

Gustavus Disposal & Recycling Center (DRC) Quarterly Staff Report
Ian Barrier, DRC Manager/ Operator
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General Operations and Management

Labor

Operations have continued at a slow but steady pace through winter with the majority of Gustavus being on vacation or in hibernation but recently the pace has began to slowly increase. For the duration of December and January the weather was exceptionally warm which was a mixed blessing. Having mild conditions makes the days much more productive since “we” don’t have to run into the office to get warm as often and “we” don’t have to dress as bulky which restricts your movement and makes every physical movement more difficult and energy consuming. The bad side is how mucky the mound becomes. With the high percentage of water content in the cover soil a single pass with our equipment makes ruts deep enough to expose the trash buried below and sometimes can even cause our skids to get stuck if your not careful or lack momentum. Some members of the community have wondered why I leave the chains on the skid steers during the spring and fall, the mud is why.

In the past I have mentioned working alone during the winter is fine considering the work load is typically light but I am starting to notice how it has been slowly draining my energy levels. I feel like this is mainly due to being outside in the elements rather than the work itself. This takes be back to the subject of needing a year round assistant to help distribute the daily exposure of the elements and to allow me to focus on other administrative tasks without feeling like I’m going to be backed up in the scale house, and vice versa. It would also be nice to utilize some of my vacation time but that will not be possible until I have a trained individual to operate the DRC in my absents. This leads me into bringing up the subject of creating a regular position for a lead DRC operator similar to what the city did for me before I was promoted to manager. The current pay rates for the DRC temporary labor pool haven’t been adjusted since they were implemented in 2017 and I feel like they are still appropriate today for most new employees but for an experienced individual who can perform every task efficiently they should have an opportunity to be a regular employee with all benefits and a small pay bump. I also hope this would encourage an individual to continue working at the DRC for an extended period of time as opposed to moving onto another career that offers the potential for growth. I don’t think this would affect our budget too much and the added cost would be worth the return.

Lastly, I am proud to announce I had an individual by the name Tiffany Mortensen come into the DRC asking if I needed help this winter. I arranged an interview and then followed up with the city administrator after the interview who approved the hire. She plans to work until early summer here at the DRC but plans to move on to other work once other businesses open for the tourist season. Tiffany has only worked two Saturdays since writing this report but I am happy to say she has a great attitude and willingness to learn whatever I teach her. I currently have her scheduled to work Wednesdays and Saturdays. I hope I will be able to utilize her more in the spring before she moves on to other jobs.

Equipment

The equipment at the DRC struggles during the coldest days. All of our equipment uses hydraulic oil to preform its basic functions and hydraulic fluid becomes extremely thick in cold weather, similar to honey or cold maple syrup. This makes our balers groan and whine when first ran in the mornings, even with the block heaters plugged in for an hour before hand. Sometimes the balers don’t behave as expected and need “encouragement” to start functioning normally. Our A770 Bobcat will often refuse to start in the cold and needs to have the block heater plugged in overnight if the temperatures are 20F or below. Our 763 Bobcat also struggles to start during cold spells but is much more forgiving with its smaller tier-1 Kubota engine; which is easier to crank over. I am mainly using our smaller 763 Bobcat for this reason.

Other Projects

The only projects in development at the DRC currently is the planning stages of a septic treatment facility. This is mainly being planned by the city and HDR. I am currently working on writing a “letter” or “document” that I hope will help assist in the strategic planning process and to lay out how it will affect the future of the landfill and the city’s needs. This will also be used for updating the DRC general operations plan.

Other projects include installing the heat pump in the DRC office. I was able to find time to get the inside portion of the task completed and started working on building the stand for the outside portion before the weather changed and it became cold again. Once I find a moment where everything is caught up in the scale house and my duty’s in the office aren't calling me I can pick this project back up and get it done.

Politics

As I’m sure everyone is aware the U.S Government has been going through some changes recently and some of those changes have the potential to alter the DRC’s current expansion plans, specifically federal funding for our projects like the new building. I currently have been thinking of what alternatives we have to increase the working capacity of our existing building if we do not receive funding for a new building, or how we would construct a new building using our own funds.

I have asked a few locals who own engineered steel structures in Gustavus what it cost for them to construct their buildings. One of these owners with a building with dimensions of 60’ x 40’ said they constructed theirs “*for about \$250,000*”, with the framing costing “*less than \$50,000 shipped.*” I felt like this was very encouraging. In 2019 Paul Berry wrote a scoping document for the new building with the original intent of it being funded by the city. In 2019 Paul had received a quote for a 60’ x 100’ building with the total cost of the framing being \$82,521, freight included. This is very major contrast of the current federal request of over \$3,000,000 with the building being estimated to cost \$1,524,000 for the metal framing package alone. This leaves me wondering “*Why are we choosing the most expensive option?*” because it appears these projects can be completed for much less.

With the DRC’s permit up for renewal this fall it will also be time to update our general operations plan to reflect the current and future operations at the DRC.

Community Chest

Once again, I want to thank Annie Mackovjak for providing a list of volunteers who worked this quarter (October-December) along with the hours worked. Those volunteers are...Adreema, Becky King, Betty Hanson, Cheryl Smith, Colleen Stansbury, Connie Darnell, Dorothy Hurley, Hailey Burley, Joyce Lupro, Jozee Archambault, Kate Boesser, Maggie O’Brien, Maribeth Jarvis, Martine Riggan, Mary & Roger Williams, Meadow Brook, Penny Cook, Tamara Sue Leroy, and Annie Mackovjak. They worked a total of 148 hours in October, 98 hours in November, and 112 hours in December for a total of 358 hours. The Community Chest also donated 5 boxes of goods to the Glory Hole in Juneau, Alaska. In early October Annie requested I purchase the Community Chest a cordless vacuum. It literally took four months and a reorder off Amazon before I finally got Annie her cordless vacuum. It was a ridiculously long wait for such an item.

The End, thank you.
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Report compiled by ian.barrier@gustavus-ak.gov