



Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority  
*A joint powers public agency*

Letter to Four Jurisdictions – Sept. 17, 2021

County of Mendocino  
City of Ukiah  
City of Ft. Bragg  
City of Willits

Dear Board and City Councils,

Background:

Mendocino Solid Waste Management Authority (MSWMA) is formed by a Joint Powers Agreement of County of Mendocino and Cities of Ukiah, Ft. Bragg and Willits. The agency provides an essential service of collecting, recycling where possible, and disposing of hazardous wastes, including chemicals, paints, tires, batteries, propane tanks, pharmaceuticals, liquid fuels, fluorescent tubes, aerosols, freon, and other materials. To the extent feasible it also does county-wide illegal dump clean-ups. These services are NOT included in the garbage service provided by private haulers under contract with their respective jurisdictions and which are paid for by their customers.

This agency does not have a customer base and does not charge for most of its services (since to do so might result in hazardous waste being thrown on our roadsides and into our creeks). Instead, we have relied almost exclusively on a surcharge on tipping fees, currently at \$6.50/ton (which in turn is passed on under their respective contracts to the customers of the private garbage hauling companies), and on various grants, primarily for handling HHW (household hazardous waste), tires, paint, and oil.

The reliance on the tipping fee surcharge and grant funding was almost sufficient to cover the services - until the pandemic hit in March of 2020. In a pattern experienced in many other jurisdictions, the quantity of HHW increased dramatically. For MSWMA, the HHW disposal costs went from an average of \$103,000 annually in the preceding four years to over \$150,000 in FY 2019-20 (only 3-1/2 months into the pandemic) and then to \$220,000 in FY 2020-21. The cumulative strain on the budget has been an increased outlay of almost \$150,000. (See attached five year financial summary.)

For a year, hoping that the unusual circumstances were temporary, we tried to cope with our budget by scrimping (delaying some repairs, stockpiling some expensive disposals, cutting the training budget, etc.) and drawing down on our reserves. In April 2020, our Board recommended seeking one-time contributions from our four member jurisdictions to replenish reserves and enable us to seek more grant funding. In subsequent months, a Technical Advisory Committee of city managers and/or staff explored an alternative of an increase in the tipping fee surcharge; they also suggested (but did not recommend) possible alternative management structures.

At the meeting of the MSMWA Board on Sept. 16, we finally decided to go back to the request for a one-time contribution from our member jurisdictions. If approved, this will enable the agency to continue providing its essential public services at a reasonable level, to begin disposing of stockpiled HHW, and to pursue more grant funding. To address the longer-term, the Board will have time to explore whether there are more efficient management options, funding mechanisms, or other solutions.

Request for One-Time Contributions:

The funding requested from each jurisdiction is as follows, based on proportion of 2020 population:

|                                   |                  |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| City of Ukiah (pop. 16,061)       | \$ 29,440        |
| City of Ft. Bragg (pop. 7,427)    | \$ 13,600        |
| City of Willits (pop. 5,072)      | \$ 9,280         |
| County of Mendocino (pop. 58,915) | <u>\$107,680</u> |
| Total                             | \$160,000        |

The viability of this proposal relies on all four jurisdictions agreeing to contribute their share.

We request that you place this on an upcoming agenda for your governing body as soon as possible. One or more representative of MSWMA will be happy to attend to present this request and answer questions. Please RSVP to me as to when this item is scheduled, at (707) 459-1493 or [mstrong@willitsonline.com](mailto:mstrong@willitsonline.com).

Sincerely,

Madge Strong, Chair on behalf of the MSWMA Board (Dan Gjerde, Mo Mulheren, Jim Brown, and Jessica Morsell-Haye, and myself)