

# Executive Summary – Report on Fall 2016 Wasteshed Forums

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## Overview of Forum's Process

Four forums were held in September in Loveland, Fort Collins, Wellington, and Estes Park. A total of 54 participated in the forums, with 50% of them from Fort Collins. The four forums were each identical. They began with a presentation summarizing the Wasteshed Coalition and the overall project, followed by a short keypad process to identify who is in the room. The first interactive session focused on reacting the presentation, data from the 2007 Waste sort, and a summary of the citizen survey, particularly in term of the barriers mentioned to increased recycling and composting. Then a second presentation focused on the Regional Wasteshed Planning Study, and the seven infrastructure options detailed in that report. The second interactive session focused on future strategies regarding the wasteshed. All the data collected at the forums is available in the Raw Data Report (available at <http://col.st/FTPfS>). This executive summary provides some key highlights and themes from the forums.

## Session 1: Reacting to the current situation and perceived barriers to recycling and composting

The initial session of the forums had participants reacting to data concerning the current situation in the wasteshed, including information on what material is going to the landfill and a summary of a citizen survey completed earlier in the year. Some key themes include:

- Significant surprise concerning the amount of recyclables and compostables still going into the landfill
- Strong support for community level options for composting.
- Two competing themes that were both heard quite often:
  - Some focused on the need for more education, arguing people want to do the right thing but are unsure what to do (i.e. what can or cannot be recycled and how).
  - Others seemed to reject that idea, and argued that we have moved beyond the impact of education. That if people are not recycling at this point, they need stronger motivation such as incentives (positive or negative) or mandates (i.e. education is not enough).
- Similarly, some participants expressed faith in people, whereas others were very pessimistic about others (“they don’t care”).
- In terms of education, many expressed support for broader consistency across the county and municipalities, and believed a more consistent message would be beneficial.
- There were no written comments responding to the “Doubts about recycling’s efficacy” (it was one of themes drawn from the survey data), but the issue of distrust did arise in few conversations. Concerns that some believe that recycling doesn’t actually occur.

- Though unclear on how this could be done, there were numerous comments about reducing packaging and increasing the reuse of materials as options that need to be a stronger part of the discussion.

**When asked on a worksheet about the primary barriers to recycling and composting on their worksheets (p. 8 of report), the top 5 answers were:**

1. Confusion about what can/can't be recycled
2. Low cost of throwing things away
3. No curbside pickup (particularly for composting or yard waste)
4. Additional costs to recycling certain items
5. Insufficient, inconvenient, or undesirable recycling drop-off location

**Session 2: Future Strategies and Infrastructure Options**

Session 2 of the forum began with a presentation summarizing seven infrastructure options that were outlined in the Regional Wastewater Planning Study. Participants completed worksheets considering broad strategies and specifically asking about the seven options, and had time to discuss both in small groups.

When asked to complete a worksheet with a matrix that included a broad range of strategy areas (from Education to Incentives to Mandates to Engineering new infrastructure) and the full spectrum of stages (Reduce Waste From Source → Reuse/Repurpose → Recycle → Compost → Capture energy values → Dispose to landfill), the five most supported strategy areas were:

1. Incentivize recycling
2. Educate about recycling
3. Educate about reducing waste from source
4. Design/engineer for composting
5. Design/engineer for reusing/repurposing

Overall, actions tied to Educate/Motivate were most supported (75), followed closely by Design/Engineer (71) and then Incentive/Penalize (65). There was less support for Mandating/Regulating (45). The stage chosen the most was Recycling (69), followed by Reduce Waste at Source (54), then Reuse/Repurpose (48), and Composting (47).

**Reaction to Feasible Options for New Infrastructure**

Participants completed worksheets asking about the seven options, and notes were captured from the table discussions as well. Below are some key themes from that data.

*Feasible Option 1: Status Quo (No Action Taken Upon Closure of County Landfill).*

- Mostly negative comments
- Concerns about greenhouse gas impact of further transfers, as well as loss of control and predictability

*Feasible Option 2: Central Transfer Station*

- General support for this options, focused on arguments such as reducing traffic to new landfill, providing a food waste option, and the possibility of relying on public/private partnerships and cost sharing
- Concerns include that it doesn't actually reduce levels of trash and that we wouldn't take responsibility for our own trash

*Feasible Option 3: New County Landfill*

- Somewhat reluctant support ("We have to do this"), with some sense of inevitability
- Some very vocal opposition, particularly from Wellington citizens
- Concerns about the distance from most of the population and impact on neighbors
- Recognition that this cannot be the only option (we need to reduce amount going to landfill)

*Feasible Option 4: Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) – Single-stream or Mixed Waste.*

- Numerous positive written comments
- Strong support for reducing amount of recoverable material going into the landfill and for not having to ship material to Denver
- Seen as an option that will be the "way of the future"
- Some debate regarding merits of "dirty" or "clean" MRF
- Clear concerns about cost and future of recycling market

*Feasible Option 5: Organics Composting Facility.*

- Numerous positive written comments (with the strongest emotions expressed)
- Strong support for reducing the amount of material going to the landfill
- Clear concerns about cost, as well as odors around the facility
- Concerns about wildlife interaction, particularly from Estes Park residents

*Feasible Option 6: Construction and Demolition Debris (C&D) Processing Facility.*

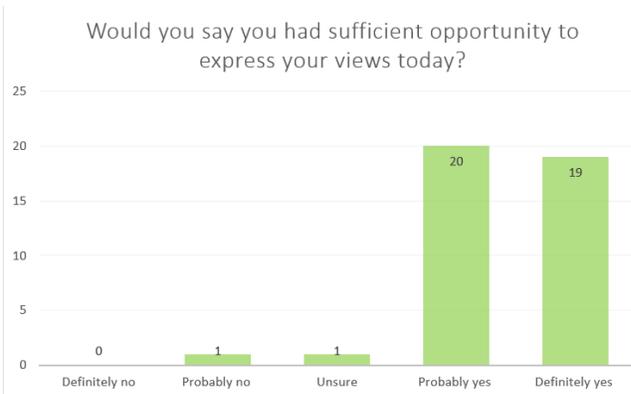
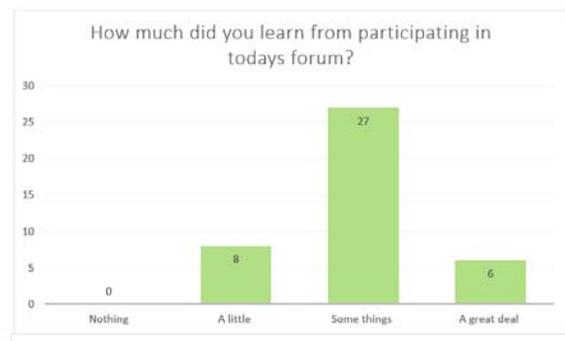
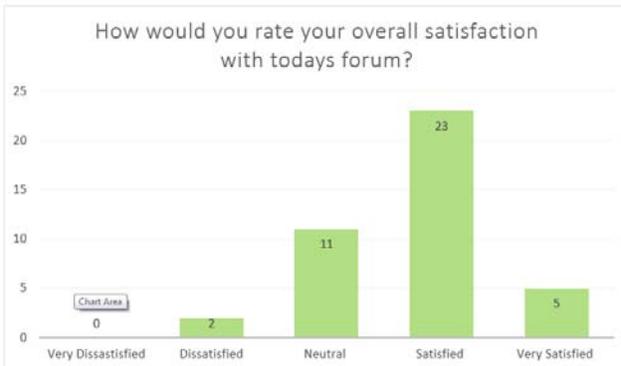
- General support, but less clarity as to why
- Concerns about cost.

*Feasible Option 7: Waste-to-Energy Facilities (Conversion Technology).*

- General support, particularly in terms of both reducing waste and assisting with energy needs
- Concerns about cost and potential hazards/pollution

## Meeting Assessment Information

Participants were asked to complete a short meeting assessment at the end of each forum. Some key results are below.



## Most important thing you heard or said today?

A final question on the post-meeting survey asked participants to share the most important thing they heard or said at the forum. Below are some of the key themes from those answers:

- How many things of value still go into the landfill
- Need for new facilities/infrastructure or new policy (i.e. limits of education)
- The variety of options we have to consider
- Limited life of current landfill