

Please Support SB 157

Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG)

Georgia Municipal Association (GMA)

SB 157 was passed unanimously by the Resource Management Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Committee after debating the merits of the bill and including testimony from the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) that they were not in opposition. It was then unanimously passed by the full NRE Committee. It passed by the Senate with only 3 "no" votes.

What is a local Solid Waste Management Plan? Georgia's Solid Waste Management Act of 1990 requires every local government be included in a solid waste management plan (SWMP). This requirement was put into place during a highly volatile period when the Federal Environmental Protection Agency was adopting new landfill requirements, forcing state permitting delays and creating a perceived landfill crisis. At that time, Georgia had less than 10 years of permitted disposal capacity remaining and many local governments were electing not to continue to operate their landfills. Today, Georgia has about 31 years of permitted disposal capacity and the private sector disposes around 70 percent of the waste landfilled in the state.

What is DCA's Solid Waste Management Survey & Full Cost Report? The survey, required to be completed annually by every city and county, is basically an extension of the local solid waste management plan. It addresses the program components within the plan and inquires about changes that may have occurred during the year. The survey does not address operational issues at a landfill nor contain any tonnage data quantifying disposal, recycling, or composting rates. With dwindling resources, DCA rarely uses this information to provide technical assistance to local governments. Remaining disposal capacity and tonnage disposal information is reported by landfill owners and operators to EPD.

What does SB 157 do? SB 157 requires cities and counties to adopt their existing SWMP and any updates they make to it via local ordinance or resolution, without having to go through DCA for prior approval. The bill further empowers DCA to develop planning guidelines that a city or county may use to amend or update their local SWMP. It makes it optional for cities and counties to report how solid waste is managed in their community to DCA. In addition to the disposal and capacity reporting to Georgia EPD, the bill requires landfill owners/operators to report disposal, remaining disposal capacity, and recycling and composting activities to DCA.

Will we still be able to meet and measure progress towards the state's recycling goal? Yes, Georgia's recycling goal and plan is not affected. Local governments will continue to provide the solid waste management programs desired and demanded by their citizens. The state's per-capita waste disposal reduction goal is measured based upon reports submitted to the EPD, not the annual local solid waste survey reports mandated by DCA.

Will SB 157 affect the way landfills are sited, permitted? No, EPD's permitting and regulatory processes remain unchanged. Furthermore, before EPD can issue a permit for a municipal solid waste or construction and demolition landfill it must still be consistent with a local solid waste management plan and local ordinances. The authority of local governments to plan for the siting of a solid waste facility via their locally-adopted SWMP, zoning, or land use regulations is not impacted by this legislation. SB 157 requires local governments to provide public notice any time their SWMP is updated to ensure community involvement with solid waste and landfill siting issues. In addition to the disposal and disposal capacity information reported to EPD, SB 157 requires additional reporting to DCA about waste disposal, remaining disposal capacity, and recycling and composting activities.