

Recycling organic material about to be a whole lot easier

By Kathryn Reed

Pine fills the senses. A chill is in the air. The building seems massive with only a few pieces of equipment inside. A pile of wood fills one corner; wood chips are at the other end of a large red chipper that looks like it could spit out an entire pine tree.

This is the scene at the Resource Recovery Center – South Tahoe Refuse company's organic materials recycling center.

"Once you get a loader and a couple cars on the scales it won't be too big," said John Marchini, who runs STR.



Jeanne Lear
and John
Marchini in
STR's Resource
Recovery
Center.
Photos/Kathryn
Reed

Construction milled wood, slash, wood pallets and few Christmas trees have come through the facility. It will

officially open in April to contractors.

The purpose of the 33,700-square-foot facility on Ruth Avenue in South Lake Tahoe is to process about 30 tons of organic material a day.

Lawn clippings, pine needles and recyclable construction waste currently cross the assembly line of the Materials Recovery Facility next door.

“The new Resource Recovery Facility will increase efficiency by directing organic material to a single, dedicated operation with existing markets and end-uses for these resources,” according to STR officials.

Bentley and Full Circle Compost, both in the Carson Valley area, are interested in this material for their operations.

Contractors will have a card to swipe that has all of their information stored on it. A scale weighs their load. They dump their goods. Then they go out a different door, get weighed again, swipe the card one more time and then receive a quarterly bill in the mail.

Before this center came along, contractors paid by the yard instead of weight.

This system should speed up the process for contractors to get in and out. Plus, it is designed to make recycling of this material more efficient.



The chipper is operated

remotely.

South Tahoe Refuse is still working out with the joint powers authority, which is made up of the city and both counties, to see how best to have residents sort out green waste. It may be a green bag or special tie to signify yard waste is inside.

Wood chips and pine needles will be available for contractors to use for erosion control on construction sites. For now, the processed material will not be doled out to residents.

Bunkers will store the various processed materials.

The center will be open Monday-Friday. It's possible Saturdays will be devoted to grinding.

In 2000, the garbage company realized it was not going to accomplish the state mandated recycling diversion goals with the facility it had. California is incrementally increasing the amount of trash jurisdictions must divert from landfills.

The state says it should be 50 percent, while South Lake Tahoe has set a goal of 55 percent. Jeanne Lear of STR says the new center will get STR over the 50 percent threshold.

Between 62 and 70 percent of the waste coming to STR is from South Lake Tahoe, with the remainder from El Dorado and Douglas counties.

The building at times has been controversial because some believe the garbage company should be in the industrial area.

"The cost to move would have been cost prohibitive. We've been here since 1962," said Marchini, whose grandparents started STR.

Marchini said the city approached him about moving. Twelve locations were looked at, with three making the short list. None penciled out financially. Besides the cost involved in moving the operation, neighbors of the sites that were looked

at were not thrilled with the prospect of a garbage company moving in.

STR responded to a request for proposal from El Dorado County and won the bid to be the operator of the mixed waste facility. Construction began in May 2008.

STR owns the land and facility. The company took out a loan for the project. Ratepayers are paying part of the expense of the building.

The cost to separate out trash is expensive. Lear said because consumers have said sustainability is important, lawmakers listened and trash companies are doing their part per mandates from the jurisdictions they serve. The consumer in turn has to pay for living greener.

Marchini said it would be a whole lot cheaper to take everything to the landfill.

For more information about South Tahoe Refuse, [click here](#).

Publisher's note: On Monday, read about how the economy is affecting South Tahoe Refuse.