

# Landfills still No. 1 – public enemy, that is

By Jim Johnson  
WRN senior reporter

Saint Consulting Group each year surveys Americans about their property development preferences.

And every time in the survey's first five years, landfills come out as public enemy No. 1.

Make that six years.

Landfills once again top the list of unwanted projects.

It's a Who's Who of unwelcome development – power plants, Wal-Marts, casinos and quarries all join landfills on the list.

But landfills, with a 76% opposition rate, consistently rank first.

"It is the most opposed land use in the United States," said Patrick Fox, president of Saint Consulting, a land use consulting company that specializes in controversial projects. "It is difficult to come up with reasons to give abutters for why they should want to support a landfill.

"There are great cases you can make for what it's going to look like in 20 or 30 years. It's going to

be a great park. There are great things we're going to do with it. We're really going to benefit and enhance the community. But during the period that it's a landfill, it's not helping your real estate values. The truck traffic isn't helping. It's a problem," Fox said.

While more than three out of every four people surveyed say they are opposed to landfills, the number isn't as high as what was posted during the first two years of the survey.

In both 2006 and 2007, more than 80% of those participating in the survey opposed landfills in their hometowns – 82% in 2006 and 87% in 2007.

Will Flower, a spokesman for Republic Services Inc., figures he's been directly involved in promoting 20 or so landfill projects over the course of his career.

"I'm not surprised the public



Patrick Fox

opinion is that landfills are difficult to site, having spent a career working in the trenches trying to convince communities that there are benefits associated with landfills," he said. "People need to understand that landfills serve as a vital component of the infrastructure of any municipality."

Those most likely to oppose a landfill are those who have the most to lose by living near a disposal site, Fox said.

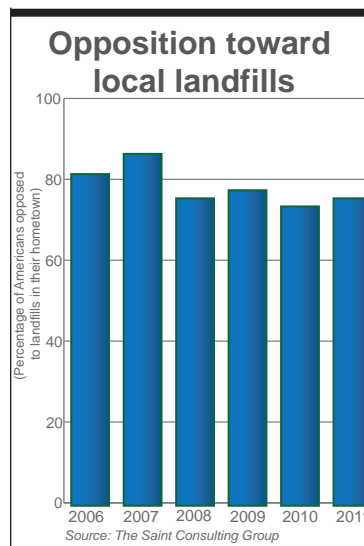
"All of that just comes down to the more affluent the community, the more opposition you are going to get. The more education, the more value in the home, the more they have to protect," Fox said.

Interestingly, landfill opposition is most likely to occur in the Northeast.

Those most likely to support a landfill development rent their homes and have a lower household income, Fox said. "They have less to lose. They are concerned about jobs," he said.

More landfill supporters also tend to live in the South.

While landfills rank first again



MARIA KIRCH / WASTE & RECYCLING NEWS

this year, casinos are not far behind with a 74% opposition rate in 2010. Comparatively, 72% of Americans were opposed to landfills last year and 77% were opposed to them in 2008.

Fox said he doesn't expect landfill opposition to change much. "I don't think it's going to get any better. It's always going to be difficult," he said.

Development opponents have become more vocal and sophisticated over the years and now have the ear of politicians. That requires landfill developers to garner support in different ways. That could include finding supporters from a different part of

## For the record

### Fuel standards story

Because of a reporting error, an article about new federal fuel standards in the Aug. 22 issue incorrectly stated the length of time MSWMA's Chaz Miller has been investigating the issue. Miller has been examining federal fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements since July 2010.

town and becoming part of the community in other ways.

"Elected officials are not going to commit political suicide for your project," Fox said. "Prove that you are a good neighbor, that you are going to sponsor things in the community. Maybe it's Little League. Maybe it's local hockey. Maybe it's the mayor's library project."

Flower said it was actually more difficult to site a landfill 10 years ago. "Today, I think the public is, by and large, more educated and there are many more tools for us to communicate with the public," he said.

The solid waste industry, he said, also is more open to communicating landfill plans.

The annual survey interviews 1,000 adults across the country to track attitudes about development and the politics of land use, according to Saint Consulting. ■

# Despite policy, Coke steps up recycling initiatives

By Vince Bond Jr.  
WRN reporter

The Coca-Cola Company has taken a stance against bottle deposit laws, but that doesn't mean the company isn't pursuing recycling in other ways.

Gary Wygant, director of recovery development for Coca-Cola Recycling LLC, said the company has launched several recycling initiatives across the nation in recent years to spur material recovery, ranging from a recycling partnership with Atlanta's Turner Field to donating bins to the National Mall in Washington.

Wygant said consumer awareness is a major factor in recycling success, so the company will deploy its five Recycling Education Vehicles (REVs) 600 times this year.

In years past, the vehicles have made stops at NASCAR races, the Super Bowl, World Series, NCAA Final Four and the national conventions of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Coke expects to reach more than 20 million people with the vehicles this year. In 2010, REVs engaged 19 million people, he said.

The vehicles have video screens, interactive displays and educational games about the benefits of recycling.

"We take an approach to recy-



Courtesy, The Coca-Cola Company

**A Recycling Education Vehicle is stationed at Stetson University in DeLand, Fla. The vehicles have video screens, interactive displays and educational games about the benefits of recycling.**

cling at Coke that is three pronged," Wygant said. "In order to generate more recycling, we need to provide education and awareness. Make sure the consumer has access to recycling. Then you have to make sure that material is being recovered responsibly and brought back into the supply chain as a valuable commodity."

Wygant said the company favors a more comprehensive approach to recycling instead of focusing on a small amount of the waste stream like deposit

measures do.

The American Beverage Association agrees.

"Invest in comprehensive recycling programs and infrastructure," said Chris Gindlesperger, director of communications for the Washington D.C.-based association. "Address all materials in the waste stream. [Bottle deposit laws] are costly and outdated. There are many recyclable materials that need to be addressed."

However, critics say municipal recycling programs aren't always sustainable.

Anthony Leteri, president of USA Recycling Facility Services in Kings Park, N.Y., said communities often are forced to cut recycling services because they're too costly.

USA Recycling operates a recycling transfer station, taking in items such as bottles, paper, wood and other nonhazardous waste.

"When you offer an incentive to anyone to generate some revenues, it increases productivity," Leteri said. "If you look at any city with a bottle law, you can't show me a case where this isn't a true story. I have a tremendous respect for the company, but in this issue, I think they need to do their homework."

To make sure people have access to recycling, Wygant said Coca-Cola has placed 130,000 bins across the nation, including a few hundred at the National Mall, "America's front lawn."

Coke also donated two trailers for Mall use, each containing 200 recycling bins that can be easily deployed during events.

Cans collected at the Mall are taken to material recovery facilities, which Wygant said are "underutilized."

"There is a lot of capacity there. What we need to do is fill it up," he said. "We do deals to get commodity from them. It's good commerce."

As part of Coca-Cola's access

strategy, the company launched Reimagine centers in November at Kroger grocery stores in Arlington, Plano, and Garland, Texas.

People with no access to recycling can drop off their bottles at Reimagine machines stationed in store parking lots and, in return, receive My Coke rewards points they can save to redeem prizes such as McDonald's gift cards or tickets to Six Flags over Texas in Arlington.

They also can donate points to schools that may be used to purchase supplies, he said.

The company estimates that more than 300,000 containers will be recycled monthly by each machine, keeping 70 tons of waste out of landfills each year.

Wygant said the Reimagine program should expand to more locations next year.

"It's important to make sure that containers are being converted and used for a useful purpose," Wygant said. "It's been recovered; it's not being incinerated; and it's creating jobs. For every unit of recycled material, where one job exists for the landfill, 2.5 are created at recycling operations. That's very powerful. Those materials have real economic value." ■

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