

# A Message from the Director

This is the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of the "S.C. Solid Waste Management Annual Report." With two decades behind us, let's look at where we started, where we are, and – most importantly – where we can go together.



*Templeton*

The S.C. Solid Waste Policy and Management Act of 1991\* provides the framework for safe and cost-effective management of solid waste. Since the passage of the Act, South Carolina has developed a two-pronged solid waste management approach that:

- requires facilities that handle and dispose of waste to be properly designed and operated to protect human health and the environment; and
- promotes waste reduction, recycling and sustainable material management.

The state has made significant progress since the first S.C. Solid Waste Management Annual Report was published in 1993.

South Carolina's recycling community now includes 87 curbside recycling programs, 641 recycling drop-off centers and nearly 900 used motor oil collection centers. The state's four largest airports offer recycling to their 6 million annual visitors and each of South Carolina's 47 state parks and historic sites offers recycling to their 7 million annual visitors.

The growth in infrastructure, along with accompanying education and technical assistance, is reflected in the state's recycling numbers. In 1993, South Carolina recycled at a rate of 0.13 pounds per person per day (p/p/d). By 2012, that number increased to 1.4 p/p/d – that's an average of more than 525 pounds per person per year. In 1993, South Carolinians recycled 87,577 tons of material. In 2012,

South Carolinians recycled more than 1.2 million tons of material. Since reporting began, we've recycled more than 38 million tons.

Municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal – our trash – dropped for the seventh consecutive year, from 4.5 p/p/d in 2005 to 3.4 p/p/d in 2012. Overall, our state's MSW recycling rate increased for the third straight year: 29.5 percent of our trash is diverted from landfills through recycling.

Waste management is expensive. The disposal of more than 2.9 million tons of trash cost more than \$111 million in tipping fees during 2012, and more than \$713 million since 2007.

Recycling more than 1.2 million tons of trash saved nearly \$47 million in avoided disposal costs during 2012, and more than \$263 million since 2007. Local governments also reported earning about \$13 million in revenue from the sale of recyclables in 2012 and more than \$59 million since 2007.

Recycling helps feed South Carolina's economy. The state's recycling industry – about 450 companies that provide about 20,000 jobs – experienced significant growth and investment in recent years.

These numbers reflect impressive accomplishments, but we still send more than 70 percent of South Carolina's trash to landfills, along with millions of dollars in lost economic opportunity.

*We must do better.*

We have a lofty goal: South Carolina should recycle 40 percent or more of its trash and reduce its disposal to 3.25 p/p/d or less by 2020.

In Section 3 of this report, we provide recommendations on ways to better manage our waste. The recommendations are many and varied, but they have an underlying theme: outdated

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\*S.C. Code of Laws §§ 44-96-10, et seq.

methods of managing waste are bad for business. We can't afford to squander natural resources, tax dollars and economic growth when we have better options.

If we are to convince more businesses and industries to reduce waste and recycle, we must lead by example in state government. We must continue to expand our recycling markets. We must work with businesses that want recycled material and businesses that manufacture recycled-content products.

We must connect those who generate waste with those who can repurpose it. We must teach businesses and consumers when their waste has value. We must increase participation in traditional

recyclables as well as recycle construction and demolition debris, compost organics and safely recover food waste. We must continue working with businesses on new processes and technologies that reduce waste in the first place.

We must work together. It will take all of us – consumers, businesses, schools, governments and other organizations – to reach our recycling goals. Please join us!

*Catherine Templeton*

Catherine B. Templeton, Director  
S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control

