



Where Waste Travels

An Introduction to ReGen Monterey & California's Solid Waste Management System



ReGen Monterey has been doing more to waste less since 1951.

Operating on 470 acres in northwestern Monterey County near the cities of Marina (inc. 1975) and Salinas (inc. 1874), ReGen Monterey provides reuse, recycling, diversion and nonhazardous solid waste disposal services. Its programs protect public health and the environment, helping to mitigate man-made impacts to this beautiful region while also providing a valuable public utility service for residents and businesses.

Want to learn more about ReGen's history and how it serves the public today? Continue reading here, or check out the related white paper available at ReGenMonterey.org.

1. Who does ReGen Monterey serve?

ReGen Monterey serves residential and business customers located primarily in the tri-county area of Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties. ReGen Monterey is a California Special District public entity that is similar to a fire, recreational, water or wastewater district, but with a solid waste management role.

ReGen has a nine-member Board of Directors that represents its local Member Agency communities:

- Carmel-by-the Sea, Del Rey Oaks, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Sand City and Seaside
- Unincorporated Monterey County areas of Big Sur, Carmel Highlands, Carmel Valley, Castroville, Corral De Tierra, Laguna Seca, Moss Landing, San Benancio and Toro Park
- The Pebble Beach Community Services District.

By a franchise waste contract, Member Agencies must send their non-hazardous solid waste materials to ReGen. Such contracts are common in the solid waste industry, because they provide organizations like ReGen with the stable funding necessary for expenses and large capital investments for specialized infrastructure. Solid waste industry infrastructure and operations are expensive. And, in the case of landfill disposal service, organizations must also fund at least 30 additional years of post-closure care of the landfill and its environmental protection systems after waste disposal revenues have ended.





2. How do communities and agencies like ReGen Monterey typically handle waste?

In California, governmental bodies, public agencies and private-sector businesses oversee the collection, management, reuse, recycling and disposal of municipal solid waste. Various public policies also encourage communities to reduce waste generation, and to recycle, reuse and recover materials whenever possible. Organizations like ReGen assist communities by providing these types of services. Sometimes, they also act on behalf of communities to coordinate such services with other waste processing service providers. In other words, private curbside haulers pick up and deliver materials from homes and businesses to ReGen Monterey, where the public agency processes the materials for disposal, recycling or composting.

Few cities have landfills, recycling centers or other waste-disposal facilities within their own borders. For example, Monterey County has two permitted landfills – and neither is located in one of the county's 12 cities. At the same time, California policies require that all jurisdictions, including cities and counties, send waste to permitted facilities for processing and proper recycling or disposal.

Cities across California and the U.S. commonly send garbage to facilities located in other communities, or even other states, for recycling and disposal. Some of those facilities are privately owned and operated. Others are public entities owned and operated like ReGen. Even ReGen Monterey sends some of your waste to other counties with permitted facilities. When that happens, it's usually done to transfer recyclables for final processing, or it's done to properly dispose of wastes that ReGen is prohibited from accepting or disposing. Clear standards ensure that waste gets moved and managed safely, and that's true whether it is trash tossed in a bin, or household hazardous waste such as batteries, e-waste, dangerous solvents and chemicals, or radioactive waste.

3. What services does ReGen Monterey provide?

ReGen Monterey (the public name of the Monterey Regional Waste Management District) provides facilities for the processing, diversion, recycling and disposal of solid waste. That includes services such as landfilling, recycling, composting, household hazardous waste collection and the sale of reusable items through the Last Chance Mercantile store.





4. What factors influence the services that ReGen Monterey offers?

Regulations at the local, state and federal levels define that wastes get either recycled or properly disposed in an approved waste management unit, like a landfill. The regulations also outline how communities and agencies like ReGen Monterey must manage and dispose of waste. Related rules determine where landfills and solid waste facilities can be located, developed and operated.

Public policies influence ReGen's work, too. One recent example is California's SB 1383 (2016). It set targets for jurisdictions, asking them to reduce organic waste disposal by 75% of 2014 levels by the year 2025, and also to rescue at least 20% of edible food before it reaches a non-edible condition and cannot be used.

The ReGen Monterey Board of Directors provides strategic guidance and makes decisions shaping the agency's operations. Between 1997 and 2003, the Board took several actions to diversify ReGen's customer base and revenue sources. For example, staff members were directed to delay tip fee increases and raise non-disposal revenues through new services. The Board also developed a Guiding Principles document that reserved 75 years of landfill space for ReGen Member Agencies, and later approved regional disposal contracts to receive waste from communities in Santa Cruz, San Benito and Santa Clara counties.

5. How is ReGen Monterey funded?

ReGen Monterey is a public agency that operates like a business by collecting fees for the services it provides. Owning, operating and maintaining solid waste infrastructure is expensive, and that's why ReGen has always welcomed both local Member Agency customers and customers from other areas to use its services.

Since 2009, ReGen has been contracted to receive wastes from regional Santa Cruz County and San Jose-area communities. Receiving solid waste from other jurisdictions increases ReGen's revenue. That helps the agency pay for facility updates, adopt new technologies, and offer innovative recycling and diversion services. Higher revenues typically result in relatively lower tip fees and service costs, and a slower pace of fee increases for ReGen's customers.

Expanded recycling, composting and diversion programs help ReGen Monterey bring in more money. When the agency opened the Monterey Peninsula Landfill in 1965, it got 100% of its revenues from disposal tip fees customers paid when dropping off waste. By the early 2020s, disposal fees made up about 64% of revenues. Other revenue sources now include things like retail sales of donated materials and the sale of recycled materials (including paper, cardboard, glass and metal), renewable energy, compost, construction sand and recycled base rock.





6. How much space is left in the ReGen Monterey landfill?

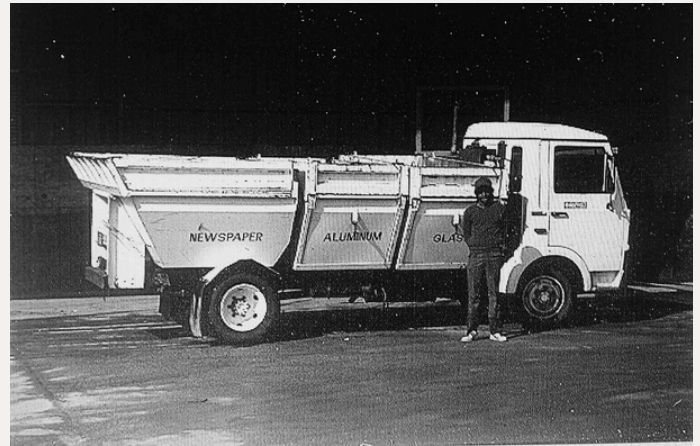
With more customers comes the potential for more waste being disposed in the landfill. ReGen Monterey's ambitious recycling, reuse and reduction programs help offset some waste from the agency's growing customer base. Still, staff members regularly monitor remaining landfill capacity.

Currently, they see three potential scenarios:

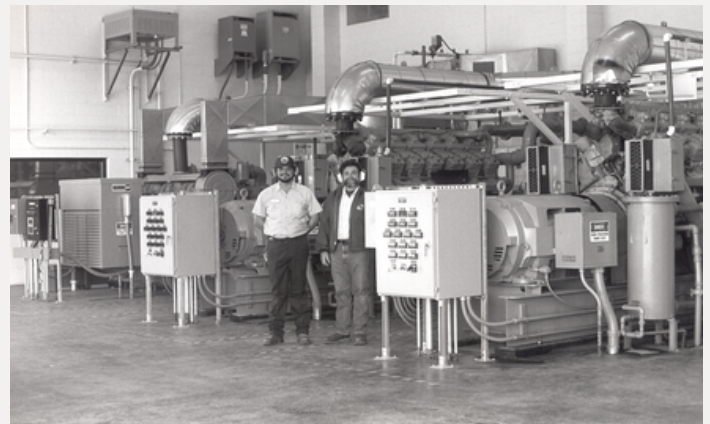
- A 2010 report, written after ReGen added Santa Cruz County customers, estimated that the landfill would reach capacity and close in the year 2160.
- After the 2013 addition of San Jose-area disposal contracts, ReGen teams created two new landfill closure estimates. One estimate assumes lower-than-expected waste volume from those new customers, and projected the landfill closure in the year 2152.
- The other assumes higher-than-expected waste volume and projected the landfill closure in the year 2142.

In 2005, the ReGen Board established a policy that required the organization to reserve 75 years of disposal capacity just for the wastes generated by ReGen's Member Agency communities and to identify the additional disposal capacity that could be sold to other customers. All three estimates of landfill life exceed that policy requirement.

- 1951:** Monterey County Board of Supervisors establishes the Monterey Peninsula Garbage and Refuse Disposal District, now known as ReGen Monterey (legal name: Monterey Regional Waste Management District (MRWMD))
- Early 1950s:** Staff members explore locations for a landfill that would replace a private “coastal burn dump” near today’s Sand City
- 1953:** New cardboard recycling program begins. New inland landfill opens on Laguna Seca Ranch lease property near Highway 68, replacing the coastal dump
- 1965:** Monterey Peninsula Landfill opens to non-hazardous solid wastes only
- 1970s:** First community collection of glass bottles for recycling
- 1983:** First electricity production from pioneering landfill gas-to-energy project
- 1988:** Diversion of yard trimmings and food scrap materials to windrow composting
- 1991:** Last Chance Mercantile reuse store opens
- 1996:** The \$9.6 million Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) opens, accepting construction and demolition materials and hosting other recovery programs
- 2016:** Franchise Contractor Lease Truck Yard & CNG Fueling Facility opens
- 2018:** MRF 2.0 opens, greatly expanding recycling and landfill diversion capacity
- 2022:** MRWMD organization is rebranded as ReGen Monterey



Early recycle truck



Landfill Gas-to-Energy facility



Early Last Chance Mercantile



First sort line at the Materials Recovery Facility