

Proponent Testimony on HB 793

EXHIBIT 1  
DATE 3.23.05  
HB 793

My name is Will Selser. I recently retired after 29 years of service with Lewis and Clark County. The last 16 years of that was managing their solid waste services. In 1994, after an all-too-commonly contentious battle, lasting 8 ½ years, Lewis and Clark County opened a new landfill. One of the prime mandates for the operation of this facility is to make it last as long as possible. There is only one way to meet that mandate – put as little waste as possible into it. The only way to do that is through aggressive implementation of a reuse and recycling program. I am happy to say that many areas around the state and cities like Helena and Billings, as well as the nationally famous Headwaters Recycling Cooperative are doing just that. But with all these efforts, we currently divert only about 14% of the state's solid waste from its landfills.

Why is that? One of the reasons is that there is no stable, long-term funding source for both state-wide and local reuse/recycling programs. In a low-population, spacious state like Montana, recycling usually costs money. A good example, about which you will hear more later, is the program to grind up glass containers and use them as part of the base material for road building. Money from a somewhat controversial source had to be used to get that program off the ground. Startup ran over \$80,000 and the long-term operational costs, estimated at some \$40,000 per year, are still not secured. This program will directly benefit all the residents of the state for many years to come. But no single city, county or private solid waste enterprise could reasonably be expected to fund such a program. It is expensive to start and operate. And there is no profit from it.

HB793 would establish a funding source specifically for these type programs. Programs like plastics recycling, reuse of tires, etc. And the administrative mechanism to collect these funds is already in place. And the distribution of these funds would be decided by a commission made up almost exclusively of people who work in and understand the need for these recycling/reuse programs.

**I would suggest one amendment – in Section 3 (3). The 9% included should be reduced to 5 %. There should be no admin. cost to collection of this fee and commission costs should be minimal.**

In closing, I would like to point out that at the beginning fee of 30 cents per ton, it will cost the average household 45 cents per year to create this very useful fund. Even when fully billed out in 2008-2009, at 60 cents per ton, the average residential unit will pay 90 cents per year to maintain this fund. I fully believe that if you were to ask your constituents they would say this is a small price to pay for expanded recycling in our Montana communities. And a small price to pay to compared to the painful community processes involved in opening or expanding landfills that nobody wants near them.

Thank you for your time and attention. You may reach me at 406-461-2958 or [wastenotsolution@aol.com](mailto:wastenotsolution@aol.com) if you have questions.

Will Selser