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### Ocean County Press Release

**TOMS RIVER** – In an effort to fend off some of the national and global challenges negatively affecting its regional recycling program, Ocean County officials will collaborate with its contractor in investing in upgrades to what has been an environmentally beneficial program for decades.

"Just like all other states and counties, we too are negatively impacted by China's major policy changes affecting recyclables," said Ocean County Freeholder Director Gerry P. Little, who serves as liaison to the County's recycling program. "In order to keep our recycling programs viable we need to make an investment in new machinery, stepped up enforcement and educational programs.

"Our residents have embraced recycling since it was first implemented in Ocean County in 1988 as the result of a state mandate in 1987," Little said. "However now more than ever we need everyone to recycle right."

The Ocean County Board of Chosen Freeholders on Dec. 5 approved a funding ordinance appropriating \$4 million to replace equipment and other upgrades and improvements at the Recyclable Materials Processing Facility at the Northern Ocean County Recycling Center in Lakewood.

A portion of the money to upgrade the facility – about \$1.5 million – is expected to come from Atlantic Coast Recycling, which operates the processing facility for the County.

According to Ernest J. Kuhlwein Jr., Director of Solid Waste Management for Ocean County, recycling market prices and specifications have seen negative changes over the course of the past year, mostly because of China's edict on contamination levels and importation restrictions. This major policy change has resulted in lower pricing for recyclable commodities and much stricter allowable contamination levels in the marketed materials, especially for paper and glass.

"China is focusing on recycling their own waste stream and minimizing importation of materials from the United States and other nations," Kuhlwein said. "This shift in policy by China is resulting in us needing to take a hard look at how we continue to recycle."

Kuhlwein explained that Ocean County's processing facility was designed and built to produce to earlier market specifications.

"Some changes to the recycling program and upgraded processing equipment are now needed to ensure the operation is financially secure for the future," Kuhlwein said.

Equipment upgrades will include a new glass removal and cleanup system, optical sorters for the paper line to clean paper to current market specifications, implementing new screening technology, a new paper baler and associated equipment.

Moreover, while the Freeholders and the contractor provide the funds to upgrade equipment to meet new market specifications, County officials are also calling on municipalities and residents to do their share in making certain only recyclables are tossed in the recycling bin.

"It is more important than ever that we recycle the proper materials and not add household trash to our recycling bins," Little said. "We are asking everyone to be more mindful of the materials they recycle and to especially not use plastic bags which have created extensive problems at our processing facility."

A recent visit to the Ocean County Southern Recycling Center in Stafford Township uncovered regular household garbage in with some recyclables. The most notable item was a toilet bowl complete with the tank.

"These items need to be disposed of properly and they should not be put out with recyclables," Little said. "There are numerous county and town-run programs that can help households get rid of bulk items and other trash. We have all worked hard to create programs that are accessible and convenient; now our citizens need to use them properly.

"These prohibited items decrease productivity at our processing center in addition to increasing maintenance costs, and result in higher residue rates, all of which affect the financial stability of the operation for the County and its municipalities," Little said.

The material that should be placed curbside in one container for recycling is only comprised of bottles, cans, cardboard, newspaper, junk mail, magazines, office paper and catalogs. The material should not be placed in plastic bags but rather a recycling container to be picked up by the municipality.

"Our recycling program was essentially designed to be financially self-sustaining," Little said. "Simply put, the cost of the program was covered by revenue generated from the sale of recycled materials. This approach has been successful for three decades.





"Our municipalities have enjoyed our recycling revenue sharing program which has returned more than \$16 million to our towns," Little said. "In addition, we have added years to the privately-run Ocean County Landfill by keeping these materials from using up landfill space.

"That also has resulted in substantial savings for our towns," Little said.

However, this year was the first in 30 years the County's recycling operation lost revenue.

"We are taking aggressive steps to make certain our recycling program remains viable now and into the future," Little said. "There is a lot of work ahead of us. We need our towns to help and we need our citizens to be mindful of how they recycle.

"This program continues to come with significant environmental and economic benefits," he added. "That is why it is so important to implement these improvements."

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