

**Making Lemonade from Lemons-
Lessons Learned in Reducing the Economic and Environmental Impact and Negotiating the
Post-2005 Service Agreements
on behalf of the 23 NESWC Communities**

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Abstract

The twenty-three communities that comprise the North East Solid Waste Committee have labored under what may well be the worst municipal solid waste service agreement in the country. In FY 2004, the disposal fee is \$140 per ton. Over the past eighteen years, the communities have paid more for disposal, as much as two to three times what the neighboring communities have paid. The NESWC Board of Directors has, over the course of the past ten years, implemented a multi-faceted program to reduce the environmental and economic burden associated with managing the municipal solid wastes generated in the 23 member communities. The program has included a series of innovative approaches to obtaining negotiating leverage and support from diverse stakeholders to reduce the cost and implementing innovative programs to help reduce the amount and toxicity of waste requiring disposal. What makes this particularly significant is that it was done on a regional basis, involved interaction with a broad, diverse group of stakeholders at the local, state and federal level and required the use of a wide array of change inducing tools, including arbitration and litigation, to achieve the results. Most recently, the communities and the vendor, Wheelabrator North Andover, completed negotiations regarding service post termination of the existing Service Agreement in September, 2005. This paper updates key lessons learned over the past decade.