



DOUGLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Douglas County Courthouse, Room 217
1036 SE Douglas Avenue, Roseburg, Oregon 97470

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commissioners Decide on a Small Fee Increase for Transfer Stations

(Douglas County, OR.) After almost two years of exhaustive scrutiny, public comment and a plethora of operational ideas and proposals concerning the future of our Douglas County Solid Waste Program, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners made the decision to keep all 11 of our Douglas County Transfer Stations operational, not change or eliminate the single can rate structure, reject the proposed three can minimum and decline the recommended \$5.00 per can rate increase. Instead, they have chosen to only approve a small increase in disposal fees for the Douglas County landfill and transfer stations. The new rates, which will go into effect on Wednesday, November 4, 2020, equate to roughly a .30¢ per bag or a \$ 1.00 per 35-gallon can increase.

After thoroughly reviewing all the options, making the decision to keep the all 11 transfer stations open was easy, as the Commissioners wanted all residents to have easy and local access to waste disposal, as well as help to alleviate potential refuse dumping in rural areas. The decision to keep the single can rate and not approve the \$5.00 per can rate increase was based on the overwhelming feedback provided by residents during and after the open house events hosted last year. Residents on fixed income or that do not produce large amounts of refuse wanted to still be able to afford to go to a transfer station. Still, the Commissioners had a difficult time in making the decision to increase disposal fees altogether. They know the timing is not ideal for our residents, but compounding and unplanned budget matters with our Solid Waste Department required this thoughtful and moderate action.

The department has been impacted by several unanticipated budget expenditures, that have made it impossible to operate within budget under the current fee structure. For example, Senate Bills 245 and 263 forced the County to pay the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) an increase in tipping fees of 27%; our environmental compliance and mandatory permit fees have increased by nearly 100%; and we had to increase operational costs to make required site improvements, purchase necessary equipment and make additions to our staff, in order comply by the new compliance standards. But, the ultimate catalyst that compelled the fee increase was the recent notice from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that they lowered their national reference rate (interest) for landfill closure accounts (FA) from 1.1% to .3%, which dramatically increased our required compliance expenses for our financial assurance account from \$500,000 to \$1,200,000 annually (more than doubling those costs). As a part of the DEQ's mandatory and complicated financial assurance model, Solid Waste Departments with active landfills are required to place funds in a 'landfill closure account' annually based on a formula used to calculate the anticipated expenses associated with the future closure and post closure monitoring of the landfill. Further, Solid Waste Departments need to be self-sustaining, and per our agreement with DEQ, we are contractually obligated to pay for the 'landfill closure account' financial assurance contributions out of department operational revenue and not general fund reserve dollars.

This is the first fee increase that has been assessed since the disposal fee program was implemented over five years ago on September 1, 2015. But, unfortunately, the increase in required state and federal compliance fees have made it impossible to continue to operate within our current fee structure. The decision was made at the Board of Commissioners meeting this week.

The Commissioners would like to thank the members of the Douglas County Solid Waste Advisory Committee and the Douglas County Public Works Department for their dedication, time and commitment in seeing this project through. They also would like to thank our residents for stepping up to participate in the decision making process and for providing their invaluable input.

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