



Waste Analytics Software

Northeast Recycling Council (NERC)
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Implementing Waste Diversion by Making Waste Data Usable

Treating waste data like a utility — captured reliably, reviewed monthly, and used to run a multi-site campus diversion program.

Laura WATS · Waste Analytics Software

Waste is an outlier among utilities

Waste is similar to utilities like energy and water. It has...

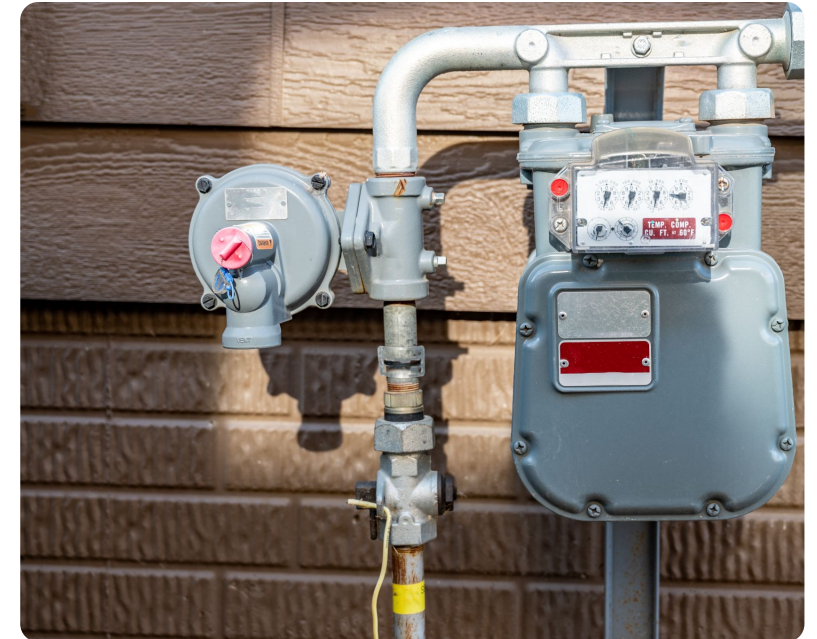
1 A line item in budget planning

2 Vendors with contracts and obligations

3 Monthly costs

4 Infrastructure

BUT there is no meter! So waste is often ignored in business strategy.



No meter means waste data is harder to manage

A combination of factors make this true.



Many sites, many streams, manage many “meters”

Labs, offices, dining, housing and athletics each produce a different mix of trash, recycling, organics and specialty waste streams.



Data can come from many stakeholders

Facilities, sustainability, operations and outside vendors all touch the material — with no single owner of the data.



Inconsistent source data

It arrives as invoices, hauler reports, emails and spreadsheets — different formats, different cadences, rarely comparable.



Hauler Data



Scale Tickets



Spreadsheets



Invoices



Sensors



Contracts



Waste Surveys & Audits



Emails



Internal Records

Treat waste data like utility data: a four-step rhythm

Capture it reliably, make it comparable, review it monthly, and act on it — the same way you'd treat electricity or water.



1

Acquire

Consistently track and request raw data from stakeholders.



2

Standardized Methodology

Normalize units so sites compare and operations are mapped.



3

Track, don't report

Move from an annual snapshot to monthly visibility on diversion, cost, weight and contamination.



4

Optimize

Right-size collection, flag overages and billing anomalies, and target opportunities for action.

A California-based higher education institute

A research campus managing waste operations across **64 sites**.

Early-stage goals



Recycling everywhere

Ensure recycling exists across all sites.



Build toward more diversion

Grow additional diversion from that base.



Continue specialty streams

Keep specialty-stream work moving.



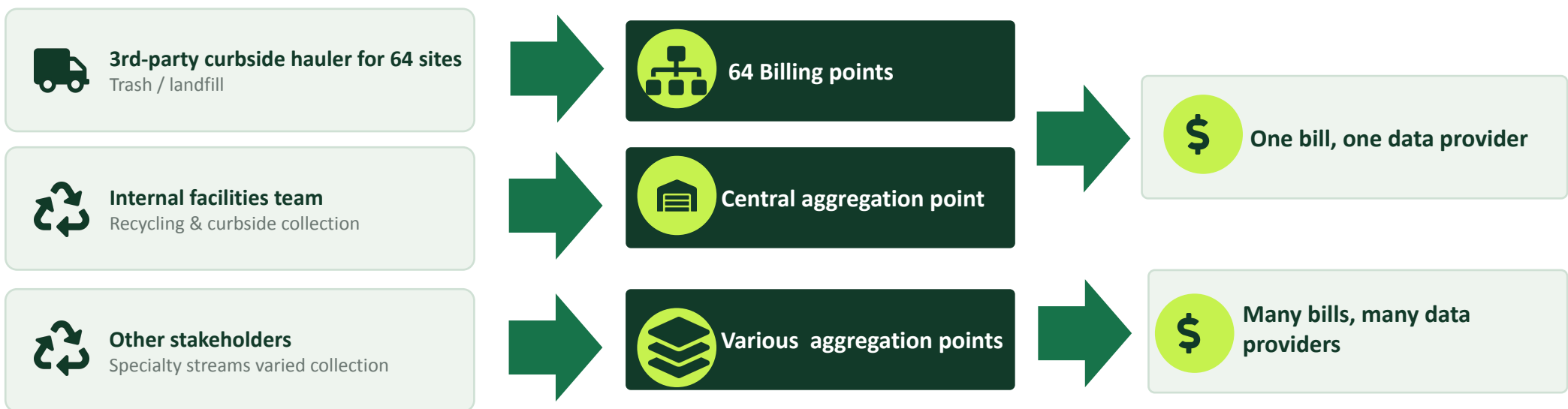
Add organics

Introduce organics recycling where possible.



Waste stream mapping: the step most programs underestimate

You can't standardize or report on a stream until you know how it physically moves and who owns it.



Key mapping considerations



What's 3rd party hauled vs. moved or managed internally



Whether data ties back to the origin site



Vendor vs. internal ownership of each stream

Specialty streams

- Trash • Organics Recycling
- Yard Trimming Recycling • Mixed Paper Recycling
- Metal Recycling • Steel Recycling
- Glass Recycling • PET Plastic Recycling
- Cardboard Recycling • Scrap Metal Recycling
- HDPE Plastic Recycling • Donations
- Material Reuse • Glass/Metal/Plastic Recycling
- Mixed Recycling • Pallet Recycling

Challenges: the messy middle of multi-site data



Assignment & aggregation

Deciding which stream belongs to which site — and how aggregated material gets attributed back — took real judgment.



Site-name mismatch

The hauler used a unique identifier for each of the 64 sites; the campus used different internal names. Mapping both into one clean dataset was slow, manual work.



Opaque vendor estimates

The hauler had its own waste-estimation method, but the campus had no visibility into the factor or its reliability — so they adopted WATS's standard estimation factor instead.

Successes: from spreadsheets to a shared system of record

64

sites onboarded — full campus in one place

~4%

of annual waste cost was going to overages, found on the first review



Automated data ingestion

Automatic collection replaced the manual burden of maintaining spreadsheets.



Digitized vendor invoices

Invoices from multiple haulers — including a major national hauler — turned into structured, comparable records.

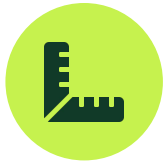


A quick-win opportunity

The 4% overage finding became an immediate, low-effort cost-control and engagement play.

Validating estimates with site-level measurement

Starting in late September, the campus is measuring conditions at roughly **10 of the 64 sites** to test the estimates against reality.



Fill-level surveys Measuring how full containers actually are at each assessed location.



Contamination photos Photographing loads to identify contamination in the stream.



Trash measurement Capturing trash at most of the assessed sites.



Organics measurement Measuring organics at one location to start.



The goal

Compare actual site conditions against the current estimation methodology — and decide whether the assumptions should be adjusted.

Attributing diversion back to the sites that earn it

Recycling and cardboard are hauled from centralized pickup points, not measured site by site. So a building may be recycling well — but the data can't credit it.



Centralized collection

Recycling and cardboard aggregate to shared pickup points.



Unattributed diversion

Individual sites recycle, but that diversion isn't tied back to them.



Understated performance

As a result, site-level diversion can look lower than it truly is.



Next phase

Build a credible method to assign recycling and diversion back to individual sites — after the trash estimates are validated by the site-level measurements.

Three moves any campus can start now



Set a monthly rhythm

Consistently collect and review waste data monthly and tie diversion goals to specific operational actions — not an annual scramble.



Let data drive the work

Use standardized data to prioritize action, reduce contamination, and right-size collection.



Make it visible by site

Site-level visibility strengthens stakeholder engagement and backs education initiatives with real metrics.

Engage key stakeholders consistently with data to gain buy in and prove progress is being made.

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Thank you

WATS is the data layer for campus diversion — turning activity into transparent tonnage, contamination, cost and opportunity.

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Questions? Happy to compare notes.