Reset Recycling in Arkansas: Lucy Cross (Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Division of Environmental Quality) Solid Waste Association of North America Presentation

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Lucy Cross undertook a presentation at the August 20th Arkansas Chapter's Annual Meeting/Update of the Solid Waste Association of North America in Conway titled:

RESET RECYCLING IN ARKANSAS ("Presentation").

Ms. Cross serves as the Director of Enterprise Services at the Arkansas Department of Energy and Environment - Division of Environmental Quality ("DEQ").

DEQ's Enterprise Services describes its objective as to:

…help Arkansas businesses comply with existing environmental regulations and reduce or eliminate the emissions and waste generated.

Enterprise Services duties also include:

- Natural State Stewardship Program for businesses that excel in sustainability practices.
- Implementation of recycling equipment tax program for businesses that buy equipment to provide recycling services for themselves and other entities.
- Serves as DEQ's liaison to the Compliance Advisory Panel/Marketing Recyclables Program that is an independent entity helping businesses with their sustainability needs/assisting small businesses with concerns and difficulties with permits.

The Presentation initially addressed the United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling ("SWIFR") Program that provides grants to states and tribes to:

- Improve post-consumer materials management and infrastructure;
- Support improvements to local post-consumer materials management and recycling programs; and
- Assist local waste management authorities in making improvements to local waste management systems.

The Statewide Solid Waste Management Plan was addressed describing DEQ's responsibility under Act 1376 of 2001 to develop the Statewide Solid Waste Management Plan ("SSWMP") which gives emphasis to regional planning, noting:

- Role of the Regional Solid Waste Management Boards.
- The development and implementation of a SSWMP.
- The SSWMP establishes minimum requirements for all regional solid waste management plans.

The major goals of the SSWMP were noted to include:

- Collection
- Disposal
- Recycling
- Waste Reduction
- Special Materials
- Education

The history of the implementation of the SSWMP was reviewed.

Ms. Cross noted the rationale for updating the SSWMP, refencing the fact that it has not been updated since 2014.

The rationale included new recycling challenges such as:

- Waste Solar Panels.
- Lithium-Ion Battery disposal.
- E-Waste disposal.
- The fact that the planning districts have changed since the SSWMP was first developed.

Progress and next steps were discussed which included:

- Send out survey.
- Conduct stakeholder meetings.
- Analyze survey results and public input.
- Update the SSWMP.

The survey questions were identified, and the results were stated to reference:

- Education.
- Rural access.
- Benefits.
- Government action.

DEQ is seeking volunteers to help brainstorm and draft recommendations for:

- 2026 Arkansas Statewide Solid Waste Management Plan.
- Minimum Guidelines for the 2026 Regional Solid Waste Management Plans.

Subcommittees will be formed which include:

- Needs Assessment
- Collection
- Disposal
- Recycling
- Special Materials
- Education & Public Participation

The timeline was stated to include September through December 2025 with presentation of recommendations to DEQ and the public by January 2026.

A copy of Lucy Cross' Presentation can be downloaded here.