

Alternative Governance Case Studies

*Prepared for Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy
June 11, 2025; Revised January 9, 2026*

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Executive Summary and Key Findings

Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) tasked HDR with identifying examples of alternative governance structures, such as Solid Waste Management Districts (SWMD) or similar entities to understand how they function in managing solid waste. R&E selected 12 of the identified entities for a detailed evaluation and then conducted detailed interviews with five selected entities.

Key Findings:

Oversight: The level of oversight and regulatory authority varies widely by type of entity, with some entities owning and operating facilities, and others only providing administrative coordination between member communities (such as annual reporting).

Structure: Examples of both intergovernmental partnerships (including joint powers, cooperative agreements, and special districts) and state regulations/processes to develop entities were identified. Of the 12 entities, six are partnerships and six are formed via state regulations. Local government collaboration from member communities is key for all entities.

Boards: Oversight is provided by Boards, which have varying levels of involvement and authority over the identified entities. Some Boards are highly involved with decision making, while others have limited involvement. All identified entities have Boards comprised of elected officials from local jurisdictions or local government staff. There were no new board elections specific to the entities, as is the case for many Watershed Districts and Conservation Districts in MN.

Staffing: Interviewed entities typically had a small number of direct staff members and often contracted for additional services, including facility operations.

Onboarding and offboarding communities: Multiple entities discussed member communities (cities or counties) choosing to leave or requesting to join the entity. Several entities identified the need for clear pathways for such transitions and changes.

Additional follow-up: Two of the entities interviewed have many similarities to R&E and may provide additional benefit through future connections.

- Rethink Waste in California is a large organization, with oversight of a franchise agreement for waste hauling for their member communities and oversight of the operations for various waste facilities. Rethink's Board of Directors was previously city staff but transitioned to elected officials due to the desire by elected officials to be more involved.
- Montgomery County Solid Waste District in Ohio owns and operates facilities and provides significant education and outreach to the community. Montgomery County SWD is funded through tip fees and property charges, and they have had experience with member communities wanting to leave and join their SWD. Montgomery County's size is comparable to R&E.

Introduction and Background

Ramsey/Washington Recycling & Energy (R&E) identified a need to better understand alternative governance structures, such as Solid Waste Management Districts (SWMD), and how they function in managing solid waste within a community. HDR conducted a national search and utilized industry knowledge and connections to identify existing structures that may be useful case studies for R&E. After compiling a list, R&E selected 12 entities for a detailed evaluation and then further focused on five entities for interviews.

The following document includes summaries of the selected entities. This document is meant as reference material for R&E to summarize the identified alternative governance structures.

Feedback from the research identified the following key findings:

- The level of oversight and regulatory authority varies widely by type of entity, with some entities owning and operating facilities, and others only providing administrative coordination between member communities (such as annual reporting).
- Oversight is provided by Boards, which have varying levels of involvement and authority over the identified entities. Some Boards are highly involved with decision making, while others have limited involvement.
- Interviewed entities typically had a small number of direct staff members and often contracted for services including facility operations.
- Multiple entities discussed member communities (cities or counties) choosing to leave or join their organizations, and the need for clear pathways for such transitions and changes.

Delaware Solid Waste Authority

Area represented: The State of Delaware

Purpose: Providing dependable, accessible, and sustainable solid waste management systems to the State of Delaware

Founding legislation: The enactment in 1975 of Title 7, chapter 64 of the Delaware Code made the Delaware Solid Waste Authority responsible for developing, adopting and implementing the Statewide waste management plan for Delaware.

[Delaware Code Online](#): Title 7, chapter 64, powers of authority—6406

Though created by the General Assembly in 1975, DSWA is **not** a state agency. DSWA receives no state or federal tax dollars. Additional information on founding and history: [History - DSWA](#)

Board: DSWA has a Board of Directors and a Citizens' Advisory Board. The members of the Board, except for the Board Chairperson, are confirmed by the state senate, and the Governor appoints Board members for three-year terms. The Board of Directors sets policies and has decision-making authority about current operations, programs, and planning, and they hire employees.

Staff: DSWA has a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Operating Officer.

Facilities and services: They have recycling centers, collection stations, transfer stations and landfills.

Website: [Home - Delaware Solid Waste Authority](#)

Other highlights: They offer two student scholarships to Delaware students studying engineering or environmental studies programs.

Eastern Idaho Waste District

Area represented: Madison, Fremont, Clark and Teton Counties, Idaho

Purpose: The District’s mission is to provide solid waste disposal services, facilities, and equipment to reduce, transfer, and recycle solid waste within the Eastern Idaho region.

Founding legislation: [ABOUT – Eastern Idaho Waste District](#)

[Section 31-4902 – Idaho State Legislature](#)

Powers of board: [Section East31-4906 – Idaho State Legislature](#)

“The District does not have taxing authority. **Ultimately, future costs will be reduced for taxpayers** through regional consolidation of services and reduced landfill tipping fee costs. This regional collaboration provides a responsible solution to deliver essential services while conserving public resources.”

Board: The district is governed by a Board of Directors, with one board member representing each member county, selected by its county.

Staff: They have an Executive Director and a municipal advisor.

Website: [Eastern Idaho Waste District – Environmentally Conscious Waste Management](#)

News: [Local landfill 14 years in the making will serve 80,000 people in four counties - East Idaho News](#)

Johnson County Solid Waste District

Area represented: Johnson County, Wyoming

The Johnson County Solid Waste District was formed in 2002. It is a Special District of Johnson County, Wyoming.

Legislation: [Wyoming Statutes CHAPTER 11 - Solid Waste Disposal Districts](#)

Board: The Solid Waste Board is comprised of six members.

Staff: The Solid Waste District has a manager.

Facilities and Services: A landfill and recycling center. They accept solid waste, construction waste, & green waste. They also accept tires, freon units, & metal.

Website: [Johnson County Solid Waste District](#)

News: [Johnson County Commission Updated on Landfill Expansion – Sheridan Media](#)

[Talking trash | News | buffalobulletin.com](#)

Mid-America Regional Council Solid Waste Management District

Area represented: Kansas City, MO-District E: Cass, Clay, Jackson, Platte, and Ray counties, Missouri

Purpose: The districts were created to foster regional cooperation between cities and counties in managing solid waste. The districts help plan and implement recycling services and other alternatives to waste disposal at the local level. They also administer waste reduction, reuse, recycling and composting grants to support these efforts.

Founding legislation: Missouri Statutes: [Missouri Revisor of Statutes - Revised Statutes of Missouri, RSMo Section 260.300-310](#) lists the contractual authority and powers of the SWMD.

Board: The District represents the interests of members through a 15-member Executive Board and a management council.

Staff: Staff from the Mid-American Regional Council support the Solid Waste Management District with administrative tasks and staffing through an annual memorandum of understanding.

Website: [Solid Waste Management District | MARC](#)

Lake Region Solid Waste Authority

Area represented: Anderson, Coffee, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Osage, and Shawnee Counties, Kansas

Purpose: Facilitate proper solid waste management, advocate for waste reduction and landfill diversion, and encourage the public to recycle.

Founding legislation: [About Us – Lake Region Solid Waste Authority](#)

In 1995, six counties agreed to form a Solid Waste Authority for joint planning and in 2024 a seventh county joined. The government document for this authority is an interlocal agreement, which is signed by each county commissioner and then sent to the Kansas Attorney General for final approval.

Each county in the solid waste authority receives funds from tipping fees or tax revenue or something similar to finance the county's solid waste operations. The operating budget for the solid waste authority comes from dues paid by each county.

Board: LRSWA is governed by a Board of Directors made up of two voting members from each of the seven counties.

Staff: They have a regional director who oversees day-to-day operations.

Website: [Lake Region Solid Waste Authority – Serving Anderson, Coffey, Franklin, Linn, Miami, Osage, and Shawnee Counties](#)

Solid Waste Management Plan: [LAKE REGION](#)

Interview highlights:

- The LRSWA provides reporting oversight to the state and coordinates education and outreach on a limited basis. They have one staff person who works part-time to compile annual reporting requirements from the member counties and works with a Board comprised of County Commissioners for high-level collaboration.
- Each county manages its own waste and contracts, and the LRSWA has no facilities, contracts, or other infrastructure.
- The LRSWA has a very limited budget, no specific authority, and serves more as an administrative and educational resource to the counties.

Lincoln County Solid Waste District

Area represented: Cooperative program between the cities of Depoe Bay, Lincoln City, Newport, Siletz, Toledo, Waldport, and Yachats; Dahl Disposal Service; North Lincoln Sanitary Service, Thompson's Sanitary Service; and Lincoln County, Oregon

Purpose: To provide sustainability program coordination, litter and illegal dumping program administration, coordination HHW collection and reduction, strategic planning, management, and reporting for the Lincoln County Waste Shed, and reduce, reuse, recycling and compost promotion and education.

Founding legislation: [Lincoln County Code \(LCC\) Chapter 2](#) Purpose, Policy and Scope

Staff: They have one district manager.

Facilities and services: They have four transfer stations.

Website: [Solid Waste District | Lincoln County, OR](#)

Interview highlights:

- Lincoln County Solid Waste District (LCSWD) is a cooperative agreement between cities and functions as a government organization.
- The existing franchise agreement between the waste haulers and the County provides all services and is outside the oversight of the LCSWD. The LCSWD facilitates the franchise entities and ensures cooperation.
- Family-owned businesses that collaborate well are the key to the current success, for hauling and facility management within the District.
- The LCSWD serves as a resource, provides coordination, oversees quality service by franchise haulers, and provides education.

Lucas County Solid Waste Management District

Area represented: Lucas County, Ohio

Purpose: “To develop and enhance programs which enable residents to easily recycle common household wastes as well as to assist business and industry with the implementation of waste reduction and recycling programs, with programs/services to reduce, reuse and recycle.”

Founding legislation: [hb592.pdf](#) [Approved-Plan-Update-102324](#)

In 1988, Ohio faced a combination of solid waste management problems, including rapidly declining disposal capacity at existing landfills, increasing quantities of waste being generated and disposed, environmental problems at many existing solid waste disposal facilities, and increasing quantities of waste being imported into Ohio from other states. These issues combined with Ohio's outdated and incomplete solid waste regulations caused Ohio's General Assembly to pass House Bill (H.B.) 592. H.B. 592 dramatically revised Ohio's outdated solid waste regulatory program and established a comprehensive solid waste planning process.

Board: The SWMD has a Board of Trustees/Policy Committee with seven members.

Staff: The SWMD has one staff member, the Solid Waste District Manager.

Website: [Solid Waste Management District | Lucas County, OH - Official Website](#)

News: [Lucas County materials recovery facility \(MRF\) work continues in 2025 | Lucas County, OH](#)

Montgomery County Solid Waste District

Area represented: Montgomery County, Ohio

Purpose: They provide waste disposal and recycling services to Montgomery County municipalities, businesses, and residents.

Founding Legislation: The Montgomery County SWMD formed as a single county district on October 4, 1988.

[Section 3734.52 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

Definition of SWMD: One of two structures a county/group of counties can form for purposes of complying with Ohio Revised Code Section 3734.52. The other structure is a regional solid waste management authority. A solid waste management district can consist of one or more counties. The SWMD's main purpose is to prepare, adopt, submit, and implement a solid waste management plan. In addition, a SWMD is responsible for providing safe and sanitary management of solid waste generated within the SWMD in compliance with Chapters 343 and 3734 of the Ohio Revised Code. A SWMD is governed by two groups – a policy committee and a board of county commissioners/board of directors.

Board: The Montgomery County SWD is governed by two bodies: 1) the Board of Directors, which consists of the county commissioners from all counties in the SWMD, and 2) a Policy Committee, which is responsible for developing a solid waste management plan for the SWMD. BOD is responsible for implementing the policy committee's SWMP.

Staff: The Montgomery County SWD has a director, assistant director, public information officer, and three program specialists on staff.

Facilities and Services: A transfer station, a MRF and an ash monofil. The SWD houses the Environmental Learning Center and the Keep Montgomery County Beautiful program, which offer educational programs to schools, communities and businesses as well as litter resources.

Website: [Solid Waste | Montgomery County, OH - Official Website](#)

SWMP: [Montgomery-County-SWMP---Feb-5-2025](#)

Interview highlights:

- MCSWD owns and operates the transfer station, provides education and outreach, and contracts for some hauling and disposal with a private hauler. They also own and operate a MRF, an Environmental Learning Center, and an ash monofil.
- MCSWD has flow control for the County and also accepts out of county waste at their TS, at a higher fee. The transfer station is currently at capacity.
- MCSWD provides extensive education at the facility, including tours.
- MCSWD is funded through tip fees and annual property charges to all residential (flat fee) and commercial (volume-based) entities in the county.
- MCSWMD utilizes services and pays fees to the County for services such as IT, HR, legal, fleet services, etc., as they are not a county entity.
- MCSWMD has had experience with entities wanting to leave or join the District and has encountered issues when member entities control different assets within the agreements. A clear legal process for joining or leaving a District is critical to success. MCSWMD's existing language is available online for reference.

Regional Recycling & Waste Reduction District

Area represented: Pulaski County, AR

Purpose: Promoting recycling and waste reduction in partnership with Pulaski County residents

Founding legislation: 1991 Arkansas legislation to establish the solid waste districts: [A Bill ACT 752 OF 1991](#)

- [Rules & Regulations of the Pulaski County Regional SWMD](#) Section 5: Powers and Duties

Board: Their Board of Directors is comprised of seven members, including six mayors of communities in the county as well as Pulaski County Judge.

Staff: The District includes four staff, including the Executive Director, contract services, recycling officer and environmental officer.

Facilities and services: residential curbside, recycling and garbage service, special recyclables like electronics, glass, plastic bags, HHW and household batteries, C&D recycling facility, tire recycling in District 2 of Arkansas.

Website: [Regional Recycling & Waste Reduction District – Promoting recycling and waste reduction in partnership with Pulaski County residents and businesses](#)

Other highlights: The board has the power to petition the Arkansas Pollution Control and Ecology Commission or Director of the Arkansas Dept of Env. Quality to issue, continue, revoke, modify or deny any permit for solid waste management. The Regional Recycling & Waste Reduction District originally was called the Pulaski County Regional Solid Waste Management District. The name was changed in 2008.

Rethink Waste South Bayside Waste Management Authority

Area represented: City of Belmont, City of Burlingame, City of East Palo Alto, City of Foster City, Town of Hillsborough, City of Menlo Park, City of Redwood City, City of San Carlos, City of San Mateo, the County of San Mateo and the West Bay Sanitary District, California

Purpose: Provide innovative waste reduction and diversion management through responsible and cost-effective programs that promote environmental sustainability in our communities

Founding legislation: Legal document: [Third Amended and Restated JPA Agreement - clean \(00198459-1\).DOCX](#) with powers of agency (article 7: Powers). Formed in 1982

Board: They have a Board of Directors with eleven members representing the service areas.

Staff: They have ten staff members, including an Executive Director, finance manager, recycling and compliance manager, principal engineer and operations manager and other roles, plus multiple public outreach and environmental education fellows.

Facilities and services: a “joint powers authority where all recyclables, compost materials, and solid waste that are generated within 100+ square mile service area are collected, handled, processed and then transported to their final location. “

They have a franchised waste hauler (Recology San Mateo County) for the Rethink Waste service area and a contractor (South Bayside Industries) to operate the MRF, transfer station and public recycling center.

Website: [RethinkWaste – A Public Agency](#)

Interview highlights:

- Rethink owns a large transfer station and MRF. They have two significant contracts:
 - A master trash and recycling hauling contract for all residential and commercial entities in the District. Individual cities use the master agreement for collections. Individual cities can choose various add-on services (ex. yard waste, bulky items, etc.) and set their own individual billing rates to their customers.
 - A contract for the operations of the Rethink-owned transfer station and MRF.
- Rethink provides oversight and coordination of those two contracts, works with member communities, provides education and outreach, and coordination between member entities.
- Rethink has an ongoing fellowship program for Rethink employees that’s been very successful.
- Rethink has a process for entities to exit the agreement. One member community chose this option, and the process worked.
- Their Executive Director is active in the state legislature, particularly regarding lithium-ion batteries, as their MRF had a significant fire due to a battery.

Solid Waste Agency of Northwest Nebraska

Area represented: Dawes, Sheridan, Sioux Counties and the Hemingford area residents in Box Butte County, Nebraska

Purpose: This agency will handle solid waste from households to final disposal in the communities and provide a disposal site for all rural residents.

Founding legislation: Early in 1992, SWANN was formed by communities and counties. All counties and communities signed an interlocal agreement.

October 9, 1992-new federal regulations went into effect, Subtitle D, related to a law passed called Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, which was followed by passage of [LB1257](#) by NE legislature.

[Mission & History: Solid Waste Agency of Northwest Nebraska \(SWANN\)](#)

[Nebraska Legislature:](#) “County, municipality, or agency; provide or contract for disposal of solid waste; joint ownership of facility; governing body; powers and duties; rates and charges.

(1) Effective October 1, 1993, each county and municipality shall provide or contract for facilities and systems as necessary for the safe and sanitary disposal of solid waste generated within its solid waste jurisdiction area. Such disposal shall comply with rules and regulations adopted and promulgated by the council for integrated solid waste management programs.”

Board: They have a Board of Directors, who represent the participating communities and counties.

Staff: They have two executive staff members, an Executive Director and an Operations Director. They also have administrative office staff, collection, disposal and transfer station staff, and community site operators.

Facilities: SWANN has a transfer station in Chadron and a landfill, as well as community sites in seven towns.

Services: They provide commercial and construction disposal service, residential waste removal service and roll-off dumpster service. Customers pay the SWANN directly for their services.

Website: [Solid Waste Agency of Northwest Nebraska \(SWANN\)](#)

News: [Newsroom: News & Events: Solid Waste Agency of Northwest Nebraska \(SWANN\)](#)

Interview highlights:

- SWANN provides residential collection and has a policy for waste designation for residential and commercial waste. All residents pay a set fee for disposal, and commercial fees are volume-based. Residents can bring other materials like C&D directly to the transfer station.
- Keep Chadron Beautiful (part of Keep America Beautiful) provides most residential recycling collection and hauling services.
- Two communities lost their local waste haulers (rural areas) and asked to join SWANN as a result, since there were no other feasible options for disposal. SWANN added them through formal approval process.
- Most cities oversee their own billing to customers and send fees to SWANN.
- SWANN has bonding authority for items that are not covered through hauling and operations fees.
- SWANN owns and operates the transfer station and landfill. All waste is baled before it goes to their landfill, which reduces litter and increases efficiencies.

St Joseph County Solid Waste Management District

Area represented: St. Joseph County, Indiana

Purpose: The Solid Waste Management District serves all residents throughout St. Joseph County. The District offers comprehensive recycling, household hazardous waste (HHW), educational services to the citizens of St. Joseph County.

Founding legislation: The District was formed in 1991 by St. Joseph County Ordinance No. 76-90. This resolution established a District in accordance with IC 13-21-2-14.5.

Legislation details for the SWMD: [§ 50.01. - Designation. | Code of Ordinances | St. Joseph County, IN | Municode Library](#), 50.09 powers of SWMD board—use for spreadsheet

Board: St Joseph SWMD Board members include county commissioners, mayors, city council members, county council members, an attorney and the county auditor. [Solid Waste Management District Board | St. Joseph County, IN](#),

Staff: St Joseph SWMD has six staff members, including a director, an educator, a program assistant, and three staff for the Household Hazardous Waste Program.

Facilities and Services: These services include Countywide Curbside Recycling Program, Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Facility, and School Education Efforts

Website: [Solid Waste Management District \(SWMD\) | St. Joseph County, IN](#)