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Naked City Waste Not, Want Not

BY ROBERT BRYCE, MAY 19, 2000, NEWS

Fifteen months after the city agreed to a short-term deal that gave **BFI** the lion's share of Austin's waste, the City Council inked a contract last Thursday that will send two-thirds of the city's waste to the **Texas Disposal Systems** landfill near Creedmoor. The 30-year deal, which has built-in adjustments for inflation, allows the city to send most of the 136,000 tons generated annually by city residents to the TDS landfill.

The decision ends several years of uncertainty. In 1998, city staffers recommended that nearly 90% of Austin's trash be buried at the **Waste Management Inc.** landfill on Giles Road. But concerns about a two-decades-old hazardous waste disposal site at the landfill forced the city to rethink its plan. In early 1999, after an engineering firm hired by the city said the Waste Management site "poses a substantial environmental risk and potential future liability" to users of the site, the city decided to send two-thirds of its waste to the BFI landfill on Giles Road and one-third to TDS. The new contract reverses those numbers. The city will pay TDS between \$14.58 and \$16.25 per ton of trash, depending on volume.

TDS will also begin processing yard waste at the city's Hornsby Bend wastewater treatment plant. The city and TDS will work together at the plant to produce and sell **Dillo Dirt**, the city's award-winning compost product. The contract is "an excellent example of how the public and private sectors can work together to provide local citizens valuable long-term solid waste solutions at competitive prices," said TDS CEO Bob Gregory.

Joe Word, the assistant director of the **Solid Waste Services Department**, said the city agreed to the TDS deal because BFI's landfill doesn't have enough capacity to serve the city. "We felt it was essential to secure landfill capacity in our region so we aren't faced with a situation in 10 years where we have to site our own landfill," said Word.

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