



June 13, 2017

Dear Community Partner,

SWACO's neighborhood Drop-Off Recycling Program is a point of pride for the agency and is one of our signature programs in the community. Like any business or government agency, we strive to ensure that our programs are run safely, efficiently and make the best use of resources.

We're happy to be able to report that today in Franklin County, 96-percent of all single-family households have access to curbside recycling. Just a few short years ago, this wasn't the case. As recycling continues to evolve, and the needs and behaviors of residents and businesses continue to change, SWACO's programs also need to evolve. To that end, our Drop-Off Recycling Program, like many long-standing SWACO programs, is under review and evaluation.

Currently, SWACO operates an estimated 180 drop-off locations throughout the District. However, in recent years the program has experienced several challenges which have resulted in us planning for changes and performing additional analysis of potential modifications to the program. A summary of those challenges is outlined below.

### **Documented Program Challenges**

**Illegal Dumping & Contamination:** SWACO monitors recycling drop-off locations daily to ensure the site locations are properly maintained and to remove any bulking material (i.e. furniture, construction materials) that is illegally dumped. Illegal dumping has been an increasing problem. In 2015 SWACO staff removed over 35 tons of illegally dumped material, and in 2016 that amount was over 50 tons. The high amount of contamination and illegal dumping is a growing cost for the program.

**Reduced Volume & Demand:** Recycling in Franklin County has changed over the last 5 years. Today, 96% of all single-family households in the County can recycle at the curb. As the result of increased participation in curbside recycling programs, and particularly following the 2012 implementation of curbside recycling in the city of Columbus, the District's largest community, the use of SWACO's Drop-Off Recycling Program has decreased by nearly half of the volume it was receiving five years ago; from 16,443 tons in 2011 to 8,574 tons in 2016.

**Increased Program Costs:** Due to the reduced volume, increased contamination, and new Material Recovery Facility (MRF) recycling fees, the costs for operating the program on a per ton basis have also increased in recent years. In 2011 the cost per ton to operate the program was \$41.21, and in 2016 the cost per ton was \$94.00. The operating expenses for the program in 2016 were \$806,039.00. While on a cost-per-ton basis these are comparable and acceptable costs for this type of program, the efficiency and impacts of the program continue to decrease as the public improves their use of more convenient curbside and home recycling programs.

### **Program Changes**

Over the past year, SWACO has been monitoring and evaluating the program to address the challenges previously outlined.

**Reduction of Site Locations with High Contamination Rates:** In June of 2016, SWACO removed 18 site locations due to heavy illegal dumping and contamination.

**Columbus City Schools Transition:** On July 1, 2017, the containers at Columbus City School locations will transfer from SWACO to CCS for school-use only. These recycling containers will no longer be available for use by the public and will be serviced by a private hauler. CCS and SWACO are working collaboratively to communicate these changes to the public in advance of the transition.

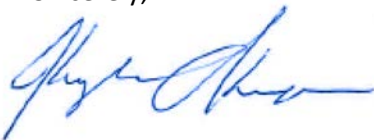
We recognize that change can be difficult and we're striving to mitigate any inconvenience these program changes may cause by offering the following tips for program users.

- SWACO will continue to operate the Drop-Off Recycling Program at many other locations throughout Franklin County. To find a participating site near you, visit [swaco.org](http://swaco.org).
- Individuals are encouraged to maximize their curbside recycling.
  - Break down cardboard boxes before placing them in the recycling container to save space;
  - Call 3-1-1 and request an additional recycling container for a fee and increase at-home recycling capacity;
  - Renters and individuals living in multifamily properties should contact their property manager to learn more about additional recycling services.

We appreciate the community's support of this program and the necessary updates. The outcome of these changes will also allow SWACO to realize cost savings that will contribute to the development of even greater convenient and sustainable programs that align with SWACO's draft Solid Waste Management Plan.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kyle O'Keefe, Innovation and Programs Director