

**Custer County Commissioners
Public Hearing Minutes
Solid Waste Fee Proposed Increase
August 12, 2025**

The Public Hearing was Called to Order at 6:10 p.m. in the Stanley Community Center by Commissioner Chairman Randy Corgatelli. The proceedings were recorded.

Those attending were: Commissioner Corgatelli, Commissioner Will Naillon, Commissioner Gordon Vaden, Deputy Clerk Tina Hawkins. Those in the audience were Bernice Hartz, Steve Botti and Russell Clark. Chairman Corgatelli then turned the hearing over to Commissioner Naillon.

The proposed fee increase is listed as follows;

Currently Base/Range Residential is \$25/Commercial \$50 – increase Residential to \$100 Commercial as follows;

#1 – Small/Up to 3 cans/week	\$350 /year Smaller businesses such as small offices, coffee shops, etc.
#2 – Medium/Up to 6 cans or 1 dumpster per week	\$700/year Medium sized businesses such as gas stations, supply stores, small motels, small Multi-housing units.
#3 – Large/Up to 12 cans or 2 dumpsters	\$1400/year Large businesses such as larger motels, liquor stores, large condominium complexes, etc.
Special* Compactor(s) Based on tonnage	Special Assessment Businesses with compactors, Such as large grocery stores.

The hearing opened with a presentation on the history of solid waste in Custer County provided by Commissioner Naillon. It was set at \$20.00 in 2004 with a \$5.00 increase coming in 2019 and has remained at \$25.00 per household per year to the present time. Past Commissioners have looked into many possibilities such as a solid waste power generation system or opening a landfill. As the finances grew tighter, either fees had to go up, or services had to be dropped. You are well aware that the Stanley solid waste transfer site has been closed for the past two years. The Mackay solid waste site no longer has a C&D pit or dead animal pit space. The Mackay site needs to be moved to county property. The past 22 years have seen only one \$5.00 increase in the solid waste annual fee. In 2023 the Commissioners (Butts, Corgatelli & Smith) decided to look into things again, and they hired Great West Engineering to do a viability study on our landfill. The first study showed very high fees to get a landfill established in Custer Co. The Board (newly elected) then asked what the absolute minimum figures could be. The recommendation was for residential to be set at \$150.00 per year and the commercial fees much like listed above. We eventually settled for the \$100.00 per year proposed fee increase for residential. The comparison sheet showing what other counties are paying is to show that we have held off increasing fees as long as we possibly could. Because of the high costs listed, I have been researching solid waste options with the Dept. of Environmental Quality for the past year. He has also toured 17 or 18 solid waste sites from Elmore County, Idaho to Park County, Montana. I talked to everyone involved that I possibly could to get an education about this

subject. I have learned that the landfills in Butte County and Lemhi County cost them over a million dollars a year to operate. I feel that Custer County needs to look into building viable transfer sites in the Stanley, Mackay and Challis areas. Perhaps not as elaborate as "Ohio Gulch" in Blaine Co, but something much more efficient than what we have. Custer County is going to have to create a Solid Waste Department within the county. We have previously operated our services through contractors. When we re-opened the Stanley site we began the process. We know that the cost of service will have to be balanced with the fees collected to make this work.

A question that comes up is "Why do we have to pay twice?" We pay a solid waste fee to the county and we pay by the pound at the site? The former Commissioners decide to set up an "Equitable waste system". This type of system charges those that generate more waste more fees to handle the waste. The "Convenience waste system" only charge one much higher fee and you unload at the site at no charge. The confusion comes from having Blue Mountain Refuse as our contractor. He handles the transfer of waste for the County, but also operates his own business. Once Custer County takes over the operation of transfer sites all fees will be paid to the county. Much the same as what Clear Creek Disposal is doing in the Stanley area.

Russel Clark asked if the plan was for Custer County to take over operation of the transfer sites? Naillon responded that it could happen in the long term, but that is not going to happen anytime soon. We will concentrate on upgrading the Mackay site next, then the East Fork site and lastly Challis.

Current Custer County solid waste fees generate around \$97,265.00 per year. Of this total we pay \$54,500 to Blue Mountain Refuse for the contract we have with him to operate three solid waste collection sites in the county. Challis, Mackay and East Fork.

Russel Clark stated that Blue Mtn. get the per pound fees collected at the sites they manage? Commissioner Naillon verified that fact. Other costs that have been required for solid waste are: the retaining wall at the Challis site; The unloading deck built at the Stanley site, that needs some major repairs; required fencing; and pit excavations; DEQ permitting; consulting fees.

Steve Botti inquired if SNRA had any issues with certain items? Naillon responded that they do not want any recycling piles that will be left for any length of time; they would prefer that the roll-offs be inside the building. Naillon assured those present that the SNRA has been very good to work with and have bent over backwards to assist the County in getting the site reopened.

Solid waste expenses the County has paid in 2025 are; \$33,000 for needed repairs to the Challis site scale. The Stanley scale has been checked and is in good shape. We set a \$30,000 budget for the part time employees that are operating the Stanley site on Fridays. Finding someone local to run the site wasn't possible, we tried. The Road & Bridge crew is willing to work a Friday on over time at the site. It cost \$42,000 for three 50-yard roll off containers to operate the Stanley site and we still need to have two more smaller roll offs inside the building during the winter. It cost \$40,000 for a used 4X4 backhoe for the Stanley site; These expenses plus the \$54,500 that is paid to Blue Mountain Refuse annually, add up to way over the 97K that we collect each year. This does not include all the minor expenses such as signage, porta-pot; scale licensing fees, fuel and maintenance on equipment, building maintenance and utilities.

Commissioner Vaden assured those present that none of the proposed fees listed are set in stone. That is why we are holding these hearing to get help from the people to make this

decision. We realize that this is a huge increase. Solid waste is one of those things that you don't think about, until it stops disappearing. We are working on a long-term plan that is as affordable as possible. If we get down the road with these projects and we could lower the fees we would be glad to.

The Public Hearing was opened for questions from the audience.

Russel Clark asked for clarification on fees per pound that are charged at the Stanley Solid Waste Site. Commissioner Naillon assured him that they will not change at this time. This hearing is only about the annual solid waste fee listed on your property taxes. The fees must be the same for all county residents. This increase to \$100.00 per year will raise your cost \$6.25 per month for residential customers.

Bernice Hartz asked; Will there be any changes in the hours or days of operation for the site? Currently we are trying to nail down the "needs" of the Stanley area for solid waste disposal. Since the Stanley site re-opened it has gotten a little busier each week, but one day seems to be enough for now. If demand increases and it is needed, we could be open an additional day.

Russel Clark thanked the Commissioners for getting the Stanley waste site re-opened. It has been wearing on the locals that felt they were paying for a service they weren't receiving. As the owner of Mountain Village, I became the community tourist dump. Many would bring their garbage sack and place it by our garbage cans. Stanley sees 2 million tourists per year and I cannot manage the refuse from even 1 million. It is a constant battle to educate the public to "Pack it in! Pack it out!" This will enable us to market your service on our behalf and inform the public about the county solid waste site that is open every Friday. This will take some of the burden off of town as well. The Sawtooth Conservation Recreation Alliance group has sponsored a dumpster up by the ice rink that is hauled away by Clear Creek Disposal. It is for the use of visitors and locals to assist with the tourist trash problem. Because the county site was closed everyone was forced to go with Clear Creek Disposal. Mountain Village has used Clear Creek for quite some time, and I don't anticipate that to change. I own a lot of parcels and if I am required to pay per parcel I will need to make changes. (Commissioner Naillon clarified that the fees are per business, not parcel.) I feel that these Commercial fees are outrageous. The residential rate of \$25 times 4 = \$100. The Commercial rate of \$50 is multiplied by 28 to get the \$1,400. I feel the multiplier needs to be similar, not so outrageous. If I have to pay this huge fee for each of my business, I will park two dump trucks at the back and every Friday you will see two truckloads of garbage arrive at the site. Right now, none of my properties utilize the Stanley site. All of our trash is hauled away by Clear Creek. Please make the rate adjustments fair. Russell then inquired about how the solid waste fees are collected for Custer Co. Road & Bridge, BLM, Forest Service, Thompson Cr. Mine, and Hecla Mine. How are these large businesses contributing to your funding?

Chairman Corgatelli verified that we do collect fees from all of the above. The County pays a \$50 fee, as well as by the pound to Blue Mountain Refuse.

Commissioner Naillon thanked Russell for bringing these questions to the Board and assured they will be part of the Board discussion before any decision is made.

Commissioner Vaden stated the proposed fees were provided by Great West Engineering. The comments received so far lead away from such high figures. We aim to be fair and equitable with everyone. If you use the dump more, expect to pay more.

Russell Clark these proposed fees will severely tax a lot of smaller business.

Commissioner Vaden this is the same message we received from the H.U.B. in Challis. People are using them like the tourists are using Mountain Village, leaving garbage for them to take

care of. If we take from the HUB, then they cannot give it back to the community, as they are non-profit. We definitely have some issues to work out.

Steve Botti asked what were the assumptions that Great West made in coming up with these high fee recommendations?

Commissioner Naillon responded that they work with solid waste all over the northwest and they considered the facts of 4 dispersed transfer sites, no landfill, and a small rural population.

Steve Botti asked did they estimate the costs of refit each site, the cost to operate each site for X amount of days, and then break it down from there?

Commissioner Naillon in a nutshell, Yes.

Russel Clark what was the total cost amount arrived at by Great West?

Commissioner Naillon I'm not sure, but somewhere around \$750,000, please don't quote me.

Bernice Hurst asked what the original commercial rate proposal was from Great West?

Commissioner Naillon I believe it was pretty close to what we advertised.

Russel Clark if you raise ALL the current base rates by 4X you would receive about \$400,000 per year.

Commissioner Naillon yes just multiply the current fee income by 4 and you get \$380,000.

Russell Clark do you think you could operate the solid waste program on \$380,000?

Commissioner Naillon yes we can operate it, but by the same token we have to build it out. By the time we get the Mackay site moved we may be required to raise the fees again.

Steve Botti asked about the services at each site? One day per week or perhaps two?

Commissioner Naillon Challis and Mackay are both two days per week, Stanley and East Fork are both one day per week.

Russell Clark based on Great West's total cost, were they thinking the County would provide dumpsters and route service like Blue Mountain and Clear Creek?

Commissioner Vaden no Blue Mountain would still provide their services, but Custer County would be operating the transfer sites.

Russell Clark so they estimate \$750K and Blue Mountain still does all the work except four employees at the sites?

Commissioner Vaden that would be when the county has taken over operation of all four transfer sites. At that time Blue Mountain would only provide residential services and Custer County would operate the sites. Plow the snow, cover and re-dig the required pits, operate and maintain the scales and transfer truck loading, etc.

Commissioner Naillon right now Blue Mountain pays the Lemhi Landfill & Butte Landfill about \$125,000 per year total in tipping fees, to unload Custer County solid waste. This cost will probably be increasing in the near future. We all feel these costs are extreme.

Russell Clark being a civil engineer myself, I am trying to understand the overall cost structure and the fairness of the proposed commercial rates. I assume that all the solid waste other than Stanley's goes through the County program and ends up in the Lemhi Landfill.

Commissioner Naillon yes mainly it all goes through the Challis transfer site and on to Lemhi Co., with the exception of a little that goes to Butte County from Mackay. The DEQ would like to see everything go to the Mud Lake landfill. Both Butte Co. and Lemhi Co. have ideal situations for a small community landfill. The Challis site is not as fortunate with a slope and no bentonite. If you have to build "lined waste cells" at a landfill they cost \$3.5 million each. The possible cost is prohibitive.

Russell Clark I would never even suggest doing that.

Commissioner Naillon so we need to build county wide transfer station infrastructure. We need to purchase a compactor to make the trucking efficient.

Commissioner Corgatelli if we can get the waste compacted, it will be more economical to haul our waste to the Mud Lake landfill. Utilize large trucks and trailers to move the waste.

Commissioner Vaden our plan is to do a certain amount of re-building each year until we have the needed infrastructure to operate an efficient solid waste program.

Russell Clark so how much do you feel is needed each year? \$500,000!

Commissioner Naillon Yes. We will do this in steps. Now that the Stanley site is re-opened, we will get it fully operational. Additional roll-off's for inside, repair the unloading dock and perhaps a larger building. We have to get the Mackay site moved over to our property which will require new DEQ permitting, fencing the site, building an access road and putting up a building. We have been questioned about just what we will do with the monies that we collect. Nothing has been done for so long the public is not very trusting.

Russell Clark I definitely do NOT support these huge commercial rate increases. I would like to see the same multiple use for residents and business.

Commissioner Corgatelli I feel that \$200 is still to low. Different business' create different volumes of waste. The Commercial rates need to be tiered.

Russell Clark I own a bar, a restaurant, a grocery store, a motel, a mercantile and a service station. I currently pay for all of my waste to go with Clear Creek Disposal. If I have to pay these high fees to Custer County, then I have to figure out how to minimize my costs and utilize the Stanley site.

Commissioner Vaden there is a possibility of using flow control down the road to make the Custer County solid waste program work. Currently we have waste going to Blaine Co., Butte Co., Lemhi Co., and Jefferson Co. We don't wish to require it at this time.

Bernice Hurst I feel you need communicate and share with the Stanley area residents just what you are offering. What day and what hours you are open and the location of the Stanley site. What items you are able to accept, and what items you cannot accept. You need to let them know what the solid waste fees you collect are currently are being used for.

Commissioner Naillon getting such information out to the public is a problem. The Idaho legislature is trying to get a legal information site up and operational, but it isn't set up yet.

Bernice Hurst you could begin with a newspaper ad, and we could post the needed information on community bulletin boards, post offices and libraries. It would be a start. Also if information changes then they would have an idea where to look. Advertise a little.

Steve Botti the City of Stanley has a pretty extensive mailing list, and a lot of people get their information off of Facebook. We would try to help.

Russell Clark my number one waste produced in all the business that I own is "cardboard". If there is any way to keep it out of the landfill I am open to suggestions.

Commissioner Vaden reported a business in Mackay has used a cardboard baler that has saved him a lot of money. But it is now hard to get someone to even take the baled cardboard, let alone pay you the transportation costs.

Commissioner Naillon offered to follow up with other counties to see what they do with the over abundance of cardboard. If we can recycle any item, then we should do it.

Steve Botti I worked with Clear Creek Disposal for a couple of years, to try to get recycling going in the area. A lot of residents were very dedicated to it. They did submit a plan to have two big bins and then they backed off of the plan. Smiley Creek has a recycling program and that is where people take their items.

Russell Clark I understand that the Blaine Co. transfer facility actually separates some of that stuff.

Commissioner Naillon I was able to tour the inside of that facility. Ohio Gulch and Carey sites were toured.

Bernice Hurst thank you for listening. We are such a sparsely populated county with 4 locations that are spread way apart. Our communities are all quite different, but require similar services.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:00 P.M.



Lura H. Baker
Attest: Clerk, Lura H. Baker

Randy Corgatelli
Chairman, Randy Corgatelli