

Agricultural plastics program going strong

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The Mountain View County and Mountain View Regional Waste Management Commission agricultural plastic recycling program continues to bring in record amounts of product, the county's policies and priorities committee heard.

A delegation from the commission and the county appeared before the committee at its recent regularly scheduled meeting, telling committee members that 2015 will see a record amount of plastic processed.

Pat Sliworsky, CAO of the waste management commission, and county agricultural service manager Jane Fulton gave the committee the update.

In operation since 2007, the program sees local farmers and ranchers recycle plastic such as bale cover sheeting and twine.

In 2007, 19,610 kilograms was processed, increasing to 55,250 in 2014. The projection is that almost 60,000 kilograms will be processed in 2015.

Under the program the first 100 Mountain View County residents who deliver a minimum of 100 kg of agriculture waste plastic for recycling receive \$100.

Local 4-H clubs may recycle agricultural waste plastics on behalf of landowners to receive the \$100 per farm that contributes 100 kg, as a source of revenue towards club activities, the committee heard.

Officials estimate that 40 per cent of the waste collected is polypropylene and 60 per cent is polyethylene plastic.

The waste commission collects and bales the plastic at the transfer site before having it shipped by containers to Asia for recycling into new products.

Sliworsky stressed the importance of ensuring that plastics brought to the transfer station for recycling are clean of debris.

"We are able to find processors that are willing to take it because our product is as clean as it is," he said. "Even with our stockpile today they are amazed that it is only twine, it is only bail wrap.

"We've got it separated. It's not rolled in mud and it's not put in with garbage. The whole thing about recycling is keeping it as specific as you can. The cleaner the product the better the price and this is what we are doing here. I hope we are setting the standard and it

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is working."

Fulton added: "People generally do want to recycle and they are putting in the effort."

In a written submission to the committee, the delegation outlined a number of program achievements (quoted):

- The program has generated a tremendous amount of environmental awareness in our community. We have seen an increase in support and participation from our local residents.
- The agricultural community has been provided with a mechanism to dispose of their agricultural plastics as an alternative to unapproved on-farm disposal methods that historically have been common practice throughout Western Canada.
- Residents look forward to this program each year and lobby strongly to ensure its continuation.
- The agricultural plastics recycling program received honourable mention for the 2012 Minister's Award for Municipal Excellence.
- Collectively both organizations meet annually to review the effectiveness of the program and explore ways to improve the efficiencies in delivering the program.

In 2015 Alberta Agriculture surveyed agriculture fieldmen, municipal waste authorities and processing companies to gather information for the economic analysis of the different markets existing for agriculture plastics, the commission heard.

"This will also assist with creating awareness of the market-based solutions and the importance of managing agriculture plastics," he said.

"Hopefully this report will also capture which municipalities have an agriculture recycling program, as there seems to be more and more. They hope to have the report completed and available by winter."