

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

PAY-AS-YOU-THROW SUCCESS STORIES

Falmouth, Maine

Population: 8,500

Type of Community: Suburban

Type of Program: Bags

Program Start Date: September 1992

By recycling and reducing waste, citizens not only save money, but also reduce costs for our community.

Getting Started: Why Pay-As-You-Throw?

In 1991, the Town Council directed the Falmouth Recycling Committee to explore options available for solid waste collection. After reviewing several systems, including traditional municipal collection, franchise contractor, and volume-based systems, the committee developed a report recommending a modified pay-per-bag system. In this system, the collection cost is paid through the tax system and the disposal cost is reflected in the cost of the special bag used in the town.

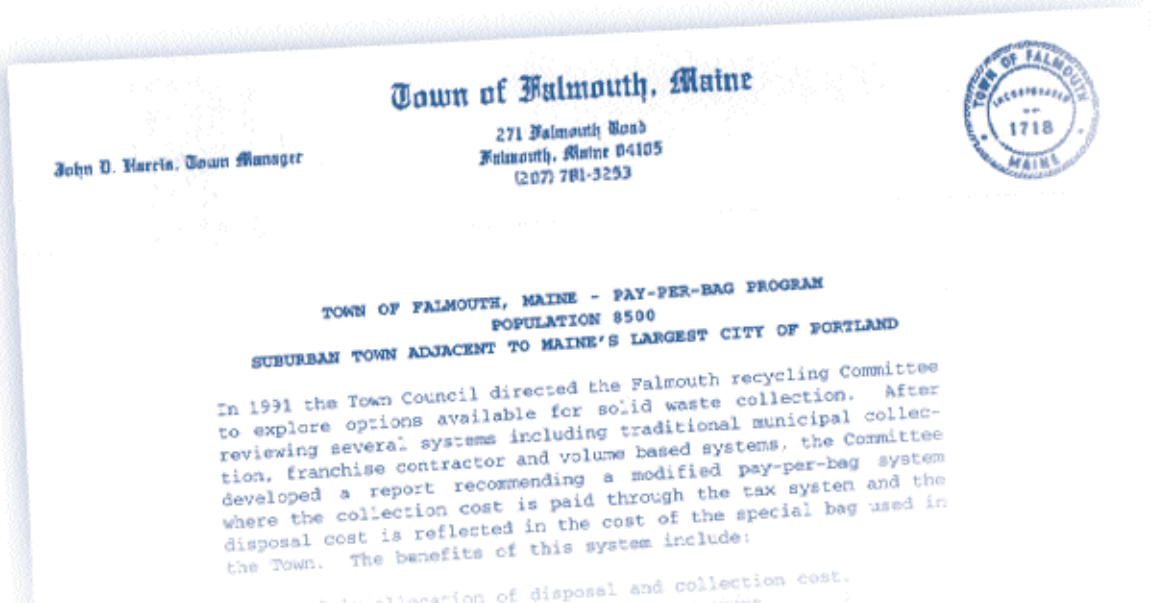
The benefits of this system include a fair allocation of disposal and collection costs, tax-deductible collection cost components, lower collection costs than a traditional non-fee system, incentives for recycling and waste

reduction, a favorable cash flow structure (bag revenues are received before disposal expense is incurred), and elimination of trash "mixing" by unscrupulous haulers. A unanimous vote of the council in the spring of 1992 directed the town to implement the program in September 1992.

How Does It Work?

The town buys about 175,000 large bags (33-gallon) and 75,000 small bags (20-gallon) each year. About a dozen local stores, including Shaw's Supermarkets, retail the bags. Bags cost the town 12 and 9 cents respectively and the store is allowed a

The success and acceptance of pay-as-you-throw in our community has been remarkable. Our recycling rate immediately jumped by more than 50 percent and trash disposal volumes decreased by about 35 percent.



2-cent per bag markup. The retail prices of the bags are 91 and 64 cents, respectively. In addition, a 91-cent sticker is available for bulky items under 35 pounds, and a \$4.80 tag is used for large items such as mattresses and sofas. Stores are invoiced for the bags at the time of delivery and have 30 days to pay. This system works well for the citizens, because they buy bags and simply use them the way they had before this program was implemented.

By recycling and reducing waste, citizens not only save money, but also reduce costs for our community. The burden on the town is minimal because its only responsibilities are bag delivery, billing, and recordkeeping. Also, cash flow is positive for the town because the bags are paid for before use. There is no concern with unpaid and uncollectible charges that can occur with post-use billing.

Success: Saving Money and Reducing Waste

The success and acceptance of the program in the community has been remarkable. Our recycling rate (always among the highest in the region) immediately jumped by more than 50 percent, and trash disposal volumes decreased by about 35 percent. Combined, these two statistics resulted in a jump of our recycling rates from 12 percent before the program to 21 percent currently. The average rate for local towns is 7 percent.

These statistics have meant a great deal to the economics of our waste program: The bid price for collection the first year was \$116,000, compared to a bid of \$146,000 for a traditional collection contract. Our current contract is for \$125,500 despite over 10 percent growth in the community. At \$55 per

ton, a reduction of 900 tons of waste disposal per year meant a savings of about \$50,000. The current \$98 per ton tip fee calculates to \$88,000 per year savings. In addition, during the old franchise system, residents paid the collection cost directly to the hauler. Now residents pay for collection through their taxes, bringing the community over \$30,000 per year.

Tips for Other Communities

Some towns have bought large quantities of bags and have been dissatisfied with size or quality. It may be prudent to buy a smaller quantity to start with so that changes can be made if desired. When you "force" citizens to buy your bag, it has to be of acceptable quality.

Educate prior to implementation! The town conducted a citizen survey, developed a brochure, published a newsletter, and passed out two free bags to each household prior to implementing the program. We also conducted a logo contest in the schools that generated a great deal of interest and media attention. The local Lions Club donated money for the prizes.

Contact other communities and learn! During our review, we read many articles published about other towns' programs. This is useful, but following up with phone calls can be even more helpful. We got copies of several towns' brochures that alerted us to some details that otherwise may have been overlooked.

Involve the collection team! The contractor or municipal crew can help or hurt the program, so they need to be on board. We developed a small tag for collection workers to leave at the curb if there was a reason to not pick up trash (i.e., not in proper bag or too heavy).

Falmouth's success story was compiled by Tony Hayes, (207) 781-3919.