

**Custer County Commissioners
Public Hearing Minutes
Solid Waste Fee Proposed Increase
August 19, 2025**

The Public Hearing was Called to Order at 6:04 p.m. in the Mackay American Legion Hall by Chairman Randy Corgatelli. The proceedings were recorded.

Those attending were: Commissioner Randy Corgatelli, Commissioner Will Naillon, Commissioner Gordon Vaden, Deputy Clerk Tina Hawkins. Those in the audience were Dean Wall, Troy & Susan Harris, John Gentry, Randy Pehrson, Jerry Hattaway and Charlie & Violet Fuller.

The proposed fee increases were advertised 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 Vaden. The Custer County solid waste program began in 2004 with Commissioners Hintze, Hansen & Butts on the Board. The cost of opening a landfill was not affordable at that time and it is even higher now. The County has put off increasing solid waste fees longer than we should have and now we are required to make some changes. It is understood that this is a big increase, but it is not set in stone as yet. We have held public hearings in Challis and Stanley as well as here and we are hearing the opinions and ideas of the people. We will not decide until we review all these hearings. Commissioner Naillon has toured 17 solid waste sites, some transfer stations and some landfills. The former Board of Commissioners had a study done by Great West Engineering and they recommended raising our solid waste fees substantially.

It was originally given at \$150.00 per residence and a 7-tiered fee system for commercial rates to effectively operate our 4 county solid waste sites. We are a large land area county with a small population, and 4 different collection sites are needed. The handout provided shows what other neighboring counties are charging per residence and for commercial properties. Commissioner Naillon interjected that this handout shows that Custer County has held off increasing solid waste fees as long as possible.

John Gentry asked what the current fees were? \$25.00 per residence & \$50.00 for commercial. We are not trying to keep up, we just need a viable solid waste system in Custer County. John Gentry asked how Blue Mountain Refuse works into our program? Troy Harris asked if we were trying to open up a landfill in Challis? Commissioner Vaden responded that we cannot afford to open a landfill under the current DEQ regulations. Commissioner Naillon let everyone know that the original goal was to open a landfill in Custer County. His conversations with Butte and Lemhi counties have show that it costs over \$1 million dollars per year to operate a landfill. The three types of charges that all counties collect on solid waste. The fee that is placed on your tax notice. This can be lower when done on an equitable system, or higher if done on a convenience system. The equitable system also requires a per pound fee at the transfer site. This ensures that those that produce more waste are the ones that pay more.

Commissioner Naillon updated the group on the current status of the Mackay area site. The C&D pit is practically full, and they only accept concrete and asphalt. Any other construction debris has to be hauled out, such as sheetrock and lumber. The dead animal pit is all but full and there is no space to dig another pit. The current Mackay solid waste is on city property and originally was a landfill and it is at capacity. We have County property adjoining this site that was acquired through the Simpson Wilderness Bill. This site can be transfer station, but not a full-blown landfill. There we will be able to have a complete C&D pit as well as a dead animal pit. We are required to have a reclamation plan for the current waste site on City property as well as permits to open the new site. John Gentry asked if the County was required to put up a deposit for each pit opened? It is understood that requirement is for "landfills" not transfer stations. This requires a brand new DEQ Solid Waste permit, fencing the new property and a transfer station as well as equipment. We would like to get a compactor at this site when funding allows. Troy Harris asked just what the building would be used for. Naillon responded it is for "household trash" that is being transferred for hauling out, the C&D items, organic debris and dead animals would be disposed of in new designated pits. Such a building would contain a tipping floor to enable recycling and separation of debris if required. We have to work within the rules of DEQ and the EPA.

Commissioner Naillon explained the waste energy plants that are being supported by the EPA. Such a plant requires huge amounts of waste to operate and the regional landfills will be their fuel source. Small rural counties, such as us, will have to haul their waste out to the regional landfills. Past Commissioners have looked into building such a system, but we do not produce enough solid waste to operate even a small plant locally.

In response to John Gentry's question about Blue Mountain Refuse, Commissioner Naillon Explained that Blue Mountain contracts with the county to operate the transfer stations at Mackay, Challis and the East Fork sites. The County pays \$54,500 per year to Blue Mountain Refuse for the contract we have with him. John Gentry didn't feel that Blue Mountain should be paid over and above what he collects on the per pound fees at the transfer stations. He understood that the original bid was for the solid waste per pound income, not anything additional. Naillon explained that last year Blue Mountain paid \$126,000.00 to Lemhi County in tipping fees for unloading Custer County solid waste. The County understands the \$54K that we pay is to cover the cost of employees at each transfer site and equipment required to operate the sites. John Gentry felt the Custer County solid waste contract should be re-bid when it

comes up for renewal. Discussion on the current rates that are charged at all county solid waste sites was held. It is \$154.00 per ton or \$.066 per pound with a minimum of \$4.00. The tipping fee variations were also discussed. Jefferson County tipping fee is \$40.00 per ton; Butte County is still unknown; Lemhi County charges \$54.00 per ton. For Custer County to open a "Small Community Landfill" would be cost prohibitive. Our site will probably require lined solid waste cells and to build one 5-acre lined cell would cost \$3.5 million dollars.

Currently Custer County collects around \$97,000 per year in solid waste fees from all residential and commercial customers. With this funding we operated three solid waste collection sites in the county at Challis, Mackay and East Fork. We have had to give up services at Stanley and in Mackay over the years because of funding. State Statute requires us to provide solid waste service to populated areas, so we were required by law to re-open the Stanley site.

Expenses that Custer County has paid in 2025 are; \$42,000 for three 50-yard roll off containers to operate the Stanley site. We will also need to purchase two more 25-yard roll-offs for inside the building. Troy Harris asked why the County is purchasing this equipment when you have a contract with Blue Mountain? Commissioner Naillon explained that the County is in the process of creating a County Solid Waste Program, and gradually taking over the operation of all the Transfer Sites. The Stanley site is no longer on the contract. When the Mackay site is re-built it too will become a County operation. Troy asked if the County would be hiring employees and buying garbage trucks? Commissioner Naillon responded that the County is planning to build a cost-effective solid waste department over time. John Gentry inquired "Who pays the tipping fees at Lemhi County?" Naillon answered that Blue Mountain Refuse pays that tipping fee. Getting back to Stanley, we also bought a used 4X4 backhoe for the Stanley site for \$40,000 to remove snow and mash waste into the roll-offs. We budgeted \$30,000 to pay for the part time employees that are now operating the Stanley site on Fridays. This does not include all the minor expenses such as signage, scale licensing fees, fuel and maintenance on equipment, building maintenance and utilities. This adds up to way more than the \$97,000 that we collect and this doesn't include the contract or any improvements for Mackay or the other two sites.

John Gentry asked if the County had received property in Challis from the BLM for a landfill? That property was given to the City of Challis in the Wilderness Bill, not Custer County. They are using it for a public trail system. It adjoins the current Challis transfer station site and much of the City property is within view of Highway 93.

The increase in residential solid waste fees from \$25 to \$100 per year works out to \$6.25 per month. Most of us can absorb that, but not everyone. Older residents on fixed income will not be able to do so. Randy Pehrson asked "What are you proposing to do here in Mackay?" Commissioner Naillon responded that the Board is looking for public opinions before making any decisions on the suggestions received from Great West Engineering. The decisions that need to be made are not simple and the learning curve has been steep. Naillon has been in touch with Butte County but they are constrained by the 20-ton per day limit at their landfill. Commissioner Vaden expressed the ultimate goal is to get a viable solid waste system set up in Mackay and figure out just what funding is needed to get the county wide systems up and running. It will not happen all at once. Troy Harris asked "What do you feel it is going to cost to operate all 4 transfer sites?"

The county cannot purchase equipment or invest in infrastructure until they have the funding. We are still learning just what the rules require. The Commercial rates were then discussed. Troy has a storage business and rarely uses the transfer station. He doesn't feel the proposed \$350 per year is fair. Commissioner Naillon responded that this type of discussion is just what the Board is looking for. The County needs to provide something in return for the fees charged. Currently John Gentry is hauling the majority of Mackay area solid waste to Jefferson County and not putting anything through the Mackay transfer station. Naillon explained that some counties have instituted "flow controls" that require all solid waste generated in a county be disposed of in that county. Custer County does not want to do that, as it will cost everyone more. We understand that the residents of Mackay have a choice between John Gentry's service or Blue Mountain's service. Troy inquired about how much you feel the commercial rates would go up? Commissioner Corgatelli reminded everyone that we are required to build a lot of solid waste infrastructure and it will be expensive.

Commissioner Naillon gave the figures they have discovered. A landfill is off the board because of the million dollars required to operate one for a year. The solid waste budget system allows for the County to carry over funds to another budget year. With an increase of fees, we can build up the solid waste budget to cover each new expense. We are considering increasing the fees to bring in between \$380,000 to \$400,000 per year. Once we get the infrastructure improvements purchased, then we need to define what it costs to operate the 4 sites. The 2025 solid waste fees collected were right around \$97,000. We pay \$54,500 each year on the contract with Blue Mountain for the operation of 3 sites. He was operating the Stanley site but was financially unable to keep it operating. Clear Creek Disposal comes over the county line from Blaine County and has under priced Blue Mountain for dumpster services due to a special tipping fee cost with Blaine Co. The residents chose to go with Clear Creek rather than Blue Mountain for their dumpster services. Consequently, we had to close the Stanley transfer station for about 2 years until we could get it operational again under County management.

The County contract with Blue Mountain was again brought up by John Gentry. He asked that when it comes up for renewal it needs to be opened up for bids. He understood the original contract bidding was done on the per pound fees and there were no additional contract funds involved. The budget figures were shared. Jerry Hattaway (late arrival) inquired about how much the County hopes to collect each year in solid waste fees? Around \$300,000 will be collected and used to operate the current solid waste program as well as invest in updating infrastructure. We have to move the Mackay site, we have re-opened the Stanley site that has been closed for 2 years. Idaho Statute requires we provide solid waste services. Naillon went over the expenses listed previously. Jerry then assumed that the Mackay site would be closed and they would have to use the Stanley site. Commissioner Naillon explained that the Mackay site is now on City property and will be moved over to County property and re-established. This requires new DEQ permits, fencing, a building with a tipping floor, a C&D Pit, a dead animal pit and a organics pit. We need to get the Mackay site operational.

John Gentry asked just how much the county plans to charge for commercial business per year? Naillon responded that it is unknown at this time. The proposed fees listed in the ad, were provided by Great West Engineering as a possibility to cover infrastructure and operating costs. The Board assured those present that they would go over all the comments received at these 3 hearings and hammer out a County fee proposal. Commissioner Vaden plans to work on the program year by year with a reasonable budget. He wants residents to see progress quickly. Commissioner Corgatelli assured everyone that it would not all get done in one year. Randy

Pehrson asked what will be done with a business that is currently closed? Commissioner Vaden responded he should sell it. It is required that a County must charge a flat rate to everyone within their county. It is understood that the Stanley area does not produce enough solid waste to ever pay for the required waste site. Unfortunately, the Stanley area pays almost 75% of the property taxes collected in Custer County, so we must give on one end to collect on the other. Dean Wall stated that Mackay is somewhat unique in that at least ½ of the solid waste collected is being hauled to Jefferson County by John Gentry. Naillon responded that the Stanley area has much the same issue with almost all of the solid waste being collected by Clear Creek Disposal and hauled to Blaine County. Dean stated the quandary of paying for a service that is not being utilized. Commissioner Vaden stated the ultimate goal is for John Gentry to be able to dump his trucks at the Mackay transfer station operated by Custer County. Dean understands that the fees are required, but he has never even been to the Mackay transfer station. It is difficult to swallow those expenses when you feel you get no benefit.

John Gentry shared the tipping fees of \$180.00 per ton that will be charged at the new Madison County landfill. This landfill has "lined cells" and anything sharp will not be allowed. Randy Pehrson stated that he has never used the Mackay transfer station, yet he pays his county fees on his business. John Gentry stated that "ranches" should be listed as commercial and not residential. Dean Wall inquired about what is involved when the old Mackay dump is closed? Commissioner Naillon explained the 30-year responsibility/monitoring requirement for methane gas. The site must be properly decommissioned once all use has ceased, per DEQ regulations. The new site can become active before the old site is declared closed.

No decision will be made quickly. We thank you for the information you have shared at this hearing. John Gentry stated that he sees the need for more funding, but the amount needed is not known at this time. Naillon reviewed the schedules for Custer Co. transfer stations, Mackay is open 2 day per week, East Fork is open 1 day per week, Challis is open 2 days per week and Stanley is open 1 day per week. The work force needed for this and to keep all the pits operational and the equipment operational will be a big cost. Currently we don't know if a contract would be more affordable or have the county run the program. We will learn more as we move forward. Troy Harris asked why the County Solid Waste Contract has not been put up for bid recently? Board members didn't have an answer, and thanked him for the question. It was felt it should go back for bid every time it renews or at least every 5 years. It was also asked when the \$54,000 was decided to be paid on the contract?

Naillon provided the NOV 2024 total of \$1,800 worth of solid waste went through the Mackay Transfer Site. Blue Mountain then pays his employees, the trucking and tipping fees. It was asked if the PILT Funds could be used for solid waste projects? Commissioner Naillon responded that the solid waste program needs to be self-supporting and not supplemented. Those PILT funds are being used to bring the courthouse into ADA compliance, and build a legal jail. The Custer County jail was built in 1907 and is the oldest active jail in the USA. We have to get permission each year to continue using the jail. The PILT formula was then discussed and how unfair it shakes out for Custer County.

John Gentry asked "What constitutes a commercial business in Custer County?" Commissioner Corgatelli felt it was something that is done for profit. John brought it back to area ranches being considered a business and be required to pay the commercial rate. Randy Pehrson responded that ranches are the large landowners and they pay a majority of the levy &

property taxes in Custer County. A ranch doesn't utilize any of these services; ie: ambulance, fire, school bonds, etc. any more than the homeowner in town. A ranch produces about the same amount of solid waste as any other household. They don't produce near the amount of solid waste as a grocery store or restaurant or a motel.

John then asked when the Mackay solid waste would be moved to County property? The Board is unable to answer, as this depends on funding and permitting. We have been in contact with both the BLM about an access road, and DEQ about the permitting that's required, but received no definite answers at this time. DEQ is requiring the old landfill site to be closed, and to do that we have to move our service site. Each solid waste site permit has a unique set of requirements. To date Naillon as learned that the DEQ expects Custer County will need a fence and a building. We don't know what type of fence is required or what size of building. It is impossible to estimate costs with so little information. The audience then asked for an educated guess on funds needed? Commissioner Naillon tossed out the figure of \$250,000 to begin with. The figures you see from Great West Engineering are all the Board had to go on at the time. Their original fee suggestions were higher yet.

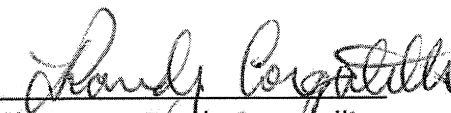
Jerry Hattaway asked "If these are just transfer stations, where does this waste get transferred to? The response was Lemhi Co. landfill in Salmon, the Jefferson Co. landfill in Mud Lake, or the Butte Co. landfill in Arco. Naillon confessed that the costs for solid waste were much higher than he thought they should be, until he researched what is involved. The tipping fees he has found range between \$32.00 per ton and \$54.00 per ton. The board has discovered it is not financially feasible for Custer County to consider a landfill. Building a well-equipped transfer site will keep it financially possible for us. John Gentry informed the board that he charges \$360.00 per year for a family to have dumpster service once a week. He does have other rates for senior citizens when required. He sees no way to utilize the Mackay transfer site at the current fees being charged for a ton of solid waste. John visited with Great West Engineering quite a lot when the survey was being conducted.

The Board asked those present to please contact them if they came up with any ideas that could be used to benefit the solid waste program. The Commissioners were asked to provide their plan of action when it was done.

Public Hearing adjourned at 7:25 P.M.



Attest: Clerk, Lura H. Baker


Chairman, Randy Corgatelli