentage of materials being diverted from the landfill (MRF % Recovery (Diversion Rate)). The target is a 75% Diversion Rate.

It should be noted that there were Covid-19 shutdowns during the 2020 to 2022 years. We know that there were impacts from the Covid-19 shutdowns, but we do not have data to quantify these impacts. During the five years shown, EDD had on-going construction for an upgraded MRF that was completed in 2025.

El Dorado Disposal (EDD) Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Data 2020 to 2024

Year	MRF Tons Inbound	Diverted Tons	MRF % Recovery (Diversion Rate)
2020	106,286.97	37,186.47	35.59%
2021	149,180.81	45,661.80	30.61%
2022	147,839.55	50,385.87	34.13%
2023	143,074.24	47,780.92	33.40%
2024	142,032.01	46,490.36	32.73%

The table above shows that the diversion rate is far below the 75% target.

In South Lake Tahoe, the state mandated implementing a three cart system for households to replace a one-cart system with employees who picked recycled materials out of the waste stream. This three cart system began in 2024.

South Tahoe Refuse (STR) Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) Data 2020 to 2024

Year	MRF Tons Inbound	Diverted Tons	MRF % Recovery (Diversion Rate)
2020	115,445.10	58,074.30	50.30%
2021	131,801.10	45,661.80	58.80%%
2022	146,869.00	50,385.87	62.10%
2023	166,874.00	47,780.92	64.00%
2024	131,293.70	46,490.36	60.60%

The table above shows a higher diversion rate than the west slope. The diversion rate increased from 2020 until 2023 and then decreased in 2024.

As identified previously, the target for the SWMP was a 75% diversion rate. Since the SWMP was written, the State has changed its measurement from a percent diversion rate to an average pounds per person per day (PPD) rate. To monitor the impact from implementing the SWMP, data is monitored for PPD and a calculated percent diversion rate. To achieve a calculated 75% diversion rate, a resident in the unincorporated area of EDC would produce no more than an average of 2.65 PPD of solid waste. CalRecycle calculated separate targets for the

City of Placerville and the City of South Lake Tahoe. These targets will be available in the summer of 2025.

The tables below show the most recent PPD for the west slope (ED Unincorporated and City of Placerville) and the Tahoe Basin. The PPD targets for The cities of Placerville and South Lake Tahoe will be available in the summer of 2025. A calculated % Diversion based on the PPD is shown.

DATA TO BE ADDED

El Dorado County Unincorporated

Year	PPD Disposed			
2020				
2021				
2022				
2023				
2024				*

*State PPD data is provided 18 months after the end of the calendar year and is therefore not yet available.

City of Placerville

Year	PPD Disposed			
2020				
2021				
2022				
2023				
2024				*

City of South Lake Tahoe

Year	PPD Disposed	PPD Target (75%)	Difference from Target	Calculated % Diversion
2020				60.62%
2021				58.33%
2022				55.54%
2023				50.71%
2024				*

ADD SUMMARY STATEMENT ABOUT FINDINGS

C. Factors Impacting Diversion

Over the last five years, there have been significant external events that have impacted the waste stream and diversion. These events include Covid-19 lockdowns (2020 to 2022) and significant fires (Caldor in 2021, Mosquito in 2022, and Crozier in 2024).

California has aggressively passed and implemented solid waste laws and regulations which are aligned with strategies in the SWMP. These laws include Mandatory Commercial Recycling (AB 341), Mandatory Organics Recycling (AB 1826) and Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SB 1383). The impact of this legislation in EDC is described in Section D.

The SWMP stated that the baseline diversion rate for El Dorado County was 65% (2010). This rate was calculated prior to a time of significant transition. When the baseline was provided, residents were told that if they were unsure about whether a material could be recycled then they should put the item in their recycling bin. At this time, about one-third of “recycled” materials from the U.S. were being transported for processing to third world countries. By 2018, these third world countries started refusing to take U.S. recycling materials because the contamination rate from non-recyclable materials was too high. Without the option of shipping to international markets, most recyclable materials were then sorted and processed in the U.S. The U.S. facility which receives recycled material from the West Slope of El Dorado County reported a 27% contamination rate for the “recycled” materials it received.

Using baseline data in the SWMP (Table 3-4, page 28, Volume II), we can identify that 32.9% of the waste stream when the 65% baseline was determined was mixed recycling (paper, glass, metal and plastic). Given that the facility receiving our recyclable materials at this time reported a 27% contamination rate. Thus, 27% of the material that was reported to be recycling was actually garbage. We can do an approximate calculation to reset the baseline by subtracting out the material that was reported to be diverted at the time, but actually went to the landfill. The new and more accurate base line is a 56.12%² diversion rate.

Following is the list of SWMP strategies not implemented and the reason for not implementing them³.

- Strategy 1.1 was to “Create a West Slope JPA”. The thinking was that this would support other diversion efforts. The agencies who would have been members of the JPA declined to join so the JPA was not created. This strategy was not expected to increase diversion. (CONFIRM TEXT BASED ON REPORTING AT MAY EDSWAC MEETING).

² 32.9% mixed waste recycling minus a 27% contamination rate is a reduction of 8.88% to the diversion rate; the 65% baseline diversion rate minus 8.88% of materials that were not diverted = a 56.12% diversion rate

³ The status of all strategies is listed in Attachment 1.

- Strategy 1.4 “Expand Mandatory Residential Collection Ordinance” was projected to have a 3.1% diversion. EDSWAC believes that the decision to consider or implement this strategy should be made by the Board of Supervisors.
- Strategy 2.14 was to “Prepare for Possible Elimination of Residential Yard Waste Burning on the West Slope”. This strategy was not expected to increase the percentage of diversion. Given the increased fire risk in the county and requirements to clear property for fire insurance, EDSWAC questions that this strategy is reasonable for larger properties and properties with slopes that would make it difficult transport yard waste. If the Board of Supervisors would like to proceed with implementing this strategy, EDSWAC suggests that clear guidelines would be needed to define the residential properties to be included/excluded.
- Strategy 2.2 was to “Use Greater Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) Pricing Programs”. This was expected to have a one-time cost of \$25,000 to \$40,000 for a study and was projected to increase diversion by .2%. EDSWAC recommends that this is a state level strategy; not a county level strategy.
- Strategy 3.2 was to “Develop A West Slope EcoPark”. The SWMP identified this strategy as having the greatest impact with a projected 7% diversion rate and the greatest cost at \$24 to \$39 million. Funds were not designated for the EcoPark. Consequently, this strategy was not implemented due to the significant cost that would be borne by rate payers.
- Strategy 3.3 “Re-Open Union Mine Landfill” was included in the SWMP but this strategy was not projected to increase the percentage of diversion and is not feasible from an environmental or financial standpoint.
- Strategy 3.5 was to “Develop Small Volume Rural Transfer Station Facilities and Strategically Placed Debris Boxes on the West Slope”. There was significant effort by Environmental Management Department (EMD) staff to identify potential properties and to meet with local residents to seek buy-in. There was significant resistance by local residents for all of the feasible location. This strategy was deemed to not be feasible. This strategy was not expected to increase the percentage of diversion.

D. Most Impactful Strategies Implemented During the Five Year Term

There were two strategies which were implemented that have the potential to further increase diversion. The first strategy was completion of the modernized Transfer Station/ Material Recovery Facility by El Dorado Disposal (EDD). The second strategy is the development, initiation and implementation of the SB 1383 Organic Waste Management Programs.

Summary of EDD Modernized Transfer Station/ Material Recovery Facility Impacts
Insert Text from Chris Brown or Tim Engle

Summary of Organics Program (SB 1383) Impacts
Insert text from Catherine Howells

E. Recommendations for the Next Five Years

EDSWAC does not recommend that the county contracts with a consulting firm for another SWMP when the current SWMP sunsets in 2030. We do recommend that EDSWAC continues to make five-year review reports to the BOS.

For the next five years, we recommend that EDSWAC works with EMD to develop a clear and focused system of data monitoring on key strategies to meet a defined diversion target. Having our own system is important because there is an 18-month lag time in state data reporting. This data should include the pounds landfilled. (TEXT IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

To increase diversion EDSWAC recommends the following focus for the next five years.
(Text is to be developed in this section.)

- Focus on organics recycling as mandated
- On the West Slope and East Slope there is less on-site sorting at material recovery facilities to take recyclable materials out of the trash carts. To increase diversion, we need material that can be recycled to enter a recycling stream. Increasingly, we are dependent upon residents and businesses to make informed recycling decisions about what goes into the recycling bin or to the MRF. To address this, we recommend the following: (Insert Data from 2009 which shows that the diversion rate was higher when there was more sorting of materials at the MRFs.)
 - .
 - A) Implement a local data tracking system to get more real-time data on diversion rates.
 - B) Do waste stream characterization studies to understand the materials that are headed to the landfill that could be diverted for recycling.
 - C) Increase public education about materials that can be diverted and make it easy to divert these materials.
 - D) Consider systems using technology or personnel to increase diversion of materials that would otherwise have been landfilled.
- BOS is advised to consider whether to implement Strategy 1.4 “Expand Mandatory Residential Collection Ordinance” and Strategy 2.14 “Prepare for Possible Elimination of Residential Yard Waste Burning on the West Slope”.

Attachments

1. Table Showing the Status of Each SWMP Strategy
2. Supporting Data on Diversion

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