

December 2025 Executive Director Report

As I write this final report for 2025, I am reminded of all the challenges and successes we have seen this year. We began the year having identified two potential sites for a county-wide landfill, and while that has been put on pause, I believe it gave us important insights into how we can better handle that work in the future. Although it is inevitable that we return to the topic of final disposal, that challenge helped motivate an organization-wide push to find new ways to divert as much waste as possible, including our recent RFP for alternatives to landfill and incineration. That is still an ongoing process, but one that will be complete soon. I believe the evaluation committee provided the Board with three great options and am proud of the process so far.

We are making progress on goals, objectives and performance indicators for the Agency. I know this has moved slower than some may have preferred, but this is work that can not be rushed, and if done well, can create a true direction for the entire Agency to follow. The Agency has many different documents that could be considered a “strategic plan”, and it is almost more difficult to incorporate those documents into one cohesive plan than it would be starting from scratch. We are well positioned to integrate our new Agency goals and objectives with our 2026 biennial report, which I believe will better align all of our work with the Agency’s mission and vision.

The Materials Management Working Group consists of the counties that make up the DEC Region 3 and the Hudson Valley. We meet regularly to discuss common issues and find ways to work together. I believe there is real momentum for regionalization in the future, and I believe this will help us find an eventual solution to siting a landfill. There is a real dialogue happening between the operational leaders of these Agencies and/or County Departments. It will be up to the policy makers and political leaders to decide whether future plans move forward, but I anticipate making progress on this work in 2026.

We have created a solid waste contract that is fair to both the Agency and the towns and City of Kingston. I have received executed versions from several municipalities already and hope to have all sixteen before the end of December. The contract requires the towns to use their best efforts to divert reusable goods and organic waste. We will assist them in doing so if they choose to partner with us. If they do not wish to participate in our program, they will need to provide annual reports on how they used their best efforts. We are in a landfill capacity crisis, and we need all those who receive waste to do what they can to divert waste.

The RePØWER Project is moving forward. We hired a Reuse Coordinator and released an RFP for operation of the Reuse Innovation Center. We are in the process of finding a location, and I am confident this task will be completed by mid-2026. Through Sustainable Hudson Valley and Circularly’s work we have found many partners in developing a circular economy here in Ulster County. This is something that our community is asking for, and while the Agency cannot create a circular economy alone, we have a vital role to play in end-of-cycle materials management. The Ulster County Circular Economy Strategic Plan will be finished in the first quarter of next year. It will identify clear actions that the Agency and others can take to make a circular economy a reality.

The Agency is now ready and permitted to recycle mattresses and receive 7,500 tons of source separated organics. This was a multi-year process, and one that required much effort and patience. Thank you to the Board for your support during this process.

Through engineers we studied our leachate and created a solution that we can operationalize in the future when needed. I believe it is incumbent on us to treat our leachate even if it is not required by the DEC. I will be working on ways to fund this project in 2026, so that we can prudently go live with this at some point in 2027. This year, with the assistance of the Town of New Paltz DPW we made major improvements to the road around the New Paltz Landfill, which improves drainage, keeping runoff away from the capped portion of the landfill and provides our staff and others with better access to the storage tanks. We are hopeful these improvements should reduce the amount of leachate we collect, transport and dispose by roughly 50 percent.

We had successful negotiations with Teamsters Local 445, which led to the Memorandum of Agreement that you will vote on this Thursday. This MOA is fiscally responsible, and it also sets the Agency up to be able to recruit and retain staff. It is in line with other CBAs signed recently, most recent of which is the CSEA CBA agreed to by the County. It also gives the Agency greater flexibility to reduce health insurance costs and other expenses.

We have challenges ahead, such as decreasing volume, which reduces our largest revenue source, and increasing tipping fees and transportation costs, which will only continue to rise as landfill capacity dwindles, and inflation continues to stay high. We continue to fight the narrow-minded perception that we are simply a “Trash Agency”, which negatively impacts our public messaging, staff recruitment and internal morale. Finally, we fight the idea that the recycling system is too complicated, or that certain items aren’t really recycled. These are all challenges that are surmountable, but it will take the work of many stakeholders to do so. Agency staff and partners, Board members, political leaders and finally our residents must all pitch in.

None of the accomplishments highlighted above could have been completed without the tireless work of Agency staff. From the Directors to their staff in operations, finance and administration and the Recycling Outreach Team, I am often impressed at the commitment I see to ensure that the Agency is living up to its mission “to protect public health and the environment and to promote sustainable materials management practices by managing solid waste in Ulster County with a focus on resource recovery.”

I am as excited to do this work as I was in March of 2024 when I began as Executive Director. As I head into the final year of my contract in March of 2026 I do so with optimism -- an optimism that comes from having partnership and support from all of you. A Board made up of volunteers who thanklessly give their time to make sure the Agency is doing right by its residents and is being managed in a fiscally and environmentally responsible way. Thank you all for that partnership and for trusting me to take on this vital role.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank Andrew for his years of dedicated service to the Agency and our County. As both an employee and Board member, your contributions have been vital to the success of the Agency. I hope you enjoy your retirement and find time to focus on yourself and your family.