



## **Recycling/Clean Communities Education, Inspections, and Customer Service Support January 2025**

This report details Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority's (MCMUA) Recycling and Clean Communities education programs, inspections, and customer service support efforts during January 2025. This supplements the Recycling Coordinator's Report for the MCMUA's February 2025 Board meeting.

### **Recycling and Clean Communities Projects, Public Outreach, Education, and Inspections**

#### **MCMUA Tours the SCMUA Landfill and Recycling Facility in Lafayette:**

In December, Marrone and Dawn Latincics, the District Recycling Coordinator for Sussex County, held several virtual meetings to discuss recycling and solid waste issues relevant to their counties. They explored how to better educate residents about waste reduction opportunities and enhance each other's programs. During one of these conversations, they agreed to organize tours of their facilities to strengthen their collaboration.

On January 21, the Solid Waste Planning Division gathered at the Sussex County Municipal Utilities Authority (SCMUA) in Lafayette, NJ, for a site tour to learn more about the services and activities provided to Sussex County. The facility includes a landfill where waste from the county is disposed of, although no tipping floor is available. Commercial truckloads are inspected for recoverable materials, but most trucks are unloaded directly at the landfill and are not visible to inspectors. Materials are shredded and compacted using large equipment at the landfill, and landfill leachate is pumped directly to the wastewater treatment plant. Marrone provided advice on inspections conducted in collaboration with the MUA and the MCDPH. He also shared educational materials created by the MCMUA for the SCMUA to replicate as they seek to implement similar inspections for violations of source separation. In addition to the landfill, the SCMUA features a large recycling depot open to all residents and businesses, where various materials are collected for recycling. These include Covered Electronic Devices (CEDs), Styrofoam, mixed fiber, antifreeze, textiles, rechargeable batteries, cooking oil, plastic bags, newspapers, commingled materials, boat shrink wrap, and car bumpers. Recycling these materials is free of charge, while items such as car batteries, wood pallets, appliances, and rigid plastics incur recycling fees. The SCMUA employs dual-stream recycling and individual material collections, assessing which Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) to use monthly. In addition, the SCMUA facility shreds logs and brush, composts vegetative waste in windrows, and produces dyed and undyed mulch.

#### **MCMUA and the New Jersey Association of New Jersey Recyclers (ANJR) Joint Efforts:**

##### *ANJR New Professionals Network Subcommittee Efforts:*

In January, Marrone, the chairman of the subcommittee for the ANJR "New Professionals Network," met with committee members during their monthly meeting to discuss and plan educational opportunities for the organization. The group will host two lunch-and-learn webinars in February and April, an educational and hands-on training session on the Municipal Tonnage Grant (MTG) in March, and facility tours of ANJR member recycling facilities in June. Educational materials are being developed to promote these free training courses and opportunities for recycling professionals within the state. For the MTG training seminar, Marrone will present

alongside the NJDEP and Bergen County's District Recycling Coordinator for a two-hour hands-on training session. This topic is critical for certified recycling professionals and municipal recycling coordinators, but they often do not receive sufficient training. Significant time has already been dedicated to preparing the presentation and takeaways and recording a video for current and future recycling professionals to reference later. These materials will be available on the ANJR New Professionals subpage and distributed to each County Coordinator in New Jersey to educate their municipal recycling professionals. Efforts such as this on a large scale can significantly impact our state-wide solid waste diversion goals by providing education to those who can benefit substantially from it.

### **MCMUA Conducts Research on Food Waste and Strategically Plans its Future Initiatives:**

In January, Marrone, Toomey, Civitella, and Eramo continued planning for our upcoming food waste initiatives, which throughout the 2025 calendar year as follows:

#### *MCMUA's Food Waste Business Challenge:*

In January, Marrone and Eramo continued their work on the Restaurant Challenge, a recipe contest to utilize commonly wasted food targeted at restaurants in Morris County, and a toolkit with motivation and details for the contest will be available for interested businesses. Eramo refined the toolkit to address food businesses better and strengthen the case for reducing food waste. Initially, the contest was set to finish before Food Waste Prevention Week in April, but this deadline has been extended due to positive developments in the Food Waste Rescue Assessment. The MCMUA can now leverage Morris County's food landscape insights for a more impactful contest while considering a partnership with Food Waste Prevention Week. Lastly, on January 30, 2025, Eramo attended an NRDC webinar on becoming a partner, which provided valuable resources for the MCMUA's potential mini-awareness campaign. A draft outline of the business toolkit is as follows:

- I. Intro and Summary of Project
- II. Food Waste Impacts (with an emphasis on business impacts)
- III. Relevant Regulations/Guidance: Food Waste Generator Law, NJ Food Waste Reduction Plan, Good Samaritan Law
- IV. How to Reduce Food Waste
- V. Join the Contest – help Morris County increase awareness about food waste while promoting your business – reasons to participate
- VI. Examples of spotlights about restaurants, social media posts, etc.
- VII. How to participate

#### *MCMUA Continues Collaborations on its Food Rescue Assessment with Food Waste Reduction Partners:*

In moving towards action and acting as a catalyst for the development of a vibrant marketplace in Morris County to divert wasted food from the commercial and institutional sectors, the MCMUA continues its work on conducting food rescue assessments at Morris County's fifty-plus [food pantries and meal service sites](#). In doing so, the MCMUA is meeting with these and other various organizations to understand their operations better and identify missing sectors, key barriers, and challenges while exploring how we can better redirect food that otherwise would have been wasted in the hands of those who need it. Once these meetings occur, MCMUA webpage profiles for these organizations will be created to share on the MCMUA food waste webpage and include their information in the food waste prevention toolkit, which will facilitate the connection of excess food with potential recipients.

*MCMUA Builds Morris County Food Waste Prevention Partner Profiles:*

Throughout January, Eramo and Civitella continued developing profiles for food waste prevention partners in Morris County, focusing on organizations involved in food rescue. These include food pantries and meal/soup kitchens that recover surplus food from supermarkets, groups like Share My Meals for tracking donations, and platforms like Too Good To Go and Flashfood for purchasing surplus food. The partner document will also cover food recycling options, such as composting and services for food scrap pickup. Its objective is to create profiles for organizations to be uploaded to the MCMUA website, serving as a resource for the public, businesses, and Municipal Recycling Coordinators about food waste prevention. The MCMUA is gathering insights from various organizations about their operations and challenges, as current food systems are inefficient in reducing waste. Additionally, a list of questions has been developed for Food Assistance Organizations that we used as guidelines in our discussions. These questions are extensive, and while we don't ask every single one, they help us identify similarities and differences in the operations and needs of these organizations. Recent inspections revealed that while excess food is available, much is not directed toward those in need. Although the MCMUA cannot solve global food system issues, local opportunities to prevent waste and facilitate resource sharing have been identified. Below is a summary of communications with partner organizations from this month.

*Conversation and Collaborations with Zufall Health Clinic:*

Last year, Marrone and Eramo had a conversation with Zufall Health Clinic at the County Health Fair. They discussed healthy food practices and food waste redirection. Zufall provided resources in both English and Spanish on food storage, seasonal produce, and support for individuals facing food insecurity, which aligned with the MCMUA's food waste initiatives. During this conversation, the MCMUA learned about a cold storage grant available for pantries and soup kitchens. However, when they discovered that Share My Meals could not partner due to a lack of refrigerator space, Eramo followed up with Zufall for more details. She learned about grant funds for refrigerators and freezers as part of the Healthy Pantry Initiative, which requires class participation and adherence to specific criteria.

On January 10, Eramo followed up with Zufall to discuss their recent initiatives. She asked Zufall to identify barriers to distributing rescued food, mentioning challenges such as transportation and adequate storage that impact their free farmers' markets in Dover. Eramo suggested potential partners like Table to Table and the Foodshed Alliance's Local Share program. The MCMUA was invited to participate in future meetings concerning the Community Health Improvement Plan, which addresses food insecurity and access in collaboration with Zufall.

*Follow-up Conversation with Share My Meals:*

On January 16, Marrone, Civitella, and Eramo conducted a follow-up Teams meeting with Share My Meals, where Eramo shared insights on food waste and cold storage grants from Zufall. She noted that the Community Food Bank of New Jersey offers grant opportunities for cold storage. Share My Meals requested information about commercial kitchen locations in the County, which can be obtained through local health departments. For food rescue collaboration, they target both organizations and food service providers. However, the challenge lies in distributing excess food effectively and finding adaptable donors. The Office of the Food Security Advocate has established a presence in Morris County, which could help the MCMUA understand food flows. Share My Meals also mentioned potential grants and the Meal Recovery Coalition to enhance food recovery efforts in New Jersey, where 5 million meals end up in landfills annually. They proposed organizing a

joint event with the MCMUA to raise awareness for their program, which is under consideration and is pending a proposal from Share My Meals.

*Phone Conversation with the Community Food Bank of New Jersey:*

On January 23, Eramo reached out to the Food Sourcing Coordinator at the Community Food Bank, as referred by Nourish NJ. Eramo shared details about the MUA's food rescue solutions initiative to reduce food waste and address food insecurity. They were enthusiastic about the initiative and provided resources related to Morris County on their website, mentioning the formation of a task force to identify areas of need. They also suggested centralized storage to improve access for food assistance organizations and other suggestions for the MCMUAs report. Both parties scheduled a meeting on Teams for February 6, 2025, to include relevant stakeholders in the discussion.

*Phone Conversation with Faith Kitchen Meal Service Site in Dover Town:*

In January, Eramo and Marrone spoke briefly with Faith Kitchen, a soup kitchen that serves meals from Monday to Saturday, 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. They provide over 100 meals daily, all prepared by volunteers who donate ingredients. Although contacted by Share My Meals, they lack storage capacity for the prepared meals, as they receive sufficient food donations. Further correspondence will follow.

*Onsite Meeting with the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry in Boonton Town:*

On January 28, the Solid Waste Planning Division met with the Loaves and Fishes Pantry Director in Boonton Town. The pantry provides non-perishable groceries, fresh produce, meat, toiletries, and pet food. It operates on a self-serve model, offering two-hour food on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The pantry is organized like a supermarket, limiting the quantities of items customers can take. All food is free, with no questions asked, assisting around 250 families per week. Most of their clientele comes from word of mouth, and approximately 40% of the customer base are Spanish speakers, along with a significant Middle Eastern community. The adjacent Gateway organization offers social services but is not affiliated with the pantry. Currently, the pantry is self-sufficient due to grant funding and individual donations. They plan to enhance their fundraising efforts by hiring a dedicated grant writer and hosting quarterly events. The pantry gleans food from stores and has about 130 volunteers. They collaborate with Food Connection for additional food rescue and spend between \$500 and \$600 weekly on produce from Riviera Produce. Furthermore, they offer pet food rescued by the Guinness Dunn Foundation and receive substantial meat and milk donations. Donations are collected through a donation bin, and when they have excess food, they share it with the Table of Hope in Morristown. Their primary need remains fresh produce, and they frequently receive excess quantities of bread, leading to waste, a common issue among similar organizations. The pantry appreciated the MCMUA's efforts and welcomed a meeting to further explore food waste redirection and prevention in collaboration with the County's food service network. The Director also offered to discuss her efforts and the pantry's services at the upcoming MCMUA second MRC meeting in Boonton in June. Meanwhile, the coordinators plan to visit the pantry to learn more about its operations firsthand.

*Onsite Meeting with Homeless Solutions in Morristown:*

On January 28, the Solid Waste Planning Division met with the volunteer coordinator of Homeless Solutions. The organization currently accommodates 76 people in its shelter and winter warming center, which operates as a Code Blue location during freezing nights. Although 85 beds are available, some are reserved for family rooms and are not always utilized. The site provides meals for residents, typically serving 20 to 30

individuals for breakfast, 15 to 25 for lunch, and dinner sees full participation from all residents. Volunteers organize dinners, and the organization generally does not collect food donations from the public to ensure efficient use of resources. They maintain a list of disposable supplies needed on their website and partner with other organizations for additional contributions. Food is sourced from the Community Food Bank of New Jersey and local supermarkets like Costco and ShopRite. The organization utilizes corporate donations and meal recovery programs such as Table to Table and Shares My Meals, with deliveries occurring twice weekly. However, they cannot accept produce donations due to specific meal planning requirements and the short shelf life of donated items, which often only have one or two days remaining before spoiling at the time of receipt. The site networks with other pantries to share excess products to minimize food waste. However, it faces challenges with unsolicited donations that do not match its needs and large quantities of outdated food stocks that must be redirected to prevent waste. Despite these issues, the site is well-managed and effectively utilizes resources, optimizing donations to help offset food costs. Additionally, the pantry gleans food from stores and relies on a robust network of volunteers who spend hundreds of dollars weekly on food to keep the site operational.

### *Overall Thoughts and Insights:*

Through these conversations, the MUA learned the importance of understanding who can access various resources and facilitating connections between parties. Excess food must often be delivered or picked up quickly to prevent it from being discarded. Organizations that address food insecurity operate under different models: some can provide perishable items, while others cannot. Some offer prepared meals, whereas others only provide packaged, non-perishable foods. Additionally, some organizations have ample refrigeration facilities, while others do not. By identifying these opportunities for receiving and distributing excess food, the MUA can effectively facilitate its flow to the most suitable distribution avenues.

### **MCMUA Attends NRDC Food Matters Meeting Network Call:**

On January 14, Eramo and Civitella participated in the January Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) meeting focused on food waste prevention. The meeting emphasized efforts to encourage public involvement in Food Waste Prevention Week, recognized nationally from April 7 to 13. They shared insights on partnering with this initiative and discussed marketing strategies to educate the public about food waste. Additionally, a presentation on the Food Date Labeling Act, H.R. 3159, proposes a dual labeling system for food products to help reduce consumer confusion concerning sell-by, expiration, and best-by dates.

### **MCMUA Presents at the Borough of Madison's Junior High School:**

On January 22, Toomey, Birmingham, and Civitella visited Madison's Junior High School to conduct a lesson on watersheds and drinking water. Toomey and Birmingham developed the lesson plan, while Civitella contributed valuable ideas. Students created model watersheds using paper and washable markers, then sprayed them with water to demonstrate water flow and pollution effects. They also examined a map of their local watershed to identify potential pollution sources. Additionally, Toomey and Birmingham shared information about the Clean Communities program and discussed possibly returning in the spring to lead a composting session in the school's garden. The MCMUA was invited back in the Spring to discuss leading a session on composting in the school's courtyard garden.

### **MCMUA and MCDPH Collaborations:**

*Food Waste Site Surveys with the Division of Public Health on behalf of the NJDEP:*

On January 23, 2025, Marrone and Eramo accompanied the Morris County Division of Public Health (MCDPH) on two NJDEP food waste site surveys held at ShopRite of Greater Morristown and Whole Foods in Morristown. The goal is to gather information on food waste practices without established regulations for institutions suspected of generating excess food waste. During the visits, the MCDPH focused on audit-related questions, while the MCMUA provided insights on recycling requirements and food waste prevention. This collaborative approach encouraged open discussions about food waste challenges.

The first inspection was at the ShopRite of Greater Morristown, and the store manager showed the team various areas, revealing that while some food waste was separated, there was no system to measure total waste generated. The manager estimated the store produced about six totes of food waste weekly. Departments like produce, bakery, and deli separated scraps mixed with regular trash by late morning. Darling Ingredients collected meat scraps, and TerraCycle handled plastic film recycling. The store had compactors for trash and cardboard, but the commingled containers were inadequately managed, as indicated by a locked recycling dumpster in an inaccessible area. Edible-looking produce was found in Organix totes, suggesting it was still suitable for consumption but likely destined for animal feed out of state. ShopRite also indicated that it donated food to Market Street Mission and Table of Hope several times weekly in Morristown. The manager agreed to provide data on recycling and donations from the store.

At Whole Foods, both parties inspected various departments for source separation alongside the store's management team. Each department had designated containers for recycling, food waste, and garbage, with food waste collected using compostable bags. Used cooking oil was stored in a container for Mahoney's collection. Sushi and Amazon were the only outside vendors utilizing the Whole Foods recycling system. The manager highlighted practices to divert food waste from landfills, including donations to Market Street Mission, NourishNJ, and Table to Table, using the Too Good To Go app to sell unsold items and mark expiring items 50% off. The dumpster area onsite had containers for trash, recycling, and a 30-foot food waste compactor, but there were issues with commingling and contamination. The recycling dumpster was a single-stream container with minimal signage and contained significant amounts of varying contamination. The manager reported not having received reports from the hauler about recycling issues. Likewise, the trash dumpsters were observed to be mixed with mandated recyclables. Despite heavily monitored and effective separation practices in the store, these practices are not being carried out outside the store. Moreover, it was discovered that during our inspection, the compactor was out of order and waiting for repair, so all food waste was being disposed of in the trash until fixed. Moreover, while the staff and internal records showed that the food waste was recycled at a food waste recycling facility by corporate policy and further confirmed by the hauler, the location showed the food waste compactor being disposed of at the MCMUA Parsippany Transfer Station. Thus, despite the staff's extropian efforts to repackage food waste and rigorously separate materials per policy, the staff was distressed to learn this news. The store manager will investigate this matter with the corporate office. The MCMUA also emphasized the importance of reporting recycling and food waste figures to their Municipal Recycling Coordinator (MRC) for municipal tonnage reports and potential grant funding.

Overall, these inspections proved to be eye-opening experiences in learning about other avenues and efforts to reduce food waste, which will assist us and the state in future waste-reduction efforts.

### **Community Lead Testing Event for Consumer Items, MCMUA, and MCDPH Partnership:**

On January 23, Birmingham participated in the MCDPH's quarterly "Get the Lead Out" community lead testing event at the Morris County Library. Birmingham provided recycling information and proper disposal

education to participants alongside the MCDPH's traditional efforts to test consumer items for lead. At the event, they brought in 19 participants from the public, testing various items, such as serveware, food products, cookware, toys, makeup, paint from household walls, and other items. The event also had several participants revisit it with additional materials gathered from their homes for a second appointment. All items with a positive failing test were either surrendered by the public on the day of the event for proper disposal or returned with the participant with a hold harmless form. Many participants were extraordinarily thankful and appreciated the event for assisting and educating them. The next event will be held again in the Spring at the exact location in the public meeting room.

### **Morris County Office Recycling Excels (M.O.R.E.) Program Inspections:**

#### *Morris County Public Safety Training Academy (MCPSTA):*

On January 24, Birmingham inspected the recycling and trash dumpsters at the Police Academy. The contents of the recycling dumpster mainly consisted of acceptable materials, and the boxes inside were flattened, which is positive news. However, the following unacceptable materials were discovered in the recycling dumpster: plastic films, Styrofoam, and shredded paper. On the other hand, the trash dumpster contained only trash, which is also good news. Two flyers were created to remind cleaning staff and employees about acceptable and unacceptable materials as a follow-up to the inspection. These flyers were emailed to Chief Colucci at the Police Academy and Director Jeff Paul at the Communications Center, who stated they would distribute them.

### **MCMUA Continues Planning for its Municipal Recycling and Clean Communities Coordinator Meetings of the 2025 Calendar Year:**

#### *MCMUA's First MRC Meeting of 2025:*

In January, the Solid Waste Planning Division met several times to prepare for its first Municipal Recycling Coordinator (MRC) meeting at the Morris County Library on February 26, 2025. Key topics will include:

- Municipal Tonnage Grant Reporting
- Hands-on practice in the computer lab for entering recycling reports
- Review of municipal recycling tonnage letters
- Presentations from NJDEP on permitting, enforcement, and education

The department is compiling resources to assist MRCs with municipal tonnage reporting, including an updated sample letter for businesses referencing municipal ordinances. Toomey has gathered a list of Morris County ordinances requiring reports from nonresidential sources and haulers. The department is updating the business reporting form and collecting MCMUA reports to share at the meeting. A Google Forms survey was sent to municipalities to gather information on curbside and depot recycling programs, which will be reviewed at the meeting. Additional surveys will collect details about municipal services, and recycling tonnage letters and forms will be analyzed for shared learning. Lastly, MCMUA example forms for 2024 recycling results and new educational materials will be developed.

#### *MCMUA's Second MRC Meeting of 2025:*

In January, the Solid Waste Planning Division met multiple times to prepare for its second Municipal Recycling Coordinator (MRC) meeting, which will take place at the Boonton Elks Lodge on June 18th, 2025.

Marrone secured several tour locations, including the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry, the Bear Minimum sustainable goods and refillery store, and the Boonton Town Department of Public Works (DPW). Additionally, Republic Services and Carton Council representatives will discuss recycling markets, while the Boonton Town MRC will share best practices for recycling and their recycling inspection efforts.

*MCMUA's Annual Clean Communities Coordinator Meeting of 2025:*

On January 9, the Solid Waste Planning Division met virtually with the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC) to plan for its 9/17/25 Clean Communities Meeting. The NJSOC is an Environmental Education Center in Stokes State Forest in Sussex County, New Jersey. At their meeting, participants discussed various topics for the meeting sessions, a tentative agenda, and other requirements for the meeting, such as meals. Subsequent email correspondence took place to finalize the agenda and discuss pricing. The MUA is finalizing the meeting details and will open it beyond Morris County's municipal clean community coordinators and its fellow county and municipal coordinators throughout the state.

**MCMUA Recycling Public Outreach Educational Materials and Efforts:**

In January 2024, the Recycling Administrative Staff completed work on educational materials for implementation with its recycling outreach operations.

*Association of New Jersey Household Hazardous Waste Coordinators (ANJHHWC) Informational Flyer:*

In January, Cumberton, Marrone, and Adams worked on completing a flyer encouraging new membership for the Association, promoting involvement with the organization, spreading awareness of their efforts, and creating transparency with the organization's efforts. The latest flyer will be distributed at the Sustainability in Motion Conference at the beginning of March. The flyer can be seen below.



The flyer features a header with the ANJHHWC logo and the text "Association of New Jersey ANJHHWC Household Hazardous Waste Coordinators JOIN TODAY! www.njhhwaste.com". Below this, there are sections for "ABOUT US", "WHO SHOULD JOIN", and a list of "Join us if you are:" with bullet points. A QR code is provided to access the membership application. At the bottom, there is a section for "ANJHHWC OFFICERS" listing Stephen Adams (President), Dan Napoleon (Vice President), Melissa Harvey (Secretary), and Chris Sikorski (Treasurer).



## MCMUA and MCOC Collaborations:

### *MCMUA and MCOC Social Media and Newsletter Collaborations:*

In January, Marrone and Eramo worked with the Morris County Office of Communications (MCOC) and Digital Media representatives to plan future topics and create a schedule for media releases. Posts provided to the MCOC and published in the Morris County newsletter are detailed below.



#### Test for Radon in January

Winter is the ideal time to test for radon, an odorless, invisible, radioactive gas naturally released from rocks, soil, and water. Prolonged exposure can lead to lung cancer. All Morris County towns are in the moderate to high zone on the [radon potential rate map](#). Visit the [state's radon website](#) for information on purchasing certified test kits and more.  
— [A Citizen's Guide to Radon \(pdf\)](#)



#### Get Your Items Tested for Lead

Many [ordinary household items](#) contain lead, including imported and vintage toys, dishware, spices, painted tin panels, lead crystal pieces, ceramics, silverware, jewelry, and furniture. The Morris County Health Department will offer [free lead testing on Jan. 23 from 4 - 6 p.m.](#) at the Morris County Library. Items will be scanned using an XRF Lead Detector, with results available in just a few minutes. You will have the option to discard any items found to contain lead.  
— [Make an appointment to drop off household hazardous waste in Mount Olive.](#)



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— [Make an appointment to drop off household hazardous waste in Mount Olive.](#)



#### DEP Commissioner Issues Public Order to Use Water Sparingly

New Jersey remains in a [drought warning](#). Recent rain and snowfall statewide accumulated up to half an inch of rainfall, not enough to change current water supply conditions. The public is strongly urged to continue voluntary water conservation practices.