

## WHERE DO OUR RECYCLABLES GO?

The state of MA has banned the disposal of recyclables and other items such as cathode ray tubes, in landfills and municipal waste combustors. As a result over the last 25 years, generators, hauling companies, municipalities and other businesses have created a network of facilities to divert these materials from disposal. Many towns now commingle plastics with other recyclables in either a single or dual stream collection. As Bourne is planning future single stream collection, some members of ISWM and the Recycling Committee toured the E.L. Harvey facility in Westboro, MA to watch their single stream process. This is the facility where the ISWM Department currently sends our recyclables along with those from Falmouth and from hauling companies on the Cape.

The commingled material is dumped on the tipping floor of a materials recovery facility (MRF), where bulky or dangerous items can be removed by hand. The remainder is loaded into a large hopper by a front-end loader where the material is then uniformly distributed on a conveyor belt that leads to the main body of the MRF. With the aid of hundreds of feet of conveyor belts, blowers, optical scanners, magnets, eddy currents for non-ferrous metals and specialized screens plus 40 men and women (pickers), this material is sorted into fiber (paper and cardboard), glass, various metals, and two plastics mixes. Paper comprises 50% of the incoming material with only 5% ending up as contamination for disposal. Once sorted, these materials are baled and sold in the commodities market to brokers or in some cases directly to manufacturers who will use them instead of raw materials to make new products. Some markets do exist in the U.S., however much of the mix of recyclables is shipped to China. This MRF at E.L. Harvey covers 80,000 square feet and handles about 600 tons per day with 85 to 95% recovery. When you shop for items, look for information that indicates it contains "post-consumer" recycled content. That will be a sign that you are closing the loop by supporting manufacturers who use recyclables in their processes.

In addition to the MRF, Harvey has a 30,000 sf building for high grade office paper and newspaper, a 20,000 sf transfer station for trash that is sent to a solid waste to energy facility, and a 47,000 sf construction and demolition (C&D) building which takes asphalt, brick, concrete, wood, metal, cardboard, shingles, drywall, and rigid plastic. This latter was built in 2006 and houses specialized equipment from The Netherlands that recycles 85% of the 350 tons received per day. The sorting process is similar to the MRF for recyclables where incoming materials are tipped on a floor, sorted by hand and then put on to conveyor belts leading to screens, a water bath where the wood floats out and heavy items sink to the bottom, followed by hand picking stations for high quality wood and magnets for metal recovery. Depending on the quality, wood can go to make energy or be used in making particle board.

E. L. Harvey is an independent fourth generation family business founded in 1911 with eight family members currently working there. Its complex has eight buildings sited on 100 acres. They have 350 employees and 250 vehicles servicing 3,500 commercial customers, 2,000 industrial customers, and 12,000 residences. They receive material from as far away as New Hampshire. Harvey has received awards for their education and safety efforts and are known for their high standards that reliably produce high quality commodities for recycling.