

Eco Centre Information Bulletin

Dec. 30, 2020

In June of 2019, the Town of Rocky Mountain House, Clearwater County and Village of Caroline agreed a new structure for waste services was needed. It was problematic that the Rocky Mountain Regional Solid Waste Authority (RMRSWA) was not a legal or separate entity in its own right. Each municipality desired a more effective service delivery for their citizens and their waste, recycling, organics and overall waste reduction strategies.

The three municipalities established a goal to have a new system negotiated by the end of March 2020 and all three councils passed resolutions to terminate the existing agreement by this date. This would effectively dissolve the Rocky Mountain Regional Solid Waste Authority.

A new agreement was not finalized by March 2020, so while the Town and County voted for an extension, the Village did not. This ended the existing agreement and dissolved RMRSWA as a regional service. The Village of Caroline went on to provide its own waste service, while the Town and County continued providing waste services using the terminated agreement as a framework for service and costs.

For 2020, the Town's cost for regional waste was \$1,013,389. These are funds paid to Clearwater County for the operation of the regional transfer stations, regional landfill and regional recycling programs.

In addition to this, the Town historically paid Clearwater County just over \$300,000 annually for residential waste pickup in Town. The County, as managing partner of RMRSWA, decided to cease this service early in 2020. The Town issued a request for proposals from private firms for residential waste pickup, that included options for curbside organics and/or recycling services. The new residential waste collection contract took effect in February 2020, and saves the Town \$80,000 per year. However, there has been no reduction in the annual operating cost of RMRSWA, or the annual requisition invoiced to the Town by Clearwater County. These two things together reaffirmed that the regional system was not the most cost-effective manner to provide services to Town residents.

Through 2020, The Town and County continued discussions on a new waste agreement based on the general principles agreed upon in 2019: That the County would assume operations of the landfill and rural transfer stations and the Town would take over operations of waste and recycling services provided within the town.

With the goal of cost effectiveness for waste and best environmental practices, the Town also undertook a [waste audit](#) to inform a [waste reduction strategy](#), and conducted an [eco-centre best practices study](#). Clearwater County was invited to participate in each of these initiatives. Besides the environmental benefits of recycling and composting, waste diversion results in cost reductions by reducing landfill operating costs and long-term capital costs of new cells. While these studies were focused on converting the Rocky Transfer Station to an Eco-Centre, the current set-up was lacking in

**Rocky Mountain
House Eco Centre**



4511-42 St.

403-845-3220



certain safety and user-friendly considerations. With 15% (by weight) of the Town's waste going to the landfill being recyclable material, it is hoped a more user-friendly facility will entice more recycling participation and reduce waste costs.

While discussions continued with Clearwater County on a new waste and recycling system, it became apparent that each municipality's vision for timelines of the transition and the fundamentals of service delivery varied significantly. The Town sees the beginning of the New Year as an optimal time to introduce new service and waste structure for our residents. The old recreation building at 4511-42 Street had previously been identified as an ideal site for an eco-centre, and so the Town implemented the change, effective Jan. 5, 2021.

Understanding that approximately 60% of users bringing waste into the Rocky Transfer Station are Clearwater County residents, the Town has offered to lease the lands to the County to continue its waste transfer operations there. Clearwater County will determine if this a desirable solution for its residents.

Town residents will be able to dispose of extra bagged garbage at the Eco-Centre. Town businesses will continue to use private service providers to handle their solid waste, but are encouraged to use the Eco Centre for all divertible materials. The Eco Centre is funded through the existing solid waste rate included on Town utility invoices.

The recycling portion of the Rocky Transfer Station is currently used 50% by Town residents and 50% by County residents. The County will determine if it desires to have the Eco-Centre open to their residents through a proportionate cost share in the service, or if it would prefer to provide an alternate solution for its residents.

This year the Town will also introduce a curbside organic pickup for residents. Currently, 61% (by weight) of the waste generated in Rocky Mountain House is organics that can be composted, and it is cheaper to take organic materials to a composting facility than to a landfill. Collecting this separately will greatly reduce the tonnage of waste going to the landfill. With the cost savings in residential waste pickup and lower costs for organics disposal, this service can be provided at no additional cost to Town citizens.

Town Council looks forward to 2021 and Rocky Mountain House following the current best practices in waste reduction, implementing greater services with no additional costs and becoming an environmental leader in one of Alberta's most naturally beautiful areas.

Related information:

[Waste audit results](#) *(Technical memo of August 2019)*

[Waste Reduction Strategy](#) *(Adopted by Council March 2020)*

[Eco Centre report](#) *(November 2020)*

[Town of Rocky Mountain House Announces New Eco Centre](#) *(News Release of Dec. 21, 2020)*

[Eco Centre webpage](#) *(overview of acceptable materials, hours of operation, location)*

[Waste Reduction Strategy webpage](#) *(summary of audit results and strategy)*