

The Challenges of Rural Recycling

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THE PROBLEM

Currently in Washington County curbside recycling is not available in every city. The number one challenge with rural recycling is that the distance between homes makes curbside recycling expensive. The few people that do recycle have to haul their recyclables to a drop-off sites. Which consist of either driving to the nearest drop-off site or waiting to drop-off their recyclables during set up community time and locations in their town once or twice a month. While the problem is being addressed by providing drop-off locations for recyclables. There is another concern with the availability of recycling information to the residents of rural communities. At this point if you try to find information on recycling in these rural communities it can be a very time consuming search unless you know where to look. While there are great sources of information not all communities have an information problem. It can be difficult for the common person to find the information. Making the main two problems among these rural communities, the lack of public information and the fact that some of these rural communities are perfect examples of rural recycling. The question is why doesn't everyone have access to information or rural recycling?

THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to find the missing gaps in recycling in the rural communities of Washington County. The rural cities in this study are Prairie Grove, Goshen, Johnson, Greenland, West Fork, Winslow, Lincoln, Elkins, Elm Springs and Farmington. After examining the demographics to these 10 cities and the resources available to this area, the goal is to implement a program that would allow all rural communities to have easy access to recycling information in their communities and curbside recycling.

Research was conducted to find the gaps in recycling in the rural communities of Washington County. The Solid Waste/Recycling Survey conducted in 2012 was used to find out whether trash collection included recycling pick-up or not. Since 2012 there have been drop-off sites organized for the residents of the rural communities to be able to drop-off recyclables. Arkansas GIS office was used to find the city limits and main Highways of these rural communities. Washington County website www.co.washington.ar.us was used to confirm drop-off sites location and times of operation. Washington County, Minnesota waste management master plan 2012-2030 was used to compile Madison County and Washington County master plan.

Table 1 below illustrates the 10 rural cities in the study and whether they have curbside recycling available or not. As well as the drop-off site location for the rural city.

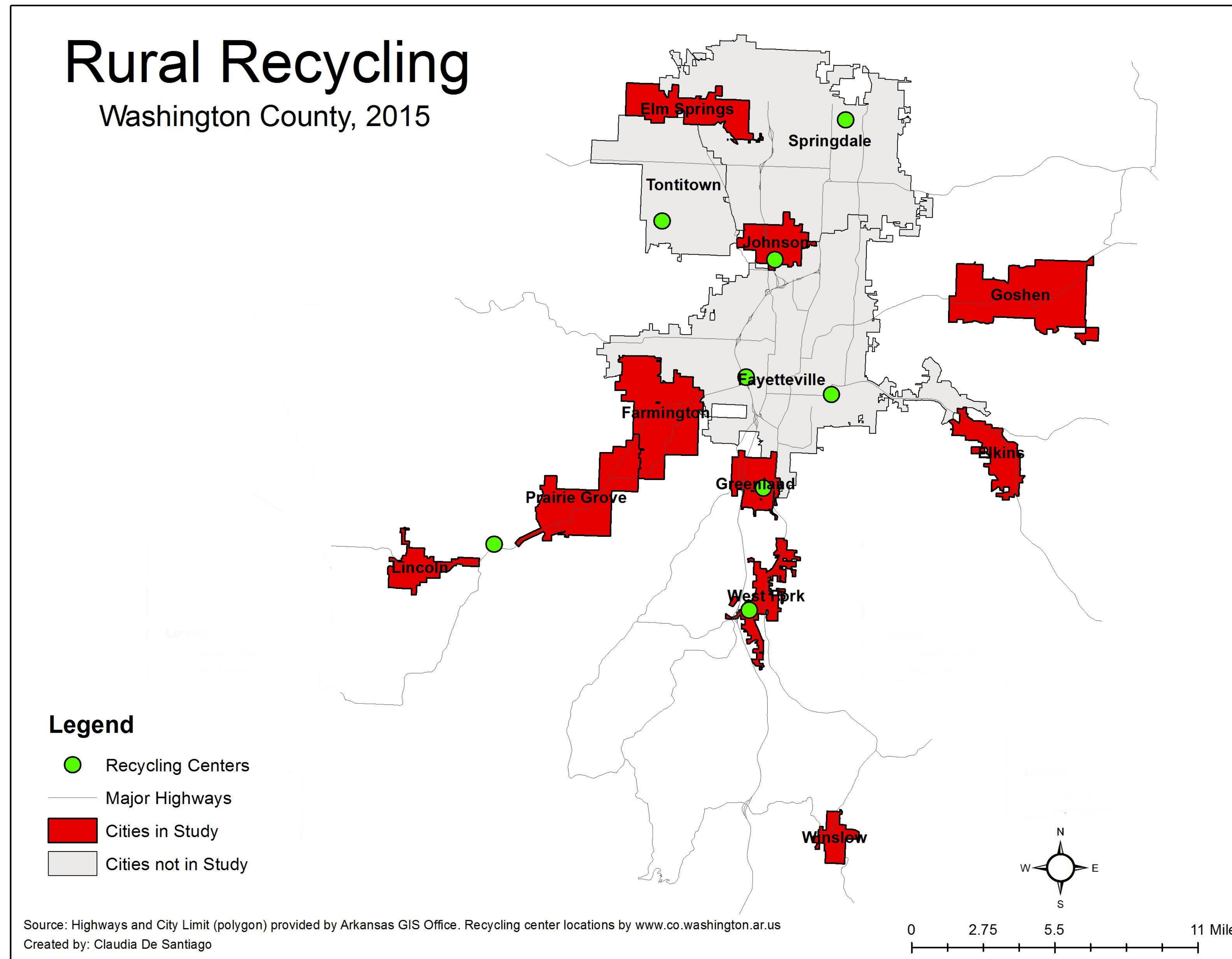
Table 1

Rural Cities	Curbside Recycling Available	Drop-off Site
Prairie Grove		Prairie Grove Public Works 114 S Neal St. Wed. 3pm-6pm & Sat. 8am-12pm Boston Mt. Solid Waste 11 398 Bond Rd. Mon.-Fri. 7am-4:30pm & Sat. 8am-12pm
Goshen		
Johnson		Fibre Source 7115 McGuire St. Fayetteville Mon.-Fri. 8am-4:30pm
Greenland		Community Center 170 Letitia St. Greenland Mon.-Fri. 8am-4pm and Sat. 8am-3:30pm
West Fork		Renewable Resource Center 141 Campbell Ave. West Fork Saturday 9am-12pm
Winslow		Winslow Blvd. Across from City Hall 1st Saturday of every month 9am-12pm
Lincoln		Haps Parking Lot in Lincoln 2nd & 4th Monday of every month 10am-5pm
Elkins		Pizza Junction Parking Lot 1st & 3rd Monday of every month 10am-5pm
Elm Springs		Elm Springs City Hall 2nd & 4th Saturday of every month 9am-12pm
Farmington		

Source: Curbside recycling available Boston Mountain Solid Waste District, Solid Waste/Recycling Survey 2012. Recycling center locations by www.co.washington.ar.us. Created By: Claudia De Santiago

Rural Recycling

Washington County, 2015



Note: The recycling centers shown on the map above are solely recycling centers and not drop-off sites.

PROPOSAL

The solution would be to compile a waste management master plan between Madison County and Washington County. Madison County has a huge rural population that borders Washington County. The purpose of the master plan would be to work collaboratively towards shared goals as a region that would benefit both counties economically, environmentally and insure that waste management services are accessible to all residents, business, and institutions. The master plan would build upon a developed waste management system where parts of the system are already working well and other parts need assistance. The plan would be used as a tool in order to implement policies and strategies to reduce waste. It would be very important to obtain direct public input in order to serve all needs.

Areas of focus

- Most importantly support for cities on residential recycling
- Collaboration between counties
- Development of outreach programs both for business and schools

Strategies

- Develop funding programs
- Performance evaluation reports
- Increase recycling and organic recovery
- Measuring progress towards waste objectives
- Make recycling available away from home
- Manage waste as a resource by reducing pollution, energy, and greenhouse gases

Policies

- Everyone would be accountable for meeting waste objectives (residents, business, and government).
- Behavioral changes by business, residents, and government.
- Integrate a county solid waste management system following an order of preference
- The government at all levels needs to be the leader and lead by example.
- Initiatives towards the private sector
- Responsible planning and management of resources
- Waste management cost should be visible, based on volume, and paid directly by the generator.
- Non Municipal Solid Waste Management

SUSTAINABILITY

By researching the challenges of rural recycling and proposing a partnership master plan I was able to connect all four systems of sustainability. From the Social systems point, I was able to see the attitudes of rural residents towards recycling. People want recycling but due to where they reside it is not always available. Information is limited for the residents of these rural communities. While drop-off sites are being made available. There is still the inconvenience of limited days and hours of operation and the far distance of these drop-off sites for some residents. The connection my project makes with the Natural and Managed systems is that recycled items all have a life beyond consumption, the cost of an item doesn't stop with its product price. People want to improve their carbon footprint and if made accessible would participate. The Built system is seen in the non municipal solid waste management policy. This policy could implement sustainable building guidelines in order to reduce energy cost, reduce waste created from construction and improve indoor air quality.

Being able to intern at Boston Mountain Solid Waste District has given me insight to all the work that is done behind the scenes that most citizens don't experience in order to make waste reduction possible. There are many organizations, individuals, business and cities trying to implement the best way to reduce waste. This experience has exposed me to different sides of the waste management world. In order to obtain a well developed and successful waste management plan there has to be a great amount of collaboration among a diverse group of industries and individuals, making the process of a partnership difficult. This concept of absolute collaboration has never seemed so difficult until this experience. It can be very challenging to form partnerships among counties politics, regulations, boards and committees have to be taken into consideration. Until this internship the only experience I had with waste management was just standard recycling in which I participate. I feel that future students can benefit from working with Boston Mountain Solid Waste District, they are a diverse organization just like the concept of sustainability. I hope that my project informs students of the challenges in rural recycling and encourages them to reduce their carbon footprint.

