USDA Rural Development
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Together, America Prospers

Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

Success Story: NEK Waste Management Generates Economic Foam-entum

$36,000
USDA Community Facilities Grant

$12,500
Contribution from Town of Lyndon

8,000 lbs.
Estimated annual weight of polystyrene processed

95%
Reduction of polystyrene volume after compression

19,671
Rural residents directly benefitting

11 and 1
Jobs saved and created due to USDA funding

Engaging Access to DIVERSE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

In Rural America, what goes on at the regional transfer station impacts the economic health and viability of its area communities. Vermont's Northeast Kingdom (NEK)—including Caledonia, Essex and Orleans Counties—is one of five Rural Economic Area Partnerships, or REAP Zones, in the U.S., attracting diverse federal funding into area projects and initiatives. In 2019, USDA Rural Development (RD) awarded a $64,000 Community Facilities (CF) grant to the NEK Waste Management District in Lyndonville, VT, for an auto tie-bailer to streamline operations. When recycling centers move more waste in less time, customers and communities save on landfill costs.

Knowing the Value of EFFICIENT WASTE MANAGEMENT

There was an obvious culprit cutting down on the speed and smoothness of waste management at the Lyndonville Recycling Center: that annoying and wasteful packaging partner, polystyrene, or styrofoam, as it's commonly known. Transportation of such a lightweight, bulky material to and from recycling facilities introduces extreme inefficiency and an outsized environmental burden. The economic costs to customers increases the carbon costs to the environment, so the District's leaders started searching for possible solutions to address the problem. A modern technology caught their attention, but it was a big-ticket item. So, they turned to an old friend for help.

Benefitting BUSINESSES, RESIDENTS & RESOURCES

The District received a $36,000 RD CF grant to purchase a commercial-grade polystyrene recycling machine. Like magic, awkward foam packaging is transformed into dense ingots that reduce volume by 95%. The ingots are then sold to a commercial buyer and made into panels of lightweight, durable material used as home insulation.The NEK Waste Management District is the first in Vermont to offer this important service to its residents, and estimates that four tons of foam waste will be processed annually. The result is a 95% decrease in polystyrene landfill volume—and a multi-generational boon to responsible builders, rural Vermont residents and area ecosystems.

For program regulations and requirements, please go to the USDA RD CF fact sheets

Polystyrene packaging is compressed and flattened into ingots at the NEK WMD transfer station. After processing, they're bagged and sold to a construction company for use as building insulation.