

Plastics Recycling: Reality on the Ground

MRN and SWANA Mid-Atlantic
Annual Conference

*Plastics: An Ever-Evolving,
Fast-Moving Target*

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Baltimore County

- Bureau of Solid Waste Management collects from more than 332,000 homes plus apartments
- 36 private collection companies collect trash and recycling from 52 routes
- County also accepts material at three residential drop-off centers located around the County

Collection Challenges

- County does once a week trash and once a week single stream recycling (except in designated routes with rodent problems)
- Challenge with plastics and other materials is to make residents aware of what is recyclable and what is trash and to limit the amount of contamination in the loads
- Survey shows that 95 percent (by weight) of what citizens put out for recycling is recyclable

Tanglers

- County has focused attention in social media and articles on reducing tanglers, which get on the star screens and require several hours of work each night.

“Tangled Up!”

- “Tangled Up” is a comedic, silent film style PSA produced in-house by 11 County employees
- Plastic bags, clothing, etc. – halts operations
- Won Silver Telly Award and National Association of Government Communicators Blue Pen and Gold Screen Award
- Shared by more than 170 government, business, media, nonprofits and industry professionals

“Tangled Up!”

- Shown at recycling and solid waste conferences
- Played in local movie theaters for 6 weeks (485,282 impressions). Theatre made exception to 60 second rule because “it was so well done and a short 90 seconds.”
- Key component of 2019 MRN Outstanding Government Leadership Award

“Tangled Up!”



BALTIMORE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
BUREAU OF SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Presents

“TANGLED UP!”



Baltimore County MRF

- County MRF opened in November 2013
- Single stream facility accepts about 1500-1700 tons per week or about 80,000 tons per year
- Facility runs at about 35 tons per hour
- Facility includes 86 belts, six sorting screens, three optical sorters, cross belt magnet, eddy current and two balers

MRF – Plastics

- Large rigid plastics are separated in the pre-sort area of the facility
- Optical sorter separates about 70 percent of PET
- Sorters positively pick PET, Natural and Color
- “Trash” belt offers the opportunity to capture material that has gone through the process

Plastics Sales

- PET, Natural and Color are sold domestically
- Rigid plastics are often sold to Canadian firms
- County requests pricing each month and awards to the highest bidder

Plastics Challenges

- PET, Natural and Color have been stable markets
- Recent drop in PET and HDPE prices
- Rigid plastics – markets have improved so that June price is higher than cardboard
- Issue with metals in rigid plastics
- County looking for markets for mixed plastics and aseptics that justify sorting the materials

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