

Waste Really Matters
County Commissioner Maria Marino

The Board of County Commissioners serves as the Solid Waste Authority (SWA) Governing Board. The SWA is an Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM) System. Through this system, the ultimate goal is to reduce the amount of waste that goes to landfills for disposal, while being environmentally responsible and fiscally sound. Elements of the ISWM System include:

- Source reduction - Lessening the amount of waste that reaches SWA through educational efforts and incentive programs.
- Recycling - Separating materials from the waste stream, either at the source or by recovering materials from mixed waste prior to disposal, and turning those products materials into commodities.
- Combustion - Using municipal solid waste as a fuel source to create renewable energy, while significantly reducing the volume of waste to the landfill.
- Landfilling - The final disposal option for anything that cannot be recycled or combusted.

It is no exaggeration to say that SWA facilities are state-of-the-art, most notably the Renewable Energy Facility 2 (REF2), which is the cleanest and most advanced waste-to-energy power plant in North America. While reducing waste going to the landfill, the REF2 generates 100 megawatts of electricity, enough to power an estimated 44,000 homes and businesses. Both REFs 1 and 2 combined produce enough energy to power nearly 74,000 households. The electricity is sold to FPL, and these revenues help offset the disposal costs to the taxpayer, keeping your disposal assessments low.

With the continued increase in population and development in the county, the SWA has kept pace with best practices in methods of waste collection to improve efficiencies while maintaining a high level of service and protecting the health, safety, and welfare of our residents. The Garbage and Waste Collection Ordinance of Palm Beach County, Florida No. 2019-022 regulates garbage collection, container requirements and placement, and maximum allowable yard waste.

Yard waste, a matter of particular interest to many residents, is limited to six (6) cubic yards or less a week in the unincorporated areas. This limitation allows the hauler to service their routes without significant disruption, and rids the road right-of-way of large mounds of waste that attracts rodents and vermin, and eliminates impediments to visibility and passage over roads, and interruptions to storm water drainage systems.

We all know how rapidly vegetation grows in South Florida and that is why it is essential that we maintain our trees and vegetation on a regular basis. Do not wait until hurricane season to prune your yard. Staying on top of it will save you time, money, and aggravation. If you live on a large parcel or have to perform extensive pruning that will exceed six cubic yards, you must

either store the excess on your property or hire a company to remove it. The SWA will provide a removal estimate to you based on a contract rate of \$8 per cubic yard.

If you live within a municipal boundary, the municipality's contract with your hauler governs the frequency of collection and accumulation allowed. Whether you live in a city or in the unincorporated area, in a zero-lot-line home or on a large rural residential parcel, every residential property owner pays the same rate for garbage and debris disposal services. This is the non-ad valorem assessment at the bottom of your tax bill levied by SWA.

The Authority is committed to transparency and accountability for every taxpayer dollar used to provide waste management services. For example, our recycling program enables SWA to sell the recycled materials at market rate and partner with municipalities as part of the Recycling Revenue Share Program. For more information on recycling, visit <https://www.swa.org/198/Where-to-Recycle>.

Let me know how I can assist you by contacting my office at (561) 355-2201, or by email at mmarino@pbcgov.org.