

GADSDEN COUNTY

ABSTRACT

This proposal is being made by Gadsden, Jefferson, Madison, Taylor and Wakulla counties in response to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Request for Proposals for Innovative Recycling Projects.

This group of counties has been doing cooperative marketing of recyclables for over four years and has established a good working relationship among themselves. As rural counties, they recognize that they are at a fundamental economic disadvantage when it comes to marketing materials individually. Gadsden County has marketed newsprint, magazines, plastics, aluminum, steel cans and glass from the other four counties. This has improved access to markets and improved prices for materials sold.

This cooperative group proposes to use \$300,000 of Innovative Grant Funds to broaden recycling to include all fiber in the residential and commercial waste streams. Funds will be used to upgrade processing facilities in Gadsden County and add collection containers, bulk storage facilities and material movers in the other four participating counties.

Paper will be collected as mixed residential and mixed commercial waste. This will be incorporated into the current collection of newsprint and cardboard. Fiber will be graded into two high grades, two medium grades, cardboard and newsprint. The separation process will allow for six separations with residue the default, and last material to leave the conveyor.

Gadsden County currently uses some inmate labor for processing recyclables. This proposal incorporates the use of Work and Gain Economic Sufficiency (WAGES) personnel through the Welfare Reform Act. These young women who are primarily unwed mothers will be grading and sorting paper on the conveyor system. We hope to teach them basic job training and experience while receiving good service for the investment.

Over the course of the next five years, this cooperative group hopes to reap over \$5,000,000 in saved tipping fees and revenues from the sale of paper. This amounts to avoid tipping fees of over a quarter million dollars and revenues of approximately \$345,000 annually. For the investment of an additional \$300,000 which represents 5% of the anticipated savings in dollars, five rural counties will significantly and positively impact North Florida's waste disposal and boost recycling through a cooperative effort. This project will also demonstrate the transferability of the technology to both rural areas and urban centers.

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Gadsden County, the host county, along with Madison, Jefferson, Taylor and Wakulla counties, propose forming a regional cooperative to increase the recycling of fiber products from the solid waste stream. Currently, these counties, hereafter called the Group, have minimal paper collections other than newsprint and some cardboard. Having established programs for the traditionally recycled materials, the infrastructure is in place in each of the five counties to expand those programs. The addition of all fiber is proposed for this Innovative Grant fund.

In the aggregate, over \$1,000,000 will be saved annually with the incorporation of four more grades of paper into the recycling process. Additionally, more than 13,000 tons of fiber will be diverted from the waste stream on a yearly basis. Table C, page four of this project description is a spreadsheet that further clarifies this. The savings that can be realized is actually more when you consider that Gadsden, Jefferson, Taylor and some of Wakulla solid waste is transferred out of county to regional landfills. Madison County accepts waste from Jefferson and Taylor counties. Wakulla County transfers some of its waste to Bay County and Gadsden County solid waste goes to Jackson County.

Paper will be collected in each county as mixed office or mixed residential waste. Each county will have semi-trailers on site to store collected fiber. The trailers, filled with Gaylord boxes of paper, will be shuttled to Gadsden County on a regular basis. Here the Gaylord's will be tipped and paper graded into two high grades and two medium grades along with newsprint and corrugated cardboard.

This separation will be accomplished with the use of WAGES (Work and Gain economic Sufficiency) personnel through the Welfare Reform Act. These are primarily young women who need job training basics and experience. WAGES provides child care, Worker's Comp, Medicaid and some transportation in order to offer job training for their program participants. The local WAGES coordinator is very excited about this opportunity for his participants.

Collecting all six grades together makes public education consistent and interchangeable among the five counties. Additionally, the program will be marketed as any dry, uncoated paper product and collected at the curb and commercially.

Gadsden County has served as a host county for marketing materials from the other counties for over four years. The accounting process and the revenue sharing agreements are already in place.

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This is an established relationship that has proven beneficial for everyone. Among materials that have been successfully bulked, processed and marketed are glass, cans and bottles, newspaper, magazines and plastics. Gadsden County processes approximately 65% of its own material and 35% from the other counties. (See TABLE A)

This cooperative will work to standardize public education making all messages consistent, therefore, able to use the same collateral materials among all the counties. Advertising placement can be done in publications that cross county boundaries since three of the counties are contiguous- and share the same landfill.

Gadsden County has the benefit of a long term lease with the Department of Agriculture for facilities that are large enough to accommodate the expansion and upgrade proposed here. A site plan, included as page 4 of this description, indicates the existing facility and proposed additions.

A timetable for implementing this project is as follows:

Grant Award	April 16, 1998
Construct New Processing Area	May 1 - August 31
Purchasing Baler	May 1
Purchasing other equipment	June 1
Begin Paper Sorting and Grading	September 1

The existing facilities that have been used for both fiber and commingled separation will not be adequate for this program expansion. It is anticipated that the additional paper will necessitate a separate processing facility. Also, inmate labor must be segregated from the WAGES labor. The proposed separation of commingled and fiber conveyance and sorting will accommodate the needs of both entities.

Grading and sorting the volume of paper anticipated also further necessitates duplicate sorting facilities. Loads of materials coming into the Gadsden facility from other counties is reprocessed and upgraded while combining the various counties' materials. To date Gadsden County has not had a load of material rejected at any mill.

Forecasts of throughput indicate that approximately 600 tons processed the remainder of 1998. By June, 1999, the full benefit of this grant will be realized as the program moves toward enterprise funded sustainability.

The addition of a covered, partially enclosed building will enable the existing processing plant to be dedicated to fiber processing. The existing building is covered and has access

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to loading docks and storage space for the specific purpose of keeping high grade paper bales out of the weather to preserve the integrity of the material for marketing purposes.

Paper buyers have been encouraging suppliers of feed stock away from mixed paper bales for some time. While it was advantageous from a waste diversion standpoint several years ago to collect the greatest amount of material even if it was of poor, quality, it is better for buyers and sellers alike now to sort and grade paper to maximize marketability and therefore revenues.

This endeavor will provide for the collection, grading and processing of six fiber grades. Beyond the capital costs of retrofitting the existing facility, relocation of the commingled processing area, labor and operational costs are expected to be minimal. Inmate labor currently processes material. The commingled processing will still be done by inmates. The WAGES people will be trained to do paper grading and processing.

A budget for this project is included on page five of the project description section. This delineates approximately \$100,000 to the four participating counties and \$200,000 to the host county. Semi-trailers, collection containers and pallet jacks as well as material storage containers will be purchased for each county. The semi's when full of Gaylord boxes of paper will be shuttled to Gadsden County. There will be a continues relay of semi's through a transportation system that is already established. This will maximize the efficiency of the transportation network.

In summary, Tables A, B and C on page 4, are used in the justification of the use of \$300,000 in Innovative Grant funds to add "other paper" to recycling programs that are similar in five counties. These funds will be used to create separate sorting and grading facilities, using WAGES employees. This will allow the use of inmate labor to continue to sort and bale commingled materials from this five county cooperative. This proposal is innovative in its use of two separate labor sources, two separate facilities to process recyclables (paper and commingled) and one host county marketing materials for the benefit of four others, and potentially more rural counties in North Florida.

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ADVANCED PROCESS/TECHNOLOGY

This proposal has several elements that are unique to the participating cooperative. There is an urban county (Leon) in the middle of this cooperative, which manages its program independently with no plan to regionalize. The five county coop, however, plans to invite the participation of two other counties, Jackson and Liberty, as this process is fine tuned. Leon may participate if it so chooses.

We are aware of no other venture like this in the entire state. Collecting a very low grade of paper maximizes diversion from the waste stream and saves participating counties extremely large blocks of landfill space. This also saves costs associated with landfilling. These are quantifiable, real savings. Also, by using the proposed grant to cover major capital outlay costs, the continuation of this paper recovery and upgrading program will sustain itself. Paper buyers are demanding improved quality and higher grades of paper with minimal contamination. The buyers are getting very selective and are rejecting some loads at the mills when outthrows exceed receipt standards.

This proposal to upgrade the materials once they are collected from individuals and businesses will ensure better acceptance from buyers and greater diversion of solid waste.

While this is not rocket science, it is innovative in its use of a major, low grade portion of the waste stream. Taking this material, adding value by upgrading the quality and increasing the quantity by forming a cooperative for consistent collection, is innovative. This enables a central clearinghouse to communicate with buyers. It reduces shipping costs to end markets. It allows each participating county to maximize its R&E dollars in term of public education and advertising. And, it ensures a consistently clean, reliable product for feed stock by mills.

The infrastructure for intracounty collection exists. The bargaining power of the coop exists. The lacking component is the incorporation of fiber into the recycling stream, upgrading it to various higher grades that will produce more revenue to the local governments.

This will be viewed by these local governments as incentive to proceed with recycling programs. Some counties have been struggling with funding for continuation of programs because of the uncertainty of future R&E funds. This one shot of capital and short term operational funds will energize local government officials therefore strengthening existing programs and increasing materials recycled. This will produce the desired effect FDEP is looking for.

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TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

The technology described in this proposal is easily transferable. The concept of expanding the existing paper collection portion of existing residential programs to include all "other paper" into the newspaper is simple to do. A commercial paper collection program for business and industry can be added to other programs as well.

The host county will use a conveyor system to sort and grade a very poor, but large item, mixed paper waste, into several higher grades adding value and greater marketability. This will be done using WAGES employees from Gadsden County. WAGES programs are in every county in the state.

This type of program takes a costly segment of the waste stream and upgrades it into several more valuable commodities that become revenue producers for the participants. These higher grades of paper are bought by mills and reprocessed. This portion of the waste stream exists in every county in the state.

Mixed waste paper has become costly for those communities that added it to their programs when paper prices skyrocketed several years ago. It is very difficult to discontinue a program once it has begun. The public education is a nightmare. This program, which can be used by one city or county or a regional cooperative like ours, can take mixed waste and improve its marketability by separating it into materials with higher value. Therefore, we believe that this project will demonstrate very effectively that it can be transferred to those areas which are currently experiencing difficulties in marketing mixed waste paper.

Our proposal uses technology that is readily available and easily transferable to any local government in the state. It uses a portion of the waste stream that exists in every landfill in the state. And, it takes advantage of a Welfare Reform Act program that will underwrite portions of the labor costs while offering job training and experience to its participants.

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COST EFFECTIVENESS

Investing \$300,000 in a program that will yield over 166% over a five year span is very cost effective. These five counties can save over \$1 million dollars a year through avoided tipping fees and higher revenues. The budget for this project is included as page two of the Cost Effectiveness.

Four of the five counties currently use transfer facilities to ship garbage out of county. This will continue to drive the cost of solid waste disposal up. Each county has indicated in their annual reports to FADE that "Other Paper" is a major component of their respective waste streams. Table C in the project description indicates each county's waste stream and paper percentages.

If only 50% of the available paper is recovered, using an average of \$53.00 per ton (See Table B in Project Description) for paper sales, revenues will amount to over \$685,000 per year. This is a realistic recovery rate and is in addition to the newsprint and corrugated cardboard collected currently.

"All Paper" is an easy commodity to incorporate into the existing commercial and residential recycling programs in each county. There will be additional pulls of drop-off containers and incorporation of additional routes for curbside collection but that is good. Most programs participation is waning. This will create new interest.

This grant represents \$.04 per ton of anticipated paper collected the first year, with anticipated revenues more than double the grant amount in the first full year of collection. North Florida rural counties are not readily accessible to mills. By increasing leverage in the marketplace, rural counties can get greater returns on their individual and collective efforts. Economies of scale in all areas; collection, processing and marketing will improve. Additionally, cooperative marketing will sustain local programs where individually they may cease to exist. Momentum will accelerate as this program expansion proves successful.

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NONTRADITIONAL MATERIALS

Traditional recyclables are aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass jars, steel cans and newsprint. Other types of paper; computer printout, white ledger, magazines, sorted office waste, corrugated and paper board are considered nontraditional by FDEP.

Paper has shown a decline in Florida's solid waste composition over the last seven years. While more paper than ever is being recycled, it still is the second highest category behind construction and demolition debris in our waste stream today.

This Cooperative believes that by collecting all paper from homes and businesses, this will make participation easy and very uncomplicated. Any paper that is not contaminated with food, or has a coating of any kind is recyclable. This concept is easy to grasp and easy to accomplish.

Once the paper has been diverted from the waste stream in each county, it will be hauled to the host county, Gadsden, where it will be sorted and graded. By upgrading, and cleaning the mixed paper coming in, it will have greater value at the mill, producing more revenue for the cooperative.

The three categories of office paper, other paper and corrugated make up an average of 27% of the waste stream of the participating five counties. Gadsden is the highest with 36% paper waste. Wakulla is the lowest with 21% paper waste. In each of the five counties the "Other Paper" category is the largest category in their respective MSW compositions. This indicates the largest potential for diversion from the waste stream.

The five rural counties in this cooperative have correctional facilities, industry and commercial centers (small towns) as well as residential areas. Each county recycling coordinator will use special containers for commercial collection of fiber. Residents will be encouraged to use paper bags to recycle paper from their homes. By collecting the lowest grade of paper, but still clean and dry, it can be sorted to attract higher prices at markets.

A number of years ago, when paper prices were high, many counties incorporated residential mixed paper into their residential recycling programs. This flooded markets with a low grade of paper that has since been unrecyclable buyers refusing to pay for the product. This proposal will take the residential mixed waste paper, sort it into five additional grades, newsprint being collected already, and market it at the highest possible grades and prices. By default, some paper will be residential waste paper, but this can be marketed to a pelletizing plant in a nearby county and use as a fuel source.

Grading paper collected as mixed waste is a way to take a product with no value or a negative value if you must pay a mill to take it, and turn it the majority of it into a more

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NONTRADITIONAL MATERIALS

valuable and marketable commodity. Mills will be more inclined to buy once they see that the quality is consistent.

Traditional fiber recycling has been limited to newsprint. There is good reason for this. Newsprint has held its value and is easy to recycle. The incorporation of all other dry, uncoated paper will be easy to understand and promote, and be easy to collect incorporating it into existing curbside and dropoff center collection. Now, therecycler will have more options and opportunity, and have renewed enthusiasm for recycling.

Nontraditional paper, computer printout and white ledger is found more often in homes where computers are as common as television sets. Businesses depend on computers for everything from making change to bookkeeping and accounting. There is always going to be a stream of paper from every store, home and industry in the state. By taking a waste product and turning it into a product that has increased in value because of the sorting process, this cooperative can use increased revenues to sustain their programs when some markets may trend toward soft which they all do in cyclic form.

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REGIONAL PROGRAMS

Gadsden, Jefferson, Wakulla and Taylor counties have been acting as a cooperative on an informal basis for over four years. Madison County joined them last year. The Recycling Coordinators have established a good working relationship that will now be formalized through Interlocal Agreements (upon award of the Innovative Grant). This demonstrates the willingness to work together- maximizing the positive aspects of cooperative marketing.

This five county cooperative has the potential to become a seven county endeavor with the inclusion of Liberty and Jackson Counties. Having Gadsden as the host works well because it sits in the middle of this group of counties. Leon County being the exception. Leon County is a large county with its own recycling programs.

This proposal of recycling nontraditional, "Other Paper" is easily transferable to other areas of the state. It can work with large counties as well as rural counties. Nation wide, it is reported in the "The Minnesota Project" by Lola Schoenrich, published in April, 1994, that in 1992 there were only 15 cooperative recycling programs nationwide. In 1994, that had grown to over 50. This proves that regional efforts are successful and serve their participants well.

This cooperative has seen proof of this in several ways. There is good quality control with one central processor. There is good tracking on materials in and shipments out facilitating payment tracking efficiency. The host communicates with the buyers, making it one stop shopping for bulk materials rather than buyers dealing with five individuals and having five different quality of materials issues.

WAGES programs exist in all areas of the state. There is always a need to have job training programs and this is a good one. Paper grading and sorting is not difficult, it can teach good work ethics and give someone the experience needed to be a productive member of society. The WAGES program in Gadsden County is excited to be working with us.

This Innovative Recycling Project is regional in nature, covering five counties in north Florida. It will serve the residents and businesses of these five counties well. It will also divert a large portion of the existing waste stream into a recycling program that is easy and convenient.