

State gives local recycling programs \$14.3M in grants

[Tony Gicas](#), Staff writer, @tonygicas 8:35 p.m. ET Jan. 6, 2017

Newark at top of receiving list with \$552,249



(Photo: Photo/Thinkstock)

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Paterson and Clifton top recipients in Passaic County with \$227,130 and \$180,157**
 - **Paramus top recipient in Bergen County with \$143,280**
-

The state will soon give \$14.3 million in recycling grants to local municipalities based on past performance, but some environmentalists question the practice, saying a good sustainability solution needs more than money.

Recycling programs at the municipal level in Essex, Passaic and Bergen counties will get the most grant money. Newark, Vineland and Jersey City, as in past years, ranked at the top of the 550 state municipalities to receive funds. Newark will receive \$552,249, Vineland \$306,675 and Jersey City \$298,152. Amounts are based on how much each municipality recycled in 2014.

In Passaic County, Paterson (\$227,130) and Clifton (\$180,157) were among New Jersey's top seven recycling communities. Paramus, 10th overall, and Fair Lawn headed Bergen County's municipalities with \$143,280 and \$108,999 respectively.

The annual tonnage funds are distributed to municipal and county authorities each year based on the total weight of materials collected and recycled. The grant program is funded with a \$3 per-ton surcharge on trash disposed at solid waste facilities across the state, officials said.

The yearly recycling grant totals hovered between \$3 and \$4 million in the early 2000s. But, that figure jumped to \$8 million in 2006 and skyrocketed to \$14.5 million in 2007 when the tax doubled from the \$1.50 per ton after the sunset of the Solid Waste Services Tax. Former Gov. Jon Corzine signed the Recycling Enhancement Act into law the following year.

Since that time, the state dispersed an average of \$13.75 million each year for the last eight years.



A Jan. 5 announcement from Gov. Chris Christie and the state's Department of Environmental Protection released \$14.3 million in recycling grants to be distributed among 550 local governments across New Jersey. (Photo: Mike Derer, ASSOCIATED PRESS)

According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the funding can be used to enhance programs or initiatives such as tire collection days, leaf composting operations or advertising campaigns promoting recycling.

Several recycling coordinators said the funding from the state is typically used to maintain municipal recycling collection infrastructures and salaries.

Paterson officials said it has not been determined how the city will spend its \$227,130, which is \$7,500 more than last year.

In the past, officials said, Paterson used the grant in various ways related to recycling, including salaries of recycling inspectors, buying trucks and other equipment used to make recycling pickups, funding educational programs and printing brochures.

Guy Picone, director of public works in Paramus, said the grant would go “strictly” toward improving the borough’s recycling efforts and reducing solid waste.

Picone said the Bergen borough offers innovative recycling methods such as providing recycled firewood harvested from trees the DPW cuts down. Additionally, a grinder that produces wood chips and malt can be used by residents. A Paramus garbage pick-up, which operates automatically, is expected to expand to recycling duties by the summer, he added.

However, some town coordinators said the money would better serve the state’s recycling and sustainability efforts if it was allocated toward long-term initiatives. Others also took exception to the way in which the grant system operates.

“The City of Clifton is grateful for the money that we received. However, it is my understanding that the state gives exceptions to communities that dump at incinerators,” said Al DuBois, an environmentalist and Clifton Recycling Coordinator since 1986. “Thereby, those communities are taking money from the communities that contribute. That’s an injustice going on 30 years and that should be righted.”



Little Falls DPW workers recycled hundreds of Christmas trees into mulch on Jan. 4. (Photo: Balevski, Demitria, North Jersey Media Group Staff Photographer Demitrius Balevski/NORTHJERSEY.COM)

DuBois said the state could have collected and granted substantially more money if towns that use incinerators were charged a tax.

In response to critics skeptical of recycling’s contributions, Caryn Shinske, a DEP spokeswoman, said the process provides great benefit to New Jersey and its taxpayers, “and far outweighs” any criticisms.

“Each of us can make a real difference for New Jersey’s environment simply by recycling,” DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said. “Recycling conserves resources and results in less waste going to landfills or incinerators. It helps local governments save money, and leads to economic development and job creation.” New Jersey became the first state to require statewide recycling when it passed the Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling Act in 1987. Shinske said the state remains a leader today because recycling is “second-nature” for New Jerseyans. Mark Pedersen, DEP assistant commissioner for waste management, said the Garden State continues to show that “the recycling culture is part of our daily lives at home, work, [and] school.”

Not everyone is satisfied with the recycling effort, however. “In the collection sense, they’re still OK,” one North Jersey recycling coordinator said. “But there are a lot of opportunities the state missed out on years and years ago that are hurting us today. Source reduction, remanufacturing and a bottle bill would’ve made a tremendous difference.” According to the DEP data, the size of the municipality does not necessarily dictate the amount of recyclables collected.

In Bergen County, Carlstadt, a borough of about 6,000 residents, received \$81,316 while Franklin Lakes, about 10,000 strong, received \$14,874. In Passaic County, however, the City of Passaic and its 69,000 citizens, received \$95,963 while the small countymate of Haledon was awarded \$8,478.