

# Larimer County Solid Waste Department

## *Annual Report 2005*

building partnerships



customer driven



good stewards of our resources



empowering people



fulfilling place to work



## From the Director's Chair

Challenges and opportunities marked 2005 as an exciting year for the Solid Waste Department. The year was the last one for the Solid Waste Department to oversee the county's forestry program. As of January 1, 2006, the program was relocated to the Parks and Open Lands Department, where this valuable resource can be better used by citizens. Other changes made in 2005 include the switch from landfill fees based on vehicle type to fees based on volume of trash, based on input from our customers, and the start of electronics recycling (for a fee) at the Larimer County Recycling Center. The Garbage Garage Education Center set regular hours, in addition to being available by appointment. And the new recycling contract between Larimer County and Waste Management Recycle America, the operator of the county's recycling center, has led to the diversion of more materials from the waste stream as was hoped.

A continuing challenge for the department is the Red Feather Lakes transfer station, which closed in 2004 due to an unrenewed land lease. We were not able to reestablished the transfer sta-

tion in that area but are hopeful that this will happen in 2006. Also in 2004 and 2005, we had researched the feasibility of moving the department's administrative offices to the landfill site, but because of another opportunity that arose, this did not occur.

In December, the county commissioners approved the acquisition of property for a potential future solid waste management site. A section of land was purchased north of Wellington. This gives the Solid Waste Department and Larimer County time to see what new technologies and processes may be available to keep up with the solid waste needs of our citizens.

Our department's mission has not changed, and we strive to use the county's vision statement as we pursue the goal of providing great services for our customers. We are always searching for better methods and changing technologies to serve the residents of Larimer County.

Stephen Gillette  
Director



### The Larimer County Vision Statement

Larimer County will add value to the lives of its citizens by:

- Building partnerships
- Being customer driven
- Empowering people to take responsibility
- Being a fulfilling and enjoyable place to work
- Being a good steward of public resources

### Solid Waste Department Mission Statement

*The mission of the Larimer County Solid Waste Department is to supply integrated waste management and forestry management in an environmentally sound manner to the citizens of Larimer County. Our primary emphasis is on quality customer service superior to that normally found in the public sector.*

*We are committed to providing excellence in the services we deliver to the citizens of Larimer County. We will provide these services in a professional, simple and cost-effective manner, always maintaining a high standard of ethics and foresight and never compromising long-range needs for short-term benefits.*

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*Cover photos, top to bottom: Dick Rush, education center volunteer, talks to a tour group about the landfill. The department has built partnerships with the community by offering tours of its facilities and sustaining a network of dedicated volunteers. Juan Felix, hazardous waste technician, helps a customer at the Drop 'n' Swap, where leftover household chemicals are accepted from and offered to county residents for free. Steve Harem (center) works with contractors to drill and investigate soil samples around the landfill. Signs show visitors the way to the recycling and hazardous waste drop-offs. Having these facilities available helps residents make good choices about managing their trash. Doug Hoff, landfill equipment operator, looks out from a road grader. To add variety to their jobs, landfill workers switch the equipment they operate every month.*

# Recycling

*"Single-stream recycling is a process in which all recyclable materials are mixed together, so residents don't have to worry about sorting them."*

*Recycling one ton of newspapers saves about 17 trees.*

*Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours.*

*From October 2004 to September 2005, Larimer County offices recycled 75.4 tons of paper, saving 1,282 trees, 342,306 kilowatt-hours of electricity and 527,940 gallons of water.*

The new contract for the operation of the Larimer County Recycling Center began January 1, 2005. The contract called for a transition period to allow the contractor time to modify existing operations so that materials could be more readily transported to the single-stream processing center located in Denver.

Single-stream recycling is a process in which all recyclable materials are mixed together, so residents don't have to worry about sorting them. Materials are collected at the Larimer County Recycling Center and then shipped to a Waste Management Recycle America facility in Denver. There a large, state-of-the-art sorting machine sorts the materials, with some help from workers.

Modifications to the county's recycling center included the removal of the Bezner sorting system and the installation of a compactor to allow materials to be loaded onto tractor trailers for transfer to the single-stream facility. The changes were completed by the end of September, and the switch to single-stream recycling and the transfer operation became official October 1.

The changes made in the recycling system have enabled the

Larimer County Recycling Center to accept materials that are either source-separated (already sorted before arriving at the facility), dual-stream (already sorted into two streams: paper products and cans and bottles), or single-stream. This provides recyclers the opportunity to choose what method is



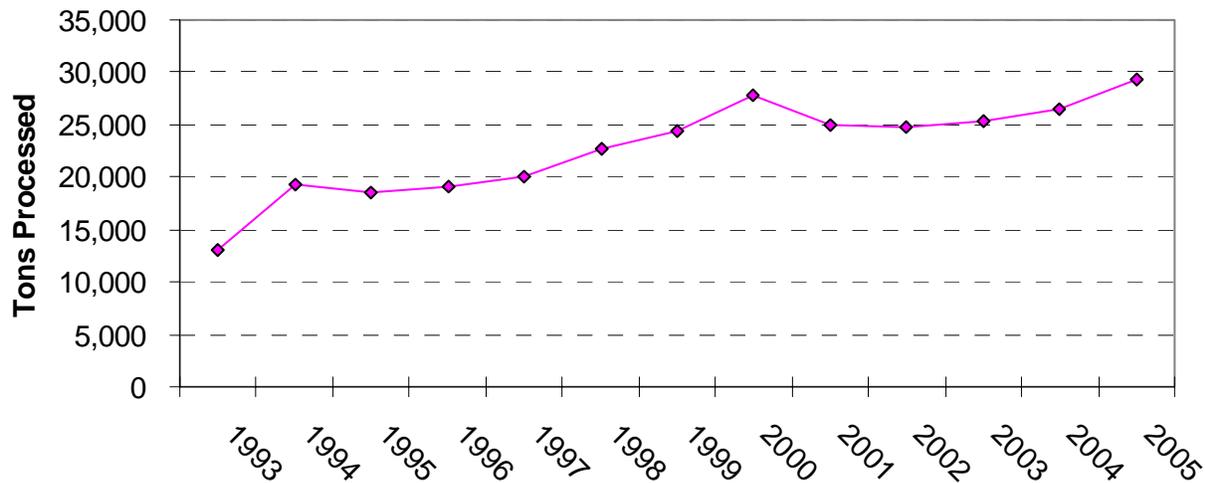
*The removal of the Bezner sorting machine has provided more indoor storage space for paper recyclables.*

best for them (curbside recycling customers must follow whatever guidelines their trash haulers choose). Across the country, when communities have switched from dual- to single-stream collection, recycling tonnages increased from 8 percent to 25 percent. In Larimer County, haulers of recyclables did not start collecting single-stream material until early 2006, so the Solid Waste Department has not yet determined the effect. In 2005, however, the number of tons processed at the county's recycling center increased 11.9 percent.

*Since October, recyclables from the Larimer County Recycling Center are sent to a materials recovery facility in Denver, operated by Waste Management Recycle America. Here, a new state-of-the-art sorting system separates the various types of paper and containers.*



**ANNUAL RECYCLING TONNAGE \***



In 2005, we recycled 29,267 tons of material, the largest amount since the Larimer County Recycling Center opened in late 1992.

*\*Includes only recyclable material from sources within Larimer County, as reported by Recycle America, recycling center operator.*

## Recycling in County Buildings

Increased success and efficiency of recycling in county buildings is a goal of the county commissioners. In pursuit of this goal, Solid Waste staff headed up a committee that included key county employees and the president of Waste-Not Recycling, the company that hauls our recyclables, to research the current state of internal recycling and determine what's needed to make it better.

The committee began by surveying county employees about recycling in their department. From there, volunteer recycling coordinators were solicited from each area and recycling assess-

ments of departments were begun in December. County offices are converting to single-stream recycling with the expectation that this will increase the volumes of materials collected and make it easier for staff to recycle. More bins and clear guidelines are the two most often requested items, and the Facilities and Solid Waste Departments have been collaborating to provide these necessities. Recycling information has been added to new employee orientations and to the county's internal Web site. Future goals include continuing education, recycling competitions among departments and more.

*The Solid Waste Department also operates rural area recycling drop-offs in Berthoud, Wellington, Estes Park, Glacier View Meadows and Rocky Mountain National Park.*

*For more information about recycling, call (970) 498-5772.*

# Hazardous Waste

*Since its inception in 1989, the household hazardous waste program has diverted 17.5 million pounds of waste from the landfill.*

*The program, which began in a small corner of the landfill's maintenance shop, had 25 customers in its first year of operation. Today, the Hazardous Waste Program has its own building and helped nearly 17,000 customers in 2005.*

**T**he Household Hazardous Waste program had a record year for one-day collection events. In an average year, we hold events in two outlying areas of the county, but because of special requests, we were able to accommodate two extra communities in 2005. We began with a double header in June, serving Estes Park and Pinewood Springs on the same day.

The Estes Park event was a bit of a challenge this year, due to a low volunteer turnout. Fortunately, the volunteers present worked hard to create a successful event. More than 200 households participated, and we collected an estimated 11,546 pounds of waste. The bulk of the waste consisted of paints, stains and solvents, but also collected were two 55-gallon drums of pesticides, a few batteries and various other items.

Pinewood Springs had an excellent showing for a small community on its first one-day collection. The 75 participants brought with them just over 7,000 pounds of waste. The local fire department

did an excellent job supporting the event and assisting.

We finished off with one-day events in Red Feather Lakes in June and Berthoud in August.

Due to challenges encountered with the one-day events, we developed guidelines for future events. Beginning in 2006, we will require that all rural communities in Larimer County interested in having a hazardous waste collection day meet the requirements presented below.

## What's new in BHAPE?

The Business Hazardous Waste Assistance Program and Education (BHAPE) is now offering charge accounts to private companies. This has been very well received by several of our on-going customers. The number of BHAPE businesses participating in the program decreased slightly in 2005. The amount of waste brought in by businesses, however, has increased by about 5,000 pounds. This year we had 201 visits from businesses, including 78 new customers.

## One-Day Event Requirements

The following guidelines have been set for communities within Larimer County participating in one-day household hazardous waste collection events. The guidelines are necessary to ensure a safe, successful event.

Throughout the year the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) program will collect household hazardous waste free of charge from residents of two rural areas of the county. The community must be considered a rural area and provide an approved location to hold the event. The location must have a level area with facilities available for workers. If no permanent facilities are available, the hosting community must provide temporary facilities. The

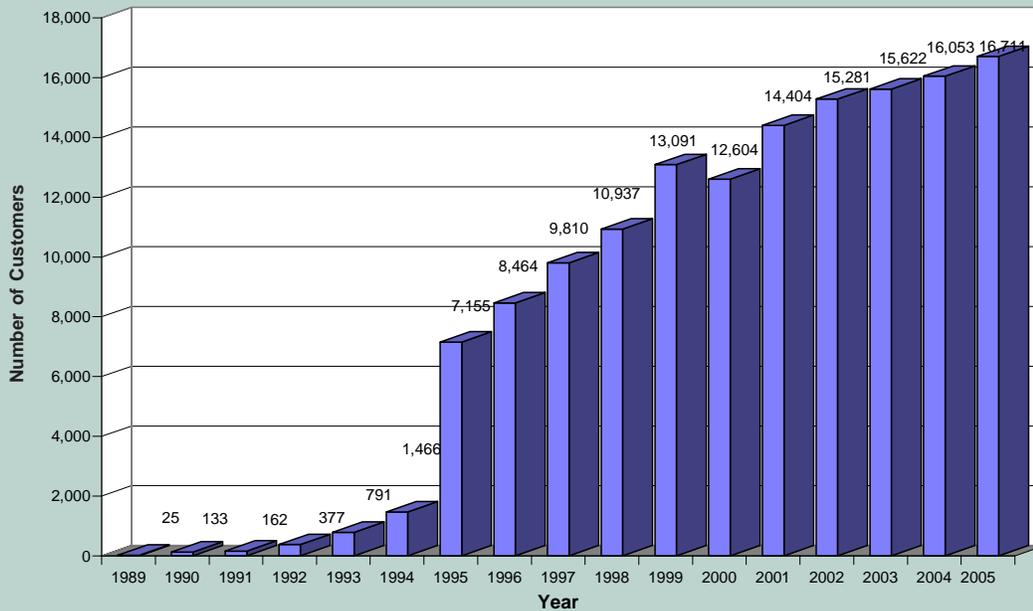
location must have easy access for participants and trucks from the disposal company. The HHW manager and a representative from the designated disposal company must give final approval of the location.

The participating community must provide at least six volunteers to assist with event functions. Duties may include directing traffic, obtaining signatures on certification sheets and unloading waste from vehicles.

The community must contact the HHW manager at least two months prior to the event day. This will help ensure that all arrangements and advertising can be in place to maximize the quality of the event.

# Hazardous Waste

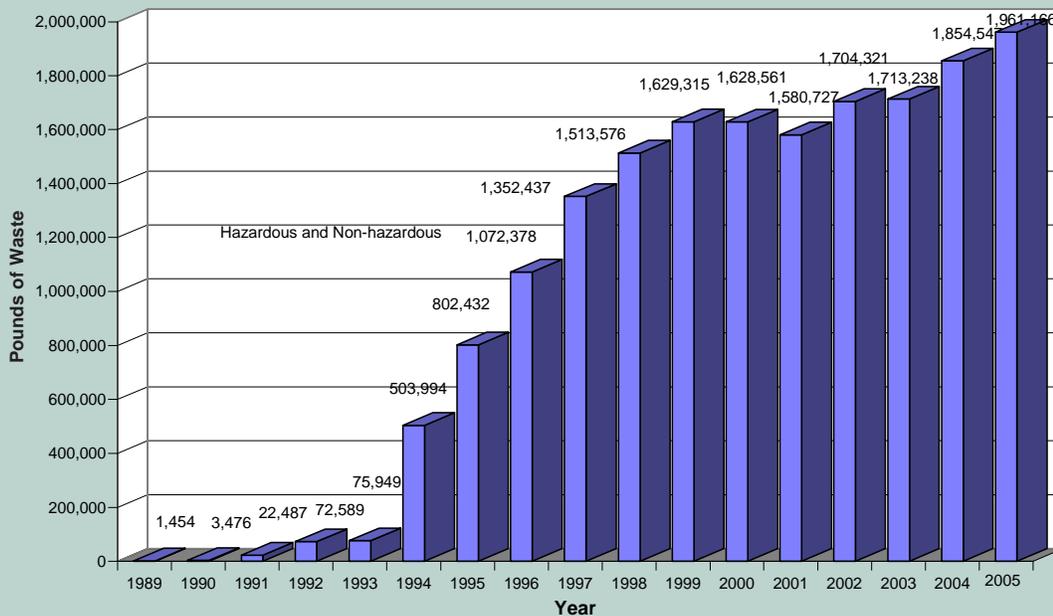
## Residential Customer Base



*The residential program showed a steady increase in participating residents, rising from 16,053 in 2004 to 16,711 in 2005.*

## Combined Waste Totals

Includes waste from households and businesses



*The total amount of regulated and restricted waste diverted from the landfill is also increasing. The amount diverted in 2005 was 1.9 million pounds, compared with 1.8 million pounds in 2004.*

*For more information about the hazardous waste program, call (970) 498-5773.*

# Landfill



*Volumes of trash buried at the Larimer County Landfill have been decreasing for the most part over the last several years. In 2005, we received an estimated 849,887 cubic yards of trash, compared with 1,044,467 cubic yards in 2000. This trend is likely due to not only recycling, but also trash haulers using other landfills.*

*It can take anywhere from 200 to 500 years for an aluminum can to decompose. Plastic bottles will decompose in about 50 to 80 years, and a banana will take 2 to 5 weeks. Buried in a landfill, however, these items could take 10 times longer to disappear.*

*For more information about the landfill, call (970) 498-5770.*

**I**n 2005, the Larimer County Landfill began charging fees based on volume of trash instead of vehicle type as had been done previously. The change has been successful and made transactions much simpler for the gate attendants.

Lead contaminants from the old shooting range area, which closed in 2000, were removed. Upon approval from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, this area will be landfilled.

In May, we hired a contractor to grind about 3,500 cubic yards of tree branches and 2,900 cubic yards of Christmas trees into

mulch. The material had been collected over the past 12 months and after grinding is offered free to the public. We also collected about 4,800 tons of concrete rip-rap, which will be ground and used on landfill roads.

Other work completed at the landfill in 2005 included the removal of a hill near the maintenance shop, from which the topsoil was stockpiled and the remaining dirt used as daily cover. Ten acres were reseeded with temporary vegetation, including the return of the top layer of topsoil on the eastern slope behind the shop.

## Property Purchased

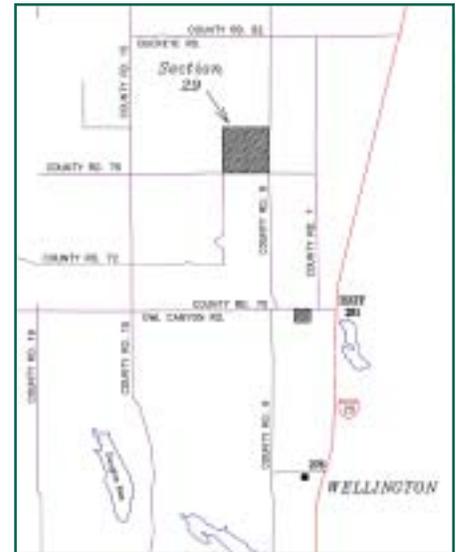
In 1998, the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) appointed a task force to explore opportunities for future waste management operations. The group suggested four options for further research: (1) a vertical expansion of the landfill, (2) the purchase of land for a future disposal site, (3) the privatization of solid waste management functions in Larimer County, and (4) the feasibility of having the Open Lands Board consider property it acquires for possible solid waste management use.

Upon review of these recommendations, a confidential study of potential landfill sites was commissioned. The study identified six sites, but by 2002 none remained available. That year, however, another possible site was found. A landfill siting study of the area was completed, but the negotiations for its purchase fell through. The land was located north of Wellington on County Road 9.

Three years later, one of the Wellington property owners contacted us, interested in renegotiating the deal. By this time, a vertical expansion of the landfill had already been approved, staff had been searching for other properties to purchase, and consideration had been given to privatizing solid waste functions.

But here was an opportunity to acquire property that would give Larimer County another option.

On December 12, the BOCC approved the \$1.3 million purchase of the property, with a



February 2006 closing. The money for the purchase comes from the Solid Waste fund, department revenues set aside over the years for just such a use. No tax dollars are being used.

The land might not be used for about 20 years, and even then new technologies might mean that it won't be used for a landfill. But it's important to have this property for future use if necessary.

# Waste Transfer Stations

This year, the Solid Waste Department managed two rural transfer stations, one each in Wellington and Berthoud. A third transfer station in Estes Park is owned by the department but operated by Waste Management, Inc.

The Red Feather Lakes Transfer Station did not reopen in 2005 as anticipated. The site had been closed in 2004 due to an unrenewed land lease. Since then, the department negotiated an agreement with the Colorado Division of Wildlife to lease land near Parvin Lake for a new transfer station in

late 2005. We're awaiting approval from the U.S. Forest Service to lease adjacent land for an access road to the new site. The partnership among the county, state and federal governments will allow us to accomplish the goal of opening this new transfer station in 2006.

The Estes Park Transfer Station has been in operation since 1983. Estes Park residents and visitors can take their household trash as well as recyclables to the transfer station. The site also provides a drop-off for household hazardous wastes.



*The Wellington Transfer Station is staffed by Lois Schwindt (not pictured).*

*Bob Adams, Berthoud Transfer Station attendant, operates the controls of one of the compacting roll-off containers.*



*Customers take advantage of the recycling bins offered at the Estes Park Transfer Station.*

*The transfer stations, funded by user fees, are not self-supporting (except Estes Park's) and are subsidized by landfill user fees when necessary. In 2005, the landfill subsidized the transfer stations \$5,266.*

*The Wellington transfer station served 1,265 customers this year, while the Berthoud transfer station served 1,155.*

*In 2005, the Estes Park Transfer Station collected and transferred to the Larimer County Landfill more than 56,000 cubic yards of waste, equal to 630 tractor-trailer loads.*

*For more information about the waste transfer stations, call (970) 498-5770.*

# Environmental Compliance

*Landfill gas is a mixture of carbon dioxide and methane, with trace amounts of various volatile organic compounds.*

*Thirteen gas collectors are located in the waste disposal area to safely vent landfill gas. Also, ten gas monitoring probes at the perimeter of the landfill allow us to watch for gas migration.*

*Fifty-two groundwater monitoring points are located throughout the landfill property as well as on neighboring properties. Water chemistry is tested four times a year and the water table is checked monthly.*

The Solid Waste Department's environmental specialist, Steve Harem, strives to keep the landfill in compliance with state and federal regulations and to minimize the landfill's effect on human health and the local environment. In addition to the routine activities of inspecting, training, monitoring, reporting and recordkeeping, compliance in 2005 also included response to a landfill gas situation and the cleanup of an old shooting range facility to prevent a future problem with lead contamination.

Underground concentrations of methane—a flammable gas produced by decomposing waste—are measured regularly around the landfill perimeter to protect the health and property of neighbors. In February, measurements indicated that methane was migrating beyond the property boundary at one point along the landfill's north property line. Steps were immediately taken to stop the migration and increase monitoring to ensure that neighbors were not affected. A

new horizontal gas collector was constructed in the Phase 2 area (see map at right) and several vent stacks were installed in the Phase 3 area to increase venting within the landfill. An additional gas monitoring probe was installed on the north property line and gas concentrations were measured frequently through spring and summer to monitor the effectiveness of venting. After the new gas collector pipe was installed, methane levels dropped quickly and have since remained well below the regulatory limit, showing that gas migration has been effectively controlled.

Air emissions at the landfill—including fugitive dust, volatile organic compounds, and ozone-depleting substances—are monitored and controlled to mitigate environmental impacts. Fugitive dust was controlled in 2005 by watering unpaved roads and closing the landfill during high winds. More than 1.5 million gallons of water were used during the warm, dry months to suppress dust on the landfill's haul

## Shooting Range Cleanup

The old shooting range facility, located on the west side of the landfill, was cleaned up to make way for the vertical expansion of the landfill. The cleanup involved screening out the bulk of the bullets and shipping them off site, and chemically treating the remaining soils to keep lead from leaching into groundwater. Soil from the target back-



stop areas, where the bullets were concentrated, was screened in hopes of recovering the lead for recycling. Although the process

did recover much of the lead, the screenings were too contaminated with dirt to be economically recycled, so the material was chemically treated and shipped to a lined landfill for disposal. The

entire shooting range area was treated with two chemical reagents to keep remaining lead bound to the soil. In

December, the soil excavation, screening and treatment were completed, followed by soil testing to ensure that no leachable lead remains.

# Environmental Compliance

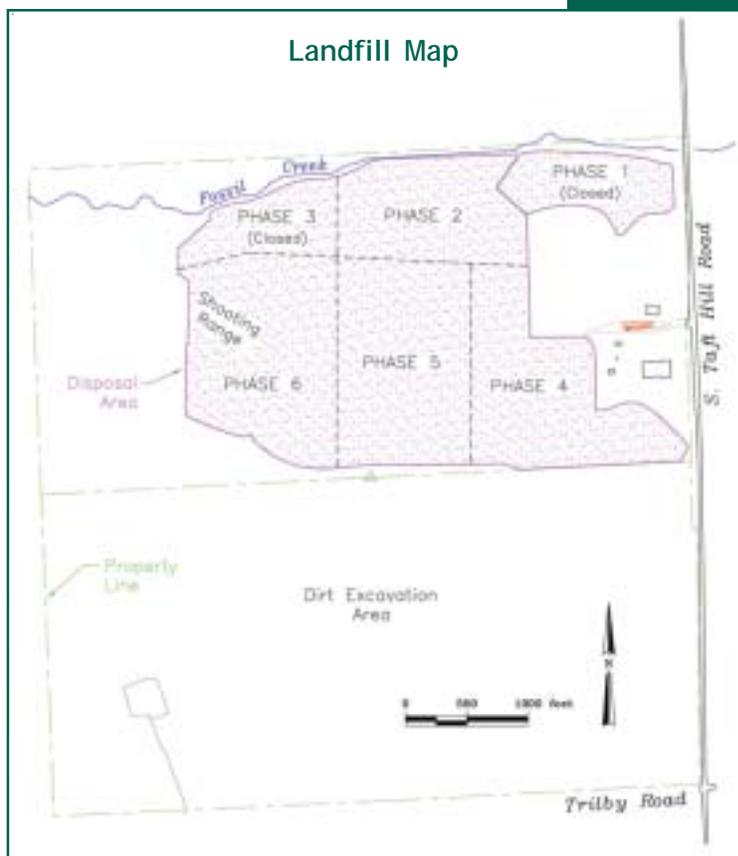
roads. To prevent chlorofluorocarbons and hydrochlorofluorocarbons from being released into the air, refrigerant was recovered from 1,625 air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers disposed of at the landfill in 2005 (the appliances are then picked up by a contractor for recycling). An official with the state's Air Pollution Control Division conducted an on-site inspection in September and found the landfill to be in compliance with air quality regulations.

The Solid Waste Department continues to monitor groundwater conditions around the landfill. Water table measurements were taken monthly and groundwater samples were collected quarterly. Total annual precipitation was slightly above average in 2005, but only a little aquifer recharge was observed. Groundwater movement remained slow, and the direction of flow did not change. In the south part of the landfill where groundwater moves southeast past the recycling center, monitoring results continue to show no off-site impact from landfill leachate. In the north-east area where some groundwater contamination exists, there was no significant change in water chemistry over the year.

Spill prevention measures and stormwater runoff controls are used to prevent surface water pollution. Since fuel, lubricants and other petroleum products are stored and used on site, landfill personnel follow a Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) plan to keep these substances out of the water. In 2005, personnel received annual training, and aboveground storage tanks and other facilities were regularly inspected and maintained, resulting in another year without a spill incident. The landfill's stormwater management plan was implemented to minimize the volume of silt carried off-site by rain and snowmelt. Revegetation was used to reduce erosion, and maintenance was con-

ducted on existing runoff control structures to improve performance. Equipment operators rented an excavator in July to clean out ditches and remove tons of accumulated sediment from two stormwater detention ponds. Stormwater discharge samples, collected annually to monitor water quality, showed some improvement since last year.

The two areas of the landfill that have been permanently closed, Phase 1 and Phase 3, are monitored



and maintained to prevent future impacts to the environment. This year, each area was inspected quarterly to ensure that the clay cap and vegetative cover were in good condition. Landfill gas and groundwater were also monitored around the closed areas.

*For more information about environmental compliance, call (970) 498-5761.*

# Education

*A big thank you goes to our wonderful volunteers: Wanda Mayberry, Wally Jacobson, Dick Rush and Carol Sarchet. Together, they put in more than 100 hours of tour guide work in 2005. Our education program would not be as effective without them!*

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*"[The Garbage Garage is] very, very impressive and interesting. Plus a fun way to learn! We came with Cub Scouts, but this is also a good reminder for us adults! Thank you very much!"*

*—Cub Scout Pack 194-Den 3, Fort Collins*

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*"There is almost always information I can use when this newsletter is published. It has directly affected our reduction in trash going to the landfill."*

*—Lisa, Fort Collins Recyclone Times reader*

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*For more information about the education program, call (970) 498-5772.*

The Garbage Garage Education Center continues to be the centerpiece of the Solid Waste Department's education program. In 2005, we had about 2,400 visitors during 93 tours. As has been typical since the education center opened in 2003, the busiest months were March, April and May. In April, we held the annual Garbage Garage open house in celebration of Earth Day. About 200 visitors over a 4-hour period enjoyed refreshments, recycling games, giveaways and more. The winner of the yearly Reusable Art Contest was also chosen at the open house.

New this year was the addition of scheduled summer activities for young children. This was made possible by the hiring of a part-time education center attendant, Alysia Perry. Alysia developed fun learning activities such as Art From Trash, Edible Landfills and Recycling X-Games. After much media coverage of the first week's classes (including a story on a Denver news broadcast), the remaining classes filled quickly and were a great success. Rhonda Lauden replaced Alysia in August as the education center attendant and has added her creativity to the center with various temporary displays. We also have a group of four wonderful volunteers that are a tremendous asset to the department and a large part of the education center's success.

Also in 2005, the Garbage Garage became more accessible as Connell Resources was contracted to pave the parking area. Keeping with the theme of recycling, recycled asphalt was used.

Tours of the education center often included a visit to the recycling center, landfill and household hazardous waste facility. After changes were made to the recycling center in October, however, fewer tours were given of that facility. Changes included the removal of the Bezner sorting machine, which had been a favorite of visitors to watch. While tours of the recycling center are still offered, fewer groups choose to go there because less activity is taking place.

The Solid Waste Department provides other educational opportunities, as well, such as in-class presentations, booths at local fairs, up-to-date information on our Web site, press releases and advertising of special events and general recycling information, and the production of two newsletters, *The Recyclone Times* and *The Landfill Update*.

*The Recyclone Times* is a joint production of Larimer County and the Cities of Fort Collins and Loveland. This year the partners took a close look at the feasibility of continuing its production. Was it the best way to spend our money to get information to the public? To help us determine which direction to go with the newsletter, we published a readers' survey. Prizes were offered to encourage participation from people whether or not they liked *The Recyclone Times*. We received 50 responses with only one respondent suggesting that we discontinue the publication. Comments were overwhelmingly positive and appreciative. Although the format and distribution of the newsletter may change in 2006, we have decided to continue its production.

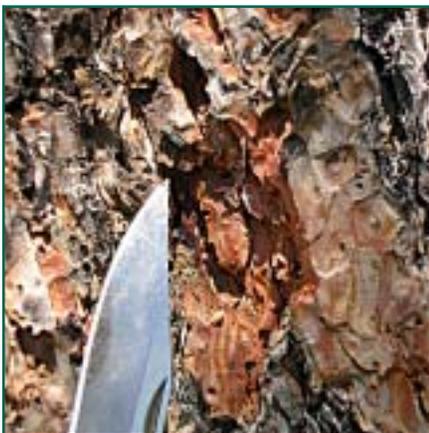


*A group of youngsters enjoy the colorful and educational displays at the Garbage Garage.*

This was a good year for tree health. With cooler temperatures and greater precipitation in the past two years, trees were able to recover somewhat from the previous drought. Still, the effect of the drought will be felt for several years, and with little snowfall along the Front Range this winter, many tree problems may return.

Losses due to bark beetles were greatly decreased in the Front Range. In the rural areas of Larimer County, no trees were affected with Dutch elm disease and only seven spruce trees required removal due to spruce ips (compared with 30 removals in 2004). The forester, Dave Lentz, and the Solid Waste Department made a serious effort this year to keep infested elm and spruce trees out of the landfill tree pile (used to make mulch).

Mountain pine beetle (MPB) numbers in Larimer County appear to be on the increase, with infestations observed in the Estes Valley, Red Feather Lakes, the lower canyon areas and northwestern Larimer County. The MPB problem must be addressed; the county's



*The knife blade points to an adult mountain pine beetle on an infested tree.*

ponderosa pine forests are vulnerable due to being extremely overstocked, overpopulated and no longer managed. To help, we developed a mountain pine beetle educational presentation that was

offered to interested groups. We also sent a press release to the media on the topic, which was picked up by several local newspapers, and Dave addressed MPB and forestry management as a guest on a radio show.

In 2005, the forester received 194 tree calls requesting assis-



*Damage from both past and present mountain pine beetle infestation is seen here.*

tance. Of these, 39 were related to mountain pine beetle, asking for information and requesting inspections. Other tree calls included questions on how to plant, prune or water trees and shrubbery, and requests for identification of insects and plant diseases. In addition, Dave handled 23 hazardous tree calls and completed 33 landscape inspections for the Larimer County Planning Department.



*This tree was considered unstable and hazardous and therefore was removed.*

*Hazardous vegetation refers to vegetation that's encroaching on county right-of-ways and impeding visibility or the flow of traffic at an intersection. It may also refer to trees or branches that are in danger of falling and that may cause personal injury or damage to vehicles on a right-of-way.*

*Insects causing tree damage in Larimer County include:*

- Mountain pine beetle
- Bronze birch bore
- Tiger moth
- Aphid
- Spittlebug
- Zimmerman moth
- Fir beetle
- White pine weevil
- Spruce ips

*Tree diseases in Larimer County include those from:*

- Mistletoe
- Juniper apple rust
- Fireblight
- Apple scab
- Wetwood
- Cytospora
- White pine blister rust

*For more information about the forestry program, call (970) 498-5765.*

# Looking Ahead to 2006

A year of new opportunities awaits us in 2006, as the Solid Waste Department works to build new partnerships, serve our customers better, be better stewards of our resources, give people the opportunities to take responsibility, and make Larimer County an enjoyable and fulfilling place to work.

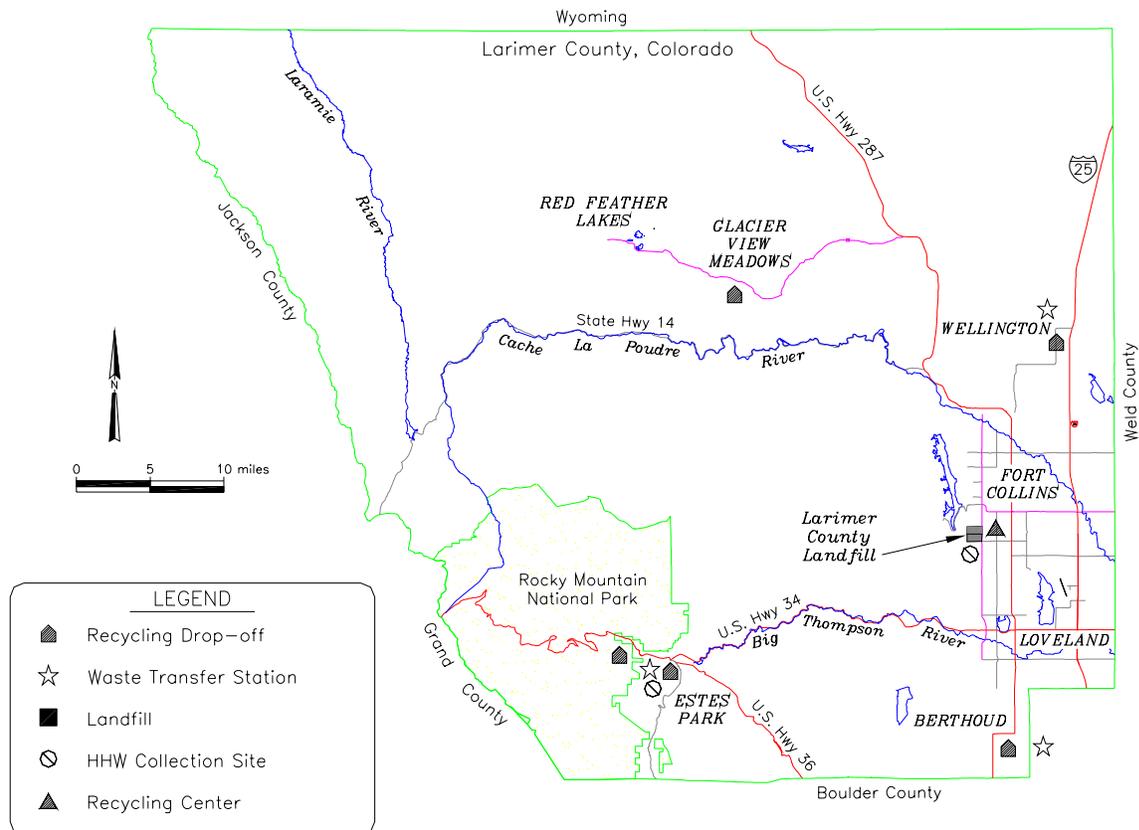
Among the tasks we plan to accomplish next year is a waste characterization study of the types of trash currently coming into the landfill. Data from this study will help us make decisions regarding what to focus on next for diversion from the landfill via recycling. By October, we'll have had a full year of single-stream collection at the Larimer County Recycling Center, and we'll be able to

evaluate the effects of this change. The Household Hazardous Waste program will be rolling out a "sharps" collection program (providing proper disposal of hypodermic needles) for our citizens. The Red Feather Transfer Station should be built and operational by summer. And as for the newly acquired Wellington property, it will likely be turned over to the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Department to determine its best use until the Solid Waste Department needs it for future operations.

As always, the department welcomes your comments. Please feel free to contact us at the address or phone number listed on the next page, or learn more about our programs by visiting our Web site.



## The Solid Waste Department's Solid Waste Management Facilities in Larimer County





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